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A WEEKLY JOURNAL

CONDUCTED BY

CHARLES DICKENS.

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CROSS CURRENTS.

BY MARY ANGELA DICKENS.

Author of "A Mist of Error," "Her Inheritance," "A Social Success," "Kitty's Victim," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XV.

ANY event, great or small, has a different significance for each human being whose life it touches; a comparison of such significances would be a rather curious study. Helen, when she heard of the Duchess's scheme, looked upon it as a special interposition of Providence, not for the relief of the Chinese, but to keep Selma from dwelling too much upon their last days together in the little house which had been home to them for so long. Everything was to be packed up before the wedding. Helen had carefully arranged that Selma should have no business connected with the move on her hands when she herself should be away; and she had been vaguely afraid that the last week, when the preparation for departure could no longer be kept in the background, might be very painful with the inevitable stir of old association which it involved. But Selma was just as usual, except for an added tenderness of manner towards her sister which every one of those last days seemed to increase. Such portions of the work as fell naturally to her, she did, just as she did everything not immediately connected with her profession, quietly, but quite uninterestedly. When Helen was obliged to consult her on any point, her opinion was given readily, and sympathetically, but as though her own personal concern in the matter was absolutely null.

The Duchess's scheme was not to be finally arranged without incessant change of mind as to details on the part of almost every one concerned, and one question in particular—the question of what the play itself was to be—seemed almost insoluble. Selma heard little of the pros and cons, and had she heard everything she would not have known the truth—that John Tyrrell had made up his mind on the subject from the first, and was only waiting to declare it finally, and with authority, until his co-managers should be so hopelessly divided among themselves as to accept any decision in sheer desperation. Nothing was decided when the sisters' last day together drew to a close.

It was late, but the two girls were still together in the drawing-room. Everything was ready; nothing lay between them and their short parting on the next day but the night's rest, of which Helen looked very much in need; but Selma was lingering, and making her sister linger, as though the prospect of her lonely room was painful to her. When at last they rose, however, and Helen said:

"Let me come and sleep with you, Selma," she answered, rather hurriedly, "No, dear"; adding with a gentle touch on Helen's cheek: "We should only keep each other awake, and you are very tired."

Selma herself was very pale, and her eyes looked almost haggard. Since she came in from the theatre, she had been quietly drawing Helen on to speak of the wedding arrangements more fully than she had yet done, and her manner all the time had been rather unusual, as though she were putting some kind of deliberate force upon herself. And Helen, to whom, at this stage of the proceedings, it seemed far better that they should speak openly to one another if Selma "didn't mind," had noticed nothing wrong until after her last hearty good-night kiss given in Selma's bedroom. As she left the room she turned, and was struck by something indefinably pathetic about Selma's face and figure as she stood watching her sister out. Helen hesitated a moment, and then, coming back, she took Selma into her arms as though she were still the little sister of her childhood, and kissed her with all her heart in the pressure.

"You don't feel as if you were being left alone, darling?" she said. "You don't feel as though you were losing me?"

Selma, who had trembled suddenly like a leaf, as she felt the touch of Helen's arms, drew a quick breath, and with a tender light in her eyes, which had been rather hard and set, returned the pressure which, until Helen spoke, she had only suffered.

"I know I'm not, my dearest!" she said. "Don't think of it like that. I know I shall have you always." She paused a moment, and then with a sudden tightening of her hold on Helen, she whispered: "You know, oh, Nell, you know how much I hope you will be happy. Oh, Nell! Oh, Nell!"

She was clinging to Helen with a convulsive grasp and pressure as the last words came from her in a dry, tearless sob; but before Helen, bewildered and startled, could fairly understand her words, she found herself pushed gently away with another rapid "good night," and the door was shut upon her. Helen stood for a moment, hesitating, and vaguely disturbed; then thinking, simply, that the fewer words and the less emotion indulged in the better, she acquiesced in Selma's unexpressed desire, and went to her own room hoping that her sister would "soon be asleep."

Humphrey and Helen were only to be away for a week, as the former was anxious about a picture for the Academy, and could spare no more time; and Selma was to spend that week with Miss Tyrrell. She was still very pale, and her eyes looked as though she had not slept much, when she was shown into the drawing-room at Kensington the next morning, and John Tyrrell, who was standing alone on the hearth-rug, apparently waiting for his sister, gave her a quick, keen glance as he shook hands.

"I've some news for you!" he said, as soon as the usual preliminaries were over. "The knotty point is settled at last!"

"Oh!" cried Selma, the grave composure of her face suddenly giving way to an eager interest which had something pathetic about its intensity. "The play? Oh, tell me?" Then as he answered her her cheeks flushed crimson, and she cried, breathlessly: "Mr. Tyrrell, you don't mean it."

The play which Tyrrell had worked so cleverly that no one had any idea that it had been worked at all, was a translation of an old Italian play, which had taken his fancy as a much younger man, on the adaptation of which he had spent great pains, but which he had never produced for many reasons—one of which had been his inability to find any one to play the heroine; he insisted that she must be young, beautiful, and powerful; and his demands had never been fulfilled. He had several years before made Selma study the part, and on first hearing of the proposed matinée, he had determined that she should play it. The piece would be a grave risk as a regular production; but at a matinée it would be a certain sensation, if only because of its novelty.

"Bianca!" exclaimed Selma, as he signified, by a slight smile and a gesture, that he did mean it. "Oh, Mr. Tyrrell!"

"It will mean some hard work for us," he said. "Did I tell you that it is to be on the twenty-second?"

"I am so glad," she said, answering his first words. "Yes, it will. I was thinking about Bianca only the other day, thinking that I should like to study her again, now that I am—older." She paused a moment, and stood absently, leaning one arm against the mantelpiece. "It will be like a new part," she added, dreamily.

"It is a new part for me, too," he rejoined. "And I shall stage-manage it, of course. Fortunately, we play a great deal with one another, you and I, so we can rehearse to your heart's content."

Selma roused herself, and slipped into the nearest chair, forgetting in the interest of the subject that she had only just arrived, that she had not yet taken off her hat, or seen her hostess.

"Tell me about the cast," she said. "Who will be the Guido?"

There were two prominent men's parts in the play—two parts of which it was difficult to say that either was the better. One of these was a middle-aged man—a priest; the other a young man, Guido—

the lover. Either would have suited Tyrrell's style, and ten years ago he would certainly have chosen Guido. He had weighed the question carefully before deciding now, and he had been little influenced by the consideration of the respective ages of the two characters. Selma's simple question, taking it for granted that he himself would play the elder man, coming from her lips meant much more than she knew. He turned suddenly, and walked to the window, as he said:

"Bevan, I hope."

"Will he be good, do you think?" asked Selma, doubtfully, having little faith in the young man in question, and remembering that she had quite as much to do with Guido as with the priest.

"He will draw."

"I see!" said Selma, meekly, remembering that there was a charity concerned; and then the door opened, and Miss Tyrrell came in, saying, as she kissed Selma:

"You are discussing the matinée, I know. I'm afraid little Nora Glynn will never forgive you, Selma."

"Miss Glynn!" said Selma. "Why—oh, Mr. Tyrrell!—you asked her to play; and there's only Bianca. Oh, how dreadful!"

"I asked her to help," answered Tyrrell, with an inward wonder as to whether his sister would ever have the faintest notion as to what it was or was not desirable to say to Selma. "I asked her to help, and she is going to help."

"I am almost afraid she did not think you meant her to sell programmes!" observed Miss Tyrrell, sweetly.

"To sell programmes!" exclaimed Selma. "Oh, Mr. Tyrrell!"

"To sell programmes," assented Tyrrell, with the utmost placidity. "You are forgetting the Chinese, Selma. Nora Glynn, and a staff of similar young women"—he named half-a-dozen other pretty girls of about the same professional standing—"will make a great deal of money for them in that way. It was the Duchess's idea, and I think it is a very good one. They are quite charmed with it themselves."

Selma could not have given, in so many words, her own reasons for being anything but charmed; but something in Tyrrell's tone hurt her, and she was vaguely relieved when Miss Tyrrell led away from the subject by speaking to her brother of her plans for the afternoon.

During the week that followed, Miss Tyrrell was constantly "leading away" from the topic on which her brother and Selma seemed to her to talk incessantly—the matinée. It is doubtful whether she would have borne so much as she did, if the subject had not had for her a kind of background of Duchess and "society." That Selma should apparently have no idea in her head unconnected with Bianca; that she should sit silent and dreamy, to start and colour nervously when she was addressed; that she should spend the greater part of her time in her own room, or in Tyrrell's study, was no surprise to Miss Tyrrell. But it did surprise that sorely tried lady that it should be invariably her brother himself—her brother, who, as she expressed it to herself in more colloquial phrase than she would have used to any one else, "was not generally so horribly shoppy"—who introduced the subject, turning to Selma, as her eyes lighted, and her answer came, and discussing details with an interest nearly as keen, apparently, as her own.

There were no stage-rehearsals during that week, the cast not being as yet complete, somewhat to Selma's dismay; but she and Tyrrell rehearsed together every day—not only their own scenes, but her scenes with Guido, in which he was coaching her.

She dropped into a chair in the study one morning, when they had been hard at work for an hour and had broken off for a rest, and looked up at him as he stood by the fire, with thoughtful, admiring eyes.

"I don't think you've ever helped me so much over anything," she said. "And you make love so beautifully! I do wish you were going to play Guido."

He looked at her for a moment without answering. They had been rehearsing very earnestly, and the emotion and enthusiasm in her had touched the artist instinct in him, until he found himself actually moved in spite of himself.

"Do I, Selma?" he said. And then he moved; his face changed, and settled into its usual expression, and he sat down in one of his most characteristic attitudes. "Bevan will make love to you quite as well, you'll find," he said, lightly, but watching her keenly as he spoke. Selma shook her head vehemently, but her beautiful brows were drawn together in deep consideration of a bit of by-play he had suggested to her, and she did not answer in words. "You've no idea how easily—those scenes come," he went on, bending a little forward as he spoke; and if Selma's thoughts had not all been preoccupied, she must have been struck by his tone.

As it was, she hardly so much as heard his words, and exclaimed:

"I can't get it quite, Mr. Tyrrell. I see what you mean, but I don't feel as though I can do it. Will you try that first love-scene with me again?"

She moved as she spoke, as if she meant to begin again immediately; but he stopped her with a slight, deprecating movement of his hand.

"We will try love-scenes as often as you like," he said; and Selma caught only the banter in his voice. "But we need not rush back to rehearsal this instant. A little breathing space!"

Selma laughed, and sank back in her chair again with a gesture of resignation.

"Very well," she said. "Tell me, in the interval, whether I do at all what you want in that first act?"

Tyrrell leant suddenly back, with a movement which was almost impatience. Then he said, rather slowly:

"Selma, do you think always of what I want?"

"You know I do," she answered, quickly, meeting the eyes he had fixed on her face with her own almost horrified in their frankness and surprise. "You've not thought me careless? You've been so patient, and taken such pains—more than you've ever taken before, I think. Ah! don't you understand how grateful I am? Don't you understand?"

"I sometimes think that you don't understand," he answered; and his voice was unusually musical and persuasive. "You talk of being grateful to me! The pains I take for you are pleasures, Selma."

The anxiety died out of Selma's face before the grave, steady light which lit up her eyes as he spoke.

"You are so good!" she said, simply and gravely, as she stretched out her hand to him. "I think nothing helps me, when I get out of heart with myself, like the thought that you think me worth such trouble." He hardly touched her hand, and she went on, after a moment, with a slight return of anxiety in her voice and manner:

"There is nothing I care for so much as pleasing you."

"Why?"

"Why? Because I trust you so. I know that when I have pleased you I have done well." Then as if fearing that her earnest words might, for all their truth, be a little uncourteous, she continued, gently: "And even if it were not so it is the only little return I can make for all you do—for I can't look at it as you do—to try to please you." She paused, and turned her head away so that he could not see her face, and added in a tone that was very low, "I owe you — everything, Mr. Tyrrell."

There was no answer, and Selma, drifting on the current of her own thoughts, apparently returned to Bianca, and the complications surrounding her; her face was very pale and set, and she did not turn it to him again until Tyrrell, rising suddenly, said, almost harshly:

"There is one way in which you could please me, Selma, if you would try. Don't think of me only as your master."

"My master!" echoed Selma, recalling herself to the present with an effort, and smiling rather faintly. "Only my master! No, of course not! You are my oldest and kindest friend. Mr. Tyrrell, am I being very tiresome to-day? Let us begin to work again, and we shall feel more natural. Shall we begin with the Guido scene?"

She rose rather hurriedly, and eagerly held out both her hands to him that he might clasp them in the attitude in which the "Guido scene" began, and, with a sudden and complete change of look and manner, he took them in his own with the business-like touch of a rehearsal, and began his speech. But before he had finished it there was a deprecating knock at the door, and Miss Tyrrell appeared.

"Oh, how shocking of me!" she exclaimed, as her brother broke off, and looked towards her with an expression of countenance which was not to be described as angry, but the thought of which was generally sufficient to keep Miss Tyrrell from intruding when he was known to be at work.

"How can I show my penitence? I really thought you had finished—it is so nearly lunch time."

"Do you want to speak to me, Sybilla?"

"Well, it is Selma who is most concerned," replied Miss Tyrrell, suavely. "I was on my way upstairs, and I thought I would bring her this," holding up a square envelope. "It has just come, and it is the Duchess's writing."

Selma, finding herself expected to read the communication, whatever it might be, there and then, took it from Miss Tyrrell, thinking that Bianca was of more importance than the whole peerage. She tore the envelope hastily open, and drew out a card. "The Duchess of Ridsdale at home, Wednesday, Feb. 17th. Music, 9.30," she read. "Thank you, Miss Tyrrell, very much. I'll answer it by-and-by. I needn't go, need I?" she added, glancing rather apprehensively from Miss Tyrrell's well-pleased face to Tyrrell's, which was not so easy to read. She was answered by a horrified exclamation from Miss Tyrrell to which she paid little attention, as Tyrrell said, quietly, "Why should you not go?"

"Because I don't want to," she answered, promptly; "I've so much to think about with Bianca, you know, and parties are so demoralising. I should have to think about a new dress, and it would all be a trouble. It can't matter to any one whether I go or not, can it? Besides," she added, simply, after a moment's pause, during which Miss Tyrrell failed to find words in which to express strongly enough her conviction that it mattered very much to Selma herself, "besides, really, Mr. Tyrrell, I do dislike going out. People—people—I don't want to be affected, but people do talk so much nonsense, and I feel as if it might—it might confuse one if one heard it much. Oh, please don't think it's conceited of me," she finished, lifting a glowing face, and shy, earnest eyes to Tyrrell's face.

"My dear child——" began Miss Tyrrell, with the utmost emphasis; and then the luncheon-bell rang, and Tyrrell said, decisively: "There is no need to settle the question this moment. Selma can think it over a little more."

Selma, spending the afternoon with Miss Tyrrell, had little chance of thinking of anything else. But the effect on her of the discourses to which she apparently listened during the afternoon was so far from satisfactory, that John Tyrrell, coming in from his club at night—he never came from the theatre with Selma—found his sister waiting for him in the drawing-room, with a less artistic and amiable expression of countenance than usual.

"John," she began, "I assure you I have quite exhausted myself this afternoon."

"That seems a pity," returned her brother, drily.

"Dear Selma really has a very trying temperament," continued Miss Tyrrell, plaintively. "And I am afraid I have made absolutely no effect upon her. Unless you interfere, John, that girl will refuse the Duchess's invitation."

"How can I prevent that catastrophe."

"You can talk to her," answered his sister, ignoring, with unusual wisdom, the sneer implied in his words.

"I have talked to her."

"And she will not be convinced? Then you must insist, John; you must——"

"We must let well alone," he interrupted, quietly. "Look here, Sybilla, insistance will do more harm than good. I am quite as anxious as you are that Selma should take her proper place in society; and I know quite as well as you do that the Duchess's invitation is as good a beginning as she could have; but she isn't ready, and it is not of the faintest use to hurry. If I ordered her to go to the Duchess's, she would go, no doubt"—there was an expression in his eyes as he spoke not pleasant to see—"but she would ruin her future chances—in all unconsciousness, but very effectually." He stopped a moment, and then went on again, more slowly: "There's no hurry, either. She can afford to wait. She is meant for better things, socially, than Nora Glynn, for instance; and there's no harm done by her waiting. Say no more to her about it, Sybilla."

And with this decree, which his sister dared neither dispute nor disobey, he wished her good night, and they separated.

With that night, Selma's stay with the Tyrrells came to an end. On the following day Helen and Humphrey were to come back, and Selma was to go home to them. Helen, anxious above all things that her sister should not feel herself an unnecessary third in their household, had written to her that they hoped to find her ready to receive them. They were to arrive at about four o'clock; and nearly an hour before that time, unpunctual Selma—determined that on this occasion, at least, she would not be late—was waiting alone in the new house.

She was very busy at first, arranging the flowers she had brought for Helen; and the strangely suggestive atmosphere of the carefully-prepared house, the curious familiarity and unfamiliarity of her surroundings, hardly touched her, while the servants—the same who had lived with the sisters in their old house—were hovering excitedly about, anxious to give her all the help in their power. But when there was nothing further for them to do, and they had retired to watch surreptitiously for "the master and mistress," as they had startled Selma by calling Humphrey and Helen, Selma's face, as she stood alone in Helen's little drawing-room in the now quite silent house, touching and retouching her last glass of flowers, grew very sensitive and dreamy. It altered rapidly under the influence of her unconscious thoughts, until its expression changed from dreaminess to sadness. Her last flower had dropped from between her fingers; her face was very pale, and quivered slightly now and then; she was quite lost in thought, unconscious of herself or her surroundings, when an excited servant appeared precipitately at the door, and roused her with the words, "Master and missis is stopping at the door, miss." The next instant she had rushed downstairs on to the doorstep, and was clasped in Helen's arms.

"Welcome home, Mrs. Humphrey Cornish," she cried, gaily. "Humphrey, you are most welcome to your own house!"

The only shadow on Helen's perfect happiness, the fear that Selma might "feel it," as she expressed vaguely her sense of the painfulness of Selma's position, was dissipated by her manner; and as they went in arm-in-arm, closely followed by Humphrey, for whom his wife turned to look almost before she had taken two steps away from him, the beaming satisfaction on Mrs. Humphrey Cornish's pretty face was only to be equalled by the quiet satisfaction with which her husband answered her glance. There were sundry letters and papers waiting for them, and as they read them together, Selma having left Helen's side to stir the fire into a brighter blaze, they were as characteristic a specimen of a newly-married couple—in spite of Humphrey's undemonstrative demeanour—as could be seen.

"Now, dearest," said Helen, turning to Selma as she handed her last congratulatory letter to Humphrey with a laugh and a blush, "come over the house with me. Oh!" as her eyes suddenly fell upon a long cane-chair which had been one of their wedding presents, and in which a large silk cushion was now lying, "oh! what a lovely cushion! Where did it come from. Selma, you naughty girl, is it you?"

Selma shook her head, and examined it admiringly.

"No, indeed!" she said, "I don't know where it came from. Mary, do you know who brought this?" she added, turning with the cushion in her hands to the servant who was bringing in some tea.

"Yes, miss. Miss Cornish brought it this morning—Miss Sylvia, miss. She—she didn't come in—she hadn't time she said," the girl stammered, looking nervously at Selma in her fear of betraying that Sylvia had asked whether "Miss Malet" was expected, and only on hearing that she was expected immediately, had discovered her own great haste. "She left it for you, ma'am, with her best love," finished the girl, hurriedly, and left the room.

It was a little thing enough, but for the moment not one of the three could find anything to say. Selma, who had flushed crimson, put the cushion back slowly in its place, Helen, with a sudden rush of self-reproach at not having guessed the truth, and a painful prevision of the little, similar awkwardnesses which were so likely to arise incessantly in the future, glanced helplessly at Humphrey. It was he who said finally, "Didn't you say that Selma was to see nothing of the house until you came back, Nell? Suppose you go over it together now."

Helen had given Selma peremptory injunctions that she was to inspect nothing until she herself had returned, and they left the room together at once, eagerly seizing on the change of idea provided for them. The tour of inspection was begun with the deepest interest and deliberation on the part of the mistress of the house; but, before they had nearly finished, it became more and more cursory; and when she found herself for the second time in Selma's room, whither they had returned that its owner might admire its arrangements all over again, Helen's impatience could no longer be suppressed.

"I'm so glad you like it, dear," she said, giving her sister a hearty hug; "I hope you will be very happy in it. And now I think we've seen everything, and Humphrey will be rather lonely. I'm not sure either that he knows where his pipe is. I think we'll go down to him."

Selma laughed.

"Go down to him, Nell, by all means," she said; "I'm going to settle myself into my new domain. Go along!"

Helen retreated, hastily, after another loving hug, and Selma, left alone, listened as the quick, brisk steps ran down the stairs, and heard the door of the studio open and shut again. Then she moved, and kneeling down by one of her portmanteaux, she moved her hand as if to take out her keys. But the next moment her face had fallen forward against the box as she knelt, and her low, choking sobs shook her from head to foot.

A HANDFUL OF DAPHNE.

A COMPLETE STORY.

HER hands were full of the sweet, pink flowers. It seemed as if the girl could never stop gathering. She was an English girl, this gatherer of the sweet daphne flowers, and never having been out of England before, she was full of a wild joy over the things she was always finding that were new and strange.

Was she picturesque? Scarcely.

The scene in which she stood was so. At her back, out to a far western horizon, the dome of blue sky, with its flying, wind-blown clouds canopied the vast grey-green waters of the Bay of Biscay, or, as it is locally called, La Golfe de Gascogne. So rocky was the shore that the height of the sandy cliffs and the stretch of rough, untended fields were not enough to hide up the dashing foam that sprang, and hissed, and roared about the giant rocks. White villas stood at various distances within sight; but the girl was a small speck of unmarked colour on the swelling, broken ground of those rough downs.

She stooped, too, nay, she was almost always on her knees, gathering the low-growing, half-hidden daphne.

She—her name was plain enough, Nance Burrell, and she, like five hundred or more English people, had been at Biarritz all the winter—she had been one of a party of five young folks who had started on that April afternoon for a hill walk, flower-hunting.

Where the four were no man could say. Nance had forgotten them, and was lost among the daphne flowers.

Suddenly a spluttering rain-shower burst upon her. She stood erect, a trim figure, neat as an English girl would be, but with wind-blown, yellow hair—the human point of a wild landscape.

"Ralph! — John! where are you? Shame! leaving me like this, alone. Holà—là—là!" Her voice rang out like a clarion.

There came no answer. Desolation was around her; no culture, no human sign.

She made for the shelter of the hedge, by a corner of which she had climbed up daphne-hunting. There was mud beneath it by this time, and Nance slipped.

"Bother!" she cried.

An answer then did come.

"Mademoiselle!"

The speaker was a French gentleman, wearing the blue cap of the Basque peasants.

"I must have my flowers!" Nance said, helplessly, as, covered with mud, she looked down on the fallen daphne.

"Are they not spoiled?" he asked. "Besides, there will be plenty more to-morrow, when the sun shines, and mademoiselle will get wet."

All was said in as correct English as if an Englishman had spoken, with the exception, of course, of the accent.

"Have you seen them?" Nance asked, inconsequently. "My friends, I mean."

"No. Spring," he said, "I will keep you safe. No; we have met no one English, I think. Have we, Rênée?"

By this time Nance was safe on the path, and saw two other people, who were sheltering and perfectly dry under the stoop of the high bank and hedge.

One was a small, brown, chestnut-haired girl, the ideal of a bright and pretty French girl—she was the Rênée addressed. She only shook her head and laughed.

"Papa, papa!" she cried, and her gay laugh rang on.

The second person was a young man, and he answered in French that they had met no one.

"But you will shelter with us, mademoiselle," the elder gentleman said. "We are quite dry here, and these showers do nót last."

She most assuredly could not go on through that falling deluge; so Nance, who was a bright, good-tempered girl, laughed over her difficulties, and wedged herself against the dry bank by the side of the girl spoken to as Rênée.

The young man, who was Monsieur de Saure's nephew, and consequently the girl's cousin, gave up his place, each man taking an outer edge, and keeping the girls well sheltered.

In a quarter of an hour many things may be done. At the end of this quarter of an hour all these four were comfortably talking together. They might have known each other for months.

Nance gave the information that they "were going home in May, and I am sorry."

"And we have been here one wik," Rênée said, in English. "I spik English vairy well—yes."

The two girls rattled on, as girls do. They learnt the name of each other's hôtel, and found that they were near together, and planned visits amid a rush of compliments from Rênée's gay tongue.

"We will walk home together."

"Yes; but my daphne! I have lost nearly all!"

"I will gather more," Etienne began.

"We will all gather more, to-morrow, when there is no rain," his cousin said. "We will come together. We are friends; is it not so?"

"Of course. My friend—mine," said Nance, "you will not go to the others, mind!"

At breakfast the next morning a bunch of daphne was brought to Nance.

"Who from?"

"Monsieur did not give his name," the waiter answered.

"Oh! it's the cousin." Nance was blushing a little—a very little—but had a perfectly cool and possessed manner. "Say I am much obliged."

The waiter shrugged his shoulders and bowed.

"Monsieur does not wait," he said.

"Well," and Nance surveyed her flowers, and poked her small nose into them—"very polite, of course. I should like to know which of you boys would have done as much," with a glance of sisterly scorn at her brothers.

"You are mighty grand. It is as good as telling you they do not want you out with them, this morning. We shouldn't have done that, anyhow," John retorted.

"I do not see that, at all. Time will prove."

Time did prove, for Rênée de Saure ran in soon after—the respective mothers having met on the Plage after the rain of the day before, the families were formally introduced—and the excursion duly came off.

Rênée evidently knew nothing of Etienne's gift of the bunch of daphne, and Nance's brothers kept silence.

They gathered more; but Nance carried hers off to her own room, flaunting the bunch in the eyes of her jeering brothers, in this way losing her head, and setting up a grand show of gay ridicule on her own part.

"Shall I not keep a piece to my dying day? Of course, I will; and show it to my grandchildren in evidence of the conquests of my youth. No, I think I'll be taken ill, and have a sprig of it buried with me!"

Very fine. She kept it quite separate, however, from any other flowers, and where its last dead bits went no man ever knew.

It was spring, and the dead season at Biarritz, for the English people who crowd there for the winter were moving homewards, and such as were left were mostly of the steady, humdrum, family sort. The French and Spanish gaiety of the summer, when all the lovely Parisian toilets are displayed, had not begun. No bands were playing—bands are not supposed needful for English folks—no promenading under the sweet strains of the last opéra bouffe could be had for love or money, unless, indeed, you made one of the "people" at the Sunday performance in the Place Eugénie. Then, of late, indeed, if you had music you also had blustering wind or splashing rain. And fancy English people going out in the sunny South for that!

Rênée de Saure was not carried off then by any crowd of compatriots, but walked with her English friends, or rode with them, or went driving in processions of the tiny carriages beloved of Biarritz visitors.

Rênée and Etienne were but two, but there were six Burrells, so in these very mad excursions, in which to race made half the fun, the pairing got diversified.

Bayonne fair was going on, so one day they drove off to see it.

It was a real summer day, a fête day, too, and crowds went to the "Foire."

There was the splendid roundabout with peasant girls coifféed in kerchiefs of many colours, peasant lads blue-capped, straight-nosed—a giddy whirl.

"I vote we all have a ride!" Ralph Burrell said, but scarcely meaning it.

"Is that what you say? We will ride on ze yellow horses. That would be funny!" and Rênée was infected with the general wildness.

"Are you mad?" Alice Burrell objected.

"Il—il ne le permettrait?" pointing to Ralph. "Lui—il est tyran—tyrant—c'est ça!" And a point of the finger at the "c'est ça!" gave emphasis.

Nance brought a new suggestion.

"I should like to go and see the lions and the girl in their cage."

"Then you will go alone!" Alice answered.

Here was another scene—a peasant was holding back from something.

"No! no!" she cried.

"She has no fun in her, that Louise—she hoards her sous. The miser!"

"I'm not a miser!"

A young man, a man with a strangely beautiful face, calm, and still, and strong, and wholly like a bronzed copy of a Greek statue—how did that type get to the western shores of France? — bent and whispered in the girl's ear.

"Never—never, Paul Lérot!"

He had asked if he might pay for her.

"Montez, montez, mesdames et messieurs! Nous commençons tout de suite. Montez, je vous prie!" a fat woman on the steps of the Arab dancers' show was calling out.

Nance and Etienne heard. "How will that end?" Nance asked.

"He will pay."

"Not at all. She has paid. Brava! Louise! But—what a handsome man!"

"I did not notice!" In truth, Etienne's eyes were that afternoon only for Nance.

Nance was semi-boyish in her dress, un-French-like, and so beyond her gay self that she caught the young man's fancy.

But Etienne was bound—he and his cousin Rênée had been bound by their respective parents when Rênée was in her cradle. They were to be married in six months, so what was Etienne the lover thinking of?

Until the day of the daphne-finding he had been a true lover; but, then, as Rênée had made English friends, so he had made the same. Here was a fine consequence!

An old Bayonnaise in black head-gear came along, dragging a child for a ticket in the lottery. She was shouting at the top of her voice, holding aloft her sous. Then some soldiers came, then a smart lady from a shop, and so on.

Rumbling low, and making a bass background, there was heard the roar of the lions in the menagerie, and the shorter snarls and yelps of the other beasts.

"I hate the sound of those creatures," Nance said. "I always think they will be breaking loose."

The young man smiled, as any man would smile, loftily, over such a purely feminine fear.

"It is an unpleasant idea, mademoiselle," he said. "Do not suggest it."

"Oh, I know it could not be. And yet——" Nance set her pretty, fair head on one side, and said: "It might be—just might be."

"That is so." Young De Saure shrugged his shoulders ever so slightly. "But the possible is not always the probable, mademoiselle."

How much further the subject might have been carried one knows not, for there came a cry, a shout, and then a rush of people from behind.

Nance was pushed to right and left, and her companion lifted his lithe, nervous arms to keep off the crowd.

"Le lion! Le lion!"

"There is a creature out." And Nance stood still and white. She did not faint or scream; no, the screams were all behind her.

"Nonsense!" Etienne answered; and his arm was round and he was trying to drag her through the furiously-thickening mass of people. "It is not true!" he called out.

"It is the bear!" a frightened girl answered. "Did I not see him come over the barricade myself?"

"No, you did not, Justine; what you saw was the camel going to lie down. You girls are foolish," Justine's blue-capped brother answered.

"Le lion! Le lion!" came again from behind; and another surge of the rushing crowd fairly lifted Nance off her feet, but only wedged her more tightly.

"It is true," she said. But somehow she felt safe, and, as people do in great emergencies, nervously laughed, and her tongue rattled out the foolish joke: "He cannot eat us all, thank goodness! there are a few behind."

Etienne looked over the heads of a good many, and he saw Rênée and Ralph, and behind them Alice and the other boys. He never thought of his own position; he flushed hotly as he saw the calm Ralph elbow his muscular self sideways, and with small Rênée sheltered within the wall his arms made, convey her to the break between one stall and its neighbour.

Rênée to allow that!

Rênée was his—Etienne's—property; was she to allow another man's arms to guard her?

What though the arms made but a cage, and no embrace at all? They were arms, and she was Rênée, his—Etienne's—fiancée.

What of Rênée herself?

Her brown head was lifted as high as she could lift it, and her round, merry, brown eyes were alight with fear. At least, they had been so, for she verily believed the lion was loose, and she had given two or three sharp little screams as evidence of that belief.

Fear, though, was not in her eyes after she saw Etienne.

Those bright, brown eyes were too sharp, too sharp. They saw something, and they imagined a great deal more.

Then the colour went from her brown cheeks, and Ralph really had to carry her through the wedge of that passage-way between the stalls.

He set her down on the strip of trodden, dirty grass behind, stretched himself, as a young giant might do, took off his straw hat, and looked round. Then, having nothing better to say or to do, he laughed, and said:

"Well, we are alive. We are not eaten?"

"That is true!" Small Rênée was like an indignant queen, and drew herself up. The next moment her instinct of gracious politeness helped her to master herself. "And you have saved me, monsieur. I sank you very much. But also I will not wish to wait here for the lion; let us run. Run!"

And she suited the action to the words.

The roaring and shouting of the crowd was fainter by distance, for these two were very soon in the region of the shops, where they soon found Alice and the boys, and by-and-by there sauntered out from another street Etienne and Nance.

"Where is the lion?" Nance shouted, wild and gay.

"Having his déjeûner!" Rênée answered as gaily, but with an angry sparkle in those pretty brown eyes of hers.

"Well, I vote for going home as fast as we can," put in Alice the practical. "I have no mind to assist at that déjeûner."

"There is the train going. We must wait half an hour now," John said. "Come and have some tea. I know a shop."

"It is tempting Providence."

A string of blue-capped youths ran by, shouting and laughing, as is the manner of hobbledehoys of all nations.

Ralph, the giant, caught one by the arm.

"What's up?" he asked in plain English.

The boy mimicked.

"Le lion! le lion!" he shouted.

"I'll shake the breath out of your giggling body if you don't answer. Is the lion safe?"

A guffaw answered.

"Le fou!"

Who the word was meant for he did not show, for a violent shake administered by Ralph stopped any more words.

A grey old sailor came up.

"Don't kill the creature, monsieur, though I'd like to do it myself. He's the boy who set the whole thing going. A monkey got loose—and is loose now for that matter — and that young wretch shouted 'Le lion!' Ugh, you Jacques Pinon! you'll be in prison before long."

"H'm, will I? But you'll not be the judge, though," and the boy flicked his fingers in the old man's face, and by a jerk got himself free from Ralph.

They were a lively party over tea. Nance was wild, as was her custom very often, and would have Etienne sit by her and serve her.

Etienne was politeness itself, and seemed to find great pleasure in his politeness.

Rênée was gay; but then she, likewise, could be always charmingly gay. There was a little more noise in her laugh, perhaps, than custom usually gave to it; but Alice and the boys were so hoydenish that Rênée's drop from her pretty grace was not so much noticed. She slipped her little hand softly within Alice's arm.

"I shall be independent. I shall act à l'Anglaise. That is what you admire, mon ami!"

Rênée's eyes were not dancing with fun.

Etienne was walking by the side of Nance, simply because Nance would walk by him.

It appeared a gay party going back to Biarritz on the tram-cars; but—is there not a second side to everything?

"Monsieur, come with us and fetch the book Rênée wants," Nance said, when they reached Biarritz.

"I will haf no time to read ze book, mademoiselle — not zis evening. No, mademoiselle; adieu, mademoiselle," and Rênée ran in.

"Au revoir, ma chérie," Nance answered.

The girl was gay at seeing she could tease Rênée.

Three days passed. Rênée had a cold.

"Not much," Madame de Saure said, coolly. "It is only a migraine — it will pass." But as one can easily drop a shot into the most trite speeches, she said, after a while, that "Rênée has been too gay;" "she is generally only with me or with her father;" "the kindness of les demoiselles Anglaises has made her fancy she can act like them, and, madame, you know"—with the politest shrug of the shoulders—"that is impossible, you know, for a Française."

Mrs. Burrell, being British in her sentiments to the backbone, rather bridled at this, without in the least knowing why. The difference in the up-bringing of young French girls and English girls, she never had had the least cognisance of. She understood this much, that for some reason the ways of Nance and Alice were not considered the right ways for Rênée.

So the intimacy faded.

Rênée de Saure did not go out, Etienne's visits fell off, English people began to leave Biarritz, and the date became fixed for the Burrells to go.

More than a week passed after this, and though Rênée was out again and though the two families had all along been gracious to each other in a pleasantly-formal way, each was too proud to make a spoken reason of offence; yet the first free-and-easy intercourse did not return.

Etienne, one day, went to say good-bye. He was being sent to Paris by his uncle on business.

"But how absurd!" Nance cried. "Why go on Wednesday? We go on Friday. We might travel together."

"The affairs are important; but——"

Etienne went back.

He was saying to his uncle that the Burrells travelled also to Paris; but—on the Friday.

"Go with them," said Rênée, who was present. "Much more agreeable than to travel alone."

"You took those papers, Etienne?" his uncle asked.

"No; they were on your table."

"Ha, I will fetch them. You had better have them at once."

He left the room.

"They have asked you to travel with them?" Rênée asked.

"Yes, they did. But I knew the affairs could not wait."

"Bah—the affairs?"

"Besides——"

"There is no 'besides.' Do I not know what you mean? Do I not know and see the liberty of those English girls? Will I not be free, too?"

"Rênée!"

"Ah! si! mon ami! I know what I speak of, and I, too, will be free like those English girls, and you shall be free, too. We will not be tied by the old régime. The world has new ways!"

"Rênée! how long have you thought this?"

"Ages! Ages! in my dreams." She laughed and shrugged her shoulders, and threw out her dimpled hands, palms upwards. "Did not Louise Thorot do what I do? Did not Virginie de Lisle choose for herself?"

"Both have married Englishmen. How could it be helped? But, if you wish it, you must be free. I will speak to uncle."

"And go to Bayonne for a day or two, and meet the train on Friday. Adieu, mon ami! It is easy."

"Rênée, I do not understand."

"But I do."

Then she walked out of the room quite quietly and steadily. How dignified these little women can be!

How Etienne managed the very uncomfortable conversation with M. de Saure we do not pretend to say. He left Biarritz.

Soon the English season was over, and French and Spaniards filled Biarritz.

Her mother said that some distraction must be found for "la petite"; she would become "dévote." A "mariage manqué" makes a girl triste.

The gay Spaniards made that distraction.

Autumn came, and M. de Saure would stay no longer. The family went home to Fontainebleau.

And what of Etienne?

Of course, he had not been seen. What had he done? In truth, he was as much Rênée's lover as ever; if at first the marriage had been arranged, in the end surely he had become a true specimen of "young France," and he had chosen—chosen Rênée.

Soon, very soon, he would speak. He would go to Fontainebleau and meet Rênée unawares.

The long afternoon shadows showed that the grand autumn day was closing in. Rênée was out in the old garden with her dog. The dog was amusing himself by basking in the last broad belt of sunshine under the great trees; Rênée was sitting by the fountain, whose chipped, broken edge told how old it was.

Was she thinking of the past generations of De Saures; of the many young and old Rênées, who doubtless had sat upon the stone bench where she was?

César, the dog, uncurled himself, wagged his tail, gave a short bark, and stood alert. What had he heard?

Rênée had heard nothing.

No; but the ears of a dog are quick. César had heard a step he knew enter by the gate at the end of the avenue of plane-trees.

Rênée's back was turned towards that direction, and her musings were so deep, that she did not hear a step that had left the gravel drive, and came softly on over the turf and the fallen brown leaves.

Another sharper and louder bark roused her.

Etienne, her cousin, stood behind her. She turned quickly, the colour in her pretty cheeks rose, and her eyes lightened with gladness. Impulse did this, then; being a maiden of some force of character, she ruled herself to command her eyes into calmness.

"Ha! you have come!" she said, coolly, and she held out her hand in greeting. "Why did you not write?"

"Because—— I scarcely know why. I think I hoped to find you alone; and then——"

"Then?" she repeated.

But she did not again sit down, and made a little movement as if she would take him to the house.

"Rênée—you know why I come." His face was grave, and he stood so firmly and so determinedly that the girl's advancing footstep was obliged to linger. "You know what I wish to follow that 'then.'"

"Do I? Scarcely. I really think not." She was too provokingly cool, and would not look at him.

"Rênée—you know well. Look at me," and as he spoke he quietly took her two hands in his, and drew her towards him.

"Non—non!"

But though she cried out her refusal, she at the same time obeyed, and her eyes lifted to his. For one second they were angry brown eyes; then they shadowed, and next they shone under a rush of tears.

"Oh, Etienne!"

That was just a gasp, and, with her hands held prisoners, she hid her tears on his breast.

By-and-by, César was again curled up on Etienne's feet, and the two, lovers again, were sitting on the old stone bench.

Rênée's sweet eyes had the shine of the glad tears in them still, and yet she was laughing.

"I was right—yes! I declare always that I was right."

"I do not see it—if we had kept to the old ways we should both have been spared a good many months of discomfort and misery. At least, I should."

She tossed her head gaily.

"It has been good for you, and if you want to have much to say to me you will have to follow the new ideas. Women think for themselves, and I am a woman. I also choose for myself—are you pleased?"

She put her dimpled hand within his, and laughed again.

A RAMBLE ON THE SOUTH-WEST SHORE.

THE sea gleams hazily in the distance, and breaks in sparkling wavelets at our feet, sea-birds float placidly on the gentle undulations, divers and sea-mews, and some long-necked cormorant from the neighbouring cliffs.

There has been a slight frost on shore, but the morning breath of the sea is fresh and free from bitterness. Light vapours curl over the water, and obscure the distant prospect; but here a white cliff or a white sail reveals itself for a moment, and there a dark headland looms shadow-like in the distance.

Our starting-point is Southbourne-on-Sea, of which a few scattered houses peer over the cliff behind us, and the headland that looms in the distance is known as Hengistbury, and is named, so it is said, after the famous Saxon chieftain, who bore the white horse as his totem or symbol.

It is pleasant walking on the firm, moist sand left bare by the receding tide; but the sea works double tides in these parts, and high water succeeds low with marvellous rapidity. There is something startling to the uninitiated visitor when he sees one advancing tide succeeding the other after an interval of only a few hours, and though he may be reassured by the fisherman's account of the phenomenon, that "'twas always so," he will perhaps fail to obtain any convincing scientific explanation. But the immediate result of this freak of nature is to drive us upon the shingle, which is not pleasant walking, so the best plan is to scale the cliff by one of the steep but practicable paths used perhaps by smugglers in days gone by.

If smugglers are scarce, there are still plenty of Coastguardsmen. Their station, with the tall flagstaff, the low-roofed buildings, and the neat garden plots, is in full view now that we have reached the top of the cliff, while directly in our path rises a substantial post, crowned at this moment by the figure of a Coastguard, who is planting there a red flag, which indicates some kind of caution to passers by.

Now the meaning of the red flag, as the preventive man civilly explains, is that the Coastguardsmen are turning out for rocket practice, and as rockets, even of the life-saving class, are awkward customers to meet, and at times erratic in their flight, it is advisable to give them a wide berth.

Beyond here the cliff rises gradually towards the headland of Hengistbury, and the broken heights of that famous promontory will afford a capital point of observation. So far, the furzy edge of the cliff has been bordered by wide open fields, in the corner of one of which stands the travelling-van that contains the rocket-apparatus used in shipwrecks, and the cultivated land extends to the margin of a huge prehistoric fortification that defends the headland from approach on the landward side. The place bears the name of the Double Dykes, and double they are, two huge parallel ramparts, with an artificial ditch between.

All the surroundings point to this spot as an ancient stronghold of great strength and importance, and the tradition that associates the name of Hengist, the great Saxon chief, with this striking headland, is not to be rashly disregarded. Probably, like most Viking chiefs, Hengist died fighting, and likely enough in defending this very line of ramparts. A tumulus that still exists on the headland may be actually the tomb of Hengist. He was not very successful in the West, as the most ancient history we have—that of Nennius—tells us how Hengist's son after his death retired to Kent, and founded the line of Kings of that ilk. He may have sailed from this very point, the young Viking, after fighting his way to his ships, while the Britons swarmed in over the deserted ramparts, and shouted curses and maledictions at the retreating foes.

But the secret of such famous well-defended winter quarters—with their warm, sunny exposure, and the sloping shore upon which the ships could be safely hauled up for the season of ice and snow—would be handed down from one generation of sea-rovers to another. Here was a Danish stronghold, doubtless, in later centuries, when the Northmen plundered Christchurch, and harried the neighbouring lands. And many a fierce battle has been fought over these great earthworks, of which no record remains, except a cluster of bones here and there turned up in the adjoining fields. But as we sit on the scarred side of the great berg, some faint echo of the tramping and shouting of contending hosts seems to reach the ears,

> Dim clarions awake and faintly bruit,
> Where long ago a giant battle was.

Further reflections are cut short by the sight of a serpentine train of fire and smoke roaring and hissing through the air. The rocket brigade are at work, and have fired their trial shot over the sea. The sight suggests storms and shipwrecks, of which this coast has had its share. Yonder in the furthest haze, where far out at sea the uttermost headland shows like some monster saurian swimming deep down in the water, is Dunster Head, which many a stout ship has struggled in vain to weather, and gone hopelessly to destruction against the cruel cliffs. Such was the fate of the "Halsewell," East Indiaman, outward bound, with two hundred and forty souls on board, which, after wallowing helpless and water-logged in the channel for weary days and nights, struck on that inhospitable coast one dark and stormy night.

But the Coastguard detachment, satisfied with their one trial shot, have limbered up and are marching off to parts unknown. And now to work across the Head, where, at the highest points, are mosses and lichens flourishing in profusion. And down below is a gully, where high tides have left a deposit of mud and slime, while great slabs of red, rusty-looking stones stick up here and there. And this, if you please, is, or was, an iron mine. An iron mine in Hampshire! But it is only a little one, and has been unworked for some time.

A rapid descent brings us to a stretch of sandy hummocks, where on one side storms and tempests have scattered seaweed, wreck, and wreckage; and on the other the swollen rivers have left their contributions, too. A happy-looking case-bottle suggests rum, but turns out to be sheep-wash. An old boat or two lies yawning as to its timbers among the tufts of wiry bent grass. In the broad, shallow lagoon, with its winding channel marked out with pine boughs, trim little yachts lie moored, together with dumpy-looking boats of the fisher class. The opposite shore is fringed with coppices, and neat, white houses shining among the trees, and all is as quiet and still as can be. But a little further on we come upon a scene full of life and animation.

It is the harbour mouth, a narrow, swift channel between sandy shores. On this side a cottage or two, and rows of stakes for drying nets; the other shore, embanked by rude piles and dark, weather-stained boards, and a crazy, wooden stair for landing, shows a rough, picturesque group of houses, some with the trace of ancient dignity about them, all isolated from the rest of the world on this lonely spit of sand; a true fishing settlement, the inhabitants of which may have dwelt there in continued succession from the days of the Vikings. The name of the place, Mudiford, suggests the association. It has nothing to do with a ford for crossing; but represents the Norse fiord, or inlet, so that in this way, as well as in dyke and grave-mound, the old sea rovers have left their mark upon the coast.

Busy enough are their descendants this breezy morning. Boat after boat puts forth from the sloping shore on this side of the channel, each with one stout rower on board, and a long seine net carefully piled in the stern. A man on shore holds the head rope of the net, as the boatman pulls as for dear life almost to the rude staging on the other side, while the net is shot out across the channel, the well-weighted lower edge falling quickly to the bottom, while the great disks of cork that support the upper edge float swiftly down in a graceful curve between the boat and man on shore, who, with the rope over his shoulder, hurries along with the stream. There seems no end to the nets and boats which, at due intervals, follow each other down the channel; and then it is seen that, as in a stage army, the same performers reappear again and again in the procession.

But for a better view of the proceedings we must cross the channel. Men and boats are too busy to be disturbed; but here are two lads, too young to help in the fishing, and a boat that has retired from active service by reason of age and infirmities. The heads of the boys hardly appear above the gunwales; but they are smart little fellows, who know how to handle a boat, and after a short and sturdy struggle with the tide, they land us safely by the crazy wooden stairs. And now for the point of sandy shore that lies opposite the strand where the fishermen haul ashore their nets, just where sea and river meet.

Our man in the boat has by this time reached the shore, on the side he started from, but considerably lower down. The man with the rope was there as soon, and the boatman landing with his end of the net, after throwing a big stone or two into the water, either for luck, or to scare back any fish that might think to slink away between the net and the shore, each man hauls away at his end; the net comes merrily in—too merrily, indeed, for when the bight of it is finally hauled on shore, there is nothing in it but some seaweed and small crabs. And now the net is piled in the boat again, and the shore-hand takes the tow-rope over his shoulder, and tows the boat up the channel again. The boat meets the floats — other nets which are floating down in like manner—but passes easily over them; and when the upper station is reached, the business is all to begin again.

And so boat after boat, and net after net come sweeping down the tideway, but never the ghost of a fin among them. The interest is beginning to flag, and a ramble of a day or two previous is recalled, when, from the parapet of an old bridge over the River Stour, a few miles above the present scene, we watched some river fishermen, with boat and net, sweeping a deep pool below. Result: an old tin can, and a decayed cabbage-stalk!

"What sport?" cried an enthusiast, arriving breathlessly on the bridge, just as boat and nets were dropping down the stream.

"Haan't had none this week, nor yet laast!" shouted back the head man of the party, grimly.

In fact, we have given up the Christchurch salmon, and have lost faith as to his existence, when, as a net is almost hauled in, there is a sudden and vehement splash in the water which it encloses. The men pull now with a will, and next moment a fine silvery salmon is pulled bodily out of the water, and trundled up the strand. A beautiful fellow he is, too—a twenty-pounder, at the least—the picture of piscine strength and beauty; and when the shore-hand picks up a big stone and bangs the head of the fish, the crashing sound of the blows inspire a momentary pity for the fate of this gallant gentleman.

But our way is along the coast; and a pleasant path along the edge of the low cliff promises well, and for a mile or so keeps its promise. From the heights the dimpling sea is spread before us, its varied depth, and underlying crust of rock or sand or marly clay, expressed in so many glowing tints. The great white chalk cliffs that form the butt-end of the Isle of Wight come into bolder prominence with the jutting knife-edge of the Needles rocks, and the tall, white lighthouse—the only needle-like thing about the group.

Then the path brings us to a wicket gate, invitingly open, that leads through pleasant grounds and past an unassuming cottage, just such "a cot that o'erlooks the wide sea" that the poet demands for the downhill of life. A curious-looking structure of blackened timber projects from the cliff, and forms a kind of gallery or verandah, with views all round from its cabin windows. For the structure is actually the poop of some big steamer, hurled ashore and left high and dry by the ocean. But at the gate of this little paradise we meet the angel with the flaming sword in the shape of an amiable gardener, who turns us back with the utmost politeness. The cottage — in hushed tones—is a favourite retreat of the Marchioness.

So there is nothing for it but a sort of toboggan slide down the cliff, and a tramp over the shingle. But the view from below has an interest of its own. For about here the character of the cliff changes altogether; sands and gravels are replaced by clayey strata, of a somewhat putty-like consistency, and along the face of the cliff, steeply sloped like a railway cutting, bands of men are at work forming trenches, so it seems, down the slope. It seems a large undertaking, this, to shape the coast of mighty ocean with a spade. But the foreman, on being interrogated, explains that this is done in order to relieve the agricultural land above, where there is a rich fat soil and plenty of it, from a superabundance of water.

Yet on the whole, what with the shingles and the clay, the walking is a little bit trying. And we see the whole coast line stretched before us with nothing to break its regularity till the eye rests upon the new settlement of Milton-on-Sea, some miles away, with its big, modern hotel shining conspicuously on the pleasant headland. Beyond lies Hurst Castle, a hazy strip almost lost to view against the bold contours of the island opposite. Our business now is to climb the cliff again, and make across the country to the nearest station, to reach our starting-point again.

Another pleasant morning invites a ramble in the opposite direction. But first let us seat ourselves in a sheltered hollow in the cliffs, and reckon up the component parts of the scene that is stretched before us. A long line of hilly coast forms one of the turns of the great, crescent-shaped bay. There is Durlston Head at the extreme point, with its inhospitable bay, and the rugged-looking Peveral Point, and Swanage, with the grey limestone hill behind it. So far the coast is harsh and stern, rock-bound with the hard, oolitic limestones. But the softer bay of Swanage, with its sloping beach and low, red cliffs, suggests the green sand, so called because it is almost always red, and this is followed by a sheer precipice of chalk, which forms the butt-end of the narrow range of downs that stretches across the Isle of Purbeck, cleft at one point by the narrow gorge of Corfe-gate.

The great white cliff on this side corresponds so exactly with the huge chalk buttress of the Isle of Wight—the hard chalk which weathers into layers that almost exactly resemble the courses of masonry, and which is carved by the sea into fantastic points,—the Needles on one hand, and detached masses, called Old Harry and Old Harry's Wife, on the other—that we needs must believe that the chalk range once stretched across from point to point, when perhaps the bay before us was a region of fertile meadows and marshes, inhabited by some unknown race of primeval man. Now the opposing cliffs form the great white gateway of what may be called our pocket Mediterranean, with its gentle tides and genial winter climate. And the eye, after passing the low-lying coast line that opens with the great lagoon known as Poole Harbour, rests upon the brown cliffs of Bournemouth.

Can we hear the band on the pier? Faintly, perhaps, if the breeze blows this way, although Bournemouth Pier is some four miles distant. Anyhow, we can see the steamers putting out on their daily excursions, two of them racing away towards Swanage, and two others bound for some more distant port. On the beach below, the yellow sands are as yet unfurrowed by human footsteps; but all along the margin of the sea are tracks of some little animal, perhaps a weasel which has been busily foraging along the coast during the night, no doubt in search of the shell-fish which may have been thrown up by the tide.

The sea is calm, and now that the steamers are out of sight, there is nothing to attract attention except an old trading brig, which is veering about in the bay waiting for the tide to carry it into Poole Harbour, her dark, well-patched sails forming a welcome relief to the glitter and sparkle of the sea. About half-way to Bournemouth we come to Boscombe Pier, at the mouth of a ravine known as Boscombe Chine, which is now laid out as ornamental grounds, and very tastefully done; nature being not too much interfered with. At the head of the chine we are full into the busy haunts of men. For here are fine shops, and big hotels, and a grand street that leads towards Bournemouth, which street is in appearance an avenue through a pine-forest, the houses being prettily interspersed among the trees. Here you may hail a 'bus as if you were in Piccadilly, or a hansom if you please, and be trundled down to Lansdown, where are tall houses, hotels, cab-stands, fine streets branching out in various directions, interspersed with open heathery knolls and tufted banks with the ever-green pine always closing the vista. There we are fairly among the shops and marts of Bournemouth, and in the midst of a throng of people, a pleasant, leisurely crowd that is doing its shopping, its chattering, its general loafing, in the happiest spirit of content. A pleasant lounge is the Arcade, with its seats and glittering shops on either hand. If chemists' shops abound, suggesting pills and prescriptions, so also do confectioners, with the daintiest forms of chocolates and confitures.

Then there is the square, with public gardens — miles of them, so it seems on a hasty glance — intersecting it in a very pleasant way; and here is a row of four-horse breaks, which are loading up for long drives in various directions — round the New Forest; to Wimborne; to Poole; to Dorchester; or where you please. Although early in the season, when other watering-places have hardly yet awakened from their winter's sleep, Bournemouth has already begun to behave as if summer were fairly here. And every sunny day seems to justify the assumption.

Yet a dangerous place is Bournemouth. Drusilla, whose mind in rural solitudes dwells serenely on her surroundings, finds sermons in stones, and revels in pleasant and inexpensive bits of scenery, no sooner is turned loose among the shops decked with all the season's fashions, than she begins to yearn towards bonnets that are lovely, and hats that are chic, and tailor-made gowns, and such-like vanities.

Now we have just "one more river to cross." It is Sunday evening, and from the brow of our Southbourne heights, looking towards the land, there is spread out a fair scene, tinged with a mystic kind of radiance by the declining sun. Softly chime the sweet bells of Christchurch over the river flats, and the noble tower of the old priory church stands out in solemn relief from the dark shadows that cluster about it. The way is through a pleasant lane, arched over with trees, a turn of which brings us to the ferry-house. It is the Wick ferry, where boat and ferryman have waited in the gloaming for those passing to and from old Christchurch. He has ferried over Saxon Thanes and peasants; great Alfred himself may have taken a seat in this boat. Danish chiefs and Vikings, too, perhaps—for the fiercest barbarians spared the harmless, necessary ferryman; cowled monks and black-robed canons have ofttimes crowded thy boat, oh, ferryman; and many fair dames hast thou ferried across, even as now, when the rustle of feminine draperies almost overpowers the gentle murmur of the stream.

From the shady cove the ferry-boat shoots out into the sunlit stream, and we are soon landed on the causeway which leads by a path across the meadows to Christchurch. The soft chime of the bells has been succeeded by the strenuous "ting tong." We are a little late, and the organ has begun to roll out its notes, and the chant of the choir meets us as we enter the sacred building, hallowed by prayers that have ceased not for a thousand years. The grand old Norman arches rise from their massive piers, illumined by bright gas clusters; shadows rest deeply in the dim aisles among chapels and altar tombs.

Knights, ladies, praying in dumb orat'ries;

and monuments with tattered banners and rusty helms, half seen in the claustral gloom.

The fine Perpendicular choir is almost shut off from view by a massive rood screen, of mediæval origin, designed to cut off the nave, which formed the parochial church, from the chancel appropriated to the Black Canons. A glance through the open door reveals beautifully-carved stalls and misereres, of the fifteenth and later centuries, and a grand reredos of carved stone, showing the stem of Jesse. But to view the church aright one must visit it by broad daylight. But then we should miss the beautiful effect of coming out through the noble Early English porch into the dim avenue of elms, daylight still hovering in the sky and moonlight mingling with it, while the white tombs rise palely on either hand, with the river, swift and clear from the priory weir, flowing beneath the chancel walls, and the strange old Norman turret, with its interlacing arcades and curious trellis stonework—all this is best seen by such a light as this in all the softness and gloom of hoar antiquity.

SHAKESPEARE'S SCHOOL.

Few spots in England have such a deep interest for members of the Anglo-Saxon race as Stratford-on-Avon, the birthplace of their greatest poet. During the summer months the small Midland town is visited by many thousands. Owing partly to increased railway facilities, but chiefly to the spread of education and the consequent wider appreciation of the genius of Shakespeare, the number of pilgrims to this favourite shrine is annually increasing. Upon the pages of the various visitors' books are to be found the names of many famous men and women. We do not wonder at it, for apart from its associations Stratford has many natural advantages. It lies in an undulating valley through whose rich pasture-lands the Avon winds slowly along, and standing out clearly in the landscape is the beautiful spire of Trinity Church, "where sleeps the illustrious dead." But the principal object of the visitor is not to refresh the eye with the beauties of nature. They are a secondary consideration. He would look upon scenes and places hallowed by their connection with Shakespeare himself. In a manner they are familiar to him already. The birthplace, the church, Ann Hathaway's Cottage, Charlecote Park, Mary Arden's House—all these he feels he must see. He needs no guide-book to tell him of their existence; but unless he is more fortunate than is frequently the case, he will miss the opportunity of visiting one spot which has a distinct claim of its own upon his attention. It is the school in which the poet received his early education. The building stands in the main street of the town, and adjoins the chapel erected by the Guild of the Holy Cross, whose foundation dates from the year 1296. Unfortunately, the outside of the school is deformed by a coat of rough-cast which covers the old oak beams, and gives no promise of the quaint beauty of the interior. The history of the school is closely connected with that of the guild chapel, and is a good illustration of the changes wrought in the condition of ecclesiastical institutions by the Reformation.

It seems probable that the oldest part of the school buildings is a long low room called the Guild Hall. At any rate, we know that in 1482, Thomas Jolyffe, one of the priests, built the Old Latin Schoolroom over it, and endowed the institution with various lands. The hall was probably used for business and judicial purposes by the members of the guild. In Shakespeare's day it was the largest public room, and as such was the scene of dramatic performances. The Earl of Worcester's players visited Stratford in 1569, and this visit was repeated annually for nearly twenty years. The father of the poet held the position of bailiff or mayor in 1571, and doubtless took his son with him to see these rude representations, which must have deeply fired his youthful imagination. On the south wall, hidden by the panelling, is a large fresco of the Crucifixion, in a very battered condition, though a part of the body of the Saviour may be traced, and the face of the Virgin is in a fair state of preservation. Unfortunately a part of this room has been cut off by a partition, and is now occupied by the town authorities. It is satisfactory to learn that they have recently decided to restore it to the school.

At right angles to the Hall is the Armoury, a room with Jacobean panelling, having on the wall over the fireplace a large painting of the arms of the Kings of England, which, as we learn from the town records, dates from 1660, and points to the public rejoicing at the restoration of the Stuarts. A winding staircase leads to the Council Chamber, which stands over it, and jutting out from this staircase is a very small room, which was used as a Record Room. It seems that the Council Chamber was the meeting-place of the Town Council as successors of the guild, and that papers were placed in the smaller room for convenience. Many of our readers will remember the controversy which, a few years ago, followed the discovery of some documents in the Record Room. The Council Chamber has a splendid oak table, and a most beautiful oak roof whose beauty was until recently hidden by a plaster ceiling. This was removed four years ago, and upon one of the walls frescoes of two roses were discovered—the one red with a white heart, and the other white with a red heart. Stratford came in for more than its full share of the troubles of the Wars of the Roses, and the painting evidently shows the joy of the year 1485, when the struggle was ended for ever by the marriage of Henry the Seventh with Elizabeth of York. In this room there is a library of some size, and on the shelves may be seen the works of several well-known modern writers, presented by them to the school.

The long room which runs over the Guild Hall is divided into two parts, the Mathematical Room and the Old Latin Schoolroom. It is probable that no such distinction existed in the poet's day. Class-rooms are the natural outcome of the many-sided education of modern times.

In the Museum at the Birthplace the visitor is shown a desk taken from this room, which tradition assigns to Shakespeare; but a great deal of its interest has been lost by its removal from the spot where it actually stood in the Old Latin Schoolroom.

The whole of this part of the building is covered with a splendid specimen of the waggon roof, said to be the finest in the kingdom, and in the windows, which are themselves modern, are panes of the old yellow glass. At the end of the Latin Room is a smaller window, of curious shape, which runs into the tower and nave of the Guild Chapel; and from one of the windows is seen a very pretty nook formed by that building and one of the school-houses, which stands on the site of the dwelling of the priests of the Guild of the Holy Cross.

The whole of the guild property—including that of the chapel and of the school — was confiscated by Henry the Eighth; but, on a petition from the inhabitants, it was restored to the town by Edward the Sixth, on condition that a grant was paid annually for the maintenance of the school. This is the origin of its present name of King Edward the Sixth's School, the name of the priest-founder being almost lost in that of the King. No such provision was made for the Guild Chapel; it is, therefore, penniless, and its present condition would scarcely give any countenance to the advocates for ecclesiastical disendowment. Unless some effective steps are speedily taken, this ancient building will become a ruin. The incumbent is the head-master of the school, and the services are conducted by him and by one of the assistant masters, who is in holy orders. There is no cure of souls, and the entire income, derived from pew rents, is considerably less than one hundred pounds a year. The building is used on special occasions as a school chapel.

But to return to our subject. One would be interested to know something of the man to whose lot it fell to plant the first seeds of knowledge in the mind of Shakespeare. By consulting the records of the town, we find that there were three who may have shared this distinction. Curiously enough, one of them, if the name of Jenkins is to be taken as a proof, was a Welshman. It is possible that he may have stood for the character of Sir Hugh Evans. We know how easily schoolboys are impressed by their master's peculiarities, whether they be those of accent or of manner. It is noteworthy, too, that Jenkins was very unpopular, as in the year 1579 a sum of money was paid him by the authorities, on condition that he resigned his post as head-master. Professor Baynes has shown that Ben Jonson's famous saying, that Shakespeare had little Latin and less Greek, is hardly a fair statement of the real facts of the case. A critical examination of the poet's works will prove that he had an acquaintance with classical literature such as would be possessed by a man who had been trained at a school like the old Stratford Grammar School. We must not expect from him nice scholarship or a strict attention to details. Knowledge is simply relative, and

Ben Jonson's standard was undoubtedly a high one. He would naturally look with contempt upon the classical attainments of one who had received such an education as Shakespeare had; but we are justified in coming to the conclusion that the poet could read Latin fluently and fairly, and that any author he cared for he would be able to read for his pleasure and information.

That the instruction in Latin was thorough is proved by a letter preserved by Malone written in that language, in 1598, by the son of R. Quiney to his father, then staying in London. It is a very creditable performance for a boy of eleven. This Richard Quiney, one of the Aldermen of Stratford in Shakespeare's day, who had certainly been brought up at the school—for his family had been long established in the town—was so well acquainted with Latin, that his brother-in-law, Abraham Starley, in writing to him, frequently made use of long Latin sentences and paragraphs.

The advantages which King Edward the Sixth's School conferred upon its scholars in the poet's time have certainly not been lessened by the growth of centuries, and by their extension to others than the sons of burgesses. An increase in the number of pupils has brought with it an improvement in the quality of the education, and a corresponding wideness in the subjects taught. The institution has passed through many vicissitudes, but its present condition is one which must be very gratifying to all those who are interested in its welfare. Successes of a high order have proved that the wish of the pious founder is being conscientiously and scrupulously carried out. Stratford may well be proud of its school, for here to-day we find a large staff of masters, a thorough organisation, and an effective training for nearly every department in life; in a word, the machinery and routine of an English public school. Pupils are trained not only for business life, but also for the Civil Service, the Universities, the Army, and the various competitive examinations. The institution, too, has its scholarships and exhibitions, one of which has been founded to commemorate in the school itself the memory of its greatest alumnus.

In this old-world scene, the minds of those who in a special manner look upon the poet as their own are being equipped to fight the battle of modern life.

A GARRISON ROMANCE.

By Mrs. LEITH ADAMS (Mrs. LAFFAN).

Author of "Louis Draycott," "Geoffrey Stirling," "Aunt Hepsy's Foundling," etc.

CHAPTER XI. A NOBLE HEART.

When Mabel Graham had made a finish of writing and sealing that letter to Captain Rowan, she put her hands up to her throat as if she were stifling; her breath came and went with an audible sound; her eyes were strained and staring, yet saw nothing. She would have given worlds for the relief of tears; the softening of the burning pain that seemed to scorch her brain and deaden her powers of thought and self-possession.

What was she not giving up?

The wisdom and tenderness of a true-hearted man that should have been her guide and support through life; the passion and the joy of a love that had come into her life and filled it with a perfect music—even that "sound of violins" which turns earth to paradise as we listen. Was that last kiss—the very memory of which thrilled her through and through—to be in truth the last? Was she to live and die, knowing such sweetness never more? Was she never to feel the clasp of her lover's strong, enfolding arm; and oh! worse torment of it all, never to have the right to take her stand beside him in the hour of pain or sickness—in the day of trial or of sorrow? Was she never to be able to comfort him; never to be able to help him; never to make the brightness of his life; to anticipate his every wish; to enfold him about with her loving care? These were the dreams that she had dreamt—dreams born to die in the dreaming. These were the fair castles in the air which she had built, doomed for ever to be but cloud towers indeed, "by ghostly masons wrought"—things of nought—shadows that should die away into nothingness. There was a photograph—a poor thing at best, being the work of a very young amateur, who was in the habit of presenting his friends with portraits of themselves in every stage of defective focus, yet, by chance, a happy likeness of Charley Rowan; a likeness that spoke to you as you looked at it. The dark eyes looked at you with a gleam of fun in them; a smile lurked under the shadow of the drooping moustache; the noble line of the brow, well displayed by the short-cropped locks, which yet would not have all the curl clipped out of them, but showed a ripple like that you may see in the sand when the little waves have kissed it; the grand, square shoulders; the neck so finely supporting the gracious head; a cricket blazer, striped green and black, the colours of the Brigade; a carelessly-knotted tie; a cunning cap to match both held lightly in one hand.

Such was the picture upon which, with burning eyes, gazed poor sweet Mabel. The laughing eyes, the dawning smile seemed to say, "What are you so sad about, little sweetheart — little sweetheart, all my own?" And what wonder that, as she gazed, the anguish grew well nigh unendurable, and her hand strayed towards the letter, lying face-downwards, as if ashamed to show itself, ready addressed and sealed?

It was a moment of supreme conflict; but Polly's face, tear-stained and yet brave, came up before her mind; Polly's voice, tremulous yet yearning, sounded in her ears.

"There's the childer to think of—the childer to think of," she sobbed. Such sobs, hard and dry, without a tear to soften them! "I am glad you taught me that, Polly—glad that you taught me that." Then came a wailing cry, "Papa—papa, oh, papa!"

For a moment thoughts which at a calmer moment she might have denounced as disloyal, cowardly, even shameful, came surging through the girl's brain. The whole life of the man they all delighted to honour was shown to her, as a drowning man is said to see his own past in one fleeting instant—what that man's life was; what it might have been; the ceaseless uncertainties; the endless anxieties; the tears and watchings; the wild unrest. . . .

Then arose the beautiful family tradition, the creed of an absolute, unquestioning devotion to the head of the household; the memory of his charm, his tenderness, and his snatches of melody.

The divine rage of self-immolation entered into and possessed the girl's heart; the same passion that in the olden time enabled delicate women to face martyrdom for a cause and creed divine, enfolded her in its pure white flame.

Ten minutes later, and the fateful letter was on its way to the Fort where the Rifle Brigade lay.

But might not the boatman to whose care she entrusted it have chosen any other song than that to croon, as he crossed the sunlit bay?

Ahimé—Ahimé—ma 'mie-é-é!

Mabel never doubted her lover's loyalty to her behest. She had besought him not to seek her out, not to appeal against the verdict pronounced upon him. He would let her have her way. The light of gladness would die out from the dear, dark eyes she loved; no tender smile would part the lips whose touch upon her own had given her her first lesson in the thrill and sweetness of passion; but her lover would meet the inevitable with a true man's courage, and he would know that it was the inevitable, because nothing less could have driven his "little sweetheart" to seal his doom of banishment.

The Major was very wily, and very wise in his dealings with his feminine belongings. He did not rush them into snares and pitfalls; rather did he let them down gently. He was even sorry for them when they had to suffer. He had a subtle consciousness of the existence of what he described to himself as a "sympathetic understanding" between his stepdaughter and Captain Rowan. He admired Captain Rowan—admired him very much indeed. It has been said that Major Clutterbuck was a fine soldier, a man whose large and genial presence, and air of calm audacity, impressed the men under his command. To be a fine soldier is to know a fine soldier. The Major prophesied great things of young Rowan, if he got a "show."

"Let him get a chance to smell powder, and if he isn't cut down, he'll be heard of in despatches," he would say, with dignified approval. "He's about as good as they make them."

Indeed, there could be no manner of doubt that if Charley Rowan had only stood in the shoes of Amphlett Jones; if the former had been a millionaire, and able and willing to give that "leg-up" to a man in (temporary) difficulties, which the latter had so readily conceded, Mabel's stepfather would have rejoiced with an exceeding great joy and would have been conscious of a real happiness, a quite affecting amount of it, in fact, in giving the girl to the man she loved. His artistic intuitions would have been gratified by the evident suitability of the one to the other; his artistic eye would have been gratified by the spectacle of their beautiful young love, the picture of their innocent joy.

He would have descanted upon it, not disdaining to let a "manly tear" gather in the said eye as he looked upon them. As it was——

Well, young Rowan did not stand in the broad, substantial shoes of Mr. Jones; therefore the dark-eyed lover must go to the wall. In his heart of hearts the Major was convinced that Mabel would find a certain consolation in the sustaining consciousness that this sacrifice was being made for him—and also for the "youngsters." It may also in fairness be said that these last-named stood for a good deal in the Major's estimation of Mabel's possible sources of comfort. He was very tender over her; full of small caresses and little thoughtfulnesses, so that the girl was almost ready to be remorseful for the anguish she felt in giving up her lover for his sake. Between mother and daughter there were no confidences. There was a passionate clinging to each other now and again—the pallor of the mother's face, the appealing sadness of her sunken eyes, told of infinite sorrow and suffering — but the "safe secret" was still shared only by Mabel and Jim. Mabel was not one to do things by halves. If she told her mother of that sweet hour of mutual love and confidence — that first thrilling chord of a harmony that was doomed to die away even in the hour of its birth—how would not that mother grieve! Surely her pain would be added to, even tenfold; for a woman alone could gauge the sacrifice of such hopes, the renunciation of all that makes a woman's life most full and complete, and without which it can but be a stunted thing at best.

The struggle once over—the fatal letter sent on its errand of pain—the inevitable reaction followed.

"Papa," said the girl, white and trembling — "I cannot see . . . . Mr. Jones . . . . to-day."

Not an irritable word did the Major say in reply, though even at that moment it was more than probable Mr. Jones was on his way across the bay.

"My little girl—you are quite upset," said the Major, with tender, grave concern, "that painful interview with poor Polly has been too much for you; go and lie down in your room, and keep quiet. I will make it all right with our good friend."

So Mabel lay down in the quiet, darkened room, where you could hear the murmuring sob of the sea against the stones—lay down and turned her face to the wall, like the sick prophet of old, dreeing her weird as best, or as ill, as she might.

Surely some one was stabbing her temples with cruel knives — some fever-demon had hold of her soft palms that they should burn so hot and dry? The "scramble" were in an agony.

King Baby had to be wildly assured by each member of the family in turn that sister Mabel was not going to be "put in a box," the gloomy and premature conclusion he looked upon as the natural result of her being ill, and not able to devote herself to him as usual.

The rest of the "scramble" spoke to him one by one, they spoke to him altogether; even Bertie's gentle consolations failed. One of his "off'cers," one he dearly loved, had been ill and couldn't play any more, and then they had put him "in a box," and played the drums, and Phil had seen him no more. It was evident to his youthful mind that Mabel had entered upon the first stage of this mournful process, and, to the horror of his family, King Baby abased himself full length—it wasn't much of a length—upon the floor, face-downwards. They hauled him up into Lily's lap at last, and there he cried himself to sleep; the little girl — fully imbued with the traditions of family devotion—sitting as still as a statue, with the golden head upon her shoulder, while Bertie wielded a vast palm-leaf to keep the flies away from the Royal sleeper.

But Jim, divesting himself of his shoes, stole a-tip-toe to the door of Mabel's room, with a little pillow under his arm, put it down, patted it straight, and then lay down like a little watch-dog. No one should come and "ursturb" sister Mabel if he could help it.

Presently he thought he heard her weeping; but perhaps that was only fancy. Anyway, he had a tough tussle with himself, and was obliged to call most vividly to mind "Mothie's" strict injunction that no one—not even Phil—should go into the room.

He was quick to catch the sound of the voice of Mr. Jones below, and slipped down the stairs as silent and swift as a monkey down a tree, giving that gentleman quite a start.

"You can't see Mabel, not if you want ever so," he said, standing there shoeless and ruffle-headed; "she's got quite upsetted. No one can't go in — not even Phil" — this, of course, was the last extremity of disability to receive visitors.

"She's restering. And I rather think—but I'm not quite sure—that I heard her . . . ."

But at this point Jim was, as it were, swept away out of knowledge, and there stood the Major, smiling and radiant, begging Mr. Jones to step into his "little room."

It will be conceived that, to tell of all this attention to his sick sister on Master Jim's part, has necessitated putting the clock back somewhat; and that in the admirable frame of mind here depicted, he had no slightest foreshadowing of the sad falling into temptation that was to come about next day — the visit to "old Bogles," to the hotel, and the solemn and silent homeward voyage to follow.

When the stabbing pain had ceased, leaving her only white and weak, and with dark shadows round her eyes, Mabel reasoned with Jim as to the iniquity of his proceedings; but the fact that old Bogles had made himself very pleasant, and that Mr. Jones had been deeply interested in the story of Polly and the baby, apparently stood in the way of any deeply penitential feeling on the part of the sinner. He looked on his misdoing as a success; why then grieve?

The delight of the children in having sister Mabel once more amongst them was so great, that a person less devoted to them might have found it oppressive. They followed her, in a body, from post to pillar. Phil twined himself about her like a parasite about a slender young tree. It was too delightful that sister was not to be put in a box, and have the drums played over her, like that "off'cer" of his —"poor chap!"—who had disappeared in that uncanny fashion, and never come any more to cut little baskets out of cherry-stones for Master Phil, as had been his wont.

"Did I tell you we saw Dr. Halkett and Cap'en Rowan at the steps?" said Jim. "Oh yes, we did"—here he nodded his head many times. "And, Mabel, he looked very sad and sorry; he did, indeed. Do you think—— Oh, Mabel"—this in a sudden alarm—"are you going to be ill, and shut in a dark room again? Why do you do like that?"

For Mabel had covered her eyes with her two hands, and was swaying herself to and fro.

"Don't be frightened, Jim, don't mind," she said, at last, gasping out the words, so that Jim's stubbly hair felt like to stand on end. "I shall be all right in a minute."

The boy flung his arms around her, soothing and caressing her as if he were a grown man, but keeping silence, lest with more words he should make her look like that again. She gave a quick, indrawn breath as Mrs. Clutterbuck came in, and said, in a strained and faltering voice:

"Mr. Jones is here, Mabel. Papa says will you go down."

Then her courage, lost awhile, came to her again. She kissed her mother, told Jim to go out into the summer-house at the end of the garden, and keep the others there, too—all this in her best, must-not-be-disobeyed manner, to which Jim immediately succumbed—and went slowly and deliberately down the stairs.

At the foot stood the Major, just a thought nervous, but very much on the spot, for all that; and through the open door of the sitting-room loomed the substantial figure of Amphlett Jones.

Certainly the Honourable Bob could not well have grumbled at the ship-owner for being "too pink" on the present occasion; but, despite his pallor, there was a glad light in his eyes, and something noble and dignified in his whole bearing. If a passion of tenderness was beating in his heart, its outward expression was carefully restrained, and his manner to the gentle girl before him as reverential and refined as that of any knight of old to his "faire ladye."

He retained the hand she gave him in greeting, and led her to a seat by the window, placing himself beside her. The door had closed as if by magic, softly and without noise. They two were alone in the dim, scented light.

Mr. Jones still held Mabel's hand, and she did not try to withdraw it. Why, indeed, should she, seeing that it was to be his for life—that its resting-place would be there in weal and woe? It was no use to let herself shrink at the very beginning of her task.

"Your father has told you, has expressed to you my wishes, my—I am bound to say—daring hopes, Miss Graham, has he not?" said Mr. Jones, conscious that the hand that held the girl's slim fingers was beginning to tremble in spite of his efforts after coolness.

"Yes," said Mabel, simply; "he told me about it two days ago."

"He cannot, however, have expressed to you the hesitation, the timidity, with which I spoke; the sense of presumption that is upon me now. I am really puzzled to know how I ever came to summon up courage to speak at all, I really am," said Mr. Jones, with a little smile—rallying himself, as it were—which had something pathetic in it, and touched Mabel to the quick. "I feel so unworthy to plead for your regard, so—if I may be permitted to word it in that way—so unsuitable, and yet, I am sure, very sure, that no one—I really feel very bold to assert myself on this point—no one could appreciate you more highly than I do, or"—here he drew a long breath—"love you more dearly."

The fingers he held grew sensibly colder, and he thought it better to release them.

"You are not vexing over what I say?" he said, tenderly. "I would not have you vex over anything for the world—I would not indeed. But the very fact that you have condescended—for, indeed, I feel it to be that—condescended to see me here and now, seems to give me a right to speak out what is in my heart."

"It is very good of you to care for me so much, to wish to help those belonging to me for my sake," said Mabel, her voice low, even, passionless, but very, very gentle; "I have done nothing to deserve it. But I will try—I will always try to make—you—happy—indeed I will."

"Then I may take it that you consent to my suit; that you promise to become—my wife?"

The last word was difficult to get out, it nearly choked him. She had seemed to him as far out of his reach as one of the stars that gemmed the purple sky; and now here she was beside him—his own, not another's, but his very own.

"I am not so foolish, my—my dear child"—he hesitated a moment over this, as fearing she might think it too familiar; but the gentle face was still turned towards him, the lips a little parted, the eyes quiet and not unkindly—"as to expect too much at first. At my age, and in my position—a position so different to that of those among whom your lot has been cast—I should be foolish to look for any—well, any romance on your part. All I hope for is this—I hope, some day, to win your tenderness by the love and care given to you day by day, and year by year."

At the words "year by year," a little shiver coursed through the girl's veins. They called up before her mind a very different picture to the one drawn by Mr. Jones. They suggested the vista of the years to be—years in which she should never meet the dark fond eyes of Charley Rowan; never hear his voice; never feel the touch of his dear lips on hers and the clasp of his strong and loving arms. But the mood of weakness passed.

"Am I turning coward so soon?" she said to herself, and rent her thoughts from the dear, dead past.

"You will be always good to me, I am sure," she said, smiling a weary little smile, that yet seemed to the man beside her as the glow of the blinding sunshine; and then, of her own free will and deed, she laid her hand once more in that of Amphlett Jones.

The man was stirred to the very centre of his being. He would have clasped her in his arms, and drawn her dear head upon his breast had he given way to the impulse of his heart, but something, intangible yet irresistible, held him back; some subtle instinct warned him that he would lose more than he would gain by precipitancy.

"Will you let me tell you," he said, speaking with a fond timidity that again touched her deeply, "how it has been with me, ever since I met you—nay, before I met you—for—do you know, dear, I fell in love with your picture? I did, indeed. . . . You see I have lived among ledgers, and goods, and hard business interests all my life—and so you came upon me as a sort of surprise. I had never imagined—never dreamed—that the world held anything like you—indeed, imagination and dreaming have had but little place in my life, as you may suppose. It has all been stern reality with me. Dodson, my chief manager, you know, and I have been like a couple of old fossils digging away in a sort of underground existence; but now the sun of happiness is shining very brightly for me—so brightly that it almost dazzles me——"

Even as he spoke Amphlett Jones was unable to refrain from wondering to himself what would be the said Dodson's expression of countenance if he could hear his chief talking in such a strain, or catch sight of that fair girl in the filmy, smoke-coloured gown with pliant waist begirt by a silver belt — what — oh what indeed? . . .

Shade of Dodson, with lined face, pen behind your ear, lank and grizzled locks, and respectable coat of broadcloth for Sunday wear, answer if you can! But

Mabel listened very quietly. A great deal of what Mr. Jones said was rather like Greek to her; and she was quite incapable of grasping the personality of the man Dodson. But she felt, with every intuition of her nature, that the man beside her was good and true, that it behoved her now, and in the future, to be good and true to him. She recognised his nobility of heart, and did homage to it, and she rested on the thought that her father and the children would be in good and safe hands, and no sense of obligation ever pressed home to any one—recognised in a word that however truly Mr. Jones, in certain lights, might socially be rightly described as an "outsider," at heart he was as true a gentleman, as pure and generous a man as Sir Galahad himself.

"I do not want to keep you long to-day," said Mr. Jones, after a while; "you have not been well; you want more—what is it Jim calls it?—'restering.' But we shall have many things to talk over together, shan't we? I want you to think things out, and tell me just what will be best for us to do—I mean for the boys; and all that sort of thing."

The delicacy that associated her from the first with all his own magnanimity was not lost upon Mabel. "We" were to talk things over; "we" were to do this and that for the boys. It was prettily put.

"I may come again to-morrow?" said Mr. Jones, simply.

"Are you going to leave us, then, this evening?"

The very hint that she might wish him to remain brought the blood to his brow; but, as a matter of fact, she had spoken more as a natural rejoinder than with any personal motive. Still, no one will find in their hearts to grudge the good man the gleam of satisfaction her words conveyed.

"I should have been delighted—you must have known that," he said, flushed and smiling; "nothing could have made me happier. But I did not know, you see; our places were a little altered, were they not, in consequence of your being ill; and I made an engagement to dine with our good friend, the Honourable Mr. Dacre. Otherwise——"

It was a tiny jar to hear him give the Honourable Bob his full title when speaking of him formally; but the look and the smile that accompanied that word "otherwise" would have salved over a greater social slip.

"I should like to see Mrs. Clutterbuck before I go."

The suggestion made Mabel wince a moment; but she recovered herself quickly. Of course he must see "mothie." Had he not the right? She rose to her feet, and Mr. Jones rose, too. They stood side by side.

What a contrast!

She, with her delicate youth, her slender grace, he—well, well, there seemed to be some truth under the fear of Amphlett Jones that he was "unsuitable" to mate with the fair girl at his side; and it may be feared with regard to Dodson, that a long and flawlessly respectable life would have been marred by the utterance of some truly awful expression had his blear eyes beheld the pair.

"I will go and tell mamma," said Mabel.

Suddenly there had come over her that strange feeling we are all conscious of at times—the feeling that the whole circumstances around and about us are but the replica of what has happened before.

It was no surprise to her when Amphlett Jones just touched her hand with a soft and lingering kiss, and said, so earnestly, that his voice shook, and well-nigh broke:

"Heaven bless you—my—my dear!"

No surprise, either, to hear herself say, in reply:

"And you, too."

Nor yet to see the sudden flash of a great joy light up in his eyes at the words.

Nevertheless, her strength had been more tried by the interview than she knew, for she was hardly able to drag herself upstairs, and her breath seemed to fail her as she gained her mother's room

"He was very good to me," she said, "very, very good to me." Then, with a sudden, passionate gesture, she cried out: "But, mothie, mothie, if he had kissed me, I should have died!"

NOTE.

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ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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BY MARY ANGELA DICKENS.

Author of "A Mist of Error," "Her Inheritance," "A Social Success," "Kitty's Victim," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XVI.

"THAT'S perfect, Humphrey!" exclaimed Selma, gratefully.

Humphrey was sitting in his studio with a sketching block and water colours before him, and she had just come into the room, and was standing behind him looking over his shoulder at the sketch he was finishing. It was a bright morning a week after Humphrey and Helen's home-coming; the studio had quite lost its unlived-in appearance—it had never looked absolutely new, nothing in it being of recent manufacture—and it looked very picturesque and comfortable.

From the very first day, when they were all three engaged in putting finishing touches all over the new house, Helen had silently, but none the less heroically, considering how much she was to sit in it, registered a mental resolution never under any circumstances to attempt to put Humphrey's studio "to rights." She had helped him to unpack his properties, and to dispose of them—or, as she mentally characterised his proceedings, "to strew them about the room," without even wishing to utter a protest. If it were one of Humphrey's characteristics to like a room which looked like nothing she had ever seen before, and in which she herself—though of this she was quite unconscious—looked ludicrously out of keeping, she was well content that such a room he should have. The trouble it would give in the cleaning weighed for an instant only on her housewifely spirit; no trouble given by Humphrey's wishes could be considered by her for more than that space of time.

Consequently at the present moment Humphrey was seated at a table which seemed to the orthodox Helen to have no connection whatever with the rest of the room, but which gave her husband perfect satisfaction, both because of the admirable light which fell upon it, and because of the effect of its colouring against the colouring of a neighbouring curtain.

"It's just what I had in my mind. How delightful of you, Humphrey," went on Selma, as Humphrey leant back in his chair, and looked reflectively from his sketch to her face, and back again.

"What do you think of that?" he said, indicating the head-dress he had sketched. "Is it too simple?"

The dresses to be worn by Selma as Bianca at "the Duchess's matinée," as it was called, had been designed, for the sake of the Chinese, by a very fashionable artist indeed. They were beautiful dresses, and Selma looked her loveliest in them; but, to the dismay of every one concerned, she had declared that they were none of them in the least what Bianca ever would or could have worn, and that she herself in consequence would have nothing to say to them. After a great deal of discussion and a few serious words from Tyrrell as to the loss to the Chinese that must ensue if the fashionable artist and his following should be seriously offended, she had stipulated for one dress of her own choosing to be worn in the most important act, and Tyrrell, knowing perfectly well that her objections to the others were well founded,—that they were in fact far too gorgeous—had agreed to compromise matters to that extent. She had appealed to Humphrey to help her only the night before, and the sketch they were looking at now was the result.

"It can't be too simple, I think," she said; "but how shall I get those beautiful folds? It must be something very soft, mustn't it, and very pale? There's so little time to look for the right thing. I must see about it after rehearsal. Oh, Humphrey, what is that?" she added, as she caught sight of a half-finished sketch lying among the paraphernalia he had brought out with his sketching block. She took it in her hand as she spoke, and he glanced at it carelessly, answering: "That? Oh! An old fancy of mine."

It was quite rough and unfinished, the background vague and indistinct; but the principal figure, a slender youth apparently, but with a beautiful, appealing woman's face, with the hands clasped above the head, was full of beauty and power, and as Selma looked at it she said: "Imogen, isn't it! Humphrey, it is beautiful! Why don't you make a picture of it?"

"Let me look at it again," he said, with an amused glance at the unconscious original of the face he had sketched for Imogen. "I haven't seen it for a long time." He glanced at her again meditatively as she stood with her attention fixed on the picture, and thought how much her face had developed since the days when it had been necessary to idealise its girlish beauty considerably before it became the beauty of Imogen. "I wonder whether it would come well," he said, absently.

"You wonder whether what would come well?" said Helen, cheerily, coming into the room at the moment, with her hands full of the newest of tradesmen's books piled on the top of a most businesslike-looking work-basket. "Selma, dear, do you know that you'll be late for rehearsal? It's nearly eleven o'clock."

There was a horrified exclamation from Selma, who was rehearsing now every morning for the matinée, and as she disappeared forthwith, Humphrey turned to Helen with the smile which no one else ever saw.

"Morning orders take a long time," he said.

"Have you wanted me, dear?" she asked.

"Of course!" he answered.

And then Selma returned with her hat on, to arrange rapidly with Helen to fetch her from the theatre for a shopping expedition, and to disappear again immediately.

Humphrey and Helen, left alone together, settled down to their respective morning's work—as it was Helen's delight to think—as though they were a husband and wife of three years', instead of three weeks', standing. They had spent each morning of the past week in the same way, Humphrey talking much, little, or not at all—as the spirit moved him, and Helen quite content to listen, and respond according to her lights, when he spoke, or to concentrate her attention upon her needlework when he was silent. This morning the first hour passed in almost total silence, and then Humphrey said, gravely:

"I heard from Roger this morning."

"From Roger!" repeated Helen, suspending her work, with her thread half pulled through, and lifting her head. "Oh, Humphrey, how is he getting on?"

Roger had written very little during the past year, and any phases of thought or feeling through which he might have passed were unknown to his family; he was never spoken of except in low-toned, pitying question and answer; and Helen's tone now was the respectfully sympathetic and affectionate tone in which a man who has passed some time at a distance, wrapped in the halo of a great trouble, is generally alluded to.

"He is getting on very well from a business point of view," answered Humphrey. "For the rest — he never talked, even at first. Nell, he is coming home."

Helen let her needlework fall on her lap, and her cotton rolled unheeded to the floor.

"Humphrey!" she exclaimed, "he mustn't. It isn't a little bit of use, poor, dear fellow! Look how happy she is. She doesn't care for anything in the world but acting. Oh, Humphrey, you must write and tell him."

Humphrey had paused in his work, and turned towards her, brush in hand.

"There's nothing to tell him, Nell," he said, quietly. "He isn't thinking of distressing Selma. He is coming home because his business obliges him to be in London."

"Oh, dear!" sighed Helen, as she picked up her work, very slightly relieved. "I can't help thinking it's a pity. It will stir it all up again for both of them." There was a little pause, while Humphrey looked thoughtfully at his picture, which, however, he did not see, and Helen added: "It is dreadfully sad and difficult with auntie and the girls as it is. You don't know, Humphrey, what little things are always happening to make poor Selma remember."

"That is what Roger is most anxious to put right," said Humphrey, beginning to mix some colour. "He says——" He stopped, and took a letter from his pocket. "You had better read it," he finished, giving it to Helen, who read aloud:

"'I want her, old fellow, to put the whole thing out of her life altogether. She mustn't think that I'm coming back to London to be in any way a reproach to her. There will never be any one in the world like her to me; if I were a romantic kind of fellow, I suppose I should say she will be my ideal as long as I live. But she was far too good, and clever, and beautiful for me, and I've fought it out, and given her up, though I shall love her all my life.'"

Helen paused in her reading, and raised her head suddenly, with the instinctive exclamation of a young and happy wife.

"Oh, Humphrey, what a pity it all is!" she said, regretfully. "What a pity she changed her mind!"

Then, as the silent Humphrey made no response, she turned to the letter again, and read on:

"'Of course, I would have stayed away if I could; but as I'm bound to come back to London, I think it would be better for her and for every one if we squared the whole thing up. I gather from home letters that mother and the girls don't see it as they should; but if she won't mind meeting me, I think I can make it straight at home. I sail on the twenty-fourth. Love to Helen.'"

Helen finished reading, and sat with her pretty, pitying eyes fixed still upon the letter.

"Poor fellow!" she said, softly. "Poor, dear fellow!"

"What will she feel about meeting him, Nell?"

"I don't know," answered Helen, looking up gravely after a moment's consideration; "it depends upon so many things. I don't know whether she will ever get over her guilty feeling towards him. I don't see how she can refuse to see him; but I'm afraid it will upset her. She feels things so," concluded Helen, with the air of one who ennunciates an unfortunate and mysterious but undeniable fact.

Humphrey had taken up his mahlstick again, and he did not answer; and, after a few moments' silent reflection, she said:

"I had better talk to her, dear?"

"Yes."

"I can't worry her this week while she is so full of her matinée. Will it be soon enough if I wait until after the twenty-fourth?"

"Quite soon enough. He can't arrive before the third or fourth of March."

"He isn't likely to take us by surprise this time," sighed Helen, remembering Roger's previous home-coming. Then, taking up her needlework again, she said: "Poor Roger, I wonder whether he will be much altered. He writes just like his old self. Oh, it's a dreadful thing to have on one's mind for a week, Humphrey."

Helen always objected very strongly to waiting for a painful moment; she liked to face her difficulties and troubles, and get them over and done with; and when she met Selma after the rehearsal that day, and saw her sister's face so quietly hopeful and contented in its repose, so bright and sensitive in its animation, her dread of distressing her made her desire to "get it over" hardly to be repressed. She did repress it, however, for that day, and the days that followed, each one of which found Selma, if possible, more deeply absorbed than the last had left her in the preparations for the matinée.

The play, unusual as it was, had caught the fancy of all the members of the cast, and rehearsals were long and thorough. The air was full of reports about it; and, amongst the many rumours current, two stood out with particular distinctness to be repeated again and again in circles fashionable, artistic, and Bohemian—that the piece was very powerful and unconventional, and that Selma Malet was going to do something very remarkable.

Selma herself was the only person concerned who knew nothing of any reports, who had no expectations, who formed no definite estimate as to herself or any one else. All her ideas were concentrated in her intense interest in her part, and there was no room in her mind for any question as to what achievement would bring her in the way of prestige and applause. Tyrrell, watching her curiously throughout the week, only once saw her wake to consciousness of any thought external to the creation into which she was putting her whole soul, and on that one occasion it was not praise and not anxiety that touched her, but a few words from himself as they separated after a stage rehearsal.

She had made a great effect upon the company that morning, and he happened to come up to her just in time to hear a somewhat over-coloured picture of the success before her, drawn for her by the only other woman in the cast—an "old woman." Selma had been smiling absently, and apparently hearing very little of her companion's discourse, but something prompted Tyrrell to say, when they were left alone together:

"Don't forget that matinées are, of all the devices of man, the most unreliable, Selma! Don't set your heart on this."

"No," she answered, vaguely, evidently with the slightest possible comprehension of his words, to which there was, indeed, no key in her simple-minded, ideal aspiration.

"And don't think," Tyrrell added, with a smile that softened his face wonderfully, "don't think that a second success can ever be quite like the first; that is impossible."

Selma turned to him suddenly as he spoke, and her eyes seemed to wake up, changing and darkening oddly. She looked at him for a moment without speaking, and then she said, slowly and distinctly, with something almost metallic in her low, steady voice:

"Thank you! I don't mean to forget."

He wondered, curiously, what he had said to rouse her, what her manner meant; but by the time they met again, she was once more utterly absorbed and carried away by the fascination of her work.

That fascination seemed to grow with every thought she gave it, and by the arrival of the day itself she was strung up and concentrated to such a pitch that she was beyond reflection, beyond nervousness, beyond self-consciousness of any kind, literally possessed by her genius. She had spoken scarcely a word that day—her white face and shining eyes had awed Helen to silent solicitude and nervousness—when, just as she had finished dressing for her part, a knock came at her dressing-room door, Tyrrell's voice asked for her, and she went to him, as he stood in the passage in his priest's dress.

"I came——" he began; and then, as she advanced into a fuller light, he broke off suddenly.

As she stood there, in the most gorgeously beautiful of the three beautiful dresses she was to wear, with all the latent passion in her deepening her wonderful eyes, few men could have looked at her calmly, could have met her eyes with no quickening of their pulses. There was a moment's pause before Tyrrell spoke again; and when he did speak, his words were not those he had intended to say—"I came to look at you."

"You are not nervous?" he said, slowly, with his keen eyes fixed on her face.

"No."

"I will not disturb you."

He paused a moment, and then held out his hand, with a sudden, most expressive gesture of comprehension and sympathy. She laid her own in it, with a quick, clinging pressure; and as she withdrew it, he turned, and went down the passage, with a look on his face which it had not worn for years.

The aristocratic committee had worked almost feverishly, and the house was packed from floor to ceiling. Society at its behest filled boxes, stalls, and even—in its ardent desire to assist the Chinese—the dress-circle. Nora Glynn and her staff were realising a small fortune by the sale of programmes, besides being extremely ornamental, and greatly promoting conversation. The cheaper parts of the house—the parts of which the Duchess had said, "We must leave them to you, Mr. Tyrrell"—did Mr. Tyrrell's judgement the utmost credit. Pit, gallery, and upper boxes were thronged with people interested in the play, capable of appreciating the excellent cast he had got together. And all over the house—demonstrative in the stalls, quiet and business-like in the pit—there was an air of pleased expectancy.

It seemed to Helen, sitting excitedly with Humphrey in the dress-circle, first, as though the curtain would never go up, and then as though the first scene, in which Selma did not appear, would never be over; but with the beginning of the second scene Helen, in common with almost every one in the house, received a species of electric shock. Helen was only conscious that her attention was arrested and held by a priestly character when it had been concentrated in expectancy of Selma's entrance; the majority were only conscious that John Tyrrell was curiously unlike himself. One old critic, sitting by himself in the stalls, thought with a shock of surprise for the first time for fifteen years, "That fellow is a genius." Before any one else had formulated an idea, a strange breath passed through the building as though every one in the house had half articulated the monosyllable, "Oh!" and Bianca had entered, and was kneeling at the feet of the priest. Their first scene together was very short, and though it served to deepen the sense already prevalent that Tyrrell was "unusual," the audience was chiefly occupied with the physical beauty of the pair. Wonderfully lovely as Selma looked, Tyrrell's appearance was little less striking; the dress, difficult to wear, and trying to many men, seemed to give him only additional grace and dignity of bearing; his face was rather worn, and his hair grey, as he had never worn it before, and this, or the setting afforded by the severity of the dark habit of a Dominican monk, or something deeper and more indefinable, gave to his handsome features a nobility of expression which seemed to make of them an infinitely higher and finer face than that with which the public were so familiar. A low murmur of surprise and expectancy followed the applause which accompanied his first exit.

Selma's best opportunity in the first act—a love scene—followed immediately upon it, and worked the pit into a state of enthusiasm which was all for Selma herself, and was in no degree lessened by the fact that the popular young actor with whom she was playing seemed to be utterly out of harmony, not only with his Bianca, but with the atmosphere which she and Tyrrell had created. As the piece proceeded amid growing excitement and enthusiasm, the part of Guido dropped more and more completely into the background, until the climax was felt by the audience to lie in the last interview between Bianca and the monk. It was a long scene, beginning very quietly, with intense self-restraint on the part of the man, and hopeless pathos on the part of the woman, and with the first words, uttered by Tyrrell, a strange hush fell on the theatre. The two were alone together on the stage; and with each word either spoke, with each breath either drew, the other seemed to gain intenser sympathy and fire, to touch greater heights of passion and perception. Of the hundreds of people in the crowded auditorium—fashionable boxes and stalls, and unfashionable pit and gallery held and shaken alike—the attention of every individual was concentrated breathlessly upon them; and as the scene went on, gaining in excitement and tragic intensity with every moment, there was hardly one among the rapt, strongly-moved faces that did not lose something of its own individuality to catch something of the vivid emotion on which each man and woman was intent. At last, on a final passionate cry which rang long in the ears of every one who heard it, the curtain fell—fell on a silence and stillness absolutely unbroken. A long-drawn breath was audible throughout the house, and then such an uproar and clamour of applause arose that the air seemed to rock and vibrate with it. Shaken out of their apathy, and carried away on the rush of popular enthusiasm, stalls and boxes united with the pit in a deafening tumult of applause. Again and again Tyrrell, with a strangely-moved and excited face, led Selma before the curtain, again and again as they disappeared from sight the cheers broke out afresh.

"I didn't think he had it in him," observed the old critic who had commented on Tyrrell's first scene as he found himself in the general movement standing next Julian Heriot, who was a friend of his.

"Very fine," was the reply.

"They must have made a lot of money," continued the older man, who had been more moved than he cared to acknowledge to himself. "Coming up to Miss Tyrrell's box, Heriot? I see the Duchess is leaving her. Happen to notice that philanthropist after the second act. She was receiving congratulations as though she'd done something wonderful herself!"

"I saw her," answered Julian Heriot. "No, I'm going round, I think. Ah! there is Lady Latter"—bowing as he spoke—"what won't that woman wear, I wonder!"

He turned away with a slight gesture of farewell, and made his way through the crowd. The green room, when he eventually found his way thither, was full of people, who stood about in eager, excited groups, lingering to discuss the altogether unusual nature of the performance. Tyrrell, still in his monk's dress, was receiving congratulations on all sides, and in the quarter of an hour which had elapsed since the curtain fell, his face had altered considerably. The enthusiasm and fire so strange to it had nearly died away, and his eyes were harder and more cynical than usual. He turned, with a slight, hard smile, as Julian Heriot said:

"I congratulate you, Tyrrell."

"Many thanks, my dear fellow," he answered. "It's a fine play, isn't it?"

"It was a fine performance," answered Heriot, his eyes wandering round the room.

Another man claimed Tyrrell's attention at the moment, and Heriot's eyes consequently remained free to wander; but he did not exercise the privilege. Their first excursion had told him what he wanted to know, and he drew back and stood apparently waiting.

"She went straight to her room, didn't she?" a girl's voice behind him said in a moment. "Knocked herself to pieces, I suppose. She won't come in now, I should think."

Julian Heriot glanced sharply round, and saw that the speaker was Nora Glynn, who had been kindly endeavouring to restore the crestfallen Mr. Bevan's faith in the stability of things in general by assuring him very prettily and convincingly that the success of the afternoon had, in reality, been made—as seemed most probable and natural in his eyes—by himself.

"Tyrrell said something about her coming in when she had changed her dress," he answered her now. "That's what everybody is waiting for, I suppose. Not quite good enough, is it? But of course it isn't for me to make a move. She won't show after all, I suppose," he added, as a maid entered the room, said a few words to Tyrrell, and disappeared.

A general movement ensued, Tyrrell having made it known that Miss Malet was not to be personally congratulated, and in a little while Julian Heriot, the only man left, offered in his turn to shake hands with Tyrrell. But the latter stopped him.

"Don't go, Heriot," he said. "Come into my room and tell me how you liked the piece. Nonsense, you're never in a hurry. Come along!"

He opened the door as he spoke, and at the same moment, along the passage which led to the stage-door, came Selma, in the dress of daily life, followed by her maid. She came up to Tyrrell with a quick exclamation, and stopped herself on seeing Heriot behind him.

"You've been quick," said Tyrrell, adding, as she showed no signs of ever having seen Heriot before—having, indeed, completely forgotten him, "you and Heriot have met before, I think."

She held out her hand then with a little graceful gesture of apology, and he said, looking at her as he spoke with eyes which showed not only more admiration, but more respect than was usually to be read in his face:

"I can't tell you how glad I am to have the opportunity of congratulating you, Miss Malet. I won't try to tell you the effect you made on me."

"You are very kind," said Selma, quietly, looking at him with a composure and self-possession which struck Tyrrell with surprise.

There was no colour in her cheeks, her eyes were grave and steady, and her voice perfectly even. Her whole manner was in marked contrast to the manner in which she had received congratulations after her first success, and suggested a woman, rather than the girlish Selma he thought he knew.

"You have done a splendid piece of work," continued Heriot. "I am not as a rule enthusiastic, Miss Malet, and the conventional phrases are painfully monotonous; but I do know good work when I see it, and I know what it means. I envy you."

"You are very kind," said Selma again, but this time with a smile of grateful acceptance. Then she held out her hand, saying, "Good night! Good night, Mr. Tyrrell!" and passed on down the passage out of their sight.

There was to be no performance that evening, and Humphrey had made an engagement to dine at his club, thinking that Helen and Selma would like to spend the evening alone together.

Helen, remembering Selma's excitement and subsequent reaction after her first appearance, had been a little uneasy as to what frame of mind the evening might find her sister in, and she had been immensely relieved when Selma arrived home quite composed, and apparently quietly satisfied, to lie very still for an hour with steady eyes, which never closed, and then to respond cheerfully to all Helen's enthusiasm. She was so cheerful, and her lovely face was so free from any trace of anxiety, that it seemed to Helen, when she had finally exhausted her comments on the performance, and they were sitting alone together in the studio after dinner, that this was the moment of all others when the news of Roger's return would make the least painful impression possible upon her. She revolved the question in her mind for several moments, during which Selma lay back in her chair, silent and motionless; and then she said, tentatively:

"I've something to say to you, dear, and I don't quite know how to say it best."

With a swift, abrupt movement, Selma turned her eyes upon her sister for a moment, and turned them back again upon the fire.

"Yes," she said.

Helen rose from her chair, and went to kneel down beside her.

"It's about—Roger, dear," she said, trying to see her sister's face, which was in shadow, and missing the movement of the slender hand which lay on the arm of the chair. "He's coming home, Selma."

There was no answer and no movement, and Helen, following her own train of thought, went on, earnestly:

"Ah, my dear, try to forgive yourself. You couldn't help it. Oh, think of how you felt this afternoon, and believe that you couldn't help it. Be reasonable, darling! Selma, he is so anxious that you should put it all away. He says he—he is quite content, and he knows that you were quite right, and he wants so much to put things straight between you and auntie. Dear, he wants you to see him."

"To see him!"

The words rang in Helen's ears as a cry of intolerable shame, and she put her arms round Selma, and held her tightly.

"It would be dreadful just for the first, I know, my dearest," she said; "but it will be so much, much better afterwards. You can't either of you really get over it while there is a barrier between us and auntie and all of them. If he is prepared to put it all away, and settle down to be your friend, you can't refuse to meet him, and in a few months it will all be almost as if there had never been any trouble."

"I can't refuse?"

"How can you, Selma?" returned Helen, tenderly but firmly, with a sense that though Selma thought her very cruel, such cruelty was necessary, and kindly. "He is getting over it, and it would hurt him all over again. You'll get quite used to it, dear. I'm sure you will."

There was a sharp, sudden movement, and Selma drew herself out of Helen's arms and stood up.

"I—I must think, Helen," she said, and her face, as the lamp-light fell on it, was white and drawn. "Don't—don't mind if I go to bed now. I'm—tired."

And Helen, left alone, wondered, first, whether her sister would ever forgive herself, and then whether she would have felt it less, after all, if she had heard of Roger's return on some other occasion.

"I thought her pleasure in her success would take off her attention," she sighed to herself.

SUNDAY WITH THE LAUNDRESSES.

THIS Sunday, at all events, a truce of warring factions would seem to have been proclaimed. The omnibuses, running again after the late strike, give a cheerful aspect to the streets, and a general content and a disposition to be jolly seem to lull all threatening elements of society to repose. Just now, too, Hyde Park is at its brightest and best. The flowering shrubs are in the fullest bloom, and diversify the lawn, all in the brightest green, with masses of glowing colour; the Serpentine glitters in silvery sheen among the full leafage of the trees. We are all in that happy disposition described by a late eminent prelate from an episcopal standpoint, "when a curate might play with him." In default of curates, a good many of us are disposed to romp about with the laundresses. Though the greater number prefer the absolute rest and quietude of a shady nook, where, prone on the grass, Harry kicks his heels in the air, and exchanges playful badinage with the lively Amaryllis. In fact, the turf is pretty well carpeted with such recumbent figures; while at the salient points abutting on the lines of procession, rows upon rows of the green chairs familiar to the frequenters of the Park are filled with more conventional sightseers.

It is the ladies' demonstration that we are awaiting, and the female element is well represented, although not in overwhelming proportions. The elderly woman in the short, bombazine skirts, black shawl, and faded black bonnet; the bare-armed woman, in a cotton gown, and battered, straw hat, with an eye artistically coloured by some of her affectionate kindred, represent the veterans of the washing brigade; while knots of two or three girls together, arm in arm, with towering hats, and sweeping feathers, and brilliant, if tarnished, costumes, all singing, laughing, or talking their loudest, are fairly good specimens of the laundry girl of the period.

But there are hundreds of groups of nice, pleasant-looking girls, with their attendant swains, smart maid-servants, abundance of work-girls of all kinds, with others of higher social status. And in all the feminine crowd, it is not difficult to recognise a certain feeling of solidarity, so to say—a real and effective sympathy, which gives a certain importance to this woman's demonstration. There is a We come into existence among womankind, spelt with a capital W. There is the kind of awakening among them, which came upon civilised man just a century ago. It is all quite up to date; and one has the feeling on this joyous summer day of assisting at one of these immense sympathetic movements, such as gathered people together in popular fêtes and rejoicings when the Revolution was as yet in its joyous infancy. Such is now the happy state of the woman's revolution. Its "Marseillaise" has yet to be composed, its Carmagnole to be danced, while the laundry women may represent for us the vivacious females of that interesting period. Anyhow, like the aristocrats of other days, the masculine part of the community is helping to celebrate its future downfall with happy unanimity. Working men in their Sunday best, and City clerks in their better still, with soldiers by scores and scores, and jolly old veterans from Chelsea, brightening up the scene with their scarlet tunics; men of fashion, too, artists also, and actors—all are looking out for the woman's procession.

But even before the procession arrives, we may see that there is a considerable contingent of our laundresses already on the ground. Coming along, the omnibuses were full of them, and mostly of the higher ranks of the profession: starchers, and ironers, and others of the multifarious divisions of such labour, who make what they call good money, and are as sharp, and independent, and practical as you please, without sharing the boisterous high spirits of the ordinary girl. And it was pleasant to see how, in the more aristocratic quarters, where elegantly-dressed women and children and their lords and masters were strolling towards park or gardens, the general attention was fixed upon the more or less demonstrative passengers; the men looking in a quizzical kind of wonder, as on a convoy of strange animals; but the women, with more appreciative interest, and the children, too, according to their kind, separating family interests as it were, and ranging themselves on sides, as with opposing interests of he and she.

And for a pleasant companion on a short journey give us a smart, capable young woman from a laundry. How 'cute she is, and fresh as well as free in her remarks, without veneration for anybody—least of all for the boss—or for anything. But she has a good feeling for "the young ladies" who come round and try to make friends with the girls, mixed with some amusement at their artless ways. These and "our Liz," who, it seems, is "a curious one," afford her a continual fund of amusement and of pleasant little stories such as the following:

"One of our young ladies brings me a paper for us to jine something, a sisterhood of something, and asts me to stick it up in the shop. Liz comes in, and she must know all about it, of course. 'What's this they want us to jine?' says she. 'Oh, it's preaching,' says one. 'Oh, I shan't jine for no preaching,' says Liz. 'No, it ain't, it's teetotal,' says another gal. 'Well,' says Liz, 'I ain't so much against that; but not too anxious like.' Then she comes to me. 'It's a bean-feast, Liz,' says I. 'Lots to eat and drink, and jolly games all through.' 'Oh, that's your sort,' says Liz, 'put me down to jine for that right away.'"

With such stories as this—which happily sums up the characteristics of the laundry girl—how short seemed the journey to the Park!

But for all the joke about "our Liz," it is certain that many excellent women are doing good work among the laundry girls, who more perhaps than any other class of women workers need a little humanising influence among them. A certain recklessness of bearing and conduct seems to be traditional among them.

Yet some women have left the wash-tub to rise to high fame and fortune, such as Moll Clarges, who married General Monk, and was afterwards Duchess of Albemarle. And there are thousands of honest women who carry on the business on their own account, with daughters perhaps who take their share in the work, and who, with much labour, make a fair living out of it, and even acquire money, unless, as often happens, there is some worthless hanger-on in the way of husband and son, to squander the earnings and ill-treat the workers. In truth, M. Zola's picture of the Parisian laundry might often be matched in the London laundry, and with details of a rougher and more brutal sort.

But it is the women in the public laundries whose condition calls for the friendly aid of their fellow women. They work hard, poor creatures; and though they get good wages, yet the business, in London especially, is one so much of times and seasons, that the less skilled hands are often for long periods out of employment, when their condition is pitiable indeed. Then the unhealthy conditions under which they work often induce a passion for strong drink, and with such a craving the poor laundry girl sinks lower and lower, and makes an evil end at last, in the infirmary of workhouse or prison.

Well, there is something to see at last. The trades-union men have filed in with their banners flaunting before them. There is no burning question on hand, and this is a kind of holiday display, with everybody inclined to enjoy the bright sunshine, and the pleasant shade. And now come the laundresses, humble in the way of bands and banners, and marching anyhow—jumping, dancing, and romping along, and mixed up with roughish sweethearts and companions. There is no overcoming the irresistible gaiety of heart of these laundry girls or their tendency to regard everything as a screaming joke. Few of the girls are of good physique. "Labor omnia vincit," say the banners, and female beauty it certainly conquers and destroys. Round-shouldered and narrow-chested from constant stooping over their work are the best and most industrious of the laundry girls, while the elder ones look broken and haggard. But all are merry enough, and seem to enjoy the procession and the Park as a real good treat.

The procession is all very well; but what pleases the most is an animated representation of washing day on a coal lorry which the regular coalman's horse drags placidly through the crowd. Here are washing-tubs, and ironing-boards, and women at work; but all too merry and jolly to excite commiseration. All round clothes are hung out to dry, while laughing girls flourish shirts and other garments in the air, for it is difficult to persuade these laundry girls to be serious.

Even at the serious meetings the demeanour of the representative laundry woman is rather disconcerting. She will have her jig, and her romp, and her joke. But the women speakers get on the best. Here is one of our young ladies who is speaking from the crowded wagonette, where the seamed and weathered faces of the working women clustered about her beam with approval as they give the signal for the cheers which come freely enough. No preaching; but just straightforward talk which the girls like; while our Liz waves her embroidered handkerchief, and vows "she'll jine first thing after the bean-feast."

Another and more sombre meeting is going on close by. It has nothing to do with the laundresses; but as the chief speaker is a woman, it deserves to be mentioned on this woman's day. Here a waggon is drawn up in the deep shade, and as a background are draped three flags of a dull red hue. A white tablet close by bears the inscription, "Do not forget Chicago," with a list of names recorded as martyrs—the names of those who were executed for throwing dynamite bombs among the police of Chicago. So that this rendezvous has something of an international character. The audience, too, is of the same description: German, French, Belgian, Swiss, with a sprinkling of stolid, unexplosive English.

"We, the Anarchists of London," begins a speaker, who mentions comrade this and comrade the other, and whose panacea for social ills seems to be a strike of everybody against everything. No one cares to object; but the remedy is too mild, so the shrugs and muttered remarks seem to intimate, to be making a fuss about. But presently a really interesting figure appears: a woman, tall and gaunt, in scanty black drapery, with the face of a sibyl gone into years, but with eyes that burn with inextinguishable fire. Here is one who is thoroughly in earnest, any how. Emotion quivers on her tongue, and passes like a wave to the very ends of her long, sinewy fingers. She speaks in French, with the resonant accent of old Gaul, and her voice quivers as if under the burden of the inert souls whom she strives to stir—in vain. This might be the shade of one of the old Revolutionary women who marched so proudly to the scaffold. This woman would march as proudly, too, that way, for she is Louise Michel. But a cynical age declines to offer her the final martyrdom.

"My! what have we here?" cries Liz, who rushes tempestuously from one scene to another. "French, is it, lor! I ain't going to jine for learning French!" and away she goes to seek some other banner under which to enlist.

And now the banners themselves are packing up and going away, and the vast crowd begins by common consent to disperse, as a day is coming to an end, which, in spite of a few dark shadows here and there, has run out bright and joyous to the last. It is a good omen for the women, whether of the laundry or otherwise.

A WEEK ON A MOORLAND FARM.

My farm, to which I resort when the relaxing air of the South Devon coast—where I reside—makes me feel the need of a tonic, lies within a measurable distance of the little town of Moreton Hampstead—that moor-town which must surely be a very distant cousin of its metropolitan namesake. When I say my farm, I do not mean mine by right of possession, but by right of the usufruct I enjoy of the health-giving breezes which play, and sometimes storm, round its thatched gables. In point of fact, it forms a portion of the noble inheritance which has lately passed from the heir of all the Courtenays to the representative of the great firm which disseminates throughout the land the most recent productions of the great controlling force of the nineteenth century.

Dartmoor in early March is decidedly bracing; but when, on the third, I walked up to Brenton Farm, bag in hand, from the station, there was nothing to indicate that we were shortly to be plunged into an Arctic winter. The lambing season was in full swing when I arrived, and I found my friend, farmer Godbeer, on his knees, administering nutriment from a baby's feeding-bottle to a weakly lamb, whose mother had died. The trapper, with some forty traps suspended from his shoulders, was just starting for the gorse-covered hills behind the farm; he gets a fee of twopence-halfpenny for every rabbit he brings to the farmer, who sends them off to Leicester—whose radical inhabitants appear to have a great penchant for "lapin au naturel."

On the field in front of the house I see a lame gander, and some dozen turkeys, making believe to sup off the grass, which, in these stern latitudes, has not yet begun to shoot. The abundant root-crop of last autumn, although sadly interfered with by the December frosts, has to supply food for the sheep and bullocks.

Although trout-fishing begins on the second of March, I will not court an attack of rheumatic fever for the sake of the few black and lanky fish I should decoy. I therefore leave the Teign and its tributaries severely alone, and spend my time in rambling over the moor.

I look up my friend, Squire Stamp, kindliest of men, and most energetic of farmers, to whom I am indebted for many a good day's sport in the little stream which flows through the grounds of his picturesque domain. Whilom a planter in India in the time of the great Mutiny, he now devotes his industry and talents to developing the resources of his Devonshire property. What a change from the heated atmosphere of Bengal to the breezy heights of Dartmoor!

On my way I pass the village mole-catcher, setting his snares in the meadow for his tiny quarry, and scattering their hillocks with an "armed" heel. I ask him if he skins them. He says: "No, sir, I never skins them, I hangs them up." He appears rather to resent the question, and repeats, somewhat disdainfully: "No, sir, I never skins them." His modest tariff is three-halfpence per mole.

I find Squire Stamp with sleeve turned back, and bare arm, feeding a threshing-machine, and illustrating the old adage that an ounce of practice is worth a ton of precept. He is in tribulation about his new steam-engine, one of the cylinders of the boiler has burst, and asks if I will examine it? for in these out of the way regions even amateur aid is not to be despised. The engine-man shows me the faulty pipe, I look wise, but alas! hydrodynamics were not included in my curriculum, and I am not able to throw much light on the matter.

On another day I wander off over the hills through the Fingle Woods to Fingle Bridge, where, in the mighty chasm cleft by nature, the River Teign dashes onward to the sea; that Teign which our ancestors laid under such heavy toll to provide the nomenclature of the district, as witness Teignmouth, Teigngrace, Teignhead, Teigncombe, Bishopsteignton, Kingsteignton, Drewsteignton, Stoke-in-Teignhead, Combe-in-Teignhead, and so on. At the foot of the gorge I am brought face to face with a reminder of the existence of the tourist, in the shape of a brand-new notice board, on which I read that in consequence of the carelessness of a picnic party having resulted in the destruction by fire of twenty acres of oak coppice, no fires are allowed to be lighted in the woods on the Earl of Devon's estate at Moreton Hampstead. What a grand sight the burning of a twenty-acred coppice on these lonely hillsides must be! After a month's drought such as we have just passed through, how easy it would be to repeat the experiment. But no! Avaunt the temptation! I will light no fire to-day—although there would be no witnesses of the act, save the buzzards soaring high over my head or the raven perched on the stunted oak on the cliff side. I revisit the romantically-situated little village of North Bovey, with its old world green with the giant elms, and the old grey cross, so common a feature of the village greens of Dartmoor; but I am not in search of the picturesque, but am bent on that pleasure known to anglers as "looking at the water," for the Bovey is, as the guide-books tell us, "a noted trout stream," and it is pleasant to revisit the scenes of former triumphs. I linger on the little stone bridge,

> Which makes a hoary eyebrow to the stream.

There is not a fish moving, the air is too chilly. There is a famous pool close by under the hollow oak, whence I startled the woodpecker from his nest in May last. I could not get my hand into the opening, it was too small. If you follow the stream up, you will find a succession of natural bridges, formed by fallen trees, extending from bank to bank. There are few acrobatic feats more difficult of execution than to cross one of these with a twelve-foot trout-rod in your hand, while a steady moor mist is falling.

On another occasion I make for Doccombe, a little, outlying hamlet, some three miles off, the manor of which was given by William de Tracey, one of the murderers of Thomas A'Becket, to the church of Canterbury, as an oblation—it belonged to it till quite recently, I know not whether it does so still. The name survives in Bovey Tracey, a neighbouring townlet. Hard by is the Blackstone Rock, conspicuous by its size and colour among the countless surrounding tors. A flight of steps, protected by a hand-rail, leads to the summit. I ascend with hat in hand—it usually blows half a gale up here. On top is a rock basin filled with rain-water, in which you might have a comfortable bath. Here it is that Good King Arthur took his stand when he played his memorable game of quoits with his ghostly enemy on Hel-tor. Onwards I trace my steps to Hennock, where is the fine artificial lake formed to supply Torquay—distant about eighteen miles—with water. It already affords the best trout-fishing in the county. In it last year one angler caught three hundred and fifty fish, weighing three hundred and fifty pounds.

On Sunday I wend my way to the old parish church of Moreton Hampstead, past the grey Tau Cross, and the venerable lime known as the "dancing tree," where the young men and maidens used to foot a measure on a temporary platform built among the branches. In its present condition the tree would scarcely afford a secure ball-room, and the dancing has been given up. In the interior of the church the modern restorer has stayed his hand—we are, as of old, securely boxed up in our high pews; the singers, male and female, are perched up in the great gallery behind us; the vast, old-fashioned pulpit which dominates the congregation is surmounted by a gigantic sounding-board, suspended by three rusty chains from a hook in the ceiling, and I am in terror during the sermon lest one of these should give way, and in the collapse the curate be extinguished—the vicar is old and infirm, and does not mount to this dizzy height.

The service over, I examine in the chancel the tombstones of the French prisoners from neighbouring Princetown, buried here at the close of the Great War. The names can scarcely be deciphered; but the dates, 1810-1811, show the cause which led to the incarceration of poor A. B., Lieutenant de Vaisseau, and X. Y., Capitaine de l'Infanterie de la Ligne. Can we wonder that French writers show some exasperation at our having chosen the bleakest and most exposed site in England for the safe custody of those "prisoners and captives" for whom we pray weekly in our churches? Perchance some of these dead warriors were victims to the vigorous climate of this "vraie Sibéria."

Leaving the church, and proceeding past the picturesque old poor-houses, with an arcaded front—dated 1637—hideously whitewashed, I find myself in the "Sentry," a public recreation ground, extending downwards to the little river Wray. The origin of the name has baffled all explanation. Sanctuary has been suggested; but seems inadequate.

Black Monday has come, and to-morrow my little holiday is at an end; the wind is north-east, and a few flakes of snow are falling as Mrs. Godbeer comes in, with her arms filled with brushwood and gnarled gorse-roots, to replenish the fire on the vast stone hearth in my "living room." I suggest that perhaps, after all, I may be snowed up.

She replies, laughingly: "Not likely, sir, at this time of year."

The landscape is rapidly assuming a wintry appearance; the wind, too, appears to have an ominous persistence in penetrating through every crevice of my room. At five o'clock it is almost dark; so thick is the screen of falling snow between the grey clouds and the whitened fields, that the setting sun is veiled in obscurity. We are evidently in for a rough night.

In the morning I rise betimes. In front of my window an iron railing divides the garden of the farm from the fields beyond, and last night I remember noticing a hen-coop in the corner of the grass plot—railing and coop are now lost to view; nothing meets the eye but snow—snow everywhere, and on everything. A furious gale is threatening to blow in my window, on the sill of which the snow is already a foot deep. In the farmyard the snow lies in huge drifts; some one has been attempting to open communication with the barn on the other side; but the little path is rapidly filling up again. Of the farm-labourers, only one, Mrs. Godbeer tells me, has come to his work; this faithful Abdiel has to feed the horses, and recognises this obligation. The others, she says, "don't care to come when it does not suit them." And although their presence here is desirable now, the restless spirit of the times has so far contaminated them that they "strike" against the snow. Mr. Godbeer has been up all night digging his ewes and lambs out of the snow; and with his one loyal adherent is still engaged in the task. Not only have the sheep to be dug out, but a path must be cleared for them from the hill-side to the farm buildings, where shelter can be found for them in the sheds. I hear their bleating; and now the advanced guard appears on the narrow track which has been cleft for them through the drifts. Surely it was not for their innocence only that our ancestors termed them the silly sheep?

Driving a pig to market is not considered an exhilarating pastime; but making a flock of sheep—with lambs—go the way they don't want to go in a blinding snow-storm, is, of all tasks, the most heart-breaking. The sheep can see no reason why, contrary to custom, they should be brought from the fields where their breakfast of roots is usually served to the farm where apparently there is nothing but snow to eat; so they oppose a passive resistance, and on a path ten inches wide, through snow three feet deep, a passive resistance is difficult to overcome.

At last, Mr. Godbeer, with a basket of sliced mangel, manages to conciliate the leading file—and the flock are safely housed. The storm continues to rage with unabated fury throughout the day. In the afternoon, as our stock of bread is exhausted, I volunteer to go into the town for a fresh supply; the road is impracticable, but by striking across the fields I can get to the railway embankment, and follow the line to the station which is but a short distance from the town. No fear of being run over—the engine is stabled in its shed, and the carriages lie idle in a siding; there will be no trains to-day. The station-master, his legs encased in sturdy flannel bandages, is pacing the deserted platform; instead of reproving me for trespass, he helps me up with a friendly hand, and says, cheerily, "You have had a rough walk, sir." The little road which leads up from the station is blocked, but I scramble over the potato gardens, where the porters grow their scanty crops, and reach the baker's shop; it is snowed up, but I force my way in. The baker, an ex-petty officer of the Royal Navy, and presumably an expert in storms, sympathises with my plight—I am sheeted in frozen snow, and my coat is frozen as hard as a board. Although trains have ceased running, the telegraph is still working to some places, and I send a message to explain my detention. Then with my sack of bread over my shoulder I stagger back through the snow; it is difficult to breathe, so piercing is the gale, and so incessant the mitraille which pelts into my eyes. I feel that, if by some mishap I should lose my footing in the snow, it might be difficult to struggle out. At midnight the storm ceases.

The next day is bright and sunny. The sight presented by the snow-drifts is marvellous and beautiful. Across the high road are a succession of what, in military parlance, would be termed "traverses," mounds of snow from fifteen to twenty feet high, extending from hedge to hedge, and of course stopping all traffic. The fields have, in many cases, been swept nearly clear by the force of the hurricane, and the snow has been piled up wherever it has encountered an obstruction.

The rails near the station are being cleared, and an engine takes a truckful of porters towards Newton to assist in operations further up the line. There are no deep cuttings, and, compared with our neighbours, we have been fortunate; so by the following day I am able to take train for Newton Abbott.

My destination is soon reached; and I terminate my experiences of the great blizzard of 1891 — the most memorable snow-storm which has occurred in Devonshire within living memory. Memorable for its unseasonableness, for the suddenness with which it appeared, its severity while it lasted, and the total interruption it caused to traffic by road and rail.

A MEDIÆVAL PHYSICIAN.

An old chronicler tells the following quaint story of a couple of physicians who were attached to the household of Louis the Ninth. One was called Deroldus, and was afterwards Bishop of Amiens; the other, whose name has not been preserved, let us designate the Salernitan, because he was a native of Salerno. Between these men of science arose a discussion, which was not slow to degenerate into a quarrel —Deroldus taunting the Salernitan with ignorance because he was unable to explain the Greek names by which certain branches of medicine are distinguished. The scientific breast, as we all know, is not inaccessible to the passions of jealousy and revenge; and the Salernitan, smarting under the contempt of his adversary, resolved to inflict upon him mortal punishment.

If in those days of darkness the practitioners of the so-called healing art were but ill provided with curative agents, they were by no means in want of those which kill; and one day, when the Salernitan found himself at the King's table with Deroldus, he secretly anointed his finger with some deadly preparation, and contrived to slip it into the soup in which both of them steeped their pieces of bread. No sooner had Deroldus tasted of the dish than he was seized with a qualm, and at once understood that he had been poisoned. Thanks, however, to the virtues of the antidote, which he kept by him, in three days he was out of danger. Then came his turn for revenge, which his superior skill enabled him to render more effective. Meeting his rival again at the Royal table, he concealed a powder between his little finger and forefinger, and sprinkled it cunningly over his viands. The Salernitan vainly exhausted his scant store of medical knowledge in endeavouring to neutralise the effects of the poison, and was compelled to seek the aid of Deroldus, who, at the earnest request of the King, consented to "doctor" him, but so contrived that the malady was driven into one of the feet of the Salernitan, and compelled him to submit to amputation.

This anecdote, whether true or false, is useful as an illustration of the light in which the mediæval physician was regarded by the mediæval world. There was not much belief in his power to heal; but there was a pretty general belief in his power to kill. Perhaps even in our own time public opinion, if it could be honestly tested, would be found to run in the same groove. What Voltaire said to the young student about putting drugs of which he knew little into a body of which he knew less, is constantly repeated in substance, if not in the same epigrammatic form. And even to this day we chuckle over the old, old joke of Dr. Radcliffe and the paviour: how that the testy physician found fault with the work of a man who had repaired the pavement in front of his door, accusing him of having endeavoured to hide its defects by covering it with earth; and how that the paviour's reply smote the doctor, as it were, under the fifth rib: "Oh, doctor, doctor, mine is not the only bad work the earth covers!"

The jests levelled at "the faculty" on the stage—where, as in our novels, the medicine-man, down to a comparatively recent period, is always made a ludicrous or contemptible figure—the coarse exaggerations of our caricaturists and satire-mongers, all, with more or less directness, perpetuate the mediæval tradition. That, under a solemn aspect and a portentous jargon of bad Latin and worse English, he concealed an enormous ignorance; that his formal wig and gold-headed cane were part of his stock-in-trade; that his sleek and fawning complacency when feeling the pulse of a rich patient contrasted strangely with his cold indifference towards the poor; that his first and last consideration was his fee, which he would snatch even from the rigid fingers of the dead—such is the eighteenth century conception of the physician, as recorded in literature, whether English, French, or Spanish. And, as I have hinted, this prejudice is not wholly dead yet. We pay, or, most of us pay, no account so grudgingly as that of the doctor's, "for medical advice and attendance."

While we swallow his pills, powders, and potions we cherish a lurking disbelief in their utility; at all events, we chafe at the charges made for them, and, when we begin to recover, at their quantity as well as their quality! By-and-by, when we are out and about and have almost forgotten our malady, we grow more and more persuaded of their absolute worthlessness. "We should have got well just as soon without all that confounded stuff. He dosed us in order to run up that interminable account of his!" These are our charitable conclusions; but they do not prevent us from sending again for the physician when baby cuts his first tooth or we have our next attack of gout.

If this old idea of the physician, the venerable tradition handed down from generation to generation, be no longer justifiable, we must own that in mediæval times there was ample excuse for it. The dilatory progress of the Sciences, compared with the swift developement of the Arts, has been a frequent subject of comment and explanation; but of all these belated Sciences, that of Medicine lagged the most behind. Something was known of Anatomy, it is true; but of the different aspects of Physiology, of the various characteristics of disease, of the phenomena of cerebral action, of morbid conditions of the system—in a word, of almost everything which makes Medicine a Science, and not a chaos of mere conjecture and guess-work, little was understood by the most eminent professors. The writings of Jerome Cardan, for example, are full of the most grotesque absurdities. In truth, it would be possible to collect from the learned treatises of mediæval physicians a farrago of comicalities which would move one to inextinguishable laughter, but for the reflection that the authors of these wild and ridiculous statements held in their hands the lives of their contemporaries.

There was that celebrated practitioner, Gilbertus Anglicus. He professed to cure lethargy—a common complaint in those days of heavy drinking and coarse feeding—by fastening a sow in the patient's bed! Well, the remedy was probably effectual. In cases of apoplexy he administered a mixture of ant's eggs, scorpion's oil, and lion's flesh; but where did he get the last-named ingredient? Benedetto Vittore prescribed roast cat, with goose-grease and spice, as a remedy for convulsions. Paracelsus made the moss off a dead man's skull—usnea humana—the basis of his once famous weapon-salve. It was he who revelled in the theory of Signatures. To discover the virtues of plants, we must study, he said, their anatomy and cheiromancy; for the leaves are their hands, and the lines traced on them enable us to detect their latent virtues. Thus, the anatomy of the Chelidonium points it out as a remedy for jaundice. In the corolla of the Euphrasia, or eye-bright, is a black dot; from this signature we may conclude that it will furnish an excellent remedy for all diseases of the eye. The blotched, oval leaves of the Lungwort have a certain resemblance to the surface of the human lung; obviously it is an admirably good thing for lung complaints. Between the spotted stem of the Viper's Bugloss and the viper may be detected a dim likeness; therefore, the mediæval doctors affirm that it is able to heal the wound inflicted by a viper's bite. And Gerard, going a step or two farther, says: "Its virtues are so forcible, that the herb only thrown before the scorpion, or any other venomous beast, causeth them to be without force or strength to hurt; insomuch that they cannot move or stir until it be taken away."

These remarks will serve as an introduction to a brief sketch of a remarkable English mediæval physician, Dr. Andrew Boorde, a man who, for many reasons, deserves to be better known than he is, and should have had a fairer fate than to be perpetuated in the unflattering sobriquet of "Merry Andrew," now generally applied to a clown or buffoon.

"His book," says Fuller, alluding to his "Compendious Regiment of Health," "contains plain matter under hard words, and was accounted such a jewel in that age that it was printed, cum privilegio ad imprimendum solum, for William Middleton, Anno 1548."

Anthony Wood speaks of him as "a noted poet, a witty and ingenious person, and an excellent physician of his time." Well, he was "a witty and ingenious person"; and I hope his patients found him "an excellent physician"; but that he was a noted poet nothing will induce me to admit. Of the true poetic faculty he had not the smallest particle; of metrical form, and the felicity of pertinent expression, he was as ignorant as the contributors to the Poets' Corner of a "local paper"; his productions never rise even to the sorry standard of Skelton's jingling rhymes. No physician, by the way, has ever been a poet; though physicians have often written verse. Between Apollo and Æsculapius there is no kinship.

Andrew Boorde or Boule was a native of—according to some authorities—Boord Hill, in Holmesdale, near Cuckfield, or—according to others—Pevensey. He was born late in the fifteenth century, was educated in the trivium and quadrivium at Oxford; and admitted into the Carthusian brotherhood—while under the age required by its statutes—in the convent in London, afterwards converted into the Charterhouse. In 1521, he was dispensed from the monastic vows in order that he might become Suffragan Bishop of Chichester; but he never acted in that capacity, nor in any other which implied the "cure of souls," preferring to undertake the cure of bodies. For this purpose he visited the various Continental schools, and also wandered far and wide—visiting even Africa — to gratify his rambling head and inconstant mind. Who provided the funds, I know not; but it seems probable that his family were of good estate. He returned to England in 1830, fully equipped as a physician—according to the standard of the time—and with so good a reputation for skill and experience that he was at once called in to prescribe for the Duke of Norfolk. This he did, so much to the Duke's satisfaction that he recommended him to Henry the Eighth, who, if he did not relish his physic, liked his quips and jokes, and distinguished him by his Royal favour.

But Boorde could never be at rest. A spirit of wandering was upon him, and in 1532 he paid a second visit to the Continent, and at Montpelier took the degree of Doctor of Physic. On his return we trace him to Pevensey, and Winchester, and London, where, in 1534, he was confined in the Charterhouse Prison—for some cause unknown — probably for some inopportune jest; obtaining his release through the good offices of Thomas Cromwell. Late in 1535 he was again abroad—apparently, from indications in his correspondence, in the South of France and in Catalonia—and in 1536 we find him practising his profession in Scotland. That was not a time when Englishmen were popular across the Border. We had burned Scotch villages and taken Scotch towns, and these rough attentions are hardly calculated to win goodwill. So Dr. Boorde discovered. "It is naturally given, or else," he writes, "it is of a devilish disposition of a Scottish man, not to love or favour an Englishman. And I, being there, and dwelling among them, was hated; but my sciences and other policies did keep me in favour that I did know their secrets."

I gather, from incidental allusions in his writings, that, in 1537, he was roaming through Spain, Flanders, Germany, Denmark, Italy, Greece, Palestine, and France. At Montpelier, in 1542, he wrote his "Dietary," his "Breviary of Health," and a kind of travel-record which he calls "The First Book of the Introduction of Knowledge." Returning to London in the same year, he compiled a "Treatise upon Beards." Then he disappears until 1547, when we come upon him in flourishing circumstances at Winchester. But his prosperity seems to have been naughtily obtained, for he was not only accused of some crime, but found guilty; was conveyed to London, and thrown into the Fleet Prison, where he fell ill with a mortal sickness, and closed his wild, wandering, and restless life in April, 1549.

I am not inclined to believe the tradition that his love of fairs and sports procured him the nickname of "Merry Andrew"; if applied to him at all, it must have been in allusion to his verbal pleasantries. That he might have qualified as punster I infer from the rich humour of his translation of his good old English names into Andreas Perforatus—that is, Andrew Bored, or Perforated. That he could be shrewd in his mirth, as well as gay in his gravity, I judge from his writings, which, if they contain a good many silly things, contain also some wise ones—and what more can you say of Ibsen or Tolstoi? The portrait drawn of him by Mr. F. J. Furnivall is certainly more flattering than I myself should draw, but it is an attractive one, and a genial; and as Mr. Furnivall is not always so lenient in his estimates, I think the reader will not be displeased if I set it anew in this framework:

"A man at times of great seriousness and earnestness, yet withal of a pleasant humour; reproving his countrymen's vices, and ridiculing their follies, exhorting them to prepare for their latter end, and yet to enliven their present days by honest mirth. A man eager to search out and know the truth of things, restless in that search, wandering free and often to see for himself. Yet a man bound by many of the superstitions of his time, though also free from many; not a 'lewd Popish hypocrite and ungratious priest,' as Harrison calls him, but a man genuine in his piety, as well as in his love of good ale and wine, and mirth; clever, able to take in a Scotchman; at times weak and versatile, showing off occasionally, readily helping strangers, chancing to get drunk, falling into sensual excess—yet sound at the core; a pleasant companion in many of England's most memorable days; worthy, with all his faults, of respect and regard from our Victorian time. Any one who would make him a mere Merry Andrew, or more of that than anything else, is a bigger fool than he would make Boorde."

There is a good deal of imagination in this, and Mr. Furnivall puts together so many antitheses that the portrait he composes is somewhat blurred by contradictory lights and shadows. For instance, it is difficult to understand how a man "genuine in his piety" could fall into "sensual excess"; but here we have Mr. Furnivall's word for it, and I will not contradict him.

"A man eager to search out and know the truth of things." Well, how far he succeeded, and what he taught his countrymen, we shall find, perhaps, in his books.

"A Compendious Regiment, or a Dietary of Health," was written, he tells us, to show "how a man should order himself in all manner of causes pertaining to the health of his body." Divided into forty chapters, it contains directions for building a man's house and ordering his household; for exercise, sleep, food, and drink, besides dietaries for health and sickness. As sleeplessness is one of the afflictions which nowadays puzzle our physicians, it will be interesting to note what Boorde had to say on the general subject three centuries and a half ago:

"When a man hath exercised himself in the daytime as is rehearsed, he may sleep soundly and surely in God, what chance so ever do fortune in the night. Moderate sleep is most praised, for it doth make perfect digestion; it doth nourish the blood, and doth qualify the heat of the liver; it doth stimulate, quicken, and refresh the memory; it doth restore nature, and doth quiet all the humours and pulses in man, and doth animate and comfort all the natural, and animal, and spiritual powers of man. . . .

"The moderation of sleep should be measured according to the natural complexion of man, and in any wise to have a respect to the strength and the debility, to age and youth, and to sickness and health of man. First, as concerning the natural complexion of man, as sanguine and choleric man, seven hours is sufficient for them. And now, considering the imbecility and weakness of nature, a phlegmatic man may sleep nine hours or more. Melancholy men may take their pleasure, for they be the receptacles and the dregs of all the other humours. . . .

"Whole men [i.e., men in health], of what age or complexion soever they be of, should take their natural rest and sleep in the night, and eschew meridional sleep. But if need shall compel a man to sleep after his meat, let him make a pause, and then let him stand, and lean and sleep against a cupboard, or else let him sit upright in a chair and sleep. Sleeping after a full stomach doth engender diverse infirmities; it doth hurt the spleen, it relaxeth the sinews, it doth engender the dropsies and the gout, and doth make a man look evil-coloured."

And now for some directions for the relief of the victims of insomnia.

"To bedward be you merry, or have merry company about you, so that, to bedward, no anger nor heaviness, sornes nor pensifulness do trouble or disquiet you. To bedward and also in the morning, have a fire in your chamber, to waste and consume the evil vapours within the chamber, for the breath of man may putrefy the air within the chamber.

"In the night, let the windows of your house, specially of your chamber, be closed; when you be in your bed, lie a little while on your left side, and sleep on your right side. And when you do wake of your first sleep, then sleep on the left side; and, look, so often as you do awake, so often turn yourself in the bed from one side to the other.

"To sleep on the back upright is utterly to be abhorred. When that you do sleep, let not your neck, neither your shoulders, neither your hands, nor feet, nor no other place of your body, lie bare undiscovered. Sleep not with an empty stomach, nor sleep not after that you have eaten meat, one hour or two after."

Most of this is sensible enough, and for a mediæval physician is worthy of all praise.

Having given an example of Dr. Andrew Boorde's serious way of seeking after and expounding truth, I must now present a specimen of his humour, which strikes me as little inferior to what we meet with in some comic papers. I take it from "The Breviary of Health," and strongly recommend it to the attention of young folk generally:

"☞ This chapter doth show of an evil fever, the which doth cumber young persons, named the Fever burden.

"Among all the fevers I had almost forgotten the Fever burden, with the which many young men, young women, maidens, and other young persons be sore infected nowadays.

"¶ THE CAUSE OF THIS FEVER.

"¶ This Fever doth come naturally, or else by evil and slothful bringing up. If it come by nature, then this fever is incurable, for it can never out of the flesh that is bred in the bone; if it come by slothful bringing up, it may be holpen by diligent labour.

"¶ A REMEDY.

"☞ There is nothing so good for the Fever burden as is Unguentum baculinum, that is to say, Take me a stick or wand of a yard of length and more, and let it be as great as a man's finger, and with it anoint the back and the shoulders well, morning and evening, and do this xxi days; and if this Fever will not be holpen in that time, let them beware of wagging in the gallows; and whiles they do take their medicine, put in lubberwort into their pottage, and beware of knavering [havering, chattering?] about their hurt; and if this will not help, send them then to Newgate, for if you will not, they will bring themselves thither at length."

I fear that Dr. Boorde's pithy deliverance on Drunkenness would hardly satisfy Sir Wilfrid Lawson. This is what he says:

"☞ The 110th chapter doth show of Drunkenness.

"Ebrietas is the Latin word. In Greek it is named Macthæ. In English it is named Drunkenness.

"¶ THE CAUSE OF THIS IMPEDIMENT.

"☞ This impediment doth come either by weakness of the brain, or else by some great hurt in the head, or of too much riot.

"¶ A REMEDY.

"☞ If it do come by a hurt in the head, there is no remedy but patience of all parts. If it do come by debility of the brain and head, drink in the morning a dish of milk, use a syrup named Sirupus acetosus de pruinis, and use laxative meats, and purgatives, if need do require, and beware of superfluous drinking, specially of wine and strong ale and beer, and if any man do perceive that he is drunk, let him take a vomit with water and oil, or with a feather, or a rosemary branch, or else with his finger, or else let him go to his bed to sleep."

On the whole, Boorde's "Breviary of Health" is a book worth reading, as characteristic of the man, of his time, and of his profession.

A GARRISON ROMANCE.

BY MRS. LEITH ADAMS (MRS. LAFFAN).

Author of "Louis Draycott," "Geoffrey Stirling," "Aunt Hepsy's Foundling," etc.

CHAPTER XII.

"THE SOUND OF VIOLINS."

KATE CARBONEL, wife of Fred Carbonel, Captain in the 193rd, was what is called a "very popular woman with the youngsters." People in general used to speak of Mrs. Carbonel as "Pretty Mrs. Carbonel." That was the light in which she struck the world in general; and the world accepted her prettiness with acclamation, because she herself gloried in it not at all.

Nothing pleased Fred Carbonel better than to see this pretty wife of his admired and made much of; surrounded by the "youngsters" like a flower about which butterflies continually do hover; flitting here and there in a ball-room in all the graceful abandon of supreme enjoyment, her laugh the merriest, her glance the brightest, and her heart ever-loving, ever true—all his own.

On the occasion with which this chapter opens, she was going to pour out tea in her own cosy drawing-room for Ginger and the Honourable Bob. Dressed all in white, her black hair sleek and glossy as the raven's wing, Mrs. Carbonel was, in truth, a pleasant sight to see; but Mr. Dacre was in no humour to be charmed. He might have said with Hamlet, "Man delights me not—nor woman either." Ginger was what he described as in a very low state, and, in his deep dejection, looked more like a callow duckling than ever.

"I'm in a deuced state, I weally am—give you my word," said the Honourable Bob, when the footman had duly retired, leaving the little spirit-kettle hissing and singing on the round table.

"By Jove," said Ginger, making saucer-eyes, and pulling the amber fluff on his upper lip, "so am I."

"But what's the matter?" said Mrs. Carbonel, brightly, as she lifted the lid of the tea-pot to see how the brew was getting on. "Have you fallen in love again, Mr. Saint John; and has she proved unkind?"

"Do you mean to say you don't know?" said the Honourable Bob, with an awe-struck air.

"Do you mean to say you haven't heard?" echoed Ginger, in a high crescendo.

"No, no; I have heard nothing," said Mrs. Carbonel, grave enough now, but comforted to feel that it couldn't possibly be anything wrong with Fred, or they wouldn't tell her like that. "I have had a bad head-ache all day, I have not been out. Please tell me what it is quickly. I am a kind of person who can't bear to be kept waiting for anything. I don't like to be 'prepared' for a thing, either. I like to be told right out."

"Well," said Mr. Dacre, solemnly, "Miss Graham is engaged to . . . . Mr. Jones."

It was a good thing that Mrs. Carbonel had already replaced the tea-pot lid; otherwise it would certainly have been smashed to atoms.

"I do not believe it," she said, sitting down, and paling so visibly that Ginger was frightened out of his small wits.

The Honourable Bob answered by his usual asseveration.

"Give you my word. The Major himself told me. He is radiant; more so than usual, I mean. Mrs. Musters knows it, and has gone to call."

"I expect she put on her bonnet right away," added Ginger, trying to give Mrs. Carbonel time to recover herself.

"It can't be true—it can't be true," she said, clasping her hands, and forgetting all about the tea; "it seems too dreadful—too unnatural. Oh, Mr. Dacre, do you not think there may be some mistake?"

But even as she spoke conviction came to Mrs. Carbonel; the echo of Polly's cry was in her ears—"There's the childer to think of—the childer to think of." Then came the memory of a white, resolute face, and the words, slowly and deliberately uttered: "I am glad I was there; I am glad we went to the huts to-day. It will be something to think of for a long, long time to come. . . ."

"It is the—boys," said Mrs. Carbonel, in a smothered sort of voice; "the boys and—the Major."

"Right you are—give you my word," said the Honourable Bob, and there were tears in the honest fellow's eyes; "I said so to Ginger, here—didn't I, Ginger?—as we came across the square."

Ginger nodded his head like a mandarin. He was better able to nod than to speak just then.

The Honourable Bob would have been very glad if he could have comforted Mrs. Carbonel by saying there "might be some mistake" as to Mabel Graham's engagement; but he could not do so honestly. He could only back up Ginger, who straightway descanted wildly and disjointedly on the fact of Mr. Jones being such a "good fellow," by muttering: "Good old Jones," and then try to divert Mrs. Carbonel's attention by pleading for a cup of tea to quench his raging thirst.

"Good?" said Mrs. Carbonel, with a gesture of supreme aggravation; "oh, yes—good enough—good as gold—I doubt not—but still—can you say that you think he is fit to marry a girl like Mabel Graham?"

The little dark-haired woman faced them both with a flash in her eyes, and the red rose burning in her cheek. There she stood, fair and defiant; then she hurled at them the sharpest arrow in her quiver.

"Do you know that Captain Carbonel thinks very, very highly of Mabel? I really tremble to think what he will say when he knows that she is going to marry—such an—outsider!"

Yes; they were obliged to own that. However good he might be, however exactly the term "Good old Jones" might define him, there could be no doubt that the magnate of Lombard Street came under that unpleasant definition. It had been delightful to know him; to ask him to dine at mess; to dine with him at the hotel; to listen to his quaint stories of the past—of his mother and the "gig," of that old hostelrie the "Rosy Jane," where he sang like a young piping bull-finch, charming the attention of all listeners—his droll tales of Dodson—these things had been enjoyable truly, and the man's simple goodness and unpretending ways had won all hearts; but to marry him. . . .

That was quite another line to take; they all felt that.

"The Wifies have got the route," said the Honourable Bob, suddenly, "they go to Toronto in the 'Himalaya,' and you know—there is Rowan. . . ."

At this they were all silent, sipping their tea, and looking at one another.

The words seemed to Mrs. Carbonel like a gleam from a lantern cast, all at once, into a dark place.

How she remembered a thousand little signs and signals; a thousand pretty looks, and happy smiles; a thousand tender flittings of colour in a girl's fair cheek. Ah, me! the pity of it all—the pity of it.

Then, like a flash—for she was a shrewd little woman, was Kate Carbonel—it came to her how things were; it came to her that a tragedy was enacting in their midst, a bitter, cruel, yet heroic tragedy, in which a woman's heart was being trampled under foot.

"It is very, very sad," she said, answering her own thoughts. Then she caught herself up. It would not do to couple Mabel's name with Charley Rowan's. "I mean about—Mr. Jones," she added now, hurriedly.

"Yes, isn't it?" said Ginger. "The news has run through the regiment like a skewer, don't you know?"

"Will they be at the 'Queen's' to-night, do you think?"

"Yes," said the Honourable Bob. "We met Mr. Jones, and he said they were going."

How discordant to Mrs. Carbonel sounded the words that told of the identification of this "nouveau riche" with the whole of the Clutterbuck family! "He" said "they" were going. And yet it was only natural under the circumstances.

"He looked——" said Ginger; then speech failed him—Ginger was never very strong at description.

He made figures in the air with his disengaged hand—the other held his tea-cup—which Mrs. Carbonel understood to be clouds, and to convey the idea that Mr. Jones imagined himself in a sort of heaven; as indeed he did.

"Deuced," said the Honourable Bob, assisting in the description according to his lights.

Then both the young fellows saw that their hostess did not want to hear any more about Mr. Jones.

"You will be there, of course?" suggested Ginger.

"Yes; I am going with Mrs. Lindsay."

"How many dances will you give me?" said the boy. "I'm not a clever fellow, you know, though I have been to Eton; but I can dance, can't I, now?"

"Indeed you can," said Mrs. Carbonel, with a winning smile; "and I will give you three — all waltzes. That string-band of the 'Queen's' is too delicious to dance to——"

"As you never show favour or affection to any special individual, Mrs. Carbonel, may I have three also?" put in the Honourable Bob.

So it was settled, and the friends parted.

"I feel as if some one were walking over my grave," said the warm-hearted little woman to herself, with a shudder, when she was left to herself. "I should like to have a good cry, but that it would make my eyes as red as ferrets'. Mabel knew what I should feel about this, and that is why she did not write to tell me. . . . Whatever will Fred say?"

This last reflection seemed to her the most appalling item, in the whole matter, and likely to be the most trying for Mabel Graham.

Meanwhile, over at the house by the sea, Mabel was looking at a star that lay in a bed of white satin—a star so brilliant that it seemed to gather into itself all the shine and shimmer of the light that filtered through the half-closed bars of the jalousies; a star that must be set in the coils of her red-brown hair that night. Jim was at hand, you may be sure. He had his hands in his pockets, crammed as far down as possible. He had his mouth pursed up into a wonderful pucker. His eyes were round as gooseberries.

"It shines, don't it?" he said, doubtfully. "It looks like that bracelet of Mrs. Lindsay's," he said, after a long and curious contemplation of the shiny thing.

Then he looked very grave, and slipped his arm about his sister's neck.

"Mabel," he said, and a little twitching came at the corner of his mouth, "did Mr. Jones give you that? Did he bring it when he was here this afternoon?"

"Yes, Jim."

The two words were uttered by lips very pale and set, and Mabel's eyes had a strange look in them, which made poor Jim want to put his hand over them. He felt like that once before, when he saw a dead woman's eyes staring, staring.

"Mabel," said the boy — and it was strange what a solemn look the thin, usually elfish face took—"tell me, is it Mr. Jones that's going to take us all—instead of Captain Rowan, I mean? Is that why I'm to keep the safe secret always and always?"

"Yes, Jim."

The same words; the same look.

Jim's heart was bursting; he was puzzled, and—as a puzzled child always is—afraid of he knew not what.

"Oh, Mabel dear!" he cried, catching her with both arms this time. "I dare say he'll do. But I love Charley Rowan, I do, indeed; and he loves me."

Mabel had said to herself that she must be armed at all points against such occasions as the present. She had said that to herself very often. But, in spite of being thus on guard, Jim very nearly broke her down, with the simple pathos of his words.

Might she not, too, have said, "I love him, I do, indeed, and he loves me?" Did not her heart in truth echo that cry?

It was just as well, perhaps, that at this juncture the Major's musical voice was heard downstairs calling urgently for Jim, and just mentioning the fact that the indisposed sea-gull had made its appearance in the drawing-room.

Off flew Jim; down came the rest of the "scramble" from the heights above; and Mabel was left alone to commune with that sad companion—her own full heart.

The "Queen's" regiment was famous for doing everything in A1 "form." Seldom had a more popular corps been quartered in the Island of Sunshine. Its C.O. was voted a "brick" by all sorts and conditions of men; its officers were gallant fellows, every one; its ladies socially attractive—indeed, it was sad indeed to think how sorely they would be missed. And now the news that the "Brigade" had also got the route, made things worse still. Where were there to be found fellows so popular as Charley Rowan and Vernon Halkett?

It is the night of the "Queen's" ball. The soft plash of oars in the quiet water—the shining of a myriad of stars overhead — the exquisite strains of a perfect string-band; flowers everywhere —nooks and crannies which were only tents set up here and there on the ramparts, and filled with palms and flowers, but which looked like fairy bowers. And all the starshine, all the many lamps—shaded and coloured so as to befit the fairy-bowers aforesaid—shimmering down upon "fair women and brave men," upon sweet and gentle faces, pretty gowns and uniforms of scarlet, green, and blue—in a word, that kaleidoscope of colour to be seen only at a military ball. The long room, its walls adorned with groups of bayonets, and draped with banners; its floor polished and smoothed into a state of dangerous yet delightful slipperiness; and at one end, where some low divans and cosy chairs make a sort of little drawing-room, the genial Colonel of the "Queen's," and his stately wife — receiving — or — as the Honourable Bob would have it, "receptioning" the company. Not quite such a grand company as you might see at the Palace gatherings; or, perhaps, at Admiralty House; but a gayer, freer one than either, with less formality and more ripple of laughter, and friendly jest. The soft splash outside makes a continual murmur, as boat after boat disembarks its gay freight.

There is Mrs. Carbonel with the Senior Major and Mrs. Lindsay—Mrs. Carbonel all in pale rose floating about like a pink cloud among the rest; very fair for the eye to rest upon, but with a look of sadness, too, upon her pretty face, and an alert and restless look as well, very foreign to her usual light-hearted gaiety.

"I hope you have good news of Carbonel?" said Major Lindsay, ready to fancy some passing worry about "Fred" might account for the cloud on his wife's face.

"I should not be here if there were anything—if there were the least thing wrong with Fred," she answered, irritably, and more than ever unlike herself; then, with outstretched hand, and pleading smile, and not without the twinkle of tears in her eyes either, "Forgive me—I think I am what they call 'fey,' to-night——"

"I think you are," he said, after rather a grave look at her face.

"George, you are being unkind," said Mrs. Lindsay; "why shouldn't she have her moods as well as other people? You had the megrims yourself yesterday—you know you had——"

So the subject passed away; but not, alas—the mood.

Mrs. Carbonel's partners found her—with a sort of remorse, though, in having an ungenerous thought of such a general favourite—just a trifle heavy. During their most brilliant conversational efforts, she showed herself distraite; and her pretty eyes wandered hither and thither instead of being focussed upon the speaker as they should have been.

How the sound of violins fills all the air; floating the spirit upwards on a sea of sound. How the little figures swoop and sway, and the kaleidoscope shifts and changes all its many colours!

But here is something more of the "earth earthy."

Mrs. Musters—like a full-blown rose, or a full-blown cabbage—seated on an ottoman, which she fills, indeed, to repletion, and airing a grievance. Mrs. Musters always has a grievance; and the good doctor is always trying to tone down the asperities of the same. She is talking to a tall, tallow-faced man, with a big, black moustache, who looks bored to extinction, and the Honourable Bob is gloating over the pair, while one or two look on in a state of high, but suppressed, delight.

"I tell you the man insulted us; he called us 'foreigners.' Oh, yes, I know it meant foreigners, because I looked the word out in the dictionary afterwards. Now if there is one thing I pride myself upon—as I often and often say—it is upon being English to the backbone."

"But you see, Mrs. Musters," said the Honourable Bob, in a deeply impressive manner, "you were in Italy, and—to the Italians. . . ."

"I don't care where I was," replied the irate lady on the divan, "that makes no difference. You are what you are, not where you are; and I say it was a deliberate insult, and I shall never think well of the Italians again—not for all their pictures and things."

"I wouldn't care if I were you, Mrs. Musters," said the Honourable Bob, with an earnest look, and stroking his moustache in a meditative manner; "it's all their nonsense, don't you know? By Jove, no one could take you for anything but English—give you my word."

Mrs. Musters looked radiant; then doubtful. If she had caught even the shadow of a grin on Mr. Saint John's face, she would have been sure that Mr. Dacre was "up to some of his tricks"; but no mute at a funeral, at five shillings an hour, could have looked graver than that young warrior.

A sudden, emphatic "By Jove!" from the Honourable Bob made every one start.

"Why, it's Mabel," said Mrs. Musters, a great, glad smile spreading — it had plenty of room to spread—over her speaking countenance; "it's Mabel and Mr. Jones, and she's got a diamond star in her hair—that wasn't bought for an old song; but I must say, I really must say, it does not look consistent with a white tarlatan at eighteen-and-six."

Now, as a matter of fact, nothing could have looked more lovely than Mabel Graham as she walked slowly through the ball-room on her father's arm. There was a pensive air about her beauty to-night that gave it all the charm of a fair landscape seen through the softened light of evening. The plain white robe, the solitary star gleaming amid the soft ripples of her hair, idealised her; the transparent pallor of her cheeks might have told a tale of suffering endured, of an ordeal passed through; but it gave an infinite charm to her whole personality.

But that was the worst of Mrs. Musters. She was like a bit of egg-shell in your omelette—she spoiled everything.

But Mabel was approaching; there was no time for further comment; and at last even Mrs. Musters acknowledged in her heart of hearts that the girl looked transcendently lovely.

Never before—perhaps never again—did Mabel Graham look as she looked at the farewell ball given by the "Queen's Own."

As for the Major, he actually appeared to scintillate light; even his many medals seemed to shine brighter than usual; and he greeted Mrs. Musters with such distinguished grace that that good lady quite bridled and blushed, and presently trotted away on his arm in a state of bliss impossible to describe; indeed, she afterwards spoke of him as being "most pleasing and attentive," and was as blind as a bat to the fact that he had made a partisan of her from that hour, and most effectually stopped the flow of any spiteful remarks which she might have made as to his daughter's engagement to the City magnate.

More than this, somewhere in Mrs. Musters' ample bosom, for all her snappy little ways, beat a woman's heart; and something in the girl's gentle sadness, in her sweet, pathetic face that night touched the spring—in truth, somewhat hard to find—and the door of that heart flew open and let her in.

"Geoffrey," said Mrs. Musters, as she and the Doctor were going home together, some hours later on, "I do believe Mabel Graham is going to marry that Mr. Jones, to help her family."

"Do you indeed, my dear?" replied the Doctor, blowing his nose so violently that you might have thought he really would have blown it off; "do you indeed?"

"Yes, I do," said Mrs. Musters. "And what's more, I think he's very fond of her—as fond as you were of me, Geoffrey, when first you married me."

"I'm always fond of you, my dear," he answered, taking her little fat hand in his. "Only, you know, I sometimes wish——"

And to this unfinished sentence his wife made no reply.

Mr. Jones watched Mabel about with worshipping eyes. There were moments in which he felt as if he himself and all around him were but the shadows of a dream; as if he might wake up at any moment and find himself in the counting-house with Dodson; moments also in which he had to draw a long, deep breath, and let a thought, that was, in truth, a prayer of thanksgiving, wing its way heavenwards from his full heart—his heart full even to overflowing.

Happiness is, I suppose, becoming to most of us. Amphlett Jones had never realised before how beautiful a thing life was; what possibilities it held; what a gift it was to be bestowed on man. He had known that you could make a great deal of money, if you worked hard, and were fortunate. He knew that you might rescue the fallen, help the poor, the sick, the weary and heavy-laden, and that there was content and joy to be found in these works of mercy; but of this deep, personal sense of happiness, this wonderful world of tenderness, this losing oneself in another, he had had no knowledge.

How beautiful his darling looked, how pure, how fair! How far beyond all other beauty in that room where there were so many fair, her beauty was! What was it little Phil had called her when she came down ready dressed, and they were all waiting at the foot of the stairs to receive her? His "fairy pin'cess"? Yes, that was it. Oh, little Phil! how sweet was this your love for your sweet sister! Never, never, little Phil, should your life lack any joy or good that wealth could give. What a sight it was to see you lifted up in Joseppina's arms to kiss that loving sister, and hear you told to put your little hands behind your back, lest you should be tempted to tumble the "fairy pin'cess" in the process! Then there was Jim's, "Oh, I say, you know, I wish I was big enough to go to parties, I do." Jim was a sharp lad; he should have opportunities; plenty of "scope" should be Jim's, never fear. How kind everybody was to him, all coming to him and congratulating him; and Mabel's partners—he loved to see his fairy princess dance; he had no petty jealousies, no mean, grasping spites—bringing her back to him between the dances, as if it were quite the correct thing to do. . . .

No doubt they thought it strange that such a pretty creature should take up with him—the toiling, moiling merchant of the restless, reeking city; but then they did not know how dear and fond he held her in his heart of hearts. How could they, indeed, when they had only the outside to judge from, and truly he was not much to look at? All that was artistic in his nature—and that was no little—was stirred and pleased by the music and the pale, bright star-shine, the soft whirl and whirr of the dancers' feet, the bright, glancing figures, and the scent of the myriad flowers. . . .

He had reached the culmination of his happiness; the "high top-gallant of his joy."

It is a great thing for any of us to say that we have even once lived in the fulness of intensity. Amphlett Jones lived this full and perfect life while he listened to the "music of the violins," under the star-gemmed sky of a Malta night.

It was a poor little hour; but it was his own. A poor possession, perhaps, but precious exceedingly; a bright and glorious light, even if doomed to fade and die.

There was one person in that assemblage who had not come forward in any way to the hero of the hour—for there could be no doubt that the shipping merchant was that

—one person who had made no offering of congratulations, offered up no incense at his shrine; and that was pretty Mrs. Carbonel.

As the evening wore on, the trouble in her face deepened. She "sat out" several dances, to the amazement of all beholders. Look at her, as the centre of a group, her tiny, daintily-shod foot tapping the ground. Impatiently she argues with a distressed "Queen's" man that, having promised to dance the waltz now just beginning is no manner of reason why she should do it.

"You see, I have your name down," he urges with persistence.

"Very likely; I don't attempt to deny it, nor yet to account for it. Only, I am not going to dance."

"Katie," said Mrs. Lindsay, sailing past on the arm of the "Queen's" C.O., "you are being very rude to-night."

"Yes, I know," she answers, with a little, hysterical sort of catch in her breath. Then she turns the innocent shining of her eyes up to her would-be partner: "Please do not be angry with me; I am out of sorts—peevish, anything you will."

He is vanquished, draws a chair to her side, and they begin to chat.

But all at once her thoughts seem to wander.

"Tell me," she says, "what is this thing they are playing? What an eerie, uncanny swing there is about it. One's very heart seems to rise to the swell of it."

"It is a new waltz, just out from England. It is called 'The Mabel.'"

She starts at this, and is then silent.

And the violins wail and cry, and the velvet-soft notes of the 'cello keep time and rhythm.

"I shall have to put my fingers in my ears if this goes on," she says, and her companion sees, with some dread, that the tears are standing in her eyes. "It is a dreadful tune. It is like a Banshee crying out in the night—it is. . . ."

Then Mrs. Carbonel stops suddenly, and the tears are scorched up in a moment by the flash that lights up her whole face, while the little hand that holds her fan is clenched so tight that the delicate sticks of carved ivory strain and crack.

She is intently watching a couple who move in perfect swing and time—move as one creature—to the sound of the violins and the dull thud of the 'cellos—Captain Rowan and Mabel Graham.

But has ever any one seen Charley Rowan look like that? The close-fitting mess-jacket of Lincoln-green shows up the deathly pallor of his face; his eyes, full of a sombre fire, are half-closed, and sunken in their sockets, as though from long and sleepless nights of cruel vigil. The trim, black moustache shadows his mouth, but you feel that the lips are white and set.

As to Mabel——

"She will fall—she will faint—she cannot bear it: his arm round her—her head so near his breast; and this dreadful music. Oh, Mabel, Mabel, my poor girl!"

Thus ran Mrs. Carbonel's thoughts. It costs her an effort not to give them tongue. She looks round.

"Where is—Mr. Jones?"

She just catches a glimpse of his sturdy figure passing through an archway of flowers and greenery that leads to the refreshment-room, while, leaning on his arm, is the portly wife of the General commanding the Brigade.

"He won't get rid of her for twenty minutes, at least," thinks Kate Carbonel. And then one swift glance round shows her those two most miserable ones have also disappeared from the dancing-room.

"Take me on to the ramparts," she says to the man beside her, who is furtively watching her with some amazement, and wondering to himself if this pretty little woman has some small, innocent "affair" on hand during the absence of her liege lord, and if he himself is playing the part of what some people call "old gooseberry," by which thought he does the grossest injustice to Mrs. Carbonel, as we know.

How lovely is the night, how bewitching, how perfect, out on the ramparts, where the silver sea laps and murmurs against the venerable stones! How wonderful the moonlight; the moving head-lights, like stars, below; the thousand, thousand lamps of heaven above! And over all, and through all, that heart-broken refrain, that cry of the violins, that voice of music that seems to have within it a beating, passionate heart!

And there, where a nest of flowers and ferns veils the entrance to a fairy-bower, Mrs. Carbonel catches the passing gleam of a white dress, the shadow of a man in Lincoln-green.

How her heart throbs as she does a sort of amateur sentry-go up and down before that safe retreat—that cosy nook, where only a rose-shaded lamp vies with the moonlight!

Was ever Mrs. Carbonel so charming; did she ever in her life before or afterwards make such a Delilah of herself as when she waylaid the one or two who, strolling out from the ball-room, thought to enter that sacred place—the little tent of flowers which Jim would have thought such an excellent place for "restering" in?

"What am I doing," thought Fred Carbonel's wife to herself; "what am I doing? Something that Fred would call 'not quite O. K.' But oh, if it were Fred, should I stop to think if it were O. K. or not? Should I mind if it were right or wrong? Not I! Shouldn't I bless any one who gave me a chance? Of course I should. And even now, who knows what may come of it?"

Do we, any of us, know, when we put our hand to the fate of another, and stop or spur the wheels, what the result will be; or how far-spreading — making or marring how many lives?

"I was wrong to come—weak, cowardly, unmanly, what you will; but I could not help it, Mabel. I fought, and fought; but at last I failed."

As Charley Rowan speaks, he turns full towards the shrinking woman at his side, and shows her the splendid misery of his face.

A moment they are silent, motionless, staring each at the other—passion-pale, with craving, haggard eyes. The next, Mabel is in her lover's arms, and their lips meet, crushed together in a wild, despairing kiss.

"Oh, my little girl, my little girl," he says, sobbing, as he sways her to and fro, holding her as though his arms would never let her go, "must I lose you, must I give you up?"

The woman is always the first to recover herself on these occasions; and now, Mabel Graham is no exception to the rule. She lifts her head from its dear resting-place, presses her hand a moment to her eyes, and, rising from the low divan, where they two have been sitting, answers him.

"Yes," she says, "yes; there is no other way—no other way. No other right way. I dare say—nay, I am sure—it is wrong to see you here, like this; but do not be angry with yourself."

"I am a brute!" he mutters, watching her bitter pain: the slim hands wrung in agony together; the white, heaving breast; the pleading, pitiful eyes.

"Nay," she says, with a wan little smile, "I will not have you call yourself hard names. I really think that I am—glad. It will make things easier—to have spoken to you—to have—said—good-bye."

The "sound of violins" fills all the moonlit air; the melody of the "New Waltz" rises and falls, and swells, and dies. It is as a voice speaking for these riven hearts, telling their story to the pitying night.

She keeps nothing from him; why, indeed, should she? Not even poor Polly's desolate cry, which has been such a help to her; and, by the supreme power of love, the man at last rises to the heights his dear love's little feet have already breasted. He sees that indeed there is "no other way." He spares her all bemoaning; he utters not one word of reproach against the Major—if he has "failed" a while ago, he succeeds gloriously now. He treads himself underfoot. He is noble, generous—great and good. . . .

"Charley," says the girl, clinging to him now, for the parting moment has come, "he is so good to me—so good—this must be the last, last time—good-bye; my love—my love——"

He takes her face in his two hands, and looks deep into her eyes, while tears burst from his own.

"My little sweetheart," he says, "my little sweetheart——" and they kiss each other as those who say adieu for ever in this world.

"Now—go," she says, flinging up her arms in a supreme gesture of despair. And he goes.

There is the plash of oars. You can hear it very plainly, for the violins have ceased. The music is silent. It has died away, even the music out of Mabel's life, as she listens.

There is no breeze outside, no faintest stir upon the surface of the sea.

Yet a curtain trembles as though with the breath of the wind, and a shadow passes across the rampart.

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By MARY ANGELA DICKENS.

Author of "A Mist of Error," "Her Inheritance," "A Social Success," "Kitty's Victim," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XVII.

Not the faintest allusion was made by Selma during the days that followed to what Helen had said to her on the evening that followed the matinée. She was very grave and quiet, but she was not, apparently, distressing herself, and Helen did not approach the subject again until some ten days later.

She had followed Selma to her room then, one night on going up to bed, and had lingered hesitatingly over the fire with a hot colour in her cheeks. She and Humphrey had been dining at the Cornishes'—not an unusual circumstance by any means—but this occasion was endued by Helen in all unconsciousness with an indefinable air of mystery and excitement. She moved her foot on the fender, as she warmed it now at Selma's fire, with a great show of interest and attention which betrayed a nervousness singularly unlike her, and at last she said, in a voice which was even unnaturally and aggressively matter-of-fact:

"I've got something to tell you."

Selma was standing by the dressing-table, in her dressing-gown, with her back to Helen. She did not turn round, but she said quite steadily:

"I know what it is."

"You know!" exclaimed Helen, almost as much surprised as she was relieved. "Why, how can you? I nearly told you when you went out to the theatre to-night, but I thought I would wait!"

"You did tell me all the same! I—you told me two days ago!"

Helen, who had spent the last two days in strenuous efforts to keep from her sister's knowledge the fact of which her own mind was full—the fact that Roger was actually in London—could only gaze at her in blank astonishment. Then speculation, which could profit her nothing, gave place in her mind to the practical question before her, and she said:

"I don't know what you mean, dear; but it doesn't matter. I'm very glad you do know as it hasn't worried you." There was a moment's pause, and then she went on: "He—he's looking very well, Selma. We had—a little talk, and he wanted to know—what you said. I said I thought he had better come here, and I said I would talk to you, and write to him."

"Yes?"

Selma's back was still towards her sister, but Helen was more than satisfied—she was astonished and delighted—at the quiet, unmoved voice which answered her. She instantly decided to ignore the fact that any alternative lay open to Selma, and went on almost easily.

"The best thing will be for him to come here to tea one afternoon—say on Wednesday. I've thought it over carefully, and that seems to me better than lunch or dinner on Sunday. Shall I write and tell him Wednesday, Selma, dear?"

Selma turned round and faced her sister quietly, her face pale and composed.

"Yes," she said, in the same steady voice, "yes, Helen, tell him Wednesday."

She turned away again as she spoke,

and standing before the glass began to unfasten her dark, wavy hair.

Wednesday morning, when it came, seemed to Helen unusually lengthy. She had suffered a good deal in a small way from the difficulties which were always arising from the estrangement between Selma and the Cornishes, and she was proportionately pleased and excited at the prospect of a reconciliation; she was at the same time quite aware that the first meeting between Selma and Roger must necessarily be attended by considerable awkwardness, and she was heartily anxious to have it over.

Selma herself was rather paler than usual, and there was a steady set about her lips which was new to them, and gave her face an added firmness which was very fine. She spent the morning just as she always did, practising and reading in her own room; and she was there practising again at four o'clock, having left Helen secretly marvelling at her calmness.

Half an hour later Helen was still alone in her drawing-room. She had done everything that was possible in the way of arranging and rearranging the room; in her excitement she had in several instances done the same thing two or three times over. Her little tea-table was more than ready, there was absolutely nothing else that she could do, and she was longing for some one to "take off her attention," as she thought, when the door opened, and Selma came quietly into the room. "It is colder this afternoon, I think," she remarked, and seated herself in a low chair at the end of the room farthest from the door. Before Helen could think of anything sufficiently light to be a suitable reply, there was a ring at the front door bell—a ring which caused Helen to start violently, and drop many stitches of the knitting with which she had been composing her mind, but which had no effect whatever upon Selma, and a minute later Helen had risen hastily, and was shaking hands with Roger Cornish.

"I am so glad to see you here," she said, cheerily.

"Thank you," he answered, and then he turned to Selma.

Only a few seconds had passed since the door opened to admit him, but in those seconds Selma had turned from pale to crimson, and from crimson to deathly white. For an instant Helen, glancing at her as Roger turned to her, thought with a horrified sense that there was no accounting for her and that she was going to faint; then she seemed to collect her faculties with a terrible effort of self-command, and held out her hand to him.

"I hope you are well," he said, simply, though his face had flushed to the roots of his hair, and he was far too fully occupied with the awkwardness of the moment to notice that the hand he touched for such a mere second of time was as cold as ice.

"Quite well, thank you."

She sat down again, and Helen, with a delighted sense that the worst was over, threw herself briskly into the breach.

"Humphrey will be down directly," she said. "He is very busy with his Academy picture, and the light has been so bad lately that when there is any he will hardly stir. I'm so glad you have come, Roger, to get him away now. He has had such a long day's work."

"He looks well, I think," said Roger.

"Not so well as he did a month ago, does he, Selma?"

"Not quite. He is so anxious."

That Selma's voice as she answered should be rather low and forced, seemed to Helen not unnatural, and the latter, turning again to Roger, and thinking that if his absence was to be ignored, conversation would be impossible, went on:

"How do you think them all looking at home? Auntie looks well, doesn't she?"

"She looks capital," he answered, heartily, as though the first awkwardness and constraint were slightly wearing off. "Younger than she did, it seems to me. They are all looking well."

"Elsie has grown, hasn't she?"

"Grown!" he replied, "grown doesn't express it in the least! She's like another child."

He turned to Selma, as though to include her in the conversation, and then suddenly and obviously remembered that she had seen none of his family since he went away.

There was an instant's painful pause, broken, to Helen's intense relief, by the opening of the door and the appearance of Humphrey.

"Well, old fellow!" was his characteristically laconic greeting as he shook hands warmly with his brother; and then he took up a position in front of the fire to wait until Helen should have finished pouring out the tea, to which soothing occupation she had hurriedly applied herself, and went on, lightly and conversationally, with a quick perception of the constraint of the situation which his entrance had broken up:

"I've just been having a terrific encounter with Smith, Helen."

"Oh, Humphrey, you haven't lost him!" she exclaimed, thankfully seizing upon so safe and impersonal a topic. "Smith is a most useful model, Roger, with the face of a perfect saint. Unfortunately, his disposition is anything but saintly, and he was much offended the other day when he arrived in a state of placid intoxication, and Humphrey refused to let him sit or to pay him. What has happened, Humphrey?"

"I reduced him to a state of abject humility," said Humphrey, handing Selma her cup of tea, but not looking directly at her. "I'm immensely proud of myself, I assure you. I had no idea I was so eloquent. But then the fellow is such a capital model, and self-interest is inspiring," he finished, with a laugh.

"How is the picture getting on?" asked Roger, whose embarrassment was disappearing rapidly.

"It will be finished, I hope," answered Humphrey, with a most unusual readiness to speak of his work. "The light has been terribly against us all, of course."

"It is beautiful," said Helen, proudly. "Isn't it, Selma?"

Helen, busy with the teapot, did not look at Selma as she spoke; but Humphrey, who was silently offering her some bread-and-butter, was necessarily looking down at her, and as she lifted her face suddenly, as though startled by the pause, and painfully conscious that something was expected of her without having heard the words she must answer, he met her eyes. It was only for a second, but what he saw made him go on, quickly:

"Selma thinks a great deal too well of it. She's not a judge—the subject caught her fancy. Nell!" breaking off with an exclamation, "that lamp flares. Excuse me, Selma."

He moved quickly before her, and, standing so as to hide her from the rest of the room, turned down the lamp, moving it as he did so, so that a deep shadow fell on her face.

"That's better!" he went on. "When will they give us electric light, I wonder?"

There was little more personal conversation after that. Humphrey, silent as he was as a rule, could talk as well as most men when he chose, and on this occasion he certainly did choose. He kept the talk mainly on topics on which he and Roger had naturally more to say than women would have, and nobody noticed that Selma did not speak a single word.

Roger, by this time perfectly easy and unconstrained, had just finished a most practical exposition of the American views on a burning international trading question, to which Humphrey had listened with an air of the deepest interest, when he finally rose to go.

"Good-bye, Helen," he said; "I've never told you what a jolly little house this looks."

"I'm so glad you like it, Roger. We must take you over it next time you come. Give them my love at home."

There was a hardly perceptible pause, and then Roger took an envelope from his pocket, and turning to Selma, said, in a simple, straightforward way, though he had flushed hotly again:

"I've brought a note from my mother."

She took it from him as he offered it to her.

"Thank you," she said.

"Good-bye."

She gave him her hand, and Humphrey saw that her lips moved, as though they formed the conventional response; but no words were audible.

"Roger might see the dining-room on his way out," he suggested. "We're rather proud of the oak, old boy. Come and do the honours, Nell."

They went out of the drawing-room, all three together; and when Helen returned, a few minutes later, the room was empty.

Helen hesitated a few minutes, went half-way up to Selma's room, and then stopped.

"I won't go up to her," she decided. "Poor dear! she would rather be left alone."

But Helen's determination to let her sister have her way, and to leave her alone, was not proof against the sight of Selma's face when she came down, half an hour later, to her early dinner—it was perfectly white and set, with dark shadows round the eyes, the eyes themselves were hollow and sunken, and Helen took her incontinently into her arms, and exclaimed:

"My dear, what have you been doing to yourself? Selma, indeed it is quite wrong to make yourself so miserable over what is past and done with."

Selma disengaged herself quickly, saying hoarsely and incoherently:

"Don't — don't notice me, Helen. I shall—be better."

And Helen, thinking that she would get "better" the more quickly for not being encouraged to dwell upon her feelings, changed the subject briskly, if a trifle incoherently; but the next day she wondered whether she would not have done better to persuade Selma to talk it out with her when she noticed that no practising, no movement of any sort or kind was to be heard in her sister's room during the long hours she spent there alone.

In the course of the evening of that day Tyrrell, who hardly saw Selma during the performance, except upon the stage, unless there was anything particular to be said between them, received a message through her maid, that "Miss Malet would be glad to speak to him." Such interviews between Tyrrell and members of his company were always held in a little room adjoining his dressing-room; and there, on his sending word that he would be very glad to see Miss Malet after the second act, Selma came to him.

Her eyes were unnaturally large and bright, and her fingers twisted the cord of her girdle incessantly. She made no response to his offer of a chair, and began at once, standing before him:

"Mr. Tyrrell, I've come to ask you a great favour."

"You might sit down to ask it, I should have thought," he said, with a smile. "What is it, Selma?"

"It's a great deal to ask you to do, I know; but—you do think I shall do something some day?"

"I don't quite see the connection of ideas," returned Tyrrell, looking at her curiously. "But to answer your question—you know that I think you may do anything you like."

"I want more work; I'm sure I ought to do more work if I am to be any good," she exclaimed, feverishly. "Mr. Tyrrell, will you give some matinées of old plays every fortnight, every week, as often as you can? I must work!"

"Gently!" ejaculated Tyrrell, with a smile. "Now perhaps you will sit down." He waited until she let herself sink into a chair with a movement of nervous impatience, and then seated himself, and crossed his legs. "It's rather a large order, Selma," he observed, watching her eager, excited face attentively.

"I know it is," she answered. "Oh, I know! But I thought if you put up old plays that every one in the company knows, it wouldn't be much trouble to them, and it would be hard work for me."

"Ah!" he observed, meditatively. There was a moment's pause, and then he went on, slowly: "Is it work, or is it another success, like Bianca, you want, Selma?"

Selma rose and turned away.

"Mr. Tyrrell," she said, in a voice that was not quite steady, "I thought you understood."

He looked at her in silence for a moment, and then he, too, rose.

"I do understand," he said; "and I will see what can be done." Then, as she turned to him with an eloquent gesture of thanks, he took the hand she held out to him, and held it, as he said: "You are not looking well, Selma, and your hand is much too hot. We must not overwork you."

"No, no! Oh, no!" she exclaimed, almost passionately, as the colour rushed to her cheeks. "It isn't that. It's work that I want—all the work I can get." She stopped abruptly, and then said, with a smile, as if to turn his thoughts away from her: "You would like a change of part, too, wouldn't you? I don't believe you like Juan"—the part he played in "Fedalma." "You don't know how different you were as the monk, and I want to see you like that again."

He dropped her hand suddenly.

"Do you?" he said, with a strange inflection in his voice. "I wonder whether you ever will."

And then Selma's maid came to the door, to tell her that she was called, and they separated.

The note from Mrs. Cornish, which Roger had given to Selma, had contained a few words of forgiveness, perfunctory in spite of all the writer's intentions and resolutions, and extended, as the note said, "because Roger wishes it," and a hope that she would come on the following Sunday to dinner with Helen and Humphrey. Selma showed the note to Helen, and told her in the fewest possible words that she would go, and then wrote to that effect to her aunt.

Her acceptance, a foregone conclusion though it was, produced in the Cornish household a variety of more or less excited sensations, the most prominent of which was a sense that the Sunday evening in question would be an extremely awkward and unpleasant occasion. Everybody was of opinion that "poor dear Roger was behaving beautifully," and Mrs. Cornish acknowledged that the present state of things must be very disagreeable for Helen; but towards Selma, personally, the family feeling was anything but cordial, and Mrs. Cornish, Sylvia, and Nettie had each individually made a private resolution that on her own part the reconciliation should be very nominal indeed.

They were all, however, very anxious that what Sylvia called "that dreadful evening" should go off as easily as possible; and when Mervyn Dallas, not knowing of the family party in prospect, invited herself to dinner for that particular Sunday, the idea of her presence was hailed with much relief, and she was not allowed to take back her words as she wished to do, being covered with confusion when the ordeal before them all was mysteriously imparted to her.

"It will be a comfort to have some one out of the family," said Nettie—who was not without a certain joy in the excitement of the situation—as she talked it over for the hundredth time with Sylvia.

"Yes," answered Sylvia, "I know." And then, with a vague sense that a less ardent adorer of Selma would have served the purpose better, she added: "I wish it was any one but Mervyn, though."

And Mervyn herself, sensitive little shy thing that she was, wished the same thing from the bottom of her palpitating little heart as she stood on the Cornishes' doorstep on the Sunday evening, trying to make up her mind to ring the bell.

She was keenly alive to the "dreadfulness" of the occasion for every one concerned; she felt it for Mrs. Cornish and the girls, she felt it for Helen, she felt it acutely for her dear Selma.

Perhaps she felt it most of all for the unfortunate on whom her deepest pity had always been bestowed, inasmuch as he had lost Selma, and who had now to be in the same room with her, to speak to her and hear her speak, and know that she would never belong to him.

There was no one in the drawing-room when she was shown in, and she drew a long breath of relief. She had been more than half afraid, though she had started very early in order to avoid such an entrance, that she might find the whole party assembled. She sat down and tried not to dwell on the situation; but she was quivering from head to foot with sympathetic nervousness, and when the door opened suddenly a few minutes later, the sound made her start violently. It did not tend to compose her nerves that the new-comer should be Roger, of whom she had been thinking at the very moment with the deepest sympathy.

He had not expected to find any one in the room, and he paused a moment in the doorway; then as she rose shyly, and held out her hand to him, he went up and shook it, saying:

"How do you do, Miss Dallas? You ought not to be all alone."

"I like it. I mean—I've only just come, and they'll be down directly," she murmured incoherently, forgetting to sit down again, and standing before him a pretty, quaint little figure in the evening dress which always suited Mervyn better than her heavier morning frocks; there was a bright, soft colour in her brown cheeks born of confusion, and her eyes were liquid and sympathetic.

"What a wretched day it has been!" said Roger, with a passing thought that "little Miss Dallas" was a pretty little girl.

"Yes," answered Mervyn, suddenly remembering that she ought to sit down, and sitting down accordingly with some haste. "Yes, it—it has."

"I'm afraid we must expect some rain, now."

"Yes," said Mervyn, vaguely again.

She was so sorry for him, and it seemed to her so dreadful that he should have to make conversation with her when she was sure he must be wishing her miles away. Roger was very anxious as to the meeting between his mother and Selma, though he felt that for himself the worst was over, and he was not equal to supporting a conversation single-handed; so that, between them, a silence ensued. It was broken by the ringing of a bell, a sound at which Mervyn started nearly off her chair as she and Roger, moved by a common impulse, turned their heads simultaneously and listened. It was a false alarm after all, no sounds as of an arrival succeeded it; but as Roger turned quickly to Mervyn to cover his previous movement with a polite commonplace, he saw her face before she was aware, and its undisguised expression of sympathy, the pitying comprehension with which the brown eyes met his, made him colour hotly, and turn away, forgetting altogether the words he had intended to speak. He was not a ready dissembler, neither was she, and there was a dead pause. Then Mervyn's feelings became altogether too much for her; and, quite carried away by them, she clasped her hands impulsively together on her knee, and said, softly:

"Oh, Mr. Cornish, I am so dreadfully sorry! I've been so dreadfully sorry for you all the time; because I know what she is."

Her little shaking voice failed her for pure pity, and there was another pause; then Roger moved to the mantelpiece, and stood there with his back to her as he said, simply:

"There's no one in the world like her."

"I know there isn't," cried Mervyn, impulsively. "I love her more than any one in the world, and I've been so dreadfully sorry for you. Oh, and it hurts so that people should think hardly of her, and be unkind to her."

Her tone assumed that he had felt that pain, and he answered it quickly, turning to her abruptly.

"It's worse than anything," he said. "They seem to think it a comfort to a fellow to hear her run down—the best and most beautiful—because—because—I made a mistake. Why, it was my fault, not hers. I ought to have understood that she was far too good for me, and not have bothered her into thinking—into thinking that she cared!"

"It was a dreadful mistake for her to make," said Mervyn; "but—she couldn't help it."

"That's what I've said! That's what I've said all the time!" cried Roger, eagerly. "Miss Dallas," he went on, rapidly, coming up to her where she sat, with her little face uplifted to him, "there's—there's this evening. I'm afraid it will be rather awkward—my mother, you know, and Sylvia. You'll—you'll do your best, won't you? I shall be so glad to know there's a woman here who thinks of things as I do. Even Helen is a little hard on her. At least, she feels — she feels——"

He stopped, having got himself into an awkward position. "Responsible," was the word which conveyed what he meant, and he could not bring himself to say it. But Mervyn did not wait for him to finish.

"Of course I shall do my very best," she said, impetuously. "There isn't anything I wouldn't do to save her the least little uncomfortableness."

She held out her hand with a quick, quaint little gesture, as one who seals a compact, and he shook it heartily. A moment later, Mrs. Cornish, Sylvia, and Nettie, all looking more or less flushed and nervous, came in in a body.

The actual arrival was very simple, after all. Mrs. Cornish had said in her letter that "bygones were to be bygones"; and when Mr. and Mrs. Humphrey Cornish and Miss Malet were eventually announced, Selma followed her sister into the room, looking very pale, but perfectly self-possessed. She said the word or two that was necessary in answer to her aunt's greeting in a low voice, but perfectly steadily, and received the stiff kisses with which Sylvia and Nettie met her with less apparent embarrassment than they were given. If she clung to Mervyn as she kissed her, before shaking hands with Roger, an instant longer than was necessary, nobody but Mervyn knew it.

But the minutes that ensued before dinner was announced were as dreadful as could have been anticipated. Humphrey talked, and Roger talked, and Mervyn, catching Roger's eye, plunged energetically, if incoherently, into the conversation. Mrs. Cornish and Sylvia felt as though every idea had temporarily left them, and the observations they contributed were not calculated to promote conversation. Helen was far too much occupied in watching Selma to make any attempt at speech, and the only person who answered any remark quietly and reasonably was Selma herself, who grew whiter with every moment, her sister thought. Dinner was decidedly less embarrassed and constrained; but things were, if possible, still worse in the drawing-room after dinner, when Helen, Selma, Mrs. Cornish, and the three girls were alone together. Mervyn did her very utmost; but when at last the door opened, she did not know how deeply relieved was the glance she threw towards Roger. She felt that they would make common cause together.

An hour passed, and then, to her unspeakable relief, Helen heard the clock strike ten, and rose.

"I'm afraid we must go, auntie," she said. "May we have a cab? Our things are in the hall."

In the general movement that ensued,

Mervyn and Roger, as though drawn together by the sympathy which had grown up between them during the evening, with the sense that they were playing into one another's hands with a common object in view, found themselves standing together. There was a perceptible hesitation on the part of Sylvia and Nettie as to which should go with Helen and Selma into the hall, which ended in their both going, as well as Mrs. Cornish. Mervyn and Roger, left alone, followed them out with one accord, appearing in the hall just as Selma turned to say good-bye to Mrs. Cornish, and faced them. It seemed strange to Helen that her sister should say good-bye to her aunt and cousins far less naturally than she had met them; and she followed Selma quickly as she went rapidly down the steps. At the bottom, Helen turned.

The hall door was wide open, and Roger was holding it, his tall, strong figure standing out distinctly as he stood in the full stream of light from the hall gas; next him, the only other figure in full light—a slight, childish little outline—stood Mervyn Dallas.

"Good night!" Helen called back.

"Good night!" responded Roger's voice; and Mervyn's echoed it.

When Helen was seated by her sister in the cab, Selma's head was turned away from the now closed door, and Helen did not see her face.

THE ASTEROID QUESTION.

It had long been suspected that something was missing from the solar system in the wide gap which lies between Mars and Jupiter; but when Ceres, Pallas, Juno, and Vesta were revealed to the world as miniature planets revolving between the orbits of those two above-named planets, it was hardly supposed that they were only four out of a countless, or at least as yet uncounted, family, which now amounts to more than three hundred in number. And still they come, until their increase has absolutely grown into a sort of astronomical nuisance.

The "Berliner Jahrbuch" proposed, last year, to ignore utterly and to take no further notice of the existence of any discovered after the two hundred and eighty-seventh, until the end of the present century. True, it has promised to follow the courses of the most interesting. But will those observers be certain to recognise that any new asteroid will prove interesting from this or that point of view; whether, for instance, it will pass near enough to Jupiter to experience considerable perturbations, or near enough to the earth to help astronomers in thence deducing the sun's parallax?

The existence of previously unknown little planets has been proved, and we cannot get rid of or neglect them, although it takes millions of them to make a mass as big as the earth; in astronomy, no quantity or object, however small, can be neglected. It is conceivable that, in consequence of their multitude, they have had to go begging for names—M. Camille Flammarion had to stand sponsor for Nos. 87, 107, 154, and 169, and some names they have received are queer enough — other asteroids still remain in the novitiate condition of numbers.

The whole swarm of new-found planets lies between the orbits of Mars and Jupiter—a very wide zone; for it is not less than seventy millions of leagues from the perihelion of the little planet Flora, which approaches nearest to the sun, and the aphelion of the most distant, Sylvia—an immense extent of space, equalling double the distance of the earth from the sun.

Scarcely a year now passes without astronomers, always on the watch, finding fresh asteroids, either while expressly searching for them, or more frequently while not looking out for them, when busy mapping stars near the ecliptic. On noting the stars to be included in the map, they remark a star which was not there the day before; its position is attentively examined, and they ascertain that it is not a fixed star proper, but a planet. There is no difference in their aspect; for all these little planets are telescopic, invisible to the naked eye, and are not brighter, on the average, than a star of the tenth magnitude; some are even smaller. Three good observations of the new little planet furnish the necessary basis for calculating its distance and the position of its orbit in space. The result has always been to place it between Mars and Jupiter.

On the first of January, 1801, the astronomer Piazzi, observing at Palermo, discovered, by chance, the first little planet, Ceres, to be shortly followed by the finding of Pallas, Juno, and Vesta, by Olbers and Harding. These four surpass in size and brightness the mean of the other asteroids; Vesta, the most brilliant of them all, attains even the sixth magnitude when nearest to the earth, and becomes visible by the naked eye. Its diameter is estimated at about two hundred and fifty miles; W. Herschell makes it less. Pallas, Juno, and Ceres are of about the same volume. Although these four are the largest asteroids, it will be seen that they are much smaller than our moon.

People were quite content with their four new planets. Nobody asked for more of them; and, during thirty-eight years, not a single new asteroid was found. The discovery of the fifth, Astrea, in 1845, was once more due to chance. Since then they form a formidable list of numbers, dates, discoveries, and titles. It will be easily understood that the size of the more recently found planets should go on decreasing. Those discovered now rarely exceed the thirteenth magnitude. It was W. Herschell who, remarking the smallness of the first, suggested that the name of "planets" did not suit them, and that it would be better to call them "asteroids."

The four first-named, more especially, have furnished M. Camille Flammarion with an apt occasion for the scientific exercise of his brilliant imagination. The first thing which strikes us, he writes, is the trifling amount of the mass or weight of these tiny heavenly bodies—the slightness of their density, and of the force of gravity at their surface. Their attraction, consequently, is without energy; objects weigh almost nothing on their surface. According to Sir John Herschell, in his "Outlines of Astronomy," a man placed on one of these planets could jump to a height of sixty feet, and would fall with a shock not greater than if he had leaped two feet on earth.

A flea might skip off into outer space, to alight upon, if possible, and colonise another minor planet. Pray, gentle reader, don't take this as an ill-timed or misplaced pleasantry. You will see, by-and-by, the reason why it is not so. Giants could exist on such worlds as those. Enormous animals, which are only found here in the waters of the ocean, where they lose a portion of their weight, could live and run about with facility on the soil of one of the four minor planets.

Moreover, the attraction which maintains them in the state of individual unities is so weak that a volcano on the planet Juno might certainly shoot out solid materials as far as the planet Clotho (No. 97), for it could start them with so great a velocity that they could not be drawn back by the feeble attraction of their own proper sphere, and might well be directed to the orbit of Clotho, which lies within a distance of no more than two hundred and sixty leagues from that of Juno.

Given, then, the extreme feebleness of weight on the surface of these little worlds, we may assume that, whatever may be the natural products of their soil, the dimensions of the things that live and grow there must considerably exceed those of terrestrial plants and animals. Those things and creatures are not restrained by the chain of energetic attraction which fastens and confines them to the soil. All the expansive forces of Nature, all the powers of vitality, are developed there without check or limit.

If we were sure that organic forces were the same there as here, we might assume with certainty the existence of beings of loftier stature than we have on earth, and at the same time lighter and more active. But as it is certain that vital energy, considered in itself, varies from one planet to another, in consequence of the differences of temperature, the chemical composition of the atmosphere and of living bodies, of the density of the substances which enter into the composition of organised bodies, we cannot positively affirm this gigantic stature to exist, although we may regard it as possible and even probable in our speculations on interplanetary comparative anatomy.

A telescopic examination of these Liliputian worlds shows, on the other hand, that several of them are not spherical globes, but irregular, many-sided in their shape—a form which must diversify their soil with strange mountains and fantastic valleys, a fall down whose precipices would be terrible were the action of weight not so trifling. Some of them, notably Pallas, Ceres, Vesta, Juno, Iris, Pales, and Victoria, present considerable variations of brightness in proof of their polyhedric form, and tending also to suggest the existence of great meteorological variations in their atmospheres. Those atmospheres are not so deep as was supposed, from imperfect observations, at the beginning of the present century; but their existence has been verified on several, as on Vesta, by spectral analysis.

It seems doubtful, however, to M. Flammarion, whether all the minor planets are inhabited—by whatsoever beings, human, animal, vegetable, or others — but he believes it certain that "several of them are completely so, quite as much as the planet on which we are now living."

The explosion theory has long been a favourite speculation in respect to the origin of the asteroids. It would have been difficult for M. Flammarion to refrain from giving it prominence in his interesting and exhaustive volume, "Les Terres du Ciel." The formation of these innumerable little worlds, he says, seems due to the derangement which Jupiter's powerful attraction caused in the creation of this zone of the solar system, by preventing the subsistence of a considerable nebulous ring, and by separating it, little by little, into fragments. Perhaps, also, a certain number of these small stars proceed from the breaking-up of a planet, brought about by the action of internal or external force—an accident by no means impossible, and which might very well happen, one of these days, to ourselves.

"Such being the astronomical conditions of those miniature worlds, who can guess what unimaginable forms Life may not assume in these singular localities? In case the disruption of one or several planets should have allowed the germs of vitality to survive, they would have been the starting-point of new floras and new faunas strangely different from their predecessors, in consequence especially of the diminished intensity of weight or gravitating force."

But might, indeed, such an accident happen to ourselves? There is a wonderful difference between "might" and "is likely to." If the interior of the earth were hollow, and at the same time incandescent; if the ocean could find a convenient opening in the terrestrial shell through which to pour itself inside, the earth might certainly explode, by the force of the steam so generated, exactly as when the boiler of a steam-engine blows up.

And what would become of the bits?

They would be shot into space, to inoculate other globes with the germs of life, exactly as a President of the British Association once suggested that we ourselves received the first elements of vitality. But his hearers hardly believed his theory. I may say they scarcely believed that he believed it himself.

If people are not satisfied with the narrative of Genesis—expanded, but not improved, by Milton in his "Paradise Lost"—would it not be better and more dignified to say, frankly: "We do not know. It is beyond our comprehension; past our finding out. We are utterly ignorant, and can offer no acceptable solution of the mystery"?

In the Scientific Notices appended to this year's "Annuaire" of the Bureau des Longitudes, Monsieur F. Tisserand strongly protests against the exclusion of asteroids from official astronomical records, for reasons too long and too technical to be reproduced in their entirety here. And the Bureau des Longitudes, struck by the difficulties which must arise from that decision, has thought of remedying them in a certain measure, by giving extension to its Bureau des Calcula.

M. Tisserand states that Olbers, after discovering the second small planet, Pallas, and finding that it might, with time, pass close to Ceres, concluded thence that both of them might be the fragments of a larger planet broken and split in two by internal convulsion — an idea which has been already mentioned. He compares the asteroids, in some respects, to periodical comets; he shows that they wheel round the sun in swarms, with distinct intervals between them, like those which separate Saturn's rings from each other.

Can the hypothesis of Olbers be maintained? The answer, unfortunately, is negative. An interesting study of the orbits of the forty first-found asteroids was undertaken by Newcomb. He immediately saw that, such as they are at present, they are far from passing through or crossing at one identical point or track. It might be supposed that that condition was fulfilled at a certain distant epoch, and that it had subsequently been disturbed by perturbations occasioned by the older planets, notably by Jupiter and Saturn. But calculation has pronounced its verdict; the required condition has never existed, and the theory of Olbers must be abandoned.

The asteroids have been the cause of important progress in the art of astronomical observation. The search for them has trained first-class observers. Piazzi, we know, discovered at Palermo, on the first day of the present century, a star which he believed to be a small comet, and which he observed several times up to the eleventh of February following, when a serious illness compelled him to discontinue astronomical work. Bode was the first to ascertain that the new star could not be a comet.

When Piazzi got well again, he was unable to find the position of Ceres. All that was known was that it must be sought for towards the end of the year, at its emergence from the blinding rays of the sun. At this juncture, Gausse, then only twenty-four years of age, set to work, and in less than a month invented an admirable method, which enabled him to calculate the elements of Ceres' elliptic orbit, thanks to which Olbers found the missing star on the first of January, 1802.

In order to follow the minor planets with greater facility, extra-powerful instruments have been constructed—amongst others, the great Meridian Circle in the Paris Observatory. With the same object, celestial maps and catalogues of the stars have advanced considerably nearer to perfection.

For a multitude of reasons, then, M. Tisserand thinks that the search for fresh asteroids ought to be continued. No doubt it calls for long and complicated calculations; but they might be divided between several scientific establishments. At any rate, the Bureau des Longitudes is ready to take its share in the labour.

THE LAND OF BRUCE.

WHAT is here meant particularly by the Land of Bruce is the old kingdom of Carrick, one of the three great divisions of the romantic and historic county of Ayr. The most northern of these districts is known as Cunninghame, and was of old the territory of the family of that name. The middle district, lying between the rivers Irvine and Doon, is Kyle—the Land of Burns. The southernmost division, which extends from the River Doon, whose banks and braes Burns has immortalised, to the borders of the Stewartry of Kirkcudbright and Wigton, is Carrick, the ancestral home of "The Bruce."

Every mile of the district of Carrick is stored with historic memories, and every mile of it is beautiful. It is an undulating land of billowy green hills, fertile plains, and rich woods, flanked by a long, wild, rocky shore, on which expire the Atlantic rollers, after being denuded of their might by the interception of the peninsula of Kintyre opposite.

Gazing seaward from the Carrick shore, the eye takes in a vast and magnificent panorama, from the dark peaks of Arran, down the long slopes of Kintyre, and away over the wide waste of waters to the Irish coast, which banks like a cloud on the horizon. But the distinctive feature in the sea-prospect is the lonely giant-mass of Ailsa Craig, uprising sheer from the waves in solitary grandeur. Surely this is one of the most picturesque objects on all our rock-bound coasts—certainly it is one of the most impressive—once seen to dwell for ever in the memory. There is, indeed, something weird in its outline, even by daylight, suggestive as it is of the terrors of storm and shipwreck, and of absolute loneliness. In the gloom of night it becomes doubly mysterious, with the watchful eye of its lighthouse—the only habitable dwelling on its two miles of rocky circumference — blinking solemnly across the far stretch of sea.

Everybody, of course, knows the pyramidal shape of the Rock of Ailsa, otherwise called "Paddy's Milestone," and naturalists know it as the haunt of myriads of sea-fowl of all descriptions, whose breakfasts alone, it is calculated, require the extraction of fifteen tons of fish per day from the surrounding waters. Only those who have dwelt within sight of it know its power to fascinate the senses. Keats felt something of its influence which he tried to express in the sonnet composed on a visit to the Land of Burns:

Hearken, thou craggy ocean pyramid,
  Give answer by thy voice — the sea-fowl's screams—
  When were thy shoulders mantled in huge streams?
When, from the sun, was thy broad forehead hid?
How long is't since the mighty Power bid
  Thee heave to airy sleep from fathom dreams?
  Sleep in the lap of thunder or sunbeams?
Or when grey clouds are thy cold coverlid?
Thou answer'st not, for thou art dead asleep,
  Thy life is but two dead eternities:
The last in air, the former in the deep!
  First with the whales, last with the eagles' skies!
Drown'd wast thou till an earthquake made thee steep,
  Another cannot wake thy giant size!

There is a noble theme both for poet and artist in this Titan of the deep—rock-warden of the Carrick shore—but we must break away from its spell for the present, and pursue our way along that shore.

One long stretch of it, of some twenty miles from Turnberry Point to Benane Head, forms a deep indentation, opposite about the centre of which the Rock of Ailsa rises from its ocean-bed some twelve miles from the nearest point of the mainland. At Turnberry Point we stand upon ground which is sacred to Scotchmen, for here was born Robert the Bruce. At this day there flashes nightly from the headland where the redeemer of Scotland drew his first breath, a white stream of light, cheering, dazzling, unfailing, from sunset to sunrise, to guide the busy mariners and fishermen who throng these waters. Once there was a light of another sort blazing on Turnberry, as we shall presently see.

Just beneath the lighthouse are the massive remains of the old feudal Castle which aforetime crowned the rocky cape, even as its Lords dominated the surrounding region. It was admirably placed for defence, and for the exercise of controlling power by land and sea. On three sides it was fortified naturally by water, and the foundations of the Castle were so built into the rock that it is hard to say where the work of Nature ended, and that of the architect began. From the centre of the Keep, a secret subterranean passage led to the sea.

As to when or by whom Turnberry Castle was built in the dim and distant past, there seems to be no authentic record; but it was originally a stronghold of the Lords of Galloway, and from them passed into the possession of the Earls of Carrick, about the beginning of the thirteenth century. Here the Earls, or Kings, as they are often called in local history, of Carrick maintained an almost regal state for over a hundred years, holding sway over countless knights and squires bound to do suit and service for their feudal lords.

Then came a romantic episode in the history of the race. By the death of her father, the fair and impetuous Marjory, or Martha, became Countess in her own right, and absolute mistress of her hand and fortune. She was young, and doubtless beautiful—on whom should she bestow them? Chance decided for her. One memorable morning, when hunting with her lords and ladies in the neighbouring woods, she encountered a stranger knight of handsome mien, and noble lineage. Strangers were not always welcome in those parts—and Normans were not usually among the most acceptable guests—but the Countess was smitten at first sight, and persuaded the somewhat reluctant stranger to tarry in her Castle for a while. He came, he saw, and she conquered, for in due time the Lady of Carrick led the Norman knight to the altar.

Who, then, was this handsome stranger in the kingdom of Carrick? His name was Robert de Bruis, or Bruyse, son of the Earl of Annandale, who claimed descent from the brother of William the Lion, and was, therefore, of Royal pedigree. It was the father of our knight who, on the death of the young uncrowned Queen, called the Maid of Norway, competed for the crown with John Baliol, Lord of Galloway, and lost by the decision of King Edward the First of England in favour of Baliol. It was the son of our knight who, in later years, summarily disposed of the claims of the Red Comyn, and secured the independence of Scotland once more.

The son of this Robert of Annandale and Marjory of Carrick was The Bruce—King Robert the First of Scotland. That he was born in Turnberry Castle the people of Carrick positively maintain, in spite of some of the historians who indicate another birthplace. That his boyhood was spent here, there is no doubt; and the traditions of the beloved redeemer of Scotland cling about these walls as tenaciously as the ivy.

Then it was here, at Turnberry, that the nobles of Scotland assembled to discuss the succession when Robert was only twelve years old. They decided in favour of his grandfather; but he was set aside by English Edward in favour of Baliol, and died ten years later with his hopes of kingship unrealised.

Every schoolboy knows, however, how The Bruce—the third, or, as some say, the fourth "Robert" of that ilk—drove the English out of Scotland, secured the crown for himself, and founded the dynasty of the Stuarts. But it is as the Earl of Carrick that we are interested in him just now, and we are not going to follow him to Bannockburn.

When Bruce left Carrick to pursue his claim to the throne, he must have been somewhere about thirty years of age, as he was born in 1274. In 1306 he was, rather prematurely, crowned at Scone, and almost immediately became a fugitive. He was excommunicated by the Pope for the murder of Comyn, hemmed in by the forces of English Edward, who defeated him at Methven, and deserted by his friends. Then he had months of dismal and dangerous wanderings in the Highlands, and finally reached Rathlin Island, on the Irish coast, and there he passed the winter.

Now, Rathlin Island is within view of the Carrick shore, and it was natural that the eyes of Bruce should be turned with longing towards his ancestral halls. But Turnberry was now in possession of an English garrison under Lord Percy, and Bruce was kept out of his own house, as well as out of his kingdom. He crossed from Rathlin to Arran, and, still in sight of Turnberry, began to open negotiations with his friends in Carrick.

He sent over a faithful follower, called Cuthbert, with instructions to sound the men of Carrick quietly, and when they were all prepared for a rising, to light a beacon on Turnberry Head. Night after night Bruce paced the beach in Arran, anxiously watching for the signal, with his two or three hundred followers all ready to spring into the boats they had collected when the beacon blazed.

It blazed at last, and then began the famous crossing as told by Scott in the "Lord of the Isles."

Yet, strange to say, the Castle garrison were not disturbed. Scott gives a supernatural explanation of the light; but the truth seems to have been that some one was burning heather on the headland, and Bruce mistook the fire for the signal of his confederate. Cuthbert met him on the shore with the doleful tidings that the people were so afraid of Lord Percy's army that they would not rise.

According to Scott's poem, Bruce at once attacked the Castle, and, putting the garrison to the sword, regained his own house the next morning. According to history, however, he had to pass many days in ambush and in skirmishing before he succeeded. According to local tradition, he went to hide in the neighbouring caves of Culzean, or Colean, and one dark night marched his band in silence across to Turnberry, surprised the outposts, and took possession, only to be driven out again by an army which Percy summoned from Ayr.

Although Bruce did eventually in turn drive Percy out of Carrick, he had to keep himself concealed in his own earldom for a long time, and many are the stories told of his adventures and narrow escapes here. It was somewhere in this region, too, that he defended a pass single-handed against a band of Galloway men, rather than break the much-needed repose of his own followers. But Fortune turned her wheel in his favour at last. A series of victories began at Loudon Hill, which led up to the crowning victory of Bannockburn, and left him undisputed King of Scotland. Thenceforward we find him no more in Carrick, and he was the last Earl of Carrick who resided at Turnberry; but the title is still borne by his descendant, the present Prince of Wales.

What Turnberry was like in those days we may allow Scott to tell us:

> Soft swept in velvet green
> The plain, with many a glade between,
> Whose tangled alleys far invade
> The depth of the brown forest shade.
> Here the tall fern obscured the lawn,
> Fair shelter for the sportive fawn;
> There, tufted close with copsewood green,
> Was many a swelling hillock seen;
> And all around was verdure meet
> For pressure of the fairies' feet;
> The glossy hollow lined the park,
> The yew-tree lent its shadow dark,
> And many an old oak, worn and bare,
> With all its shivered boughs was there.

But we do not see any of that now except the "verdure meet." In fact, the poet warns us,

> Seek not the scene—the axe, the plough,
> The boor's dull fence have marr'd it now.

But there are beauties remaining, nevertheless. There is a long fair stretch of wind-swept grass-land leading up to the promontory, now crowned by the light-tower, and there are magnificent prospects of land and sea from its summit. It was on this cape, too, that the only witch in history who did a good action once wove her spells for the destruction of the Spanish Armada. This was Elcine de Aggart, and as the ships came round the Mull of Kintyre, she began to unwind a great ball of blue yarn. She went on unwinding until a great storm arose, and every ship went down before the eyes of the terrified inhabitants of the Carrick coast.

Just beyond the promontory to the north is the picturesque village of The Maidens — a groups of white cottages separated by a stretch of greensward from the dazzling beach of a remarkably pretty and well-sheltered bay. Here dwells a small colony of quiet fisher-folk, under the shelter of the guardian eye of Turnberry Light; but in the sands not many years ago were found a number of battle-axes, silent witnesses of previous conflicts in this peaceful retreat. Indeed, if we are to believe the venerable Boece, there was once in Maiden's Bay a great British city called Carretonium, with high walls and towers, and all the luxuries of the civilisation of a pre-historic period. One likes to think of this ancient city, and to strive to recall its magnificence; but there is little to help, save one's imagination. And that receives rather a rude check from old Boece when he proceeds to set up here a King Caractacus, from whom the district of Carrick, he says, received its name. There may have been such a King here; but it is curious that no one ever heard of him in these parts except Boece.

Just inland from this, however, we come to a place which has given a name to one of the immortals. This is Shanter Farm, where Burns made the acquaintance of one Douglas Graham, whom he transformed into Tam, and sent forth to the world for all time as Tam O'Shanter. Not far from this, again, is the house called Glenfoot, where lived Souter Johnnie, known to his contemporaries, however, as plain John Davidson the shoemaker.

The northern arm of the Maiden's Bay is a fine wooded promontory, not so long as Turnberry, but with a bolder front of precipitous rock. Here the woods spread from sea-marge to hill like a forest, and embowered in them is the Castle of Culzean, the seat of the Marquis of Ailsa. This is one of the show-places of this part of Scotland, and is remarkable alike for the picturesqueness of its situation and the beauty of its trees, gardens, and rockeries.

The Castle rises sheer from the perpendicular sea-cliffs, beneath which are the caves before-mentioned. There are six of them, and the tide rises to the level of the largest, which runs inland for about two hundred feet, and is quite fifty feet high. The entrance has been built up with freestone, so as to leave a narrow doorway, and there is every indication, besides tradition, that the caves were often used as secret habitations in times past. When Bruce was here there was no castle at Culzean, for the present edifice was built in 1777; but long before that the Kennedies had a dwelling of some sort near.

The Kennedies of Cassillis, however, of whom Lord Ailsa is the present representative, had their stronghold at Dunure, some six miles to the north, and also on a sea-cliff, after which they had Cassillis Castle, more inland.

The Kennedies of Cassillis were always at feud with the Kennedies of Bargany—another ancient Carrick stronghold—and it was during one of these feuds that Mure of Auchendrane, an ally of the Bargany section, murdered Sir Thomas Kennedy of Culzean, and afterwards a young Dalrymple, who was the only witness of the crime. The murder of Dalrymple occurred on the shore to the south of Turnberry, at a farm called Chapeldonan; and the place where the body was buried on the sand, only to be washed bare by the vengeful sea, is still pointed out.

This incident was employed by Scott in his not very successful tragedy of "Auchendrane." But, indeed, the stories of the feuds of the Kennedies are endless in Carrick, and would afford material for many romances. Scott was not at his best when he wrote "Auchendrane," or he would have made more of the striking incidents of the story he tried to utilise. The curious reader who wishes to learn more of these strange family feuds may consult Pitcairn's "Historie of the Kennedies," or Robertson's more recent and more imaginative "Kings of Carrick."

Our object, however, was to view the Land of Bruce, not that of the Kennedies, and for this reason we must pause short of the Abbey of Crossraguel, although we are within a few miles of it. This abbey was founded by King Duncan in 1260, and is one of the most complete and well preserved ecclesiastical remains in Scotland. But, indeed, all the Land of Carrick is stocked as richly with scenes of historic interest as it abounds in beauty of woodland, mead, and river, of wide-spreading strands, and of bold, rocky shores.

A ROUGH ROAD.

A COMPLETE STORY.

Yes, I always take the old road from the bottom of the valley to our village, perched up on the heights, instead of the new one which goes round the other side of the hills. No doubt the new road is shorter, better, and more gradual; and when there was first talk of making it, I was as pleased as any one to think of the time and trouble it would save us. But before it was finished I wished, from the bottom of my heart, that it had never been begun. No, I have never made use of it yet, never, and, what is more, I never shall. If you like, I will tell you why. It is so old a story now that most people have forgotten it.

Twenty years ago there was not such another handsome girl in all the country round as my daughter Léonie. She was the youngest, the flower of the flock. She was the last fledgling left in the nest after the elder ones had married and left us; and though she had always been the hardest of all to manage, we were in no hurry for her to go. I have only to shut my eyes, and I see her still: her white forehead, and her little pink ears peeping out from her curly hair; her big brown eyes full of life; her saucy nose bidding you mind your p's and q's when you bandied words with her; and her firm, well-curved mouth and chin which said as plainly as words, "I've not come across my master yet, and I doubt if I ever shall."

People sometimes told us we had spoilt her and made her wilful; but at that I shook my head. It was no spoiling that had made her what she was; and with all her faults she was still a good daughter, nor was there a girl in the village who could hold a candle to her for pretty ways. You needn't take my word alone for it; ask any one, whose memory can go back so far, who it was that all the lads in the place were in love with in those days, and if they tell the truth they will say Léonie Corseau, the daughter of the landlord of the "Epée d'Or."

Her mother and I often talked over the likelihoods of her marriage. It seemed a pity that, with a good dowry and lots of admirers, she should let the time go on too far; for at the time I am speaking of she was turned three-and-twenty.

"Which of 'em do you mean to take, child?" I'd say to her sometimes, when one young fellow or another had been trying to make himself more agreeable than usual; "which of 'em is to carry off my little lass, and be landlord of the 'Epée d'Or' when I retire into private life?"

For I meant Léonie's husband to have the goodwill as part of her dowry.

"I hope it'll be a long while before any one comes to carry me off," she'd answer; "and I'm sure there's no need yet to talk of the 'Epée d'Or' changing landlords."

"Nor there is, lassie; but the time'll come some day, and when it does it is to be hoped the right man'll be in the right place; for instance, such a one as Jacques Lambert."

Yes, I had a great wish to see her take the son of my old chum, the quarryman, Lambert. He was as good-looking a man as you would need to look for; broad-shouldered and stalwart, with a military air about him, which he had picked up when he served his time in the army. I'd known him from his babyhood, and I'd often thought he was just the one to step into my shoes at the "Epée d'Or." His father and I had spoken of it more than once.

"He'll make a rare good husband for your girl," his father had said; "he's got just that about him that a headstrong girl will give in to. His only fault is that he's a bit jealous; but if she doesn't provoke him in that way, she'll never know in how far he's her master."

"She's not all that hard to manage, Lambert," I said.

"She's not all that easy, Corseau; which you know well, if you'd confess. Still, I'd like to have her for a daughter-in-law."

What Léonie thought of Jacques was not so plain to see. When I brought his name into such a talk as I've mentioned above, she mostly laughed and tossed her head. She wasn't, however, the girl to tell her secrets, and she often passed her deeper feelings off with a joke. It was not time yet to talk of it seriously, so I contented myself with watching them, and giving him a word of encouragement from time to time.

At last the day came when young Jacques Lambert came to me with a bashful look on his handsome, sunburnt face, and asked me if I thought really he would do for a husband for Léonie.

"And what else could I think, lad?" I cried. "Why, you're cut out for her. If I hadn't felt sure of that, you'd have had the cold shoulder here instead of the warm welcome I've always given you. It's just what I've been wishing for; and your father is of my mind. Only, mark you, not all the fathers, nor mothers either, in the land, could say the last word for my Léonie. You must go to her yourself for that."

Then he went a bit redder, and looked down.

"I've heard what she's got to say," he began; then he stopped.

"Well," I said, "she didn't say you nay, or you'd have let the matter drop?"

"She didn't say me nay," he answered; "she said she had nothing against me, and I might come and ask you if you wanted me for a son-in-law."

"It wasn't quite the sort of answer you'd have liked," I said; "but that's her way. You mustn't expect her to leave off teazing you yet awhile. She's a good girl, though she does put on that manner."

"But do you think she loves me, Père Corseau?" he asked. "If she'd say she loved me, she might tease me as much as she likes."

"Of course she loves you, lad," I said; "but she's not the one to give herself all at once. You'll have to let her drop her independence by degrees. We won't talk of the marriage just yet; but you'll see, when the time comes, you'll have as loving a wife as any one could desire."

When I talked to her she said but little; certainly she made no mention of love.

"I've nothing against him," she repeated; "and you are always saying it is time I married."

"That's no reason for taking Jacques Lambert," I said, "if there's any one you like better."

"There's no one I like better. I don't suppose I ever shall like any one better."

That, it seems to me, was all one could expect from a girl like Léonie; so the matter was settled, and Jacques was as happy and proud as could be. Something in his way of holding his own kept Léonie's old admirers at a distance, and as to her moods, whatever they were, he accepted them. If she teased him, he bore it; and if she was silent, he sat and watched her with a look in his eyes that told you more than all the fine words a cleverer man might have found for his love.

"You're a lucky girl, Léonie Corseau," her friends said to her.

"There doesn't seem to me to be more luck on my side than on his," I heard her say once to this. "Perhaps not so much, if I am to believe all he tells me about myself."

"Good gracious! who do you want, if Jacques Lambert isn't good enough for you?"

"Who said I didn't think him good enough? But I'm sick of being told I'm lucky, as if I'd carried off what all of you wanted."

This was how matters stood when our new road was begun, with M. Paul Chastelain for the chief engineer.

We had had a good deal to say about this M. Chastelain before the works actually started. There had been some trouble about the survey; the first idea had been to bring the road across a bit of Lambert's land, for which, of course, he would have required proper compensation. All the rest of the way it would be along the common land of the mountain. There was no reason why M. Chastelain should have made up his mind to save the Government the expense of Lambert's ground—he himself pocketed nothing by his economy; and to Lambert, with young Jacques' marriage on hand, the ready money would have been welcome. There was no personal feeling in the matter either, for we had scarcely seen the managing engineer before we knew that, instead of taking a cutting through Lambert's vineyard, the new road would follow the line of the path, which went scrambling over boulders, and across the boggy courses of mountain streams into the highway below. He must be a clever man, we said, who would undertake to make a broad road wind smoothly down that rough mountain slope; and clever M. Chastelain was, no doubt, though to look at him you would not have said so. He looked in no way notable; he was neither tall nor short; his figure was neither bad nor good—he looked wiry and flexible, but not a bit smart. He wasn't exactly ugly, yet in his best moments you couldn't say he was good-looking—everything about him seemed to me utterly uninteresting, especially his cold, blue eyes which gave a keen glance at you for a second, and then went back to a kind of indifference. He certainly hadn't the presence you'd think necessary to manage a couple of hundred workmen; yet he did manage them, and such orders as he gave, and such regulations as he made on the works, were strictly observed.

Before he came, he wrote to me saying that he should board with us, and he mentioned the price he meant to pay. It wasn't a high price, particularly for a time when lodgings were likely to be scarce. We prepared him a room in proportion to what he proposed paying.

"My good man," he cried, when he saw it, "do you think I can live in a cupboard? I must have room to turn round—my price is a fair one. I hope you don't imagine I mean to let myself be swindled."

"I have no wish to swindle, Monsieur," I said; "my other rooms are all let."

"There is the room over the kitchen, father," said Léonie, who stood by, "if Monsieur does not mind the smell of the cooking."

I gave her a frown; there was space in the room over the kitchen for three navvies' beds. We should lose considerably by such an exchange.

"That room," I began, "would have many inconveniences for Monsieur."

But he interrupted. "Not so many as this; anyhow, I will see." And forthwith he established himself in the biggest room in the house. When I began to scold Léonie afterwards, she said she had no mind to wait on an unlimited number of navvies, which wasn't so very unreasonable from her point of view; certainly, as I said to myself, it was not because she was so taken with M. Chastelain at first sight, that she did such a bad stroke of business.

A great many of the villagers found work on the new road. The Lamberts took a contract for blasting away the stone round the shoulder of the hill, and for conveying it to a place where a viaduct would have to be built across a wide gully. The distance from one to the other was a good kilomètre, and it would have been a puzzle to most of us to say how the stone would be got from where it was quarried to where it was needed. M. Chastelain, however, soon settled that.

"He's having a double line of temporary rails laid," old Lambert explained to me, "along a dry water-course which goes as straight as an arrow from where we have to blast to the gully. The full truck running down the incline will pull the empty one up. All the machinery we want is a couple of good cog-wheels, and a few hundred mètres of cable. It's a capital idea, and I shall see if I can't manage to have such another laid from our own quarry to the river. It would pay me back in no time. He's a sharp fellow, is Chastelain, and knows his business."

Every one said this of him; but nothing more friendly. He gave himself no airs; yet no one seemed to take to him. Certainly, he made no advances to any one; he went about his work alone; he ate his meals alone; he smoked alone; and on Sundays he went for a long, solitary walk. He was the last man I should have expected Jacques Lambert to turn jealous of.

Nevertheless, one evening when I was busy in the bar, Jacques came to me, looking very savage. He called me aside, and said:

"Père Corseau, I want you to understand that I'll have no nonsense between Léonie and this young spark of an engineer."

If he hadn't been looking so angry, I should have laughed outright.

"Bless me, Jacques!" I cried; "what sort of nonsense do you mean? I've seen nothing between them."

"There's none so blind as those who won't see," he went on. "Surely you don't mean to say you can't see that for him she's quite a different girl?"

"Well," I said, "and what of that? He's a stranger to us, and a gentleman into the bargain; she can't treat him as she would one of her own station."

"That's just it," he said, more angrily than before; "he's a gentleman; but if I am not his equal, I'm not ashamed of the difference between us; and what's more, I'm not a man to let a promise be made into a plaything."

"Come, come, lad," I answered, "don't make such a fuss about nothing. What would Léonie say if she heard you?"

"It's time she did hear something. If you don't believe me, just come this way."

And he led me out across the courtyard to the garden gate. There he stopped.

"Well, Père Corseau," he began, "what do you think of that?"

"I see nothing so very wonderful," I replied. "The lass is gathering the early cherries to send to market to-morrow."

I spoke as coolly as I could, though I must confess I was a bit surprised to see M. Chastelain standing beside her, holding down the boughs while she gathered.

"But it isn't his business to gather cherries, and it isn't much in his line, either," said Jacques; "he wouldn't be gathering them by himself."

"Of course not," I said; "they aren't his to gather."

At that Jacques turned sharply round on me.

"I might as well have saved my breath," he said. "Of course you take her part. You think——"

But I stopped him.

"I'm not taking her part," I said; "indeed I see no need to; she's doing nothing at all to be ashamed of. They're scarce speaking to one another."

In fact, they weren't; moreover, M. Chastelain was drawing down the boughs with just the cool, indifferent air he always had. Yet, for all that, there was something that made me feel a little sorry for Jacques as I watched them; and that something was the look on Léonie's face. M. Chastelain did not seem to be aware of it; yet there it was—such an expression of perfect joy and contentment as I had never seen her wear before, for Jacques or for any one. What did it mean, and where did the great happiness come from that shone round her?

I hadn't much time, however, for observation, for they heard our voices, and looked towards us. I fancied Léonie gave a start; certainly her face changed as she cried:

"Go and get a ladder, Jacques; there are plenty ripe on the upper boughs."

As to M. Chastelain, he gave no sign whatever of having been caught doing anything unusual.

"A fine crop of cherries, Père Corseau," he called out; and by the time Jacques came back with the ladder, he was gone.

"I could have come before if I'd known you'd wanted help," Jacques began, in a vexed tone.

"Better late than never," she answered, laughing; but she made no excuse for herself, nor did she say how it was that M. Chastelain came to be helping her.

After that, I kept my eye upon them; but I could see nothing that need have vexed the most jealous lover—certainly nothing that I could have interfered to stop. Once or twice I saw M. Chastelain stop to speak to her at the well, or while she was feeding the poultry; but who could forbid him to do that, especially with his quiet, unassuming manner?

In Léonie, however, there certainly was a change, which sometimes I tried to account for one way, sometimes another. Could it be that she had been hurt by Jacques' jealousy, or was it that she was beginning to tame down into what she would have to be as a married woman? Or could she be unhappy? Often she would sit with her hands in lap for half an hour. That wasn't like her restless nature; and when I rallied her, she would say: "I'm tired; there's such a lot to do with all these workmen about."

Then another day, when we tried to spare her, she would declare no one could do her work but herself; that if she had not plenty to do she felt dull. But principally I was worried by the way she treated Jacques. She left off all joking with him, and she never seemed to have a moment to spare for him.

"We're uncommon busy, Jacques," her mother would say sometimes by way of excuse; "the child's run off her legs."

"She can find time for doing what she likes to do," he answered more than once; and I knew what he meant. Léonie had by degrees taken all the service for M. Chastelain into her own hands.

"You're not as civil to Jacques as you should be, child," I said to her. "Leave more of the work to Louise, and let him have a bit more of your company."

"But what's the good of sitting there? We have nothing to say to one another; and as to Louise, she can't be trusted to remember things, and M. Chastelain doesn't like her to do his room."

"Bother M. Chastelain," I said; "you've got to spend your life with Jacques. My child, I am not scolding you," I went on, for I saw her eyes were filled with tears. "Courtship is a serious matter, and a girl who has a good husband ready to take her should count herself lucky."

"I wish people would leave off calling me lucky," she cried, impatiently; "I'm sick of being called lucky."

Altogether one could feel that a storm was brewing, and it seemed to me that the sooner it broke and cleared the air the better.

"When they've had a good squabble and made it up, they'll understand one another better," I used to say to my wife, for I'd never been one to make mountains out of molehills, as Jacques seemed inclined to do.

Besides, when a man is busier than usual, he has to put family affairs out of his head, which was my case, particularly as our annual fair was coming on, which is always the busiest time of the year.

This fair falls on the fifteenth of August. It begins in the morning, with a procession through the village and high mass at the church, and it finishes in the evening with dancing, which, in those days, was always in the big club-room of the "Epée d'Or." Of course, there was a general holiday, and quite early Jacques came, dressed in his best, to walk with Léonie to church. He had taken it for granted that she would go, and he was more than a little vexed when he found her in the kitchen, a big blue apron round her, and her sleeves tucked up, trussing poultry for dinner. She laughed at him when he told her what he had come for.

"You should have spoken about it last night," she said, "and have saved yourself the disappointment. The fair-day is no holiday at the 'Epée d'Or,' and I should like to know who'd do my work if I began gallivanting at this time of day."

"Go along, child," her mother said;

"Louise and I will manage, and I'll call Marie Roux in if I want any one else."

But Léonie shook her head.

"What's the use of talking about Louise, you know she'll be outside chattering every time your back is turned—and Marie Roux has gone to church, I saw her go up the road with Joseph. Nay, Jacques, I can't go out this morning. Mother knows that as well as I do."

"She'll be able to go in the afternoon, Jacques," put in the mother. "And they say that the booths are finer than ever this year, and that there's a real theatre."

"Yes, mother's longing to see the theatre," Léonie said; but for herself she made no promise, and expressed no wish.

I was too busy myself all day long to take any note of anything; and in the evening, after the dancing had begun, my wife and I had our hands full pouring out drink, and counting change, or marking the score against those who did not pay ready money.

"If Léonie were here, she'd do this better than I can," I said, as I wrote something on the slate.

"I'm very glad she isn't here," my wife replied. "I had a job to persuade her we could do without her. But Jacques would have been very cross if she had kept away from the dancing."

She had scarcely spoken these words, when Jacques himself came into the bar.

"Where is Léonie?" he cried, angrily. "No one knows anything about her. I won't be served so!"

"She isn't here, Jacques," I said, trying to look as if I didn't see how vexed he was. "I expect if she isn't among the dancers, that she's busy titivating."

"I expect she is," put in my wife; "it was late before she was free to go and make herself smart."

Jacques muttered something, then turned on his heel and went away. My wife followed him. A minute or two later she came back and touched me on the shoulder.

"Léon," she said, "go into the court for a minute. I can do without you. And perhaps you can stop it coming to a regular quarrel. Oh, dear, oh, dear! why need she worry him so?"

I made haste to do as she bade me, without asking any more particulars, picking and choosing as I went the words that I thought the most likely to smooth matters down. At the back door, however, I stopped, too much astonished at what I saw by the light of the August moon to remember what I had meant to say. There, on the low parapet of the well, sat Léonie, in her workaday clothes, her elbows on her knees, and her face between her hands; behind her, leaning against the woodwork, stood M. Chastelain, an angry look on his usually calm face. In front of them, with his back toward me, was Jacques. I knew what he was looking like.

"You have been drinking, Lambert," M. Chastelain was saying, in a louder tone than I had ever heard him use; "if you were in your sober senses you would not dare say such things."

"I'm as sober as you are," shouted Jacques; "but who wouldn't say what I've said to the man who's done the mischief you've done? I love her a hundred times better than you ever could. What business have you there? Go away, I tell you, and leave her."

"You're not master here," replied the other, calmly; "and as you are not in a state to be left alone with Mademoiselle Léonie, I shall stay as long as you do."

"Then if you won't move, she shall. Léonie," he went on, his voice shaking with rage, "get up, and go into the house." She did not take any notice; he sprang forward towards her. At the same time M. Chastelain put himself in front of her, and crossed his arms over his chest. It was high time to interfere; a crowd was gathering by the fence, and I heard some one say, "If they fight, Jacques 'll pound him to a jelly."

"Jacques," I cried, hurrying across the yard, and placing myself between them, "Jacques, M. Chastelain, I can't stand by and see a quarrel of this sort when my daughter's at the bottom of it."

"It's not a quarrel, M. Corseau," rejoined Chastelain, quietly, "it is merely a tipsy mistake of this rash fellow. Mademoiselle Léonie is no more to blame than you are. For her sake I will tell you all that has passed. I pass across the courtyard. I see her sitting by the well, evidently tired out with the laborious side of the merry-making. I wish her good-evening. I commend her wisdom in avoiding the fatigues of the dancing. All of a sudden swoops down her angry fiancé, loads us both with insults and reproaches, and makes an exhibition of himself generally. I am ready to excuse him on the ground that Aubazine Fair comes but once a year, and that the wine one gets at the 'Epée d'Or' is a little heady; perhaps Mademoiselle Léonie will forgive him for the same reasons, if he promises to behave better for the future."

It was a wonder that Jacques had let M. Chastelain say all this without interruption; but he suddenly seemed to have grown as cool as the other.

"It is I who have something to forgive," he said, "and I'm not so sure I shall forgive it."

Then he turned and walked away with a firm step. In truth he was as sober as any of us. Léonie had slipped into the house directly I had come forward into the courtyard.

The next day, at ten minutes past twelve, M. Chastelain had not come in to his lunch. This was unusual. His hour was noon, and he was generally as punctual as the sun. Léonie, her face still troubled by last night's storm, kept taking anxious glances, now from the door, now from the window.

"Father," she said, presently, "what can be the matter? Not a man has come off the works yet, and people are going down the street all in that direction."

I went to the door. She was quite right. Instead of the usual midday rush of navvies into the village, the current seemed to be setting steadily the other way.

"What is the matter?" I asked.

"There's been an accident where they are blasting," was the answer I got.

At which I started off too. When I reached the blasting there was no sign of anything wrong, except that workmen were standing about in knots, talking excitedly.

"Is any one hurt?" I asked.

"He's worse than hurt, Père Corseau," was the answer, "unless there's been a regular miracle."

"Who?" I asked.

Then I heard all. It was M. Chastelain, who had been coming up in the empty truck from the viaduct, as he mostly did when he wanted to save time. When he was within ten feet of the top, the rope had broken, and the truck had gone spinning over and over down to the gully below.

"Who was at the pulley?" I asked, for a terrible thought crossed me.

"Young Lambert," they told me.

Then, in the distance, we saw a crowd coming along. Some of the foremost carried a stretcher, which was covered over with their coats. The Lamberts were walking side by side—the father holding the son by the arm.

"How is it with him?" we asked, looking towards the stretcher.

But no one spoke; there was no need of words—you could see how it was in their faces.

"Jacques," I whispered, going close to him, "Jacques, say it was an accident."

"It was, Père Corseau," he cried, looking at me pitifully. "Before Heaven, I hadn't a notion of what was going to happen till it was all over."

At that minute I pitied him almost more than the man who had died such a sudden, cruel death.

There was a terrible stir in the village, every one crowding round, women crying, men arguing in low tones about the accident; but Léonie was not to be seen.

When we—the two Lamberts and I—went into the house, there she stood. I took her hand and drew her aside to where we might be alone.

"Here's Jacques," I said to her; "he's in sad trouble. You've heard what's happened; it's your place to comfort him."

She drew her hands out of mine.

"To comfort him!" she cried. "No; never. I won't say you killed him," she went on, turning her white face towards Jacques. "Whether you did or did not, I'm not your judge; and no penalty you can pay will bring him back. But there's something I've got to say to you; I'd meant you to hear it to-day. I must say it all the more because he is dead. You thought he made love to me on the sly. Never once did he breathe a word of love to me; and he never would have done; he didn't love me. If you'd been as sharp as you thought you were, you'd have seen that. But I loved him; I was breaking my heart for him; and he didn't see it, either. I might have married you if he had never come. If I loved you as I loved him, it would make no difference to me that a man's life lies at your door. Now go away, and leave me all to myself."

Of course there was an enquiry into the manner in which M. Chastelain had met his death. Nothing, however, was proved against poor Jacques. Father and son were blamed for letting the rope wear thin; but it was urged in their defence that the line was for the transport of stones; that M. Chastelain had more than once been warned that he risked his limbs every time he used it; that if the rope had broken in the ordinary course, the only damage would have been to a couple of trucks.

So Jacques was cleared; but that didn't make him happy again. He lingered about the village for a time, hoping that Léonie would soften to him; then, when all hope was over—when we'd laid her to rest in the cemetery—he went and enlisted in the artillery, and since then he has never been seen in Aubazine. Another engineer finished the new road; but I've never been along it to see what manner of road it is.

A GARRISON ROMANCE.

BY MRS. LEITH ADAMS (MRS. LAFFAN).

Author of "Louis Draycott," "Geoffrey Stirling," "Aunt Hepsy's Foundling," etc.

CHAPTER XIII. "HOMEWARD BOUND."

CERTAINLY a good boat-load.

Private Doolan, number ten company, and his certainly much larger, if not better, half; Private Davenport, number one company; poor Polly Morrison, a slight figure all in black; and, last but not least—Butcher.

Butcher in a state of the wildest possible excitement and agitation. Of course there could be but one object in an expedition of this size—in Butcher's opinion—of course, they were going to seek for that missing master of his who had so evidently strayed away and got lost. During the morning it chanced that Butcher had come upon an old glove at Sir Peyton's—and seized upon it as some zealous paleontologist might seize upon a single bone of some extinct animal. It was not his master, but it was an integral part of him, and, as such, to be cherished and made much of. This very near resulted in Butcher eating the said glove altogether; but Davenport rescued it—at peril of his life, as it seemed, from those lusty fangs—though in a pulpy state impossible to describe. After this the old dog sulked a bit, but brightened up immensely when the boating expedition above-named was taken in hand.

You must know that, in a regiment, people are gregarious. They do things in groups. Nobody can do anything without somebody else—or even everybody else—helping. It is a way they have; and, believe me, it is not at all a bad way. Burdens are less heavy to carry when many hands are put to them; and joys shine all the brighter for being shared. So satisfied was Butcher as to starting on this expedition, that he condescended to overlook and ignore the presence of Sweet Nancy, who, curled up between Doolan and his missis, every now and again gave a shrill yelp at the boatmen, evidently under the impression that they were doing something unlawful with the oars. We have said poor Polly was all in black; but the effect as a whole was a little patchy, and the bonnet on her head was a very veteran in bonnets, the startlingly white widow's cap beneath it showing up its shabbiness cruelly. The fact was that many had contributed articles of mourning attire, for the young widow's more seemly caparisoning. People in the poorer ranks of life have a touching longing to show respect for the dead in such ways, and hands and hearts are all open to help one another. I remember in the great cholera epidemic, when so many of our regimental children were orphaned, the neat black dresses in which the little creatures would appear on Sundays at our Garrison Chapel—the said dresses being provided by the men of the company to whom the dead and gone parents had belonged. In the same spirit—the Divine Spirit of sympathy that is the blessed fruit of sorrow—the women of the 193rd had put a hand, as they called it, to making Jack's girl tidy. How quiet and pale her face beneath the widow's cap! How closely little Joe—himself as black as any sloe, poor bairn! from head to foot—clung to her hand, never letting go even in the boat!

At once Butcher recognised the pathos of this small black figure, and licked Joe's dumpy fingers; at which Davenport took his pipe out of his mouth to say:

"Look there, ain't the dawg got sense, now?" to which Doolan grudgingly replied, "Shure, and the baste isn't a bad-manin' baste altogether," and the subject dropped, because Davenport's indignation was too deep for words. Davenport had been Jack's "comrade," or, as schoolboys would say, his "chum." His presence on the occasion under consideration was therefore natural. To account for Doolan and the missis is more difficult; but Doolan looked upon himself as indispensable, and Mrs. Doolan said that "one faymale wanted another faymale to stand by her in adversity—praise be!" and Polly said very little, but smiled a sad little smile at every one being so kind to her.

Polly was on her way to see Miss Mabel. She held a little paper tight, tight clasped in her hand. Her heavy eyes looked wistfully round. How brightly the sun shone; how gaily the water sparkled; there was the tuneful clash of a band in the distance, and Jack—Jack lay still and cold under the dark earth. Jack would "never come no more!"

In due time the boat reached the Sleima shore, and Doolan—Doolan only — went with Polly up to the Major's door. It took Davenport all his time to hold Butcher back by his gilt-nailed collar, for Butcher had come too often to Major Clutterbuck's with his master not to have suspicions that that gentleman might possibly be lurking somewhere about the premises. Nancie, too, was rebellious, and wriggled like a little eel on Mrs. Doolan's lap.

"Some of us came along wid her," said Doolan, explaining matters to Mrs. Clutterbuck in the doorway, and indicating Polly, who, trembling very much, asked to see Miss Mabel. "We were apprehensive," said Doolan, using his largest words, "that she might be taken wid a wakeness, so a sample of us came along wid her, my lady."

He stood stiff and rigid while thus addressing the Major's wife. The Major's soldier-servant, standing modestly in the background, was visibly impressed by his air and manner, and asked him to "step forward," and take a seat in the kitchen until Mrs. Morrison was ready to set off home again. But Doolan shook his head, and returned to his companions in the boat; not being in spirits to make himself socially agreeable just then.

Meanwhile, up in Mabel's room the women met—the widowed in life, and the widowed in heart.

If Polly had heard, shuddering, the shriek of the fife and the roll of the drum as Jack was borne to his last resting-place—had not the other, to the "sound of violins," buried the dear hopes of a day that was dead, the fond delights that were now but as stories told, or as a dream when one waketh in the morning?

Scarcely less white and wan than the new-made widow, looked Mabel Graham as she went forward to greet poor Polly.

"Why, how tired-like you look, Miss Mabel!" said Polly. "Maybe I did wrong to come; but I couldn't stay home with such a secret in my bress'; and the rest, they would come, too."

"A secret," said Mabel; "tell me what it is, Polly. No more sorrow, surely? We have had enough of that—we have supped full of it."

At another time, her young mistress's hopeless, stricken tone would have aroused Polly's fears; but just now she was too much engrossed with the secret to notice anything.

She pulled a narrow slip of paper out from the palm of her glove, and spread it on the table.

"Miss Mabel," she said, speaking not without a certain awe and fear, "they tell me this bit of paper, simple as it looks, is worth a matter of—fifty pound."

Mabel looked at the paper closely; she went on looking, until she could not see for tears.

It was a cheque for fifty pounds, and there was the plain, unpretending signature:

"Amphlett Jones."

"Why, Polly!" said Miss Graham, at last.

Then some strange impulse — Heaven knows what!—came over the girl. She bent down, and pressed her lips — how pale, how pale they were!—to the name at the foot of the little slip of paper.

Then she said, laying her hand on the other's shoulder, and looking her very gravely in the face:

"Polly, I am going to marry—Mr. Jones."

Polly made a strange gesture, wringing her hands one in the other.

"Miss Mabel," she said, "do you mean that? He is good, I'm sure—good and true; he couldn't hold out his lovin' hand to the widow and the fatherless if he wasna that. But oh, Miss Mabel, I thought—I was sure——"

"Never mind what you thought; never mind of what you were sure."

But the woman would not be silenced.

"Love is sweet," she said, "sweet as sweet. Don't I know that, as has lost it? A man may be good as good, but love is love. Ah, Miss Mabel, dear, forgive me! I make too bold. You know what Jack used to say—him as 'ull never come no more—'You're such a wench for talking, Polly—such a wench for talking;' and it's true as true."

But Mabel put all this aside, very quietly, but very firmly. Was it not her work in life now and for ever to put from her all sentiment and tenderness, all that was "sweet as sweet," all the glamour of passion, all the joy of love?

"Tell me, Polly," she said, "what you are going to do with all this money. Tell me, too, how it was sent to you. Were you not amazed at such a stroke of luck befalling you?"

"You may say that," said Polly, stroking the magic slip of paper with a thoughtful hand; "Mrs. Doolan she fell into the wash-tub when she were first told, she did indeed; and Doolan, why, he danced a step or two of the double-shuffle—there's no man stands the regiment can do the double-shuffle like Doolan. Then he grew sorry-like, and axed my pardon for such a step, wi' Jack laid low: but he said the bit o' paper seemed like something sent right down from heaven, and got in his head; I reckon, Miss Mabel, it come straight from the heaven of a good man's heart—for I am sure he is a good man, Miss Mabel; and I wish you may be happy."

"Tell me, Polly," said her young mistress, quickly, "how did Mr. Jones send this to you?"

"Ah, miss, it was the doctor brought it, and he'd tears of joy in his eyes, that had he. It's Dr. Musters has the heart to feel for us all, same as though we were his own kith and kin. Why, when he cut Jimmy O'Brien's leg off, you'd have thought it was his own; and Jimmy were greatly comforted, and, when he come out of the sleep, his first word was to know would the leg have Christian burial. It weighed on his mind most of all to think of his leg being done by like as if it was a heathen; besides, some had told him if it weren't blest it 'ud never rise, and Jimmy thought he'd cut but a poor figure that way. But Doolan—eh, dear!—but Doolan's the clever lad—Doolan said, 'How about them as go down into the say?' says he. 'The leg's safe enough, the crathur,' says he. But la! la!" said Polly, breathless with the abstruse theological argument in which she had engaged, "how I do run on! I'd ought to have Jack to check me off, same as he'd used to—same as he'd used to——"

"And now, Polly," said Miss Mabel, "tell me, what are you going to do?"

"Going straight away home to mother, me, and little Joe, and the baby. Oh, Miss Mabel! it seems too good to be true. I have so dreaded that three months' kep' on the strength, and then your rations stopped, and . . . Well, well, I needn't think about it now, need I? But it seems strange to leave Jack behind; strange to have seen him lying so still, with the curl in his hair like life, and the smile on his bonnie lips—the smile that death left for to greet me, that death couldn't take away."

At this juncture the door was flung open, and all sentiment put to flight by the arrival of the scramble, very much sobered by the remembrance of Jack's untimely end, it is true; but still the "scramble," and nothing but it. They were all round Polly in a moment, except Phil, who swarmed up into her arms by some process only known to her and himself, and hugged her as tight as wax. Phil went straight to the point, without any of that circumlocution which an older hand would have employed.

"I benny solly Jack be's drownded in the biggy sea, I do be's, de—ar Nurse Polly."

How she kissed him—how she cuddled him—how she cried over him! The other children, seeing this, tried to draw him away; but Polly wouldn't have it so. Indeed, Phil eventually accompanied her down to the boat, and was very gracious to its occupants, fearlessly patronising Butcher, and laying his little pinky palm upon that mighty head.

"Lord love him! Who'd hurt the likes of him?" said Davenport, when Mrs. Doolan showed signs of nervousness. "What d'you take the dawg for?"

Then the boat-load set off on its return journey, Jim, to the very last, most pressing in his enquiries as to whether the baby's eyes were open yet, which sent Doolan and Davenport into respectful convulsions, while Mrs. Doolan and Polly made signs of admiring astonishment to each other; Polly by no means sorry that one of her own "little gentlemen" should show off to such advantage.

It was later than the Major had expected when Mr. Jones arrived that afternoon. The Major had thought that a zealous and ardent lover would scarcely restrain his impatience of the empty hours passed away from the loved one's side. He met Mr. Jones almost at the landing-place, and told him that Mabel was in the drawing-room.

She was not there, but her lover—for indeed he was that, however unsuitable he might deem himself, however unsuitable other people might deem him—had not long to wait.

She came in, floating—so it seemed to him—on the golden shaded light, floating in like some white-robed angel, beautiful, and sweet, and good. Every time he saw her freshly, he freshly wondered at his own audacity in having asked for such a gift from fortune. Every time he saw her freshly he made fresh resolves as to what he would do to try and make her happy—plans as to how he would think, and plan, and strive, and try, and crave of heaven the gift of wisdom, to know and to see what would please her best.

These had been his thoughts, his aspirations every time they met. What his thoughts were now, the future alone may reveal to us.

She came right up to him, close to him, so close, that for her to come like that of her own free will, set his heart throbbing, and his hands trembling, made him conscious of a thrill of delight. She laid her hand upon his arm.

"You have been so good—so good; I thank you for it in my heart of hearts."

Truth to tell he was somewhat embarrassed at this. He could not be sure what she was speaking of; he did not know how far, or how short, her knowledge went, of the way in which matters stood between himself and—the Major.

He took her hand gently in his own.

"If I have pleased you, I am very glad."

At the sound of his voice Mabel started. There is nothing that so subtly tells of a change in a man or woman's personality as the voice; for the human voice is an instrument of so exquisite a timbre that one inflection higher or lower, deeper or more restrained, alters the key of the whole music—or creates discord, as the case may be. There was no discord in the voice of Amphlett Jones, but, it was not the same voice as that to which Mabel had listened hitherto Nor yet — hearken as she might—would she ever hear that voice again! Nay, as she looked at him earnestly in the faint light, she saw that his face was changed—marvellously, yet inexplicably changed. In the eyes was a strange, luminous light, a look of yearning, yet of fixed resolve. His eyes were the one fine feature Amphlett Jones possessed; the one gift a younger and handsomer man might have envied him. It seemed that the ruddy mottled colour had departed permanently from his cheek, and his lips were set and sad, yet with a sweetness of smile—when the smile came—that had something very touching and pathetic in it. His manner to Mabel was changed also. Something was gone, she could not define what. His thought for her, his tenderness, his gentle ways, were all, as it were, things impersonal. They centred upon, and had reference to her alone. He seemed to stand apart, somewhere very far off; and as he watched her, he looked as we look when we are about to take an eternal leave of what is infinitely precious, but in which we have neither part nor lot.

"Polly has been . . . ." said Mabel, drawing a long breath, and conscious of a little shiver even in the glow of that Malta day.

"Oh; it is that," said Mr. Jones. "That was a little pleasure I could not deny myself, and now you, too, are pleased—that is well."

He still held her hand—but loosely, looking at its pretty whiteness every now and then, as though it were some beautiful helpless creature he had captured, and would fain set free. Now and again he raised it, and touched it lightly with his lips; but even in this was no urgency of possession.

"Come here," he said, drawing her to the low couch by the window, "come and sit down beside me—I have something to tell you. . . ."

"There is nothing the matter—you are not ill?" said Mabel.

"Ill? Oh no—I have cast all that away since I came to your island. Dodson will be quite astonished with me when I get home—quite—and, by the way, that brings me to what I have to say——"

"Dodson brings you, do you mean?"

"Yes, Dodson. The fact is, Dodson wants me — which is, you must know, another way of saying that business wants me. I had not thought to leave you so soon. It is not the plan I had laid out for myself—not at all . . . . not at all. . ."

He spoke in a low, dreamy way, new indeed for Mabel to observe in him—and his eyes gazed thoughtfully out at the garish bars of light seen through the blinds. He seemed to be watching something as we watch a funeral whose cortège carries out of our sight some precious thing—precious still, though no longer warm with life and love as once it has been.

"And you must go—now—at once—is that what you mean?" said Mabel, a pang of remorse cutting her like steel, as she was conscious of a sense of relief and coming freedom.

"No; not quite at once," he answered, with such a sad little smile that her shame and self-reproach was deepened; "not quite at once. I cannot baulk myself altogether of what I have coveted so much—I shall give myself——"—this with a long, deep breath—"six whole days—then—Dodson and business—or—I ought to say, business and Dodson—shall have their way——"

When first the Major was told of this arrangement he looked grave, and got what his family called the "fidgets"; but after a long, and it must be supposed pleasant interview with Mr. Jones in the "den," took a brighter view of things, and sang with such a verve and charm that evening that the boys crept out of bed in their nightgowns to listen, making the stone stairway into quite a sort of amateur Jacob's ladder for the nonce. They had a real good time until Jim and Algie, fighting—in a most unangelic manner, it must be confessed—for the best place on the said ladder, damaged King Baby, and caused that monarch to air his grievances loudly and bring Mabel hurriedly to the rescue.

There was a bump the size of a pigeon's egg on the kingly brow, and brown paper, vinegar, and kisses had to be freely applied; not only so, but Phil had to be carried into the sitting-room and there held on sister's lap, to listen to Pap sing "The Minstrel Boy." Jim also slid in somehow—he was a very eel of a boy for slipping into places where he had no manner of business to be—and now being promoted to a sleeping-suit, considered himself fit for any society at any hour of the twenty-four. Nevertheless, he was glad to avail himself of the shadow of Mabel's chair, and, from that point of vantage, listen greedily to the melting tones of Pap's voice. He also thought fit to say, in a pig's whisper:

"D'ye know, Mab dear, Cap'en Rowan's going on leave, 'mediately—give you my word; the Honourable Bob said so. He said 'Bai Jove,' you know, he said it many times, 'I think Cap'en Rowan's about off by now. He's going to join again out in a new place—a place where it's always snowing, and stags walk about the streets, and you shoot 'em, you know, just as you like,' that's what the Honourable Bob says, and he ought to know. He says he should like to go to that place, and shoot stags; but we haven't got the route, have we?—it's only the Brigade. I don't think Cap'en Rowan's going to come and say good-bye to us, do you? I call that mean. I think he's forgotted us a good lot lately."

Here Phil looked up with an aggrieved face, blinking from under his pent-house of brown paper.

"Don't skees me so tight, Mabel," he said; "I can't get mine breff. I be's benny sad wis this sing on mine head, an' I can't be skeesed."

Jim proved to be right.

Captain Rowan did not come to say good-bye. He wrote a little letter to Mrs. Clutterbuck, but as nobody else saw it, nobody was the wiser. That dear lady's eyes were very red all the next day—a fact which the Major laboriously ignored—and the Honourable Bob and his friend Ginger, who looked in to tea, were in such a low state that every one was very glad when they went away, which they did in company with Mrs. Carbonel, who was not only low, but also frightened to note that Mabel carefully avoided holding any kind of speech with her, except in the full publicity of the assembled family.

Mrs. Carbonel was terribly aggrieved. She had done her best the night before to give Charley his chance; and nothing had come of it. She had hung about the door of that floral tent until forced away by a partner who would take no denial, and then, just as with a wild, final shriek the violins ceased to play, she had caught a glimpse of Captain Rowan's figure leaping into a boat——

Bah! what were the men made of? Would Fred—her Fred—have let her go like that? Not he! He would have taken her with him. Where? Oh, anywhere! What did it matter? And then, being by this time safe in her own room, Mrs. Carbonel had a "good cry," and vowed that she would never take an interest in a love-affair again.

NOTE.

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BY MARY ANGELA DICKENS.

Author of "A Mist of Error," "Her Inheritance," "A Social Success," "Kitty's Victim," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Two days after the Sunday on which Helen, Humphrey, and Selma dined at the Cornishes', Mervyn Dallas was left alone at home with the prospect of a solitary fortnight, and Mrs. Cornish asked her to come and spend the time with them. Roger, whose business arrangements at that time were rather unsettled, was a good deal at home just then, and the ice having been so thoroughly broken between them, Selma's old lover and her enthusiastic little adorer found a constant bond of sympathy, and an unfailing topic for tête à-tête conversations, in Selma's perfections.

The bitter and unpardoning animosity which had lurked in the tone of almost every one who had hitherto spoken or written to him of Selma — though any open expression of such a feeling to him had from the very first received a simple and decided check—had been a constant distress and reproach to Roger. That she should lose affection and respect for what he looked upon as entirely his own fault, hurt him almost as though he himself had actually done something to lower her in popular estimation. The bitter pain of his first disappointment was past for him now, although he hardly realised the fact; the element of reverent uncertainty which had been so prominent a characteristic of his love, had come to his help in his trouble, and he had grown, with time, to look upon the girl he had lost as an altogether superior order of being, to be admired and worshipped as such, but to be thought of no longer with the simple, protecting love which such a man as Roger Cornish gives to his wife.

To hear her talked of as Mervyn talked of her, to be able to dwell on her beauty and her general perfection was, to him, like the restoration of his own self-respect. That the conversation which began with Selma should not invariably end with her, was not so wonderful as it seemed, on reflection, to Roger.

Mervyn's visit to the Cornishes was drawing to a close, when Helen, coming in one afternoon about tea-time, as she often did, found the whole party assembled in the drawing-room. Roger and Mervyn were both there, and, after a few minutes, a most unusual fit of silence and abstraction seemed to come over Helen, which lasted until she found herself in Sylvia's bedroom, whither the latter had conducted her to inspect something or other—Helen was not quite sure what. She was standing with the recent purchase in question—a hat—in her hand, looking at it vaguely, when she said, slowly:

"Sylvia, have you noticed anything?"

Sylvia looked at her quickly.

"What sort of thing, Helen?" she asked, looking down again at the hat, on which Helen's eyes were also fixed.

"Roger and—and Mervyn," said Helen. And then she and Sylvia looked up simultaneously, their eyes met, and the new hat was nearly demolished as they suddenly and vigorously embraced. "Oh, my dear!" cried Helen, joyfully. "Is it really, do you think? How long has it been going on? Oh, tell me all about it, do!"

"We all think so," returned Sylvia, eagerly, as though she were only too delighted to talk about it. "I don't believe they've any idea of it themselves, yet; it would take them ever so long to think of such a thing, you know. But wouldn't it be delightful?"

"Nothing could possibly be better," answered Helen. "Selma will never really forgive herself until he is married; and perhaps when there's no doubt as to his being quite—quite cured, you'll all forgive her, Sylvia?" she finished wistfully.

"We have—we have quite forgiven her," protested Sylvia; "if it is because she can't forgive herself that she hasn't been here since that Sunday, I think she ought to make an effort, Nell. Mother has spoken about it several times."

"She is so busy," said Helen, apologetically, not mentioning that she had several times made energetic, but entirely unsuccessful, attempts to get her sister to go with her to make the call on her aunt which mere civility required. "She is so very busy, Sylvia."

There was a moment's silence, and then Helen, returning to the topic from which they had gone off at a tangent, said:

"Oh, I shall be so anxious to hear how they get on, Sylvia—Mervyn and Roger, I mean. I suppose I'd better not say anything to Selma yet, in case—in case it should be a false hope."

"I wouldn't, certainly," returned Sylvia, promptly, thinking that Selma might very well wait. "I'm so glad you noticed it, Helen. I've been longing to talk to you about it. We are so pleased."

But the Cornishes' satisfaction was nothing to Helen's. It seemed to her that Roger's marriage was just the one thing that could and would put everything straight again, and lift the shadow of self-reproach from Selma's mind. That Selma suffered greatly from an exaggerated feeling of remorse and shame at her own conduct towards Roger, was the dominant principle in Helen's consideration of her sister at present, and had coloured all her impressions for many months. She would have hailed the news of his marriage to any one, almost, with joy, and she could hardly restrain herself from telling Selma of the probabilities that very evening. She contented herself, however, with mentioning that Mervyn was still with the Cornishes, and that Roger had still very little occupation, placing the two facts significantly near to one another; and during the weeks that followed, as her hopes rose higher, and her satisfaction increased every day, she never came from the Cornishes' without having something to tell Selma in which the names of Mervyn and Roger occurred in close proximity.

Helen was anxious that her sister should call with her, because of what Sylvia had said and because Mrs. Cornish had several times hinted as to her non-appearance, and also because she wished her to have a chance of seeing with her own eyes what was likely to happen—as she might easily do any day at the Cornishes' house, where Mervyn was constantly to be found. But Selma was never able to go; all Helen's representations and arrangements for her were quietly put aside with a reference to her work.

Nobody who knew how her days were spent could have said that her words were an idle excuse. Tyrrell had arranged for the series of matinées for which she had begged—as an experiment, he announced—and though he altogether declined even to hear of more than one every fortnight, the amount of work which Selma contrived to get out of them was positively amazing to him. She rehearsed with him, and she rehearsed with the company as often as she could persuade him to call a rehearsal; and he knew that she must study hard at home to arrive in so short a time at the results she attained. She went into every minutest detail of dress which could possibly affect the correctness of the picture she was to make, with a feverish thoroughness.

Miss Tyrrell's lamentations over her were bitter and incessant. After her success as Bianca, invitations for all such "quiet" entertainments as were given in Lent showered upon her through that lady, and she refused them one and all. She was too busy, she said, to go out in the afternoon, and too tired after her day's work to go out in the evening.

"She has a chance for which any other girl would give ten years of her life," bewailed Miss Tyrrell, as she received one refusal after another. "And she is simply throwing herself away over this ridiculous mania for improvement. Of course, I know," she added, as Tyrrell's mouth took a cynical twist at this very plain speaking, "of course, I know that an artist must be devoted to her art; but still, I do not see why Selma should refuse the Duchess's dinner"—which was the immediate cause of Miss Tyrrell's outbreak. "She is absolutely overworking herself, too, John.

I thought her looking quite haggard the other day, and altogether strained and tired. She'll lose her beauty if she isn't careful, and then what will all this work do for her?"

John Tyrrell, to whom this harangue was addressed one morning at breakfast, made no attempt to reply to it. Selma was, in fact, something of a perplexity to him. He was well-used to what his sister defined as her "mania for improvement," but there was something about her manner of working lately which was new to him—something which he had once found himself defining as "desperate." The word, though he dismissed it the first time it occurred to him with a little contemptuous smile, came back to him again and again; and the more keenly and carefully he watched her, the less he understood her. It annoyed him, and it also annoyed him that, often as they met for purposes of rehearsal, Selma's whole mind was invariably concentrated on the matter in hand, and she neither heard nor understood him when he attempted to "waste the time," as she expressed it, in desultory, personal conversation.

It was a bright, warm, April day, nearly two months after the family dinner-party at Mrs. Cornish's, and into Selma's pretty sitting-room the soft spring air floated through the open window with a pleasant suggestion of country fields and flowers in its breath. But its gentle touch was unnoticed by Selma; she was walking up and down the room, her face flushed and tired-looking, and with a look in her eyes as though the concentration she was giving to the new part she was studying so indefatigably was a painful effort of will. She had been working for nearly two hours, and the flush on her cheeks was fading and leaving it very white, when there was a knock at the door, and the servant told her that Mr. Tyrrell was downstairs, and had asked to see her.

"The dining-room door was open, miss, and Mr. Tyrrell said he would go in there as he wanted to see you on business," added the girl, apologetically.

"Very well, thank you, Mary," said Selma, as she went quickly downstairs, wondering a little what the business could be that was so important. It was the first time Tyrrell had been to the house to see her.

"I hope there's nothing wrong, Mr. Tyrrell?" she began, nervously, as she entered the room.

Tyrrell was standing with his back to the door looking at a picture—a sketch of Selma which Humphrey had done long ago, and given to Helen. He turned quickly as she spoke, and came towards her.

"How do you do?" he said, quietly, as they shook hands. "Don't look so anxious, there is nothing wrong."

"I am getting nervous, I believe," she said, as she sat down, with a little laugh, which was somehow not quite natural. "I was afraid something might have happened——"

"To give you more work?" he interrupted, looking at her curiously.

"No, no, indeed," she protested, feverishly. "On the contrary, I was afraid something might have happened to postpone the next matinée."

He sat down close to her, and said, his voice very musical, with what seemed to Selma kindly solicitude:

"Selma, you are looking very tired. Am I overworking my 'leading lady'?"

"No!" she cried, vehemently, turning her face away from him, and pressing her hands against her pale cheeks as the colour flew to them. "I'm not tired—not in the least! And if I were, you know that it's only a necessary part of it. You said it was a struggle, and a constant effort! You said so!"

She faced him again as if defying him to notice the inconsistency of her words, and he understood at once that she was referring to the words he had once said to her about an artist's life—the life from which she had then been turning away.

"Did I?" he said, quietly. "I said then, at the same time perhaps, that the struggle brought its own reward! Do you find it so?"

She was still looking straight at him, but apparently she did not see him; at least, she was quite unconscious of his eyes. Her colour came and went, her lips set themselves, her eyes were dark and burning. At last, as though she forced it from herself, her answer came, vehement, almost passionate in its protestation.

"Yes!" she cried. "Yes, yes, yes!" Then apparently becoming conscious of herself, and her excitement, she rose abruptly, and going to the window, stood there, with her back towards him, looking out.

He did not speak to her. He was quite aware that he had had a glimpse at the real Selma, as she was at present, such as he had not had for months, and he was more annoyed than ever with himself for not being able to understand what he had seen. He was still reflecting when she turned again with all the excitement gone from her face.

"I beg your pardon," she said, with a faint smile. "I'm afraid I've been gushing. There is something you want to talk about, isn't there?"

There was a good deal about which Tyrrell wanted to talk—about which he had wanted to talk for some time; but, above all things, he despised a man who risked a hair's breadth for want of patience, and he said:

"Yes. I came to tell you that Arnold will design your dresses for Pauline if you have settled nothing about them yet. He must have an answer to-night"—Tyrrell did not mention that the obligation was of his own making—"so I thought I had better see you this afternoon."

"How kind of you," said Selma, gratefully. "Don't think me very ungrateful if I say that my brother-in-law is doing them for me, and I won't trouble Mr. Arnold. He is very kind, but it seems to me that he hasn't much idea of character. I'm afraid, though," she added, hesitatingly, and with that deference in her tone with which she always considered a proposition of his, "I'm afraid you would have liked him to do them as you've taken all this trouble about it?"

"I don't care in the least," he replied, with a slight smile. "Your brother-in-law's designs are always excellent."

"Come up and see them, and have some tea," she said. "Humphrey is taking a little holiday, and he will be delighted to see you, and so will Helen. They are both in the studio."

She had risen as she spoke; but he did not follow her example immediately. He sat looking up at her as she stood in the fading sunlight of the April afternoon.

"I came to see you," he said.

"But you are not in a hurry? Oh, do come!"

"I want to talk to you, Selma."

Her face changed instantly.

"Oh, I beg your pardon!" she said. "I did not know there was anything else. What is it?"

He looked at her for another instant, and then he rose, abruptly.

"I dare say it will keep," he said. "I shall be delighted to go upstairs. Oh, by-the-way," he went on, "my sister sent you this, and said you were to send an answer. She also said that she would not write to you, as she left it to your common-sense to decide. I suppose, however, that your common-sense and hers are likely to decide differently."

His smile as he spoke was not a pleasant one. He knew better than to hurry Selma into a social position which she did not care to fill; but her steady refusal of the invitations she received annoyed him little less than it annoyed his sister.

"I—am I to send an answer by you?" asked Selma, looking up from the imposing card of invitation she had drawn from its envelope. "It's a fancy dress ball!"

"One of the biggest things of the season," he assented. "No, you'd better think about it and write."

And then, as she turned with a smile and a little shake of the head, he opened the door for her, and followed her upstairs.

"We hear that Humphrey's Academy picture is capitally hung," said Selma, as they went. "I hope——" she opened the studio door as she spoke, and stopped suddenly.

The next moment Mervyn Dallas, who was calling on Helen, had placed her cup of tea hastily upon the table, and had rushed across the room in her most impulsive way, and was embracing Selma, unobtrusively, but with something almost tremulous in her vehemence, while Helen and Humphrey shook hands with Tyrrell.

"You dearest dear," she said, not the less enthusiastically because the presence of Tyrrell, who was almost a stranger to her, caused her to utter the words in a vehement whisper. Then, releasing Selma, she said, shyly: "How do you do, Mr. Tyrrell?" And as he, having shaken hands with her with the faintest possible smile of amusement, followed Helen to the tea-table, she turned to Selma once more, and gave her another furtive little hug. "I thought I was never going to see you again," she went on. "Are you always going to be so busy? I've been here ever so many times, and they've always told me that you were at work, or at rehearsal, or busy about a dress or something. Do you know I haven't seen you since—since"—Mervyn faltered, stopped, and crimsoned. She and Selma had not met since the Sunday dinner at Mrs. Cornish's.

But Selma did not colour. Perhaps it was the pale gravity of her face and the curious quiet of her manner that gave Mervyn's eyes, as she looked at her, a slightly deprecating and wistful expression.

"I am very busy," answered Selma, simply. "Have you been here long, Mervyn?"

Mervyn made no reply. Her expressive little face was raised to speak when all at once it changed suddenly and completely. She was facing the door to which Selma's back was turned, and she had seen Roger Cornish come into the room.

"I thought I might come up," he said, apologetically, as he shook hands with Helen, who, having given Tyrrell the cup of tea she had been pouring for him, had come forward with a smile to meet her brother-in-law. "I didn't know——"

He broke off, not liking to say that he had not expected to find any one beside themselves. He shook hands with Selma, and then he turned to Mervyn, and there was something in his look and manner as he did so, something in the eyes she lifted for a moment to his face, which made Helen glance triumphantly at her sister as she stood next to Mervyn, with a delighted conviction that the moment for which she had waited so impatiently had come at last. It was quite a disappointment to her to see that Selma had turned and moved suddenly away to where Humphrey and Tyrrell were standing talking together—a strikingly contrasted pair.

"I don't believe she saw," thought Helen.

There was a curious mutual interest and liking between Humphrey Cornish and John Tyrrell, utterly at variance as were their schemes and ideals of life. Each man was conscious that there was more in the other than was easily to be fathomed; Humphrey believed that the best of John Tyrrell had never been drawn out, and Tyrrell liked and respected the quiet painter without troubling himself to define the reason. They met seldom enough, but when they did meet, they had always plenty to say to one another; and as Selma joined them now, Humphrey, who was speaking, did not break off, though his smile included her instantly in the conversation. It was Selma who interrupted him, abruptly:

"Humphrey," she said, "Mr. Tyrrell would like to see the Pauline sketches."

At the first sound of her voice, high-pitched, and almost harsh, though not loud, both men turned simultaneously to look at her. Then Humphrey glanced quickly from her face to where Roger and Mervyn still stood together, dilating to one another on the extraordinarily accidental character of their meeting, and saying, quietly:

"With pleasure, Selma. They are on this table," led the way to the other end of the room.

"What a capital studio you have here," observed Tyrrell, as he followed him with Selma.

John Tyrrell had come to the house that afternoon determined, if possible, to get some clue to the indescribable change which he had noticed in Selma. He had only seen Roger Cornish once—on the October afternoon when he had gone to Selma with her release from her first professional engagement, and she had proudly introduced him to the man she was to marry—but he had known "the colonial fellow" again the instant he had appeared in the doorway, though until that moment he had had no idea that he was in London. The sight of her old lover, and the strange ring in her voice as she spoke to Humphrey, taken in combination, had not only given him—as it seemed to him—the clue he wanted, but had let in a flood of light upon the position, of which he himself, John Tyrrell, was, in his own calculations, the centre figure. It was a light which not only roused all his intellectual faculties, but which stimulated, as they were not often stimulated now, all the calculating impulses into which he had subdued his passions; but as he uttered his complimentary comment on the studio, and strolled with Selma across the room, it would have been impossible to tell that anything in the least unusual was passing in his mind.

Humphrey silently produced the sketches, and Selma talked about them, describing the material and the colouring she proposed to use, rapidly, and rather incoherently, answered now and then by an appreciative word or two from Tyrrell. Humphrey had not spoken, and had hardly looked up from the sketches, when Helen, from the other end of the room, said:

"Humphrey, will you come here for a moment and tell Roger something?"

As he left them, with a word of excuse, silence fell upon Selma and Tyrrell. Selma, standing in shadow, was looking at the little group near the tea-table where Humphrey had joined, not Roger, but

Helen. Tyrrell looked at her for a moment, and then followed the direction of her eyes. He saw Roger with Mervyn's tea-cup in his hand, his face towards them; he saw him bend down and give it her, and then, sitting down in the chair next her, lean forward and speak to her—the words themselves were lost in the words which were passing between Helen and Humphrey; but Roger's face, as he spoke, was plainly visible. Then Tyrrell turned and looked again at Selma; and, as he saw the expression on her face, his own grew resolute and determined. His mouth set itself for a moment like iron, and there was a most unusual flash in his eyes.

"The sketches are excellent," he said, lightly, turning away from her, and taking one in his hand again. "If you could make up your mind to that ball, now, either of these would be perfect."

She started at the sound of his voice, and looked round hurriedly as if to see if he had been looking at her. Then, as though she had hardly heard what he said, she answered vaguely, and as if only anxious to make conversation of any kind.

"The ball? Oh yes, the fancy ball. Tell me all about it, Mr. Tyrrell. I've never seen one."

"Then it would amuse you," he said, carelessly. "It is a pretty sight, and this will be magnificent. Lady Winslow always does things well."

"She is very handsome, isn't she?" said Selma, in a tone of the deepest interest, as she moved her chair a little so that she no longer saw the group by the tea-table.

"Well, no," returned Tyrrell, deliberately. "You must be thinking of some one else. Lady Winslow is the ugliest woman in London."

The conversation which followed would have filled Miss Tyrrell with a hope that light was dawning on Selma at last. She kept up the conversation then started on countesses and balls with a feverish eagerness and excitement, putting all kinds of questions on such subjects to Tyrrell whenever the talk seemed in danger of flagging. She was so deeply absorbed that Helen called her twice unheeded, and then came and put her hand on her shoulder.

"I'm so sorry to interrupt you, dear," she said. "I know how anxious you are about the Pauline dresses, but Mervyn is going."

Roger was going, too, it appeared, and Mervyn's eyes, as she said good-bye to Selma, were even more deprecating than when she kissed her first.

A few minutes after Tyrrell also said good-bye.

"By-the-bye," he said to Selma, as he took leave, "Sybilla tells me that you don't mean to come to us on the second?"

Selma shook her head with a faint smile. The occasion in question was Miss Tyrrell's first large "at home" of the season.

"I shall have Pauline so much on my mind," she said.

"I am sorry!" he answered, gravely, and then he shook hands with Helen and Humphrey, and went away, and, as soon as he was gone, Selma, saying that she had a great deal to do before dinner, ran quickly upstairs.

As the door closed behind her, and Helen and Humphrey were left alone together, the former turned a radiant face towards her husband.

"I wonder whether she noticed," she cried. "I thought she looked rather odd and excited when she kissed Mervyn. Well, at any rate," with a happy little laugh, "I should think she would soon know now. Wasn't it delightful that they should meet here like that? Oh, poor dear, how pleased she will be!"

Humphrey was putting his sketches together with a rather grave and preoccupied air.

"I wonder!" he said, apparently in answer to his wife's first words. "I wonder!"

During the next two or three days that same grave, preoccupied air returned to Humphrey again and again, and Helen thought he must be meditating a new picture. To facilitate his meditations she left him as much as possible alone, expecting each evening that, as she sat with him while he smoked, he would deliver himself, according to his custom, first of a few slow words—few and far between—which should gradually grow under her very womanly and loving, if somewhat incomprehending, sympathy to a full description of the picture which was growing in his mind; a description which he usually seemed to put into words as much for his own sake as for hers. But no such words came from him during these days, though, when Helen left him alone, he would sit meditatively smoking, or walking up and down with a troubled face.

It was late in the afternoon, four days after, and Helen herself was out. Humphrey, alone in the studio, had been standing in the same reflective attitude for very many minutes, when he was roused by the sudden opening of the door, and Roger came in quickly.

"I'm afraid I ought not to bang in like this," he said. "But if you're not too busy, old fellow, I should like to talk to you a bit."

A curious look, as of a man who has taken a sudden and rather desperate resolution, and intends to carry it immediately into action, had come over Humphrey's face at the sight of his brother, and it intensified at Roger's words.

"Sit down, old boy," he said. "I've been wanting a talk, too."

Roger paused in the act of settling himself in his chair, and looked at him.

"You have?" he said. "Well, go ahead then. Or wait a bit," he added. "Suppose I have my say first? It's rather on my mind."

"Go on, then."

But Roger did not go on. He leant forward in his chair, propped his chin on his hands, and his elbows on his knees, and sat staring into the fire.

"Humphrey, old boy," he began, at last, in a low voice, "there's no one knows so well as you do how hard I was hit."

Humphrey started, and looked down at him, his face full of sympathy and hope.

"Yes," he said.

"I shall think of her as long as I live, as—as—well as altogether different to any other woman," Roger went on, slowly; "like a queen, or—or a saint, or something like that. But I'm only a man, you see; and a man wants—wants something nearer to him for his wife I've come to understand." He paused, and Humphrey's face changed suddenly; he turned it away without speaking, and, after a moment, Roger went on:

"I told her just how it was, and she understands exactly. I—she—we——" He paused again, having confused himself past all extrication, and Humphrey said, without looking at him:

"You are not talking of Selma, now. Tell me in so many words what you mean."

"I am engaged to Mervyn Dallas," answered Roger.

He never knew what it was that Humphrey had been going to say to him. When he asked on a sudden thought as he said good-bye, Humphrey had forgotten.

CONCERNING SOME GEORGIAN DINNERS.

As introductory to my notes on some remarkable dinners in the reign of George the Third, I shall quote, from "Humphrey Clinker," Matthew Bramble's letters to Dr. Lewis, in which Smollett describes, with evident enjoyment, the wholesome fare at the command of a country gentleman of the period. The squire of Brambleton Hall is made to boast of his "five-year-old mutton, fed on the fragrant herbage of the mountains, that might vie with venison in juice and flavour;" "the delicious veal that fills the dish with gravy;" the barndoor fowls "that never knew confinement but when at roost;" "rabbits panting from the warren;" "trout and salmon struggling from the streams;" "salads, roots, and pot-herbs, the produce of his own garden." His orchard supplies his dessert; his dairy yields "nectareous tides of milk and cream, whence he derives abundance of excellent butter, curds, and cheese;" and the refuse fattens his pigs, which are destined for hams and bacon. His beverages are cider, brewed from his own apples; and claret, imported by a friend on whose integrity he can rely. While his bread, sweet and nourishing, is made from his own wheat, ground in his own mill, and baked in his own oven. Let the country gentleman of to-day look upon this picture—and weep.

This same Matthew Bramble is of opinion that no nation drinks so "hoggishly" as the English. "What passes for wine among us is not the juice of the grape. It is an adulterous mixture, brewed up of nauseous ingredients by dunces who are bunglers in the art of poison-making; yet we and our forefathers are, and have been, poisoned by this cursed drink, without taste or flavour. The only genuine and wholesome beverage in England is London porter and Dorchester table-beer; but as for your ale and your gin, your cider and your perry, and all the trashy family of made wines, I detest them as infernal compositions, contrived for the destruction of the human species." There is a good deal of truth in this, so far as home-made beverages are concerned, but I would fain except from the sweeping censure Mrs. Primrose's gooseberry wine.

Smollett introduces into his pages the well-known actor and gastronome, James Quin. At a dinner given by Miss Tabitha Bramble, he characteristically exclaims: "If I was an absolute prince, at this instant, I believe I should send for the head of your cook in a charger. She has committed felony on the person of that John Dory, which is mangled in a cruel manner, and even presented without sauce."

Quin used to journey to Exeter in order to enjoy his favourite fish in perfection, the finest being caught on the west coast. One morning after his arrival, his valet came to call him according to custom.

"Well, John, any dory in the market?"

"No, sir."

"Very well; then I'll lay in bed to-day. Call me this time to-morrow."

When Dr. Robertson, the Scottish divine and historian, visited London, Smollett invited him to join a partie quarrée of ingenuous Scots. He accepted the invitation. The dinner was good, the talk was brilliant. "Having to stay all night," says one of the guests, "that we might spend the evening together, Smollett begged leave to withdraw for an hour, that he might give audience to his myrmidons; we insisted that if his business permitted, it should be in the room where we sat. The doctor agreed, and the authors"—his literary drudges or hacks—"were introduced to the number of five, I think; most of them were soon dismissed. He kept two, however, to supper, whispering to us that he believed they would amuse us, which they certainly did, for they were curious characters. We passed a very pleasant and joyful evening. When we broke up, Robertson expressed great surprise at Smollett's polished and agreeable manners, and the great urbanity of his conversation."

The dignified leader of the Scottish kirk, who infused a good deal of his dignity into his historical style, had evidently imagined that Smollett must be "the man he drew"—as coarse and wayward as the disreputable heroes of his novels.

Smollett, in 1752, took Monmouth House, in Lawrence Street, and here every Sunday he gave an authors' dinner, entertaining his less fortunate brethren of the quill with beef, pudding, and potatoes, port, punch, and Calvert's entire butt beer. A very humorous description of the guests occurs in "Humphrey Clinker."

Fielding, that great painter of manners, loved a good dinner when he could get one, which, in his earlier career, was by no means a daily certainty. Like his own Captain Booth, he was frequently induced to sponge upon his friends for it, or for a guinea with which to pay the tavern-keeper. He was over-partial to good-fellowship, which, in that roystering age, implied a good deal of drinking, and, though a fond and faithful husband, tippled at the tavern, and paid the score with the money his poor wife had raised on her ornaments or her children's toys, keeping late hours, and thereby spoiling the modest dinner of boiled mutton she had cooked for him with her own tender hands.

An anecdote is related of him which shows the man better than would a hundred pages of analysis: He was living in Beaufort Buildings; his "parochial taxes" were over-due, and had been demanded by the collector with emphatic persistency. At last Fielding went off to Johnson, and, by "process of literary mortgage," procured the needful sum. He was returning with it, when he met an old college chum whom he had not met for several years, and immediately asked him to dine with him at a neighbouring tavern. He found his friend to be involved in great difficulties; and with his usual generous promptitude emptied into his pocket the limited contents of his replenished purse. On his return home he was told that the collector had called twice for his money. "Friendship," said Fielding, "has called for it, and had it; let the collector call again."

In his novels, Fielding seldom dines his characters on anything more sumptuous than a chine of beef or a loin of mutton, with an occasional chicken or two, though he sets them down at the table with greater frequency than almost any other novelist I know of. It would be interesting to count how many dinners and suppers, to say nothing of breakfasts, take place in the course of "Tom Jones"; I believe the reader would be surprised at the total. One of the happiest of his descriptions I take to be that, in "Amelia," of the dinner prepared by Mrs. Booth, to which her husband brings an unexpected guest.

"Amelia," he says, "with the assistance of a little girl, who was their only servant, had dressed her dinner, and she had likewise dressed herself as neat as any lady who had a regular set of servants could have done, when Booth returned, and brought with him his friend, James, whom he had met with in the Park; and who, as Booth absolutely refused to dine away from his wife, to whom he promised to return, had invited himself to dine with him. Amelia had none of that paltry pride which possesses so many of her sex, which disconcerts their tempers, and gives them the airs and looks of furies if their husband brings in an unexpected guest without giving them timely warning to provide a sacrifice to their own vanity. Amelia received her husband's friend with the utmost complaisance and good-humour; she made, indeed, some apology for the homeliness of her dinner; but it was politely turned as a compliment to Mr. James's friendship, which could carry him where he was so sure of being so ill entertained, and gave not the least hint how magnificently she would have provided had she expected the favour of so much good company—a phrase which is generally meant to contain not only an apology for the lady of the house, but a tacit satire on her guests for their intrusion, and is at least a strong insinuation that they are not welcome."

This is a lesson in true politeness which many hostesses would do well to take to heart.

Our Georgian ancestors were certainly of coarse appetites. You can see, in some of Hogarth's broadly-painted satires, indications of the excess to which every class was more or less addicted. Hogarth, himself, preferred a dinner of roast beef and pudding to the daintiest dishes devised by the genius of, let me say, Le Stere, the Duke of Bedford's notable cook. When he and four jolly companions undertook their famous excursion "from London to the Island of Sheppey," extending over five days of adventure, they displayed in their meals a distinct inclination for solidity and substance in preference to the grace and lightness of a refined cuisine. One day they dined upon "hung beef and biscuit," washing down the indigestible viands with Hollands; another day on "soles and flounders, with crab sauce; calf's head stuffed and roasted, with the liver fried, and appurtenance minced; and roast leg of mutton, and green peas." Their beverages were small beer and port! It was with food as heavy, and liquors as strong that Sir Robert Walpole had entertained his Norfolk squires at Houghton. One of the clauses of the hospitable code of the time was that every guest must be fed to repletion, and liquored into intoxication; and a man's repute for good fellowship depended upon the readiness with which he conformed to this clause.

Beef, and veal, and pork—such being the principal joints that figured at the dinner-table of the English squire, one is the more surprised that on the lady of the house should be imposed the onerous work of carving. Yet as Lady Louisa Stuart reminds us, in her charming memoir of her grandmother, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, the mistress of a country house was then expected, not only to persuade and provoke her guests to eat voraciously, but to carve every dish, when chosen, with her own fair hands. The higher her rank, the more indispensable was this laborious duty. Each joint was placed before her in turn, to be operated upon by her, and her alone. The lords and squires on either hand proffered no assistance. The master of the house, seated opposite to her, might not act as her croupier, his special function being to pass the bottle after dinner. As for the crowd of guests who sat below the salt, the most inconsiderable among them, the squire's younger brother, the chaplain who mumbled prayers and took the vacant hand at whist, the curate in rusty cassock from the neighbouring village, or the subaltern from the nearest military station, if suffered through her neglect to help himself to a slice of the mutton that steamed at his end of the board, would have digested it as an affront, and gone home in dudgeon, half inclined to vote the wrong way at the next election. There were then professional carving-masters, who taught young ladies the art scientifically, and from one of these Lady Mary received instruction thrice a week, so as to be perfect on her father's public days at Thoresby. On those occasions, that she might discharge her duties without let or hindrance, she was compelled to eat her own dinner alone an hour or two beforehand. How she would have welcomed the modern invention of dinners à la Russe!

If Lady Mary had but kept a record of her dinners, how thankful one would have been! She must have dined with all the most distinguished of her contemporaries; she must have tested the skill of the best cooks of her day. Bishops, peers, poets, essayists, beaux, wits, and would-be wits, actors, authors, fine ladies—she dined with them all! Lord Halifax, Lord Sandwich, Lord Hervey, Lord Carlisle, Pope, of course, and Pope's circle—the Earl of Mansfield, Duchess Sarah of Marlborough, Congreve the dramatist, Henry Fielding, the poet Gay, Dr. Garth, Churchill the satirist—these are but a few of the celebrities with whom she dined, or who dined with her. When she lived at Saville House, Twickenham, her table was crowded with notable guests; and she was too experienced a woman of the world not to provide them with something more substantial than "the feast of reason." Abroad, she carried her hospitality with her. Writing to her daughter from Brescia, she says:

"I had a visit in the holidays of thirty horse of ladies and gentlemen, with their servants—by the way, the ladies all ride like the late Duchess of Cleveland—i.e., in masculine fashion. They came with the kind intent of staying with me at least a fortnight, though I had never seen any of them before; but they were all neighbours within ten miles round. I could not avoid entertaining them, and by good luck had a large quantity of game in the house, which, with the help of my poultry, furnished out a plentiful table. I sent for the fiddles, and they were so obliging as to dance all night, and even dine with me the next day."

Of Italian cookery, of French cookery, of Austrian cookery, of German cookery, Lady Mary must have gained an extensive knowledge. Alas! why did she not bequeath to posterity the results of her wide and varied research?

The fastidious and refined Gray would, without doubt, have carried his exquisite taste into the arrangement of his table and the choice of his viands; but hereditary gout imposed upon him the obligation of a rigid abstemiousness. There is a curious passage in one of Horace Walpole's letters, in which he says: "My Lady Ailesbury has been much diverted, and so will you, too. Gray is in their neighbourhood. My Lady Carlisle says, he is extremely like me in his manner. They went a party to dine on a cold loaf, and passed the day." "A cold loaf" would seem but a sorry dish to set before one's friends! Walpole speaks of him as very ill company at the dinner-table. "From a melancholy turn, from living reclusely, and from a little too much dignity, he never converses easily; all his words are measured, and chosen, and formed into sentences." His last, and fatal, illness seized him while he was at dinner in the college hall of Pembroke, and he died six days afterwards, July the thirtieth, 1771.

To the author of "Tristram Shandy" and "A Sentimental Journey," that most irreverent of reverends, Laurence Sterne, when he came up from his Yorkshire vicarage to sun himself in the success of his great book, Garrick proved a generous friend. "Mr. Garrick," he writes, "pays me all and more honour than I could look for. I dined with him to-day, and he has promised numbers of great people to carry me to dine w$^{\text{th}}$ 'em . . . He leaves nothing undone that can do me either service or credit; he has undertaken the management of the booksellers, and will procure me a great price." Sterne's sojourn in London was a glorious cycle of dinners; and he had enough of the gastronome in him to appreciate the seductions of a well-furnished table. Gray writes: "'Tristram Shandy' is still a great object of admiration—the man as well as the book; one is invited to dinner, where he dines, a fortnight before." And when some one remarked, in Johnson's hearing, that there was little hospitality in London, Johnson confuted him by a reference to Sterne, who, he said, "has had engagements for three months."

One of the most interesting of Sterne's dinners was that given by Lord Bathurst. "You know," he writes to Mrs. Draper, "this nobleman was always the protector of men of wit and genius, and has had those of the last century, Addison, Steele, Swift, Pope, Prior, etc., always at his table. The manner in which his notice began of me was as singular as it was polite. He came up to me one day as I was at the Princess of Wales's Court, and said, 'I want to know you, Mr. Sterne; but it is fit you also should know who it is that wishes this pleasure. You have heard of an old Lord Bathurst, of whom your Popes and Swifts have sung and spoken so much? I have lived my life with geniuses of that cast, but have survived them; and, despairing ever to find their equals, it is some years since I have shut up my books and closed my accounts; but you have kindled a desire in me of opening them once more before I die; which I now do. So go home and dine with me."

One of Sterne's early friends—and perhaps the least respectable—was John Hall

Stevenson, the author of "Crazy Tales," who, at Skelton Castle, near Sutton-in-the-Forest, loved to assemble a company of kindred spirits—self-styled "The Demoniacs"—and to engage with them in reputed orgies of hard drinking and foul talking. As Mr. Traill says, the club may have had nothing diabolical about it except the name; but as Stevenson had been a comrade of John Wilkes, and his brother-monks of Medmenham, and as the fraternity included gay militaires like Colonels Hall and Lee, and "fast" parsons like the Rev. "Panky" Lascelles—mock grandson of Pantagruel—Sterne, as the Vicar of Sutton, could not attend their banquet without injury to his reputation.

That was a strange dinner which took place at the table of the British Ambassador, Lord Hertford, in his splendid hotel in Paris. Sterne, who was in Paris on a visit, was asked to preach the first sermon in its chapel, and took for his text, by some mischance, 2 Kings xx. 15. At the dinner which followed, David Hume was present, and he, not unintentionally, rallied Sterne on his choice of a text. "David," writes Sterne, "was disposed to make a little merry with the parson, and, in return, the parson was equally disposed to make a little merry with the infidel. We laughed at one another, and the company laughed at us both." The picture Sterne draws is hardly a very edifying one.

When rusticating for health's sake in his Coxwould vicarage, towards the close of his strange career, his dinners were of the simplest. "I am as happy as a Prince," he writes to a friend, "and I wish you could see in how princely a manner I live. 'Tis a land of plenty. I sit down alone to dinner—fish and wild-fowl, or a couple of fowls or ducks, with dessert and all the simple plenty which a rich valley under Hamilton Hills can produce, with a clean cloth on my table, and a bottle of wine on my right hand to drink your health."

In connection with Sterne one can never help thinking of the dinner-party in Clifford Street — close to Sterne's last lodgings in Bond Street—on March the eighteenth, 1768. The company were friends of Sterne, and a footman was sent to ask after his health. "I went," said the footman, afterwards; "the mistress opened the door; I enquired how he did; she told me to go up to the room. I went into the room, and he was just a-dying. I waited ten minutes, and in five, he said, 'Now it has come.' He put up his hands, as if to stop a blow, and died in a minute."

A year or two before Sterne's first appearance on the town, a young officer of the name of Wolfe, who had earned distinction by his military services in Europe and America, was appointed by Pitt to the command of an expedition against Quebec; and on the day preceding his embarkation, was invited to dine with the great minister to receive his final instructions. The only other guest was Earl Temple. As the evening advanced, Wolfe, it is said, heated perhaps by his own inspiring thoughts, and the unwonted society of statesmen, indulged in a wild, gasconading strain; drew his sword, smote the table with it, flourished it round the room, and boasted of the mighty things he intended to achieve. The two ministers sat aghast at an exhibition so unusual from any man of real sense and real spirit; and when at last Wolfe had taken his leave, and his carriage was heard to roll from the door, Pitt seemed for a moment shaken in the high opinion which his deliberate judgement had formed of Wolfe. He lifted up his eyes and arms, and exclaimed to Lord Temple:

"Good God! that I should have entrusted the fate of the country and of the administration to such hands!"

This anecdote is told on the authority of Mr. Grenville, who professed to have heard it from Lord Temple. But it is not in keeping with what we know of Wolfe's character, and betrays marks of exaggeration or misconception. At all events, the hero justified Pitt's original judgment by his victory and death on the Heights of Abraham.

At his pinchbeck Gothic castle of Strawberry Hill, Horace Walpole played the host to perfection. His own character as a wit, scholar, and fine gentleman, and the celebrity which his "fantastic fabric" had acquired for its architectural novelties and internal treasures, drew thither visitors of every class—lords and ladies, dukes and duchesses, poets and princes, men of fashion and men of letters, besides "distinguished foreigners"—and he knew how to entertain them according to their several humours. I should like to dwell upon the social glories of Strawberry Hill, and to pick up reminiscences of the men and women who once sauntered through its gallery, loitered among the treasures of its library and green closet, or idled in its round drawing-room; but I must be content with a glance at one of the brilliant dinner-parties which the courteous Horace assembled in its refectory, which, by the way, was "hung with paper in imitation of stucco," and adorned with a conversation piece by Reynolds, and portraits of Walpole's father, family, and friends.

Writing to George Montagu — May the eleventh, 1769—he says:

"Last Tuesday all France dined here; Monsieur and Madame Châtelet, the Duc de Liancourt, three more French ladies, eight other Frenchmen, the Spanish and Portuguese Ministers, the Holdernesses, Fitzroys—in short, we were five-and-twenty. They arrived at two. At the gates of the Castle I received them, drest in the cravat of Gibbon's carving, and a pair of gloves, embroidered up to the elbows, that belonged to James the First. The French servants stared, and firmly believed this was the dress of English country gentlemen. After taking a survey of the apartments, we went to the printing-house, where I had prepared verses, with translations by Monsieur de Lille, one of the company. The moment they were printed off, I gave a private signal, and French horns and clarinets accompanied this compliment. We then went to see Pope's grotto and garden, and returned to a magnificent dinner in the refectory. In the evening we walked; had tea, coffee, and lemonade in the gallery, which was illuminated with a thousand or thirty candles, I forget which, and played at whist and loo till midnight. Then there was a cold supper, and at one the company returned to town, saluted by fifty nightingales, who, as tenants of the manor, came to do honour to their lord."

Of Dr. Johnson's dining-out propensities and his peculiar gastronomic tastes so much has been said, that, in alluding to them, I am under the disadvantage of repeating an oft-told tale. When he first came to London, his means were of the smallest, and a rigid economy was imposed upon him.

"I dined very well," he says, "for eightpence, with very good company at the 'Pine-Apple,' in New Street; several of them had travelled; they expected to meet every day, but did not know one another's names. It used to cost the rest a shilling, for they drank wine; but I had a cut of meat for sixpence, and bread for a penny, and gave the waiter a penny; so that I was quite well-served, nay, better than the rest, for they gave the waiter nothing."

He rose above such meagre fare as this when his literary reputation was established; but seldom had occasion to dine at home. When he was not at one of his favourite clubs, he dined with Reynolds, or Goldsmith, or Bennet Langton—that is, when he was not sheltered under the hospitable roof of the Thrales, at Streatham Park. Nothing, as Boswell acutely remarks, could have been more fortunate for Johnson than this connection. "He had at Mr. Thrale's all the comforts and even luxuries of life; his melancholy was diverted, and his irregular habits lessened by association with an agreeable and well-ordered family. He was treated with the utmost respect, and even affection. The vivacity of Mrs. Thrale's literary talk roused him to cheerfulness and exertion, even when they were alone. But this was not often the case; for he found here a constant succession of what gave him the highest enjoyment—the society of the learned, the witty, and eminent in every way, who were assembled in numerous companies — called forth his wonderful powers, and gratified him with admiration, to which no man could be insensible.

I string together a few anecdotes of Johnson and his dinners. One evening his servant brought him a message: "Sir V. Taylor sends his compliments to you, and begs you will dine with him to-morrow. He has got a hare."

"My compliments," replied Johnson, "and I'll dine with him—hare or rabbit."

On a certain Easter-day, he asked Boswell to dine with him.

"I never supposed," says Boswell, "that he had a dinner at his house, for I never heard of his friends having been entertained at his table. He told me, 'I generally have a meat-pie on a Sunday; it is baked at a public oven, which is properly allowed, because one man can attend to it; and thus the advantage is obtained of not keeping servants from church to address dinner.'" Boswell continues: "I had gratified my curiosity much in dining with Jean Jacques Rousseau while he lived in the wilds of Neufchâtel. I had as great a curiosity to dine with Dr. Samuel Johnson in the dusty recess of a court in Fleet Street. I supposed we should scarcely have knives and forks, and only some strange, uncouth, ill-drest dish; but

I found everything in very good order. As a dinner here was considered as a singular phenomenon, and as I was frequently interrogated on the subject, my readers may perhaps be desirous to know our bill of fare. Foote, I remember, in allusion to Francis the negro—Johnson's servant—was willing to suppose that our repast was black broth. But the fact was that we had a very good soup, a boiled leg of lamb and spinach, a veal-pie, and a rice-pudding."

One day Johnson dines at Sir Alexander Macdonald's, when his attention is drawn to a young officer in the regimentals of the Scots loyal by the vivacity and fluency of his conversation. He is the Hon. Thomas Erskine, who afterwards abandoned military service, and took up with the legal profession, obtaining fame and fortune as counsel learned in the law, and attaining to the woolsack.

Visiting Oxford, he and Boswell are invited to dinner by Dr. Bentham, Canon of Christ Church, and professor of divinity.

"Sir," said Johnson to Boswell, "it is a good thing to dine with the Canons of Christ Church."

And no doubt it was; but the two friends were unable to accept the invitation, having promised to dine at University College, where they had an excellent dinner with the Masters and Fellows.

Dining at an inn at Chapel House, he expatiated on the felicity of England in its taverns and inns, and triumphed over the French for not having, in every perfection, the tavern life. "There is no private house," said he, "in which people can enjoy themselves as well as at a capital tavern. Let there be ever so great plenty of good things, ever so much grandeur, ever so much elegance, ever so much desire that everybody should be easy, in the nature of things it cannot be; there must always be some degree of care and anxiety."

Johnson's peculiarities of manner—the result, in great measure, of physical disease—have been sufficiently commented upon. We all know that he tore his dinner like a famished wolf, with the veins on his forehead swelling, and the perspiration running down his cheeks; that he generally drank lemonade or water, but that when he took wine, he took it in large quantities, and greedily. I find no pleasure in dwelling upon these details. I prefer to think of him, as Macaulay pictures him, in his favourite club-room, with the table which bears his lemons, and the omelette for Nugent, and around him those men of light and leading whose features still live upon the canvas of Reynolds. "There are the spectacles of Burke; and the tall, thin form of Langton; the courtly sneer of Beauclerk, and the beaming smile of Garrick; Gibbon tapping his snuff-box; and Sir Joshua with his trumpet in his ear. In the foreground is that strange figure, which is as familiar to us as the figures of those among whom we have been brought up—the gigantic body, the large, massy face, seamed with the scars of disease, the brown coat, the black worsted stockings, the grey wig, with the scorched foretop, the dirty hands, the nails bitten and pared to the quick. We see the eyes and mouth moving with convulsive twitches; we see the heavy form rolling; we hear it puffing; and then comes the 'Why, sir!' and the 'What then, sir?' and the 'No, sir'; and the 'You don't see your way through the question, sir!'"

But how little should we know of Johnson if it were not for Boswell!

BY ELECTRIC LIGHT.

If, in this age of Exhibitions, there be one branch of industry which has a better right than another to bring itself prominently into public notice, to call attention to its recent inventions and triumphs, and to a comparison between its latest perfections and its earliest attempts, it is the scientific industry of practical electricity, electrotechnik, as the Germans have it. No other science has made such astounding strides within the last ten years; no professional man has a finer field open to him than the electric engineer. The mysterious force which, fifty years ago, was only known in a series of disconnected and apparently uncontrollable phenomena, has now been thoroughly investigated and domesticated, and made subservient to the needs of daily life in innumerable ways. In medicine and mechanics, in metallurgy and mining, electricity is becoming, or has already become, by the rapidity of its operations and the satisfactory nature of the results achieved, the most efficient motive power yet discovered.

An Electric Exhibition is by no means a new thing. Since the first one in 1881, there have been at least half-a-dozen. But every year there is more to exhibit; fresh questions are daily asking for fresh answers; old problems are finding new solutions; so that the International Electrotechnical Exhibition which was opened at Frankfurt-on-the-Main a few weeks ago, is far more comprehensive than any of its predecessors, and also of far wider interest to the commercial world on the one hand, and to men of science on the other.

The idea of such an Exhibition was set on foot during the year of the great French Exhibition—1889. At that time the town of Frankfurt was busy with a scheme for establishing a central electric station, which should provide not only public and private lighting, but also motive power to all factories or mechanics who would put themselves in communication with it. In order to carry out this scheme in the best possible way, a committee of experts was appointed to examine, test, and report upon the machinery necessary to the undertaking; to find out, in fact, and recommend the best and most suitable steam-engines and dynamos. As the scheme was intended to cover a great deal of ground, the committee of experts found their task a long and difficult one. After much investigation and many consultations, a verdict was at length given, and at the same time it was proposed that in order to obviate similar difficulties in parallel cases, it would be well to invite all the leading manufacturers of electric machinery to join in a great International Electrotechnical Exhibition to be held at Frankfurt. The proposal was evidently a timely one. It met with unanimous approval from those to whom it was addressed. In a few weeks preparations were seriously set on foot, and funds were rapidly subscribed. It was at first proposed to hold the Exhibition in 1890, but that would have allowed too little time for the indispensable preparations. Finally 1891 was decided on.

The Exhibition buildings occupy what was, a few months ago, a dreary waste of building ground, more than twenty acres in extent, between the central railway station and the town. They include, as a matter of course, many besides those required by the exhibitors. There are: a gigantic panorama, a dozen restaurants, a theatre, and various other seductions for the frivolous; but one and all the structures are tastefully designed, and well carried out; and when the enthusiastic Frankfurter boldly draws a comparison between the Electric Exhibition buildings and those which adorned the Champ de Mars in '89, after duly discounting the patriotism which inspired the assertion, we can still admit a certain residue of truth. The great machine hall in particular is a handsome building, and when the outline of its cupola and towers is traced out against the evening sky by two thousand incandescent lamps of various colours, the effect is quite fairy-like, and far from suggesting anything so heavy and prosy as machinery and manufacture.

We are not long in remarking that this is an industrial Exhibition in the most literal sense of the word; every lamp-post has a placard affixed, saying the firm from which it originated; every lamp bears the name of its maker in black and white; the clock holds out its certificate of birth, and the wire railings round the lawns tell you where their like is to be had. It is evidently — in spite of the gay-looking restaurants, very much in earnest, and if we want to see it we must go seriously to work, the restaurants and frivolities can come later, when mind and body want refreshment. With this plan of campaign we make our way across the grounds to the boiler-house, which lies immediately behind the great machine hall. We intend to begin at the beginning, and work our way steadily through.

The very beginning and root of the matter is a great pumping-engine down by the river, itself worked by two electromotors, which supplies the boilers. This much, however, we take on trust, and take our start among the boilers themselves. The first impression conveyed to the non-professional, as he or she enters the long unpretentious building, is one of heat and prevalent Brunswick black. We accustom ourselves to this as we walk along the gallery in front of the boilers, pausing in amazement at the size and curious appearance of one after another. There are vertical boilers and horizontal boilers, there are boilers which are embedded in solid masonry, and boilers which display their colossal forms to the public. There are communicative boilers which tell you how much heating surface they contain, or how many atmospheres they can support to the square inch, and there are reserved boilers which set you longing for an explanation if you only had the boldness to attract the attention of one of the busy workmen. We bring our courage to the sticking point at last, and satisfy our curiosity from the information of an obliging foreman. There are, he tells us, twenty-two boilers erected, nineteen of which are at work. This represents a heating surface of two thousand five hundred and ninety-five square metres. The improvements which electric engineering has brought about in the construction of boilers are, we learn, many and great. Steam must above all be produced rapidly; furthermore, it is necessary to economise coal, and to minimise smoke. Hence these assemblages of pipes under the boilers, through which the water gradually passes. Naturally, with the increase of steam-power, danger increases; but modern science nips it in the bud. If we may implicitly believe all that we heard in the boiler-house at the Frankfurt Exhibition, a boiler can only burst nowadays from a wilful desire to behave in an unexpected manner.

The steam which is being generated so rapidly, and in such enormous quantities, finds its way by pipes to the central machine hall. Thither we follow it, curious to see what part is allotted to it in the great drama of which electricity is hero and heroine. We are so fortunate as to meet here a professional friend who kindly places his technical knowledge at our disposal, and who explains to us, with the ease of long acquaintance, the mysteries of dynamos, and how they are driven. He first calls our attention to the fact that every dynamo—or electricity-producing machine—however large, however small, must be driven by another engine, generally a steam-engine. The two stand side by side, a strap connecting them. The requirements of the dynamo have brought even greater improvements into existence in the steam-engine than in the boiler. The very straps which pass from wheel to wheel have joined in the march of progress, while the registers of force and speed have outstripped their predecessors of ten years ago by an incalculable distance. Our friend tells us that the fly-wheel of the huge machine, in front of which he has called a halt, is capable of performing one hundred and sixty revolutions in a minute, and that it is going at nearly full speed. Of course we believe him — we see a great whirling circle the centre of which appears to be made of gleaming gauze—how can he know, we ask, whether or no it could go a little faster. He points to an object which looks like an aneroid, but which is labelled "Tachometer," and of which the long finger is trembling over the figure one hundred and forty, sometimes advancing a little, sometimes retreating. This is the answer to our question. We further learn that the steadiness of the index on the tachometer is a test of the accuracy of a wheel's build. But this must not keep us from the more important subject of the dynamo. It is but very few of those who come to look at this heavy mass at work, continues our guide, who have any idea where and how the electric force is generated. We have, ourselves, a vague notion, based on our childish experiments with the back of the "harmless necessary cat." At this he laughs good-naturedly. The sparks we refer to are not created, but only rendered visible, by our friction, he says; and then he shows us the part of a dynamo which corresponds to the cat's back. It is a great copper axis, which is traversed horizontally by hundreds of lines, and which projects and revolves beyond the body of the machine. Round it and in extremely delicate contact with it, are several sets of things which look like square-ended knife blades, woven of fine copper wire. If the hall were dark we should see occasional electric flashes between this revolving body, and these copper scrapers. The less delicate the contact the more sparks are seen. The copper surface is, in fact, alive with an electric current strong enough to kill us all if we were ill-advised enough to touch it with the extreme tip of our fingers; but the current is not created there, it is only collected, and carried straight away. He then takes us to a dynamo which is at rest, and consequently easier to examine. Here he shows us that part of the wheel which answers to the tire. It consists of a number of coils of wire; each of which has two ends communicating with the collector. As the wheel revolves, each coil in turn passes close to an electro-magnet which is always kept charged. There is no contact, no friction, yet each coil of wire in turn—and its turn comes, perhaps, three hundred times in a minute—is instantly charged with electricity, which it forthwith hands on to the collector. The transmission of the current from the magnet to the coil, says our friend, is the secret of nature; the natural philosopher has taken hold of it, the electric engineer has applied it, but neither of them can explain it.

Now we are further instructed in the way in which electricity, as it leaves its cradle, is measured. On each dynamo we see a plate, which tells us that the machine can produce so many volts, so many ampères. These words to us suggest nothing. They were certainly not in the table-book of our childhood. "Volt," we are told, represents the "spannung" (tension) of the current; "ampère" the impact it acquires. The number of volts a machine gives depends, as we understand it, on the amount of electricity it is capable of producing, the number of ampères on the efficiency of the conducting-wire, and the comparative absence of friction. A third measure, "watt," which is the number of volts multiplied by the ampères, gives us the working force of the machine — its horse-power, so to speak.

The force, whose production we have been looking at, is distributed by an intricate maze of telegraph-wires all over the Exhibition—for lights inside and out, to the workshops, to the signalling, telegraphic and telephonic systems, to the various electric tram-lines, to the artificial mine, to the electric-boats on the Main, to the big pump which feeds the boilers, to the monster captive balloon. You may command its services by "dropping a penny in the slot" of several of those machines so long associated in the public mind with chocolate and cigars. At one of these machines you can get a slight electric shock; at another you hear for a minute the performance of a musical instrument out of a phonograph; a third puts you in telephonic communication with the Exhibition officials. There is altogether, we are told, a force in activity which may be represented by four thousand seven hundred horse-power.

This mass, however, is not all produced on the premises. To show off adequately the possibilities of a force which can fly ten times round the world in a second, one of the most important points to illustrate is that the force does not degenerate by transmission; that, in fact, an electromotor may receive its current from a dynamo at any distance. The committee have, therefore, placed three of their dynamos at the Palmengarten, a mile and a half from the Exhibition, another at Offenbach, five miles up the river, while a third enormous stream of twenty-five thousand volts—an ordinary "Glüh" lamp requires only one hundred volts—is brought from a dynamo worked by water-power at Lauffen, on the Neckar, a distance of more than one hundred and twenty miles. This is considered the crowning victory of the Exhibition.

Our guide then led us to the Installation Hall, that we might see the various matters and articles, instruments, and tools required by the electrician for his work. We saw stacks of bamboo-charcoal, coils of wire, gutta-percha, resin, asbestos, all the sundry and manifold parts of electric-bells, electric-telegraphs, electric-lamps—of which there were dozens burning in tasty globes of all colours—there were conductors and isolators of all sorts. None of them interested us very much, though the whole impressed us with the notion that electricity must give a wonderful impetus to an incredible number of industries, and must therefore be a great joy to the earnest political economist.

Before we enter the next department we take a long look at its exterior, which, together with one end of the boiler-house, is built to represent old Frankfurt—the Frankfurt where Faust set up his stolen printing-press; where Shylock bought the ring Jessica stole; where Goethe passed his childhood; and where the Rothschilds laid the foundation-stone of their colossal fortunes. The slated fronts of the houses, the high peaked gables, the narrow windows, the quaint turrets — above all, a reproduction of the ancient Holzpförtchen, with its battlements and portcullis, bring Auld Lang Syne into sharp contrast with the van of progress. There are a few of these picturesque corners still to be found in the older streets of Frankfurt; but they are fast disappearing. Something, naturally, must cede its place to electricity.

The interior of the building is as interesting as the exterior. It exhibits such instruments as are required for the vertheilung (distribution) of electricity. The first thing our guide called on us to admire was a transformator, which he told us was at work.

"At work!" we exclaimed, peering through the wire-netting which protected it. "Why, it is not only silent, but quite motionless!"

"But do we not feel the heat?" asks our friend.

Yes, it is true; a stream of hot air hovers over the netting. What work is it carrying on? It is transforming the current of a stream of electricity, we learn—exchanging so many volts into so many ampères, or vice versâ, just as it is required; a most modest machine, we considered, to effect such a marvel with so little self-assertion.

Further on we saw a splendid display of specimens of submarine telegraphic cables, each set labelled with the places it connects, its length, and the date of its laying. These are exhibited by Messrs. Siemens of London, together with the model of a ship which was used in laying a Transatlantic cable.

Flanking this Vertheilungs Hall are two rows of workshops, in which electromotors replace the old motive forces—steam or hand. All the electricity is supplied from the dynamo, whose gyrations we were studying only an hour ago. The electromotor is a most unpretending-looking machine. The only moveable part of it is a spindle, which revolves between two uprights. There is no driver necessary—nothing but an occasional dose of machine oil; it is perfectly noiseless, and gives out no heat. The workman presses his foot on a treadle, or pushes back a button, and his machine or instrument, however big, however delicate, is set in motion.

There were needles being made; there were sewing-machines doing all manner of work; there was a big crane lifting heavy weights; and an optician polishing lenses; there was an electric dairy, and an electric laundry; a sawyer sawing planks, and a watchmaker at his lathe. In fact, there were more machines than we can possibly remember, working with a maximum of precision and a minimum of noise.

Among so much sightseeing it was natural that we should require an interval for refreshment and rest. But where to seek it. The choice is so embarrassing. There is an American bar, with drinks of wondrous nomenclature; there is a picturesque imitation of a Magyar country inn, where Hungarian wine can be drunk; there is a kiosk devoted to Californian vintages; there is a fine building to represent an Italian tower, where the grape of the Fatherland can be enjoyed; there is a Bavarian beer-hall, and a rival establishment from Pfungstadt. Our friend shakes his head at each of these in succession.

"We want something cooler and more refreshing," he says, "than anything these supply. Have we," he asks, "ever tasted Sachsenhäuser cider?"

"No," we reply, "we have never even heard of it."

This seems to him a terrible gap in our culture. Never heard of Sachsenhäuser cider! Why, its name and fame were good a century ago. Frankfurt and the neighbourhood grow enormous quantities of apples; many of these are carried to Sachsenhäuser, on the opposite bank of the Main, to be there pressed and converted into cider. One firm alone uses annually more than forty-five thousand hundredweight of fruit, and produces upwards of a million-and-a-half litres. As he tells us this he leads us to a pretty little building in the style of a Sachsenhäuser garden-house. A wreath of fir with an apple in the middle, which hangs over the door, suggests what we shall find inside. The interior is a good imitation of an old-fashioned German inn. The walls are decorated with humorous sketches; the chairs and tables are such as Frosch and his jolly companions were familiar with in Auerbach's Keller in Leipzig, when Mephistopheles and Faust came and disturbed the serenity of the social gathering.

There is an old-world feeling about the whole thing. It seems quite an anachronism to look up and see electric lamps ready to give us light when the twilight comes on. The cider is really good; our electrician has made wiser and gladder folk of us.

Our next move is to the department for telegraphy and telephony. Here there is an extremely good and comprehensive display. The Imperial Post and the Royal Bavarian Post exhibit machinery which follows out the whole history of the telegraphic system; so does the Eastern Telegraph Company (English). In the last-named collection we saw a model of Sir William Thomson's electro-magnetic syphon-recorder in its original form, and standing face to face with it the same machine in its present perfection. We also passed a most instructive quarter of an hour in front of a telephone station, such as would be used in a large town.

In this department, for a small entrance fee, can be seen and heard the phonograph, the grammophone, and an operatic performance brought by telephone from Munich. There are two Edison phonographs for the entertainment of the enquiring mind: one repeats a speech made by an Englishman in German, reproducing with comic fidelity the well-known British accent; the other grinds out a short musical piece. This we found much more curious than edifying.

We then proceeded to assist for ten minutes at a performance of "Tannhäuser," which had just commenced in the

Opera House at Munich. When our turn came to place the telephone to our ear, the overture was drawing to a close. The effect of what Mark Twain is pleased to call a musical insurrection, heard by electricity, is very strange. The combined instruments seemed to lose their balance en route. The horns and trumpets exerted themselves amazingly, and the strings, which play so important a part in the aforesaid overture, were almost inaudible. When the first scene opened, however, one had no more fault to find. The voice of the tenor, Vogl, one of the greatest Wagner singers in Germany, came to us as clear and pure as if we had been sitting in the balcony facing the stage. We could almost see him pleading with the enchantress Venus for his release from his unhallowed sojourn; but, alas! it was an enjoyment all too short. The conductor turned the inexorable handle, the voices trembled into silence, and Munich was once more removed to a distance of one hundred and seventy miles.

We then went into the hall devoted to the use of electricity in connection with railways. Here, as in the telegraphy department, the State has done much for the Exhibition. The railway directorate of Frankfurt exhibits in miniature the whole of its original system, historically. The models look like the most enchanting toys. Our guide, who is quite at home among them, with the kind assistance of an official, shows and explains the whole to us. He runs a miniature train through a network of miniature lines, stopping it when the signals are against it, and finally brings it safe into port. He shows a clock, which has an automatic electric connection with the points, and registers the exact moment of the train's passage. What an unimpeachable witness against a negligent or reckless engine-driver!

We also saw an automatic machine for displaying in the waiting-room the names of the places for which trains are about to start. We uttered a devout hope that the clever invention might be universally adopted — at least in Germany—to the abolition of the rapid and unintelligible official who performs the function at present, and who has caused us many a moment of panic.

There was also an automatic machine for registering, in the station-master's office, the speed of a train at the moment it passes over a certain spot of the rails. The name of this machine is worth recording. The author of the "Tramp Abroad" would certainly add it to his collection of uniques if he came across it. It is "Zug geschwindig keit registrir apparate."

But the most interesting machine of all was one whose outward appearance is far behind its historic importance. This is the first electric locomotive ever constructed. Above it hangs the portrait of the engineer whose work it is—Werner von Siemens, the head of the great firm of electricians at Berlin. It is a small, low, wooden construction, it was worked by an accumulator inside, and a driver sitting astride the top, which caused much merriment in the Berlin Exhibition of 1879.

After a long look at this interesting relic we leave the hall, hesitating, as we go, in a choice between two voyages of discovery: one into the artificial mine, where every detail of work is carried on by the help of electricity; the other into the air by means of the captive balloon. The question decides itself, for the entrance to the mine—so little like the pit mouth of real life—is closed; so we cross the Kaiser Strasse to the space set apart for Captain Rodeck's monster aerostat. While it is being prepared for the ascent, we gather some details concerning its build and working. It is the largest, it appears, that has yet made an ascent in Germany. Its captain and crew, sixteen in number, are all gallant tars, and display the usual naval briskness and smartness. The envelope consists of nine thicknesses of a material woven of wool and silk. It kept forty sewing-machines at work for six weeks, and used thirty pounds' worth of thread in its making, besides breaking four pounds' worth of needles. The cable which holds it to terra-firma is six hundred and fifty yards long, and is paid out by an electric machine. It will stand a strain of twenty-eight thousand pounds. Nevertheless, in one of its first flights it managed to escape from its moorings, and took the one passenger it contained at the moment for a fairly long trip. This casualty, however, is not likely to recur. We mount the natty ladder into the car with great confidence, and at a word from the captain the enormous wheel which controls our flight is in slow, steady motion. As we gently mount, the Exhibition buildings lie beneath us, as neat and trim as an architect's plan, and the notes of the band come up softly through the evening air. The sun has set, and the sky is cloudless and clear. When we have reached the level of the highest tower of the city, we come to a halt; below us lies Frankfurt, well-favoured, well-situated, a vast sea of houses, girdled round by the broad, green Anlagen. There is the Main with its busy quays, and the enormous Central Railway Station—a train gliding along the rails looks like a tiny snake. Then we go on upwards. The surrounding chains of hills, the Spessart, the Odenwald, even the Schwarzwald come into sight, while the Taunus hills, beloved of the Frankfurt excursionist, are so near and clear that we feel as if we could touch them. A little higher and we see a still more beautiful sight—another glimpse of the sun, already set for Frankfurt, behind the Feldberg.

It was well worth making the ascent to see the wonderful contrast between the already darkening plain below and the bright glow beyond the hills.

But the rope is paid out; before it has begun to be wound up the sun has disappeared once more. Then comes the crowning sensation. The light of the great reflector-lamp on the upper deck of the balloon—where Captain Rodeck and his officers manipulate the ascent—is turned on. The silvery ray falls far across space on to an old ruined castle in the wooded hills. Every stone is as clear as if we were within a stone's throw of it. Another minute, and the light has changed its direction; it touches the rich red tower of Frankfurt Cathedral; then, as we sink, the dazzling flood streams on to the colossal railway-station.

"The romance is over," we exclaim.

"That depends," rejoins our professional friend, "on the point of view from which we see things."

For him, he maintains, no romance is so thrilling as the story of the struggle between mind and matter, of the slowly-gained victories of genius and perseverance over time and space. He is waxing eloquent, when, lo! he is interrupted by a slight concussion, as when a train suddenly stops.

"Ladies and gentlemen," says the aëronaut, "I hope you are pleased with our excursion."

We assure him that we are; and well satisfied with our day's achievements, though we have left much unseen, we take our way back to our hotel. It is no wonder if that night, in our dreams, we return on electric wings, without the least exertion on our own part, to our native land, conversing as we journey, through silvery-toned telephones, with our absent friends of all the wonders we have seen at the International Electric Exhibition.

SUNDAY IN HOSPITAL.

A HOT, breathless Sunday afternoon, with no shady sides to the streets, and arid stretches of burning pavement to cross; more oppressively hot from the people who are strolling along in their Sunday finery, or crowding the omnibuses and cars that, with three or four horses apiece, are making for some place of holiday resort. It is hot enough, too, by the hospital gates, where a crowd of people have gathered, awaiting the striking of the hour which will admit them to the interior of the building. Within, the expectation is perhaps even more intense. It is a good thing to be an in-patient in one of our magnificent hospitals. Many people, children especially, could never have imagined that such care and kindness as meet them in the hospital were ever to be exercised in their behalf, while the comforts of cleanliness and order, and the happiness of regular and sufficient food, are some counterpoise for the uneasiness and suffering of their condition.

"Such a 'E'vnly place," says Maggy, in "Little Dorrit." And how many children from unkind, unhappy homes would say the like? Yet whatever the home may be, an affection for it survives a good deal of rough usage; and in the quiet, unvaried routine of hospital life, a visit from one's own friends brings in a bit of the variety and charm of the outer world.

If the patients inside, and their friends outside the hospital, feel an eager kind of interest in the coming meeting, the nurses have also their preoccupations. That the wards shall look cheerful and pleasant is in the general order of things; but extra touches here and there, a rearrangement of flowers and shrubs, and a general brushing and brightening up, give witness to the desire that everything shall be seen to the best advantage.

The crush in the doorway suggests the passage to the galleries "at the play"; but there are stronger shades of character here, and more striking contrasts in appearance. Here stands a stout, brawny woman, in the coarse dress and apron of everyday wear. She has come to see her Bill, who cut his own throat last night, but was luckily too drunk to cut it very deep. And there are half-a-dozen specimens of the ordinary British matron and mother, such as this one with the red, smeary face, and dull, fish-like eyes. Two of her boys are in a home, and her gal is in the 'orspital. At both places "they look after 'em fine," she informs a friend and neighbour; and she abandons her responsibilities to the good gentlemen and others with the lightest heart imaginable. Her friend and neighbour is younger and fiercer-looking, a hard worker, and not a mere drifter among public-houses. She has come to see her father, who was took bad with the horrors.

"Oh, they treat 'em well enough," she admits; "but they don't get their little comforts, neither."

Polly means to supply one little comfort to her respected parent, anyhow, and laughs and smacks the bottle in her pocket. There is a comradeship about this young woman that has its engaging side, although it is too evident that it leads to her partaking of, as well as dispensing, comforts of the kind contained in her black bottle.

Yet there are pleasant family groups, too, by the dozen. The young wife with her baby, whose elaborate costume—the baby's, not the wife's—suggests the care bestowed upon the first-born; the three or four motherless children in black, yet not quite motherless with that clever little chit at the head of them, all come to see father who has tumbled off a scaffold and broke his leg. Then there are three or four boys under the guidance of a father who looks distracted enough, poor fellow, with sadness lurking in his eyes, and sorrow in the corners of his mouth. Many of the young people bring flowers—flowers of the market, not of the garden, though here is a rosy-looking countryman, who brings as an offering a spreading fern in a big pot, while another carries, not a palm-branch, but a whole tree on a small scale. And these will be as gladly received as the offerings of the magi, and will hold places of honour in the decorations of the ward for months, and perhaps years to come.

But now the doors, the great entrance doors, are thrown open, and we are borne onward in the crowd. Surely the greatest man in a hospital, not excepting the visiting physician or the treasurer, is the hall porter, that is, if he be fully equal to his position. Affable to the authorities, polite but dignified with the nurses, friendly with the patients. Condescending to their friends, but with a keen eye, notwithstanding—"Now, Polly, what have you got there in your pocket? turn it out," and the black bottle is confiscated. But Polly gives a nudge to her friend. She always carries two, and the forfeited one was cold tea; no harm in cold tea, if not strictly in accordance with regulations. But the porter's eyes can't be everywhere, and a good many forbidden dainties are smuggled in by visitors who can't believe that this or the other should do any harm to anybody.

Who does not know the interior of a hospital? The board-room, where the governors sit in state, or the medical officers meet in council, and where at other times students entertain their friends, or in moments of expansion play leap-frog over chairs and tables; the dispensary, crowded with drugs and bottles; the accident ward, where sufferers may arrive at any moment from the streets; the theatre, with the operating-table displayed in the centre, a place familiarly known in hospital language as the slaughter-house. Then there is the general perfume of carbolic acid, suggestive of surgical knives and bandages; the wide, open staircases, the cheerful roomy wards.

Here is the surgical ward of which we are in search—the beds ranged round three sides of the room, a stained-glass screen running down the middle, with cots for children on either side; growing plants and ferns give a cheerful appearance to the long room, and prints and chromos on the walls have the same effect in the general estimation. Over each bed is the tablet which records the name and number of the patient, and the name of the surgeon who has the case in hand, with the dietary table, and perhaps a brief diagnosis of the case, which, if it be complicated, the patient regards with considerable pride. A small low press holds the patient's personal belongings and such small rations as sugar and butter, which, sometimes, friends from outside are allowed to furnish. Over each bed swings from the roof a chain, furnished with a miniature trapeze, by which the sufferer may help to move himself in bed. Here and there a screen placed round a bed indicates that a patient is passing away beyond the reach of human aid, or that he may be wandering among delirious fancies.

And now, about nearly all the beds, there gathers a little levée of visitors. But, if any be so unlucky as to have no friends who care to come and see him, he need not feel himself deserted, for there is plenty of comradeship among the patients; they know each other's cases, and Harry's friends come and talk to William, and everybody is friendly enough, without waiting for introductions. And there are the nosegays which are entrusted to the nurses to put into water after the sick children have inhaled the freshness of their fragrance. The children are never left uncared for—the whole ward takes an interest in their welfare, and kind ministering women come and sit by those who have no mothers to care for them, or, perhaps, worse than none.

But here is one who is going away. That fracture of his has been reduced, and he hobbles about famously with the aid of a stick. In workaday hours he is a young man who drives a van; and as pleasant and friendly a young fellow as you could wish to see. He hobbles round to all the beds to shake hands with the inmates. The children nod and smile at him as he passes, and watch him as he passes out, and leans on the arm of the little wife, while "the kid" marches joyously in front. And then he pauses to say "good-bye" to the ward nurse, who sits in her little room marking off her dockets. "Good-bye," a little huskily, for, as he says, "you have all been jolly good to me." And then he, too, is marked off, discharged—cured, and a nurse takes down the record from over the vacant bed. Already, perhaps, a tenant for the vacant bed is being borne out of the crush and turmoil of the street, the roar of whose traffic is gently heard through the open windows of the quiet ward.

Further on is a sailor, a young mate, who fell down the hold while discharging cargo, a frank, good-looking young fellow, who would be a credit to the Royal Navy. It was for him, lucky dog, in spite of his misfortune, that the pretty young wife with the finely-dressed baby was waiting down below, and there is a shipmate, too, to hail him, as to having had his timbers comfortably spliced.

Beyond the sailor lies an older man, and one whose face is worn by pain. He is awaiting a dangerous operation, which affords the one slight chance of preserving him in life. But that one little chink of hope sustains him wonderfully, and he, too, can be cheerful with his friends in this holiday hour.

But there are only sixty minutes in the hour, however precious those minutes may be. A subdued whistle sounds along the wards, and is repeated in the corridors. The good ship sails on her regular course once more, and all visitors and idlers must "come ashore." And we may hope that those on board of her may come ashore, too, in good time, out into the pleasant sunshine, and into the bustling world, where health and strength are such joyous, precious gifts; and so be written down in the books—"discharged, cured."

A GARRISON ROMANCE.

By Mrs. LEITH ADAMS (Mrs. LAFFAN).

Author of "Louis Draycott," "Geoffrey Stirling," "Aunt Hepsy's Foundling," etc.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE six days which were to elapse before the dual tyrants—business and Dodson—should claim Mr. Jones, were nearly at an end. The ship-owner's passage was secured, his affairs in the island were wound up. Endless were the P.P.C. calls he had to make, so many friends had his genial simplicity, his unpretending worth, won for him. Michael was inconsolable, and informed every one that his "heart within him was plenty, plenty sad."

"Sare Jones, he has the fat heart and the wide hand. He is the best-as-made; he is, as we say in Engleesh—a rare'un, good to go. I weep for him," said Michael.

And, indeed, Mabel's lover—he was that still, he was always that—made himself very dear to all who knew him in these last days. For you and I, dear reader, know well that they are last days, indeed; know very well that by some chance, happy or not, who can say? Amphlett Jones overheard the latter part of that sad and pitiful farewell in the floral tent; know, perhaps, more than we care to know, what the hearing of it meant to him. Not a look, not a word betrayed the secret in his breast; not a look, not a sigh betrayed the aching at his heart. With such a nobility about him altogether as would only have been called into life by the noble soul that dwelt within, the man lived through each of those long days, loving and loved by all the little band around him. His noble heart was like a light shining through a homely lantern, and making it beautiful and bright—bright with the subdued and steady radiance that is only to be found in a perfect self-abnegation. In the light of a day to come, all this was read as the writing in letters of fire on the wall of old; but at the time, this time, all eyes were blind, all senses dull; only the hearts were open wide.

The man's resolution and endurance were wonderful. The manner in which he kept the even tenor of his way, marvellous.

Everything was arranged entirely to the Major's satisfaction. He—the Major—was to obtain leave, when the C. O. and Sir Peyton rejoined; there would be no difficulty then. The marriage was to take place in England. Retirement was hinted at for "Pap"; there was to be an end of unlimited scope for the boys; Lily was to go to Brussels to "finish."

All went as merry as a marriage bell, or, rather, many bells. No one looked sad save the bride-elect's mother and—occasionally — the Honourable Bob and Ginger; also Dr. Musters had a grave face on him as he listened to Mabel's laugh and noted the dark shadows round her eyes—the signs of sleepless nights and troubled thoughts.

Like the condemned man, who finds each day of the short time left to him more precious than the last, Mr. Jones counted the days, nay, the hours, that lay between the precious present and the long farewell, that none but himself would know to be supreme and final.

The day before his departure he had a busy time of it. Michael was maddened, or, rather, his curiosity was enraged by the visit—the long visit—of an English lawyer to the hotel. There were papers written, and carried away in a bag. Not one left lying about—not a line, not a sign! Then came Vernon Halkett, a man not much more than indicated in this story, but of whom we may hear more in another—a man to whom all the trust of Mr. Jones had gone out, though he had not seen much of him.

"I know not what things are doing with themselves," said Michael. "It is to give one the madness of the dogs; it is to make one run about and tear one's own self. The green doctor he come, he stay; when he go, he is white as the sheets of the dead. When I go in—I go in plenty quick—Sare Jones is laid out straight—so—the head very much on the arms, the face nowhere seen. Then he gets himself up, and goes out, and I see him no more."

The next day was the last. Late that night the steamer would be in. All the boxes were packed; together with all the pretty things that Mr. Jones had bought in Malta—Dodson was not forgotten, you may be sure.

Many of the light-textured garments that had roused Michael to a frenzy of covetousness were now in his possession. He dreamed dreams, and saw visions of himself in those garments, ogling all the girls at Mass and at Benediction. He crossed himself in anticipatory absolution of the sad dog he was going to be, and the hearts he was going to break.

Mr. Jones was pale with a sort of dusky pallor; he looked shrunken in his clothes; but he was as calm and gentle as ever. He sent half the toy-shop in the Strada Reale to the "scramble," and the noise of trumpets and shawms and the beating of mimic drums was terrible—so much so, that the Major chid little Phil for "setting up such a din," upon which King Baby behaved in a terrible manner, and gave his family fits. He laid down his instrument of torture—a brazen trumpet with a curl in it, laid himself down beside it, and said:

"Benny wen, I be's goin' not to play no more, 'cos Pap doesn't like mine moosic."

At which Pap had to capitulate at once, and join his entreaties to those of the rest of the family, that more melody should instantly be performed—in fact, sue for a trumpet obligato, which Phil obligingly gave.

In times of great mental strain, it is the little things which run most near to breaking us down. This Amphlett Jones was to learn the truth of.

Just as he was preparing to go across to Sleima for his farewell visit, Michael burst into the room.

"One soldier and one beast to see Sare Jones—one great John bull-dog—big—so," and Michael indicated an impossible monster.

"I will come down," said Mr. Jones, slipping a sovereign into his waistcoat pocket. "I will be there in a moment."

In the wide entrance-hall he found Sir Peyton's servant, otherwise Private Davenport, apparently gone suddenly rigid from head to foot, without a bend in him, and as it seemed, gazing fixedly into space—this being his idea of proper respect due to a civilian and gentleman of distinction.

"Heard you was a-going, sir," said Davenport; "thought you'd like to see the dawg. He's pretty middling in 'ealth and appetite, is Butcher. I thank you, sir, but he stands in need of a deal of encouragement."

Butcher, whom Michael was viewing from the safe elevation of halfway up the stairs, raised his huge muzzle and gave a languid wag of his stumpy tail, as who should say: "I'm a very sad dog without my master, I do assure you — pray encourage me if you can."

"Tell your master I was very glad to see Butcher," said Mr. Jones.

"I shall tell Captain Sir Peyton Paling as you was very pleased to see the dawg," said Davenport, with his hand glued to the side of his cap. "Come on, Butcher."

But Butcher lingered, looking up in the face of the stranger——

It was only a little thing, this interview with poor old Butcher, but it upset Mr. Jones past the telling. It seemed the one added straw that went near to break the back of his endurance. He would like to have kissed the old dog's bullet head. He actually saw the brindled, wrinkled forehead through a sheen of tears. . . .

It is next day.

Amphlett Jones is gone; and people go about saying how much they miss him. They hardly knew how much he did to strive and make every one happy until he was gone, and there was no one else to do it any more.

Mabel is kneeling at her mother's knee.

"Mother," she says, "when he took me in his arms last night, as gently as if I were a baby, when he reminded me — always so gently—that he had not yet kissed me, though I was his promised wife; when he touched my forehead with his lips, and held me so a moment, when he said: 'Heaven bless you—my dear——' I felt that if—if it hadn't been for—if things had been different—I could have learnt to love him, in time—yes, to love him with all my grateful heart — to love him as he should be loved. I tried to tell him so; but he would not let me. If he had known all about everything, he could not have been more tender—or more dear and fond. I was very silly, and burst out crying. He took his handkerchief, and wiped the tears from my eyes: 'Nay,' he said, 'do not let me see you weep—I cannot bear to see you weep. I like to think of you smiling and happy. Heaven send you may be both, my darling——' He never called me that before; he looked so sad that I could not choose but say something kind to him—he has been so good —so good. When he said: 'Good-bye,' I said: 'It will not be for long——' 'No,' he said, 'not for long—not for long —nothing is long in this world—though it seems so——' Then he put me from him, in the same gentle way, and left me—without another word. . . ."

Then the two women clasped and kissed, and each knew all that was in the other's heart—the pity of it, the sadness of it, the glory of it.

The world is some weeks older, when, one day, Jim sits flat out on the floor; his legs are extended; his hatchet face is uplifted like a dog about to howl, and the tears course adown his cheeks.

"Heavens, Jim!" cries Mrs. Carbonel, entering from the road, "what has happened? What is the matter with you?"

"Don't speak to me," cries Jim. "I'm not to be spoke to; I'm too sad. Go away; they're all gone upstairs."

"What is it? Oh, Jim, tell me!" pleads Mrs. Carbonel, thoroughly alarmed.

"Mr. Jones is like Corporal Jack—he's drownded dead. Oh, go away, go away!" sobs Jim, this time throwing himself prostrate in one of his agonies.

And she goes.

Something tells her that the news is true, and that little plot of hers takes the form of a treachery to the dead.

Soon she hears all about it—how, in the Bay of Biscay, when a fresh breeze was blowing and a brisk sea running, a passenger was one morning reported missing from the steamer. The rich ship-owner of Lombard Street had disappeared while the shadows of the night touched the white-crested waves and the pitiful moonbeams turned them into silver.

Some thought they heard this, some thought they heard that. People have always heard things, or seen things, when accidents of this kind happen. Was it an accident? Who may say? Did Amphlett Jones lay down his life because he saw no other way; or was it taken from him and did he give it up gladly, finding this world a lonely place, and having perfect faith in that which lies beyond our ken?

Let each one have it his own way. I can but tell things as they happened.

At all events, Vernon Halkett knew that Mr. Jones had resolved to give up all hope of calling Mabel Graham his wife; but—he knew no more. There are things that must rest between heaven and a man's own soul, and in which no man can meddle; and of these the death of Amphlett Jones was one.

At all events, it may be said that, if love is supreme according as it attains to an absolute abnegation of self, then surely Mr. Jones deserves to be looked upon as the hero of an ineffable and beautiful—romance.

As time went on, those who loved him and mourned him saw all about the "accident" in the papers; heard its story on the tongues of men and women; heard further wonders still, for the English lawyer produced a will, duly signed and sealed, and by this will, after various moneys set aside for this or that noble purpose—after Dodson was well provided for, and the education of Major Clutterbuck's boys arranged for—Amphlett Jones, of Lombard Street, left Mabel Graham, stepdaughter of the above Major Desbrow Clutterbuck, of Her Majesty's 193rd Regiment of Foot, his sole residuary legatee.

A year later the 193rd were still at Malta; but they had got the "route." They were going to the land where the stags ran about the streets, waiting to be shot, and where the snow was ever falling.

Once more the men in scarlet were sitting round the mess-table; once more the band-boys sang, with sweet, shrill voices, the story of the Men of Harlech. The purple sea, the overhanging canopy of star-gemmed sky, the flood of silver moonlight—all are the same as on that night a year ago, when the "Outsider" dined with the 193rd, and Sir Peyton Paling sat in the balcony, with his heels on a chair, and a soda-and-brandy by his side. He is doing exactly the same now. He has got over his disappointment, and is reported to be paying his addresses to a gay widow. Indeed, Ginger and the Honourable Bob have already volunteered to assist him in writing the necessary document.

A guest—a civilian—is speaking, and he addresses the first-named of these worthies:

"You've had some changes in the regiment since I was here last year?"

"Yes," says Ginger. "Clutterbuck has retired; he's an agent for something or other, and I believe doing well."

"And his daughter — stepdaughter, though, wasn't it? A pretty girl, by Jove!"

"Yes, she married Rowan, of the Rifle Brigade. He's left the Service, too. They've a large property to manage. She was an heiress, you know."

"Ah yes, I remember; it was something of a romance, was it not? Left to her by a City man; a bit of an outsider, wasn't he? I remember seeing him."

But here the Honourable Bob interposed:

"If he was an outsider, as you call it," he said, speaking so seriously, that the other looked at him in some amaze, "if he was an outsider, then the world would be all the better for a few more like him, give you my word."

It may be taken for granted that, as the years went on, Jim captained the Winchester Eleven, and saw that Phil fielded properly in the long field. It may be surmised that Bertie, though voted a bit of a "sap," won the respect of all with whom he came in contact, and that Algie looked to him for protection in all schoolboy troubles, and never looked in vain.

We may think of Mabel as a very happy woman, with a husband who is still a lover, and children about her knee; children who remind her of the "scramble" of old days, but are not allowed quite so much "scope" as were that unruly band; children to whom she tells the story of little Phil climbing on the turret, and how he was saved—a story that never loses its charm, and has to be told over and over again.

There is another story, too, which she tells them. It is called "The Story of a Good Man's Life"—how he was very, very rich, and tried to help everybody, and to make them happy, and never thought about himself at all. The tears come into mother's eyes as she tells that story—the story they love best of all.

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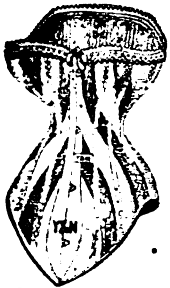

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PART 32.

Third Series

AUGUST, 1891.

VOL. 6

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."

All the Year Round

A Weekly Journal

CONDUCTED BY

CHARLES DICKENS.

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A Weekly Journal

CONDUCTED BY
CHARLES DICKENS.

No. 135.—THIRD SERIES. SATURDAY, AUGUST 1, 1891. PRICE TWOPENCE.

CROSS CURRENTS.

BY MARY ANGELA DICKENS.

Author of "A Mist of Error," "Her Inheritance," "A Social Success," "Kitty's Victim," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XIX.

IT was early in the afternoon of the following day, and Helen was hovering about in her drawing-room, glancing impatiently and incessantly at the clock. She had been obliged to go out early that morning without seeing her sister. Humphrey had told her, after Selma had gone to bed the night before, of his brother's engagement. She had seen that there was a letter in Mervyn's writing for Selma that morning, and she had hardly been able to restrain her impatience, when, on her return home, she had received a message to the effect that "Miss Selma said she was at work, and would be down about three o'clock."

"I do wish she would come," thought Helen again, as she looked at the clock for the ninth time in the course of half an hour. "It is past three." And, as she glanced towards it, the door opened and Selma came in dressed for walking.

"Here you are at last!" cried Helen. "Oh, are you going out?" she added, disappointedly.

"I'm going to dine with the Tyrrells," returned Selma. "Miss Tyrrell asked me to go early."

Her voice was perhaps a shade thinner than usual, but perfectly soft and composed. Her face was shaded by her hat; but there was a colour in her cheeks, and her eyes were very bright.

"You—you had a letter this morning, didn't you?" said Helen, and then she went suddenly round to Selma and took her tenderly into her arms. "Oh, my dear, I am so glad!" she cried.

"I am glad, too, dear; very glad indeed."

"I know," returned Helen. "That's why I'm so delighted. Of course it's nice that Mervyn and Roger should be happy; but it's you I'm thinking of. Oh, I have so wanted you to know that it was coming. Did you see when they were here the other day? Of course you must have seen though. Oh, Selma, I can't tell you what a relief this is to me for you, my poor dear! You can't reproach yourself any more when you know that he is happy. This will make all that trouble, dear, as if it had never been, almost, won't it?"

"Almost, Helen. Yes."

It was very significant of the gulf which lay between the Selma of two years ago and the Selma of to-day, that it seemed quite natural to Helen that her sister's words should be few, and her manner quiet, pleased as she believed her to be. Selma was very seldom either demonstrative or impulsive now; never, indeed, except about something which touched her keen artistic sympathies; but the change had settled upon her so gradually that Helen had almost forgotten that she had ever been different.

"It's funny that it should be Mervyn, isn't it?" continued Helen, with an amused laugh. "I rather thought Mervyn would never marry, dear little thing. Sylvia says" — Helen had been with Sylvia that morning—"Sylvia says that they are so funny. They both declare that it is because they both think there is no one in the world like you! You've quite made the match, Selma! I congratulate you, darling!" And Helen kissed her sister again.

"Nobody hopes more heartily than I do that it will be a very happy one," answered Selma, moving as her sister released her, and walking up to the window, putting on her gloves.

"Oh, must you go?" said Helen as she saw what she was doing. "We haven't half talked it over yet, and I've been longing so to tell you all about it."

"I'm afraid I must," returned Selma. "I've written to Mervyn, of course, but give her my dear love if you see her before I do. Good-bye for the present, dear."

It was a long drive from Humphrey Cornish's house to the Tyrrells'; but the half-hour that had passed was not long enough to account for the change which had taken place in Selma by the time she stood in Miss Tyrrell's drawing-room. Her face looked, as though some strain on the muscles had been entirely relaxed, haggard, exhausted, almost stupid; her eyes were hollow and dull, and there was no colour even in her lips. There was no one in the room, and, as she realised the fact, she sank into a chair as though her one desire was for absolute inaction, mental and physical. She had no idea how long she waited, she vaguely wondered whether she had been asleep, when Miss Tyrrell eventually came to her with profuse regrets for having kept her waiting alone, and explanations of her apparent neglect.

"Now, dearest girl, let us make ourselves very comfortable," she said, at last, "and let us have a nice little chat. I am going to be very serious, indeed."

She spoke in her most winning and irresistible tone, and Selma, taking the chair she indicated, responded with a vague smile.

"But first of all, dear girl," continued Miss Tyrrell, "before I begin to scold, I must tell you how utterly charmed and touched I was at the last matinée! I was with Lady Drummond, Selma, and I assure you she was in ecstasies. It was admirably artistic."

Miss Tyrrell paused; but, rather to her surprise, there was a perceptible interval before Selma said, "I am glad."

She spoke strangely, more as if she were searching under some heavy oppression for the words which she vaguely felt she ought to say, than because she cared at all, and Miss Tyrrell glanced at her sharply.

"Good gracious, child," she exclaimed most inartistically, but thoroughly naturally, "do you know that you look quite plain?"

Selma did not answer—apparently she was entirely indifferent on the subject—and, after a horrified pause, Miss Tyrrell recovered herself and her manner, and rearranging herself in a new attitude, she began, in a deliberate and solemn voice:

"Selma, the time has come when I feel it my duty to you as an artist to speak to you most seriously. I had intended doing so in any case, but the sadly palpable proofs in your face of the truth of what I am going to say makes me even more anxious than I was already." Miss Tyrrell paused, and looked gracefully for her pocket-handkerchief that her next words might be the more impressive. "I have known for some time," she continued, with the air of a seer, "I have said it to myself, I have said it to John, I have said it to every one: 'That dear girl is overworking herself; she will lose her beauty, she will spoil her career if something is not done!'" Miss Tyrrell paused again, and this time Selma said, languidly:

"I am not overworked, thank you."

"You must absolutely give yourself a rest," pursued Miss Tyrrell; "you must have a little change; you must go about and see people. Dear girl, I think you cannot know how greatly you have wounded me by refusing to come and give me your help at our little 'at home' on the second. How that party weighs upon my mind," said Miss Tyrrell, in a plaintive parenthesis, "tongue cannot tell. But it is not for my sake, Selma, but for your own that I am most deeply anxious that you should be here."

Selma put her hand wearily to her head.

"You are so kind, dear Miss Tyrrell," she said, and her voice was dull and toneless, "you are most kind; but please don't ask me."

"I do ask you," returned Miss Tyrrell, suavely. "It is your duty to yourself as an artist that is involved; your duty to your art itself. It is infinitely painful to me to see you throwing yourself away, dear girl. Will you not relieve me by promising to give yourself at least this one holiday? Come to me, dearest girl, come to me on the second."

With a sudden movement, as though she were hardly conscious of anything but physical pain, Selma rose to her feet.

"I will come," she said, faintly, "I will come. Miss Tyrrell, my head aches. May I——"

And then, before Miss Tyrrell could reach her, she had slipped to the ground, white and unconscious.

Selma did not play that night. Miss Tyrrell, triumphant, but feeling that so practical an endorsement of her words on Selma's part was more than she was prepared to cope with, sent for Helen, and late in the evening Selma was taken home. She had been over-working herself, absurdly, every one said, and all her strength, physical and mental, seemed to have given way at once. She lay all the next day, and for several days following, almost motionless, and though she was only absent from her work at the theatre for the one night, it was evident that she forced herself to fulfil her engagement simply from a sense of duty, with no spark of professional enthusiasm to help her. All the forthcoming matinées were postponed indefinitely, without a word of protest from her; she seemed to have not the faintest desire to resume any of the occupations at which she had worked so feverishly.

But she was young and strong, and in a few days she was going about the house listless and uninterested; but no longer actually ill. She had gone up to her own room one afternoon, and Helen, sitting alone in the drawing-room, was listening for the sound of her piano, wishing she could hope that her sister was either practising or studying.

"She doesn't seem to get right, as she should," thought Helen, anxiously. "I wish something would happen to rouse her. I don't believe she will be well enough to go to the Tyrrells' 'at home,' to-morrow. I wish——"

But Helen's meditations were here cut short. There was a ring at the front-door bell, and a moment after, to her great delight, Sylvia Cornish and Mervyn Dallas came in together.

"Oh, I'm so glad to see you both," cried Helen, eagerly. "Sylvia, that's a delicious chair. Mervie, come and sit here. We'll have some tea this minute."

The two girls had been shopping, and as Helen settled them down in a cheery fuss—she was a very newly-married Helen still, and delighted to do the honours of her house—Mervyn showed her a large bunch of lilies she had in her hand.

"They are for Selma, Helen," she said. "Is she better?"

"We have been so sorry to hear of her illness," added Sylvia, in a very different tone of voice from the tone she would have used in speaking of Selma before Roger's engagement to Mervyn.

"She is better, thanks," answered Helen, with a grateful glance at Sylvia. "She will come down, I expect, when she knows you are here."

"She isn't working, is she?" said Mervyn. "Helen, do you think I might run up to her? I—I haven't seen her yet," she finished shyly, meaning thereby that, owing to Selma's illness, she had not seen her since her engagement.

"Run up by all means," laughed Helen, and Mervyn departed hastily with her lilies, to reappear behind Selma, a little later, with very flushed cheeks and big bright eyes.

During the half-hour that followed their appearance in the drawing-room, Helen was delighted to see that Selma was far less languid, had more colour in her cheeks and brighter eyes than she had had for days. A little change and society was decidedly good for her, Helen thought, and when Sylvia and Mervyn were gone, she said cheerfully, as Selma moved rather restlessly about the room:

"You will feel quite inclined to go to Miss Tyrrell's to-morrow, after all, I hope."

Selma came up to her and stood by her work-table, winding and unwinding a reel of cotton as she answered, as though her superfluous energy craved an outlet, however trivial.

"Shall I go!" she said, restlessly. "I may as well, perhaps."

"It will do you good," replied Helen, practically.

"Perhaps."

A triumphant conviction was borne in upon Helen that she had been a most sage adviser, when, some four hours after she had seen Selma off to the "at home" the next afternoon, she received a telegram to the effect that her sister was stopping all night with Miss Tyrrell; and her conviction would have been strengthened if she could have seen Selma as she sat that night, after the performance, with Miss Tyrrell and her brother in Tyrrell's smoking-room. She was sitting on the wide fender-stool, wearing a tea-gown of Miss Tyrrell's, which, artistic as it was and well as it suited her, made her look strangely unlike herself, and perhaps gave her the appearance she wore of being slightly posed—a hitherto unheard-of condition with Selma. Her face was flushed and eager, her eyes bright and excited, and she talked and laughed with a feverish little triumphant air, until Miss Tyrrell exclaimed, delightedly:

"Dear girl, you look like another creature. Doesn't she, John?"

"She looks like a very pretty creature," returned Tyrrell, looking Selma full in the face as she turned to him with a little laugh.

The party had been a signal success; and its most brilliant feature, not artistically, but socially, had been Miss Selma Malet. To her dying day Miss Tyrrell asserted that the change that that afternoon had seen in her protégée was entirely owing to her own admirable reasoning; and whether or no such was the fact, the change itself was certainly no delusion. Selma had laughed and talked, allowed herself to be flattered and flirted with, and had apparently thoroughly enjoyed herself, as she had never done "in society" before.

All the afternoon, while she formed the centre figure of his party, Tyrrell had watched her in her new departure with distinct satisfaction, but with no surprise. He read her by the light he thought he had obtained in Humphrey Cornish's studio nearly three weeks before.

John Tyrrell was, before all else, a man of patience, and he had been playing a waiting game for nearly two years. There was nothing in life so interesting to him as success—the obvious, tangible wealth and social power for which the word stood in his vocabulary. He had known Selma Malet all her life, and the possibilities which lay open to the genius in her—genius which no man was more capable of appraising—had made her developement and introduction an interesting piece of brain-work to him. But he had considered her as a very perfect piece of mechanism with his intellectual faculties only until about two years ago. It was on the afternoon when he first met her as the promised wife of another man that she first appeared to him in the light of a beautiful woman, and a desirable acquisition. Her beauty and charm had suddenly appealed to his senses; the social position which he knew might be hers whenever she should choose to take it, and which she would necessarily share with her husband—should that husband be himself—had gradually appealed to his ambition as a man of the world.

Two objects had formed slowly in his mind after his meeting with her at the dance to which she had gone with Mrs. Cornish and Sylvia during Roger's absence in Liverpool, and he had pursued them steadily and without haste ever since. He had broken off her engagement with Roger Cornish, believing honestly that she would be miserable in a life from which Art must be for ever excluded; but determined also to make her eventually his own wife. He had given her, professionally, every chance and advantage which lay in his power to give, because he looked upon every step she made artistically as a step toward that which he intended her to attain; toward that which he considered the most desirable thing modern life has to offer—social notoriety.

Tyrrell was a man for whom the world had been too much. Early success—popularity, money, social power—had been too much for the spark of the genius with which Nature had endowed him. If he had had to struggle in his youth and early manhood; if he had known artistic success before his personal gifts had brought him popularity; he would doubtless have been what he had it in him to be—a great artist. He had been flattered and overpaid for what he knew to be superficial, and accomplished without effort; he had given the world what it asked and applauded, and he was a society favourite. Perhaps the one point about him still in his favour was the fact that he never deceived himself. He had ceased to believe in Art—in anything but tangible position and wealth—and he used no phrases to himself about the matter. There had been moments in his intercourse with Selma, as her master, and later as her manager, when her simple, single-minded devotion to her art had touched him, had stirred the old artistic instinct in him, in spite of himself. The Duchess's matinée had been such a moment. He had caught fire then at her enthusiasm, and had been for the time being so carried away that the cynicism of reaction in him was harder than ever. But his professional work and his social work were, in his eyes, equally means to an end which he could have attained by neither singly; each was a matter of business, and regarded by him from no other point of view.

Until within the last twenty-four hours, both the ends he desired to accomplish with regard to Selma had seemed as far from him as they had been when he first laid his well-calculated plans for their attainment. He was no nearer making Selma his wife, and he was no nearer making Selma a social power than he had been then. She had been so absolutely innocent and unconscious, that any attempt on his part at anything approaching love-making had fallen utterly flat. She had altogether refused to have anything to say to society.

The time had arrived now, however, when his desires, matrimonial and social, seemed to have come practically within his reach. He had hitherto been powerless against an inpenetrable something in Selma which prevented his advancing one hair's-breadth. Try as he would he could make no way against it, nor could he define it; he was baffled on every side by a sense that he was moving in the dark. The light that had dawned upon him in Humphrey Cornish's studio had, in his own opinion, not only shown him the obstacles that lay in his path, but had shown them to him just at the crisis when they might most easily be dealt with.

When he induced Selma to break off her engagement, he had had not the faintest respect for her feeling for Roger; he had looked upon it as a girlish fancy which would assuredly wear off with time. But now from what he had seen in Selma's face as she watched Roger Cornish and Mervyn Dallas in the studio, he had deduced a theory that, with what he mentally designated as the self-torturing instinct of a thorough woman, she had dwelt on Roger's unhappiness, and her own imaginary sacrifice, until she had magnified her girlish infatuation into what she chose to consider a consuming passion. These premises established—and in Tyrrell's mind they were very firmly established — Roger Cornish's new engagement could not fail, Tyrrell argued, to bring about a state of mind in her which would only need judicious management to bring about both his objects. Jealousy and despair, however fictitious, would catch at any distraction, he calculated; the excitements of society, judiciously presented to her, would serve such a purpose well enough, and one season accomplished, the completion of his social plans for her would be merely the work of time. Wounded pride, he told himself, would inevitably hurry her into marriage, and he had only to play his cards well to ensure its hurrying her into marriage with himself. He looked at her now as she sat there on the fender-stool, her new self-consciousness sitting so gracefully upon her as she laughed up into his face, and taking the cigar from between his lips, he said, carelessly:

"It's almost a pity you refused the fancy dress ball, isn't it, Selma?"

"Do you think so?" she answered lightly.

"Suppose you change your mind, dear girl," said Miss Tyrrell, eagerly. "John and I are going of course, and I dare say I could arrange it with Lady Winslow. It will be a delightful evening."

"Exercise your privilege and change your mind, Selma," said Tyrrell, waving off the smoke of his cigar as he spoke. Selma hesitated, and then she turned to Tyrrell with a look on her face which he had never seen there before—a reckless look.

"Do you think it leads to anything?" she said, looking him in the eyes as if he and she were alone together, and speaking with a strange ring of demand in her voice. "Tell me!"

Tyrrell laid down his cigar and answered her slowly and deliberately, using the only argument which would, he knew, have any weight for her.

"I think that a good social position is the very greatest help towards the attaining of the highest artistic position. I think it is a help which no artist can afford to neglect."

There was another pause, and then Selma sprang to her feet.

"Take me to the fancy dress ball, dear Miss Tyrrell!" she cried; and her voice was as reckless as the look in her sparkling eyes. "Don't let me neglect anything that will help me, pray!"

A great deal of artistic advertising may be done in a very short space of time by a lady of Miss Tyrrell's peculiar talents; and though there were only a few days to pass before the fancy dress ball in question, when the night arrived nearly every one in the room was talking about the expected appearance of Miss Selma Malet. The Tyrrells were late; all the other theatrical lions and lionesses had arrived to roar unheeded, as quarter of an hour after quarter of an hour slipped by, and still Miss Selma Malet did not put in an appearance. Her previous refusals of all invitations had been utilised by Miss Tyrrell to the utmost. Everybody knew that Miss Selma Malet was wholly devoted to her art; if she deigned to smile now and then upon society, society understood that it was to be deeply and humbly grateful, and, being at the bottom a meek and credulous institution, society was prepared to fall immediately upon its knees, and there remain until a newer idol should be presented to it.

"What will she wear, I wonder?" said a gallant of the court of Charles the Second, who had worshipped Selma from the stalls for some weeks, and was burning for an introduction. "You know her, of course, Lady Latter?" he added to the lady on whom he was bestowing as much of his limited intelligence as he could collect.

The two years which had gone by since Lady Latter and Tyrrell had met at Mrs. Oliphant's had left her in looks and manner almost as they found her. She had been looking old last season, people had said; but this year she appeared to have completely recovered herself, and her dark, piquant face was only a shade harder and more daring for the time that had elapsed. She was slightly and very admirably "made up," and her dress, from the point of view either of originality or effectiveness, was perfect. If some people might have thought that, considered as clothing, it left something still to be desired, Lady Latter considered that half the point of a fancy dress lay in the superior facilities it offered, compared with ordinary evening dress, for sailing as near the wind as possible.

She nodded to an acquaintance across the room, as her companion spoke, and then turned to him with a laugh, which was not a pleasant one.

"Indeed I don't!" she said. "You forget that this budding genius is altogether superior to such an inferior being as I am! To tell you the honest truth, too," she continued, with an indescribable grimace, "these superior young beauties bore me. They bore all the ugly women in London, no doubt," with a quick change of tone, and another laugh; "but I am the only one who would own to it."

"You've seen her play?"

"Yes—for my sins! I saw her in that dreary old fossil of a play Tyrrell dug up for the Chinese business, and she and he together nearly killed me with suppressed laughter. It made one feel quite young and romantic to see such an old stager as Tyrrell making such a fool of himself. 'Bianca! oh, Bianca!'" she quoted, striking an attitude — another privilege attending fancy dress in Lady Latter's eyes—and burlesquing Tyrrell's tone and manner. Then, suddenly returning to her own natural demeanour, she exclaimed, as nearly every one in the room exclaimed at the same instant: "Here they are!"

Miss Tyrrell, dressed very perfectly as an Egyptian sorceress, was just presenting to her hostess a figure which looked as if it had stepped down from one of Romney's most charming canvases, it was so lovely, so gracious, so girlish. The dress was very simple and rather dark in colouring, relieved by the big white fichu. Selma wore no ornament of any kind, her own beauty was the dominating note in her appearance; and the whole effect against the mass of bright colour and gorgeous jewellery in the room was, as Miss Tyrrell had intended it should be, indescribably striking. Behind her, an admirable foil, was Tyrrell in a splendid dress of old Venice.

As far as Selma's success was concerned, Lady Winslow's fancy dress ball was a repetition of Miss Tyrrell's "at home" on a more extended scale. Everybody in the room who was "anybody" had been introduced to her, and she was talking and laughing with a lovely, excited flush on her cheeks, and with eyes like stars, when, about an hour after their arrival, Tyrrell made his way to her side.

"Oh, nobody else just yet, please!" she cried, with a little laugh which was as unlike the simple, natural Selma, as was the gesture with which she turned to him. "Breathing space, if you please, Mr. Tyrrell!"

"Breathing space by all means!" he answered; then with a sudden hardly perceptible change of manner, he said: "Ah! Lady Latter, how do you do?"

A movement of the crowd had suddenly brought them close together, and face to face, and she held out her hand to him, saying:

"I thought you had gone into retirement! We haven't met for ages!"

He made some conventional rejoinder, and as he spoke, as if accidentally and unconsciously, he drew a step or two off from where Selma and her court were standing. Lady Latter stopped him.

"Introduce your beauty, Tyrrell," she said, carelessly.

He hesitated.

"Introduce your beauty," she repeated, raising her voice a little, and looking him full in the face, and he turned to Selma. She had apparently heard Lady Latter's words—Lady Latter's insolence was one of her sources of power—for her eyes were very girlish and indignant.

"Lady Latter wishes me to introduce you to her," said Tyrrell—"Miss Selma Malet—Lady Latter."

Miss Selma Malet acknowledged his words with the bow of a young princess, and at the same moment Lady Winslow came up to the group with a very distinguished peer by her side.

"Miss Malet!" she said, "may I introduce Lord Gildon? I hope he may persuade you to go down to supper. Mr. Tyrrell, why don't you take Lady Latter to have some supper?"

A moment later Selma had walked away with her peer—she would have walked away with any one from "that woman" as she mentally designated Lady Latter—and Lady Latter and Tyrrell were practically alone together.

"May I have the pleasure?" he said, without looking at her.

She put her hand on his arm in silence.

ON THE TOW-PATH CIRCUIT.

THE name of the good town of Reading is familiar to travellers in every land, set forth in terms which suggest that Englishmen when they pass across the seas do not in changing their domicile, change their taste for biscuits. Until last summer I knew little more of Reading than this, save an occasional glance at its roofs and chimneys from the railway carriage; but one day in July I alighted there, and the next morning, in company with three other adventurers, set sail on "The Kennet swift" to make a circular tour over unknown waterways through the pleasant southern meadows.

When we first announced our programme to our friends, we were favoured with warnings in plenty, and vaticinations of a somewhat gloomy character as to the outcome of our adventure; but no one was forthcoming with information of a practical and useful character, for the good and sufficient reason that no one had any to give. Had we wanted to be posted up in all the latest dodges of globe trotting, or of shooting expeditions in Kashmir or Bechuanaland, we should have had an embarras de choix; but of our friends only one here and there had ever heard of the River Kennet. When we went on to say that a great portion of our trip would be done over canals, we were regaled with many venerable anecdotes as to the ferocious nature and habits of the bargee; but these, though in some instances moderately diverting, were not immediately useful. In guide-books we found scant counsel, for these seemed, for the most part, to be written for the use of athletic young men who cover twenty or thirty miles a day, and gave us the notion that stopping-places would be difficult to find. Had the country been half as inhospitable as certain of these suggested, we must often have camped sub jove; but it turned out that, at the end of our day's journey of a dozen miles or so, we invariably came upon some sheltering roof. We often found chops and steaks awaiting us, and always eggs and bacon and a hearty welcome.

The Kennet soon gets clear of the contaminating presence of the town, and half an hour's easy pulling saw us free of houses and wharves, and the grime which hangs about the verge even of the best ordered of boroughs. After passing Fobury Lock, the character of the stream changes. Straight reaches, which greatly shorten the course, show the hand of the engineer; but we do not yet bid farewell to the Kennet au naturel. At a corner now and then it makes an irruption into the navigable channel, just to let one know it is there, and one soon does know it, for the river is as swift now as it was when Pope wrote his precocious couplets. As a rule it flows into each "pound"—the local term for the reach of water between one lock and another—just below the upper lock, a clever bit of engineering, which secures abundant water even in the driest summer. These straight cuts, fringed with the thick, silver-grey foliage of pollard willows, are full of picturesque charm. From the boat or the towing-path one looks through the leafy screen, over the low-lying adjacent meadows, to the woods that fringe them and the hazy upland beyond. Near our first halting-place, Woolhampton, the low ground becomes almost savage in its marshy luxuriance of towering sedge, and willow herb, and loosestrife. Silent ditches wind through the black, peaty meadows, expanding here and there into wide pools, jewelled with water-lilies, and encircled by a dense growth of underwood and water weeds. Sometimes these merge into the canal itself, and as our boat passed we caught sight now of the azure back of a kingfisher, now of a troop of water-hens sculling across from one reed thicket to another, and now of a heron rising slowly from his fishing station, and flopping majestically away from our intrusive presence. Human anglers, except in the neighbourhood of towns, were rare; and of voyagers bent on a task like our own we saw none at all.

We halted at Newbury and again at Hungerford, and up to the last-named town the scenery has just the same characteristics; but the next day's work brought us into a different region. The Kennet no longer kept us company, and we passed the Berkshire border into Wilts. The trees grew rarer; rolling downs instead of level meadows bounded our course; we passed by chalk pits instead of sedge beds, tokens that we were rowing in regions where nature never intended men to row. We had already passed through some five-and-forty locks, and now a series of nine close together at Crofton lifted us to the summit level more than five hundred feet above the sea. At the entrance of Savernake tunnel we left our boat in charge of the railway signalman, and, by way of a change, took a spell of wheel locomotion through the forest, by driving to Marlborough, our next resting-place.

The entrance to Savernake may well disappoint any one looking for real forest wildness. All round about the house—a melancholy-looking pile—it is mere park, with no touch of the "selva selvaggia"; but, after traversing the long avenue of lofty beeches, the most perfect example of the forest aisle, one emerges in a different woodland world. Hoary giants, oak and beech, contending for supremacy, rise from dense thickets of underwood. The surface is abrupt and broken: thickly-wooded crests, with valleys of rough pasture between. In the low ground the rabbits dart about from one furze-bush to another in the way the sportsman loves, and herds of cattle wander at will, and lie lazily under some of the finest forest-timber in Britain, trees which might easily date back to Stuart times; and, with slight effort after illusion, one might call up a vision of a troop of mailed horsemen disappearing through the "verdurous gloom." The tall red-deer are still there to aid the fancy in a flight back to days yet more remote, for Savernake is one of their few remaining haunts south of the Tweed, and there they have as yet evaded the fate which seems to be shadowed forth from the motto of melancholy suggestion which one reads on the heraldic shield of the lodge gate.

An easy half-day's rowing brought us to Pewsey—one of the discoveries of our voyage. It was marked in small type on the map; and we knew it not by fame, as we knew Marlborough on the one side, and Devizes on the other. We pictured it a mere village, with rough beer-shop accommodation; but we found it a trim, well-ordered place, neither town nor village, with a very phœnix of an inn. The Salisbury Avon flows through the main street, and here begins its work of flour-milling before it descends to the plain. All around are high-down ridges, which seemed to promise magnificent ground for a gallop over the springy turf in some of the finest air in England. Truly, if Pewsey were in Germany, it would boast a big hotel or two; and dozens of "Concordias," and "Tivolis," and "Germanias," painted green and white, and smothered with hops and Virginia creeper; and a brass-band, and all the necessary adjuncts of a Luftkurort.

Devizes is a handsome town, chiefly remarkable for the "Bear Hotel"—never had bear a kindlier growl—where Sir Thomas Lawrence first gave evidence of his talent, and for a monument in the market-place which records how a lady fell down dead after telling a falsehood over the sale of a sack of corn. As we gazed upon this obelisk, and read its warning inscription, the question arose whether locomotion in Devizes market-place—or, indeed, in any market-place — would be possible, supposing that a stony record should be built to mark the place where deviation from veracity, in the course of a bargain, has not been followed by the instant death of the teller of the taradiddle.

But more interesting to us, as voyagers, than any objects usually dealt with in guide-books, was the series of descending locks which lay just ahead. Twenty-nine locks in less than two miles! Since the day of embarkation we had been reminded by many commentators on our venture, with a knowing twinkle of the eye, that we would find the Devizes locks a pretty tough job. They are a formidable obstacle, no doubt, to the laden barge, or the house-boat; but we, in our light-going order, were able to turn the position, instead of storming it, by engaging an obliging wharfman to cart our boat over to the bottom of the watery staircase. It was a little like shirking work, perhaps; and one of the crew, who seemed to find the cream of life's happiness in working sluices, and opening and shutting lock-gates, was very scornful on the subject. Still, we saved four hours by our manœuvre; and the five locks at Seend, and the four more at Semington, and the intervening distance to Bradford gave us a very fair day's work.

Bradford-on-Avon is certainly one of the most interesting and peculiar towns in England. The well-informed man knows only one Bradford, and that is in Yorkshire—a great centre of the woollen trade. Should you tell him that there is also a Bradford in Wiltshire, he will possibly admit the proposition; but should you go on to say that this southern Bradford made cloth when its smoky northern namesake was a mere moorland village, and still turns out a quality which the Yorkshireman, with all his push and capital, cannot equal, he will tell you you are talking nonsense. Yet so it is. Though, like Frome and Melksham and Westbury, it has suffered by the rise of Trowbridge, it still produces cloth of the finest quality; but it was not as a weaver's town that it claimed our interest. We came rather to see the tiny church of Saint Aldhelm, the oldest place of worship in Great Britain, teste Professor Freeman, and I should like to know who would dare to contradict such an authority. The little church, as it now stands, is an admirable instance of successful restoration, and is as little changed as may be from its original state. But it is by no means the only object to gladden the eye of the archæologist. At every turn one comes across fine bits of Jacobean or Queen Anne work, roomy-looking houses built of that stone which becomes ruddy brown with age like the face of a sound-bodied, kindly-souled, old man. The streets are quite steep enough to produce pretty often an inclination to stop and look at the scenery, and the houses stand in terraces, built one above the other, along the slopes of the semicircular deflection in the hill-side. In passing from one level to another, one often has to traverse alleys which might be parts of some Italian hill town. Gardens, full of vegetables and bright with flowers, lie before almost every door, and make it hard to believe that we are, after all, in the midst of an English manufacturing town.

The bit of canal between Bradford and Bath is certainly the gem of the voyage. On one side sloping woods come down to the water's edge, and the Avon flows far below us along the valley. Twice the canal is carried from one side to the other on an aqueduct, and every turn of the course brings to view some fresh charm of landscape. But the air of this winding valley is hot and stifling, and in the oak woods the flies rage in a fashion truly Egyptian. We long as we sit at the labouring oar for a breath of the air of Pewsey downs, and murmurs arise from certain of the crew that it would be well to return thither instead of braving suffocation in the sweltering streets of Bath.

Bath certainly is the last place in England where people, wearing what were emphatically working suits of boating-flannel, would find themselves at home; so, after a day's repose, we gladly took ship again, and returned on our track as far as Semington, the junction with the Wilts and Berks canal. As we entered the first long narrow lock, it seemed a mere toy affair after the huge ones we were leaving. This new bit of country is rich with all the quiet, happy characteristics of Southern English scenery. In the level lush pastures, studded with noble trees, the sleek, sleepy cattle live what must surely be lives of ideal happiness. Drowsy as they seemed to be, they were yet curious enough to saunter slowly up to the canal to stare at us. Pleasure-boats are evidently rare in these parts, for should a child catch sight of us he would summon all his mates within ear-shot to come and look at the little ship; and in the lovely fields were

> The mowers, who, as the tiny swell
> Of our boat passing swayed the river grass,
> Stood with suspended scythe to see us pass.

Occasionally they would give us a humorous invitation to get out of that boat and come and help them to clear up that field of wheat. On the left the Bristol Avon still kept us company, and on the right were the sloping woods of Bowood; but, after passing Wootton Bassett, the presence of numerous anglers on the towing-path—oily, grimy men who looked as if they might recently have been cleaning engines—warned us that we were emerging from the purely rural districts. These anglers, however, were urbane only in a limited sense. We got from them no kindly good-day or jocular remark—as from the reed-cutters, and shepherds, and harvestmen we had hitherto met—but lowering looks and muttered objurgations on people who came with boats, and spoilt the fishing. They were all fishing with live bait; and, as far as I could see, they put very much more weight of fish into the water than ever they took out of it. There must have been at least a hundred wretched impaled dace and gudgeon for one pike to select from, supposing, that is, that a single pike were foolish enough to abide in the unsavoury neighbourhood of Swindon. Perhaps it was even baffled hope which made them so grumpy; but their mode of life might well have had something to do with it. Can men who live all day long in the grime, and fume, and whirr of a steam workshop, possibly put forth those gentilities of manner, none the less real for the hearty roughness of their mode of expression, which come naturally to the workers in the open fields; or, at least, to those of them we came across? When I had travelled a little farther, and saw the town of New Swindon, the dwelling-place of these saturnine fishers, I fell into a more forgiving mood. Were I fated to live there, I am sure I should be as gloomy as the gloomiest of them, and very possibly might violently assault any boating excursionists who came to disturb my fishing.

There is a current belief that civilisation owes much to railways, and if this belief be a valid one, the Great Western, as a railway, is an agent of culture and enlightenment, and deserves a good word from the friends of progress; but as far as I could see in my tramp along the towing-path through New Swindon, there is a huge debit item on the other side, on account of the erection of this amorphous congeries of houses. The canal, which was pure enough a few miles back, here becomes a foul, black ditch, running close past the back doors of rows of mean, ugly houses, every one of which, by the indulgence, I suppose, of whatever sanitary authority may exist in the place, maintains a feculent dust heap. These lie in almost a continuous line along the bank, in hideous contrast to the blossom and greenery of the tangled hedges which have hitherto bordered our path. Crowds of frightened ducks scuttled away from our intrusive boat over the water black as Styx, and the odours disengaged by their flight were more suggestive of a Venetian than a Wiltshire canal. A few years ago this spot was fair and pure as the fields a few miles back. Men will multiply, and places like New Swindon will spring up; but there is surely no reason why their early stages of growth should be so unseemly. A large portion of the evil springs from the carelessness and want of control and design which has hitherto characterised our public life. If the dose of democratic mixture lately administered to local government leads to an increase of supervision of the right sort, the rural revolution will not have come in vain. For two miles at least the plague of man's defiling presence was visible, and it was not till after the first lock on the North Wilts Canal, a short cut from Swindon to the Thames and Severn Canal, at Cricklade, had been passed, that we came back to quiet and greenery. This last-named waterway, when we floated into it through the last lock, seemed a spacious stream indeed after the narrow, weed-grown channel we had traversed since Wootton Bassett. Down to Lechlade it is a pretty, tranquil landscape, though not to be compared with the golden valley at its other extremity, or with the Upper Thames reach between New Bridge and Bablock Hythe. Here it seems time to turn off the itinerary tap, as the Thames above Oxford, in spite of the sparseness of inns and the paucity of accommodation in the few there are, is becoming well known to boating people, especially those who are growing a trifle weary of the humours of Henley and Maidenhead.

If some one with a gift that way were to address himself to the task, he might find as good material for a volume of travel, duly spiced and salted with statistics and social philosophy, in a jaunt like ours, as he would ever get from a long vacation trip to the States, or a progress through the Australian colonies, made under the patronage of some high official, with all the rough places smoothed down in the usual way. Nearly every afternoon you land at one of those little country towns, which the coming of the railway was to have made as Tyre and Sidon, and spend the night in one of those English inns, the merits of which often furnish matter for discussion in the public press during the holiday season. When the railways made a sudden end of the mail coaches, the small country towns certainly seemed likely to fall beyond recovery. People who still had money to spend rushed off to spend it in the county town; or, still worse, in London, lured by the charm of change, or by the extraordinary experience of travelling fifteen miles an hour. One guest came to the inn instead of ten, and even this solitary one grew to be so uncertain and fleeting in his movements that it was hardly worth while to provide victuals for his sustenance, so that it was no uncommon experience for the adventurous traveller to find no better fare in the leading inn of a country town than bread and cheese. The long range of coach-houses and stables fell to ruin; ruin also seemed likely at no distant date to overtake the house itself, and the landlord not unfrequently hastened this on by consuming too much of his own liquor, to make him forget the evil days upon which he had fallen.

But the Englishman, whether he lives in London, or in a country town, or in some half-savage colony, is equally incapable of knowing when he is beaten. The railways, no doubt, for a time turned things topsy-turvy; and in the forties the country tradesmen were as men dazed, and unable to grapple with the situation. But they, or their successors, recovered their wits after a time; and it may safely be said that, as a class, they are better off now than ever they were. The shops, in spite of the arrival of co-operative packing-cases addressed to local magnates of frugal mind, are well supplied, and, even in the villages, show signs of doing a good business. The butchers' shops are full of meat, and so are the grocers'. After all one has read about the prejudice against tinned meats, and the dangers of eating them, it is astonishing to look upon the long ranges and tall pyramids of beef and brawn in every grocer's window. The prejudice against it must be waning, and the contents of the tins cannot be so noxious, after all. The universality of the ready-made clothes'-shop accounts for the disappearance of the smock-frock, and for the existence of those industrial abuses in the London tailoring trade, about which Royal Commissioners have collected evidence and reported, if they have done nothing else. There is generally some builder's work in progress, and all about the place an air of trimness and neatness, which is one of the surest evidences of prosperity. The Athenæum, or the reading-room, is there to prove a certain amount of intellectual movement; and there is evidence, from the sight of some familiar posters on the walls, that one would have the chance, now and then, of seeing the same acrobatic and spectacular shows which at other times are the delight of London folk

Much has been written on the evils of centralisation, and on the malignant part which railways have played in promoting it; but all this is ludicrously exaggerated. A Frenchman once declared that Englishmen were not merely insular, but islands in themselves. "Every Englishman is an island;" few truer epigrams have ever been spoken. It is not to be supposed that Fallowthorpe and Meadbury—towns made up of incorrigible individualists of the type described by the witty Frenchman—would ever suffer themselves to be assimilated and controlled by the larger congeries of the county town, or of London. There is just the same corporate feeling, just the same pride in the particular spot of earth in respect of which they pay rates and taxes, amongst English country townsmen now as there was in the days when stage-coaches ran, or in those remote ones when the same word was used to describe the stranger and the foe. They have stuck to their posts, as the British soldier sticks to his when he finds himself in a tight place, and have let city people see that they are quite well able to take care of themselves, in spite of the uphill game they have had to play.

But, after all, the inn is the feature of the country town which has the most vital interest for the wayfarer. English innkeepers are reputed to be strongly conservative, and to this view any one who has visited necessarily a score or so of English inns will agree. Our trip for a good part of its course lay well off the beaten track; and we assuredly did not fare the worse on that account. Our food was invariably abundant, and well cooked; and the friendly service of the pleasant, willing waitress made us hope that she may, after all, be able to survive the competition of the ubiquitous "Fritz." So far, there is little room for adverse criticism; but the reverse of the medal must, in justice, be exhibited. Considering how we English pride ourselves on our national cleanliness, and what hard things we have to say of the dirt of other lands, it is a little surprising that the one well-nigh universal failing of the English inn should be the want of freshness, or, to put it plainly, the frowsiness of its bedrooms. They may be clean, but they don't look like it. If you open a drawer or a wardrobe, you will surely discover a plentiful assortment of fusty garments, belonging presumably to the landlady or her assistants. The carpets will be faded and frayed; the curtains ragged and inefficient; the water-bottle furred and suggestive of germs and microbes; and the atmosphere

—though our national passion for fresh air is as strong as that for cold water—stuffy, and nothing short of it. It is hard to find a reason for this prevalent dinginess, especially as the hostess and her maids will be as neat as one could wish. Perhaps the easiest explanation of it is, that it is part of the ingrained conservatism of the British Boniface, which leads him to believe that the air of the bedrooms and the water of the jugs are, like the fundamentals of the British Constitution, best unchanged.

The question of charges opens a wide field. A correspondence thereanent was started in the journals last year, and in this the English landlord, as compared with his Continental brother, did not seem to get much the worst of it, and in truth his adversaries did not put their case with much skill or cogency. A gentleman who had once lived well in a Swiss pension for seven francs a day, wrote saying that he considered twelve and sixpence a high charge for a day's stay in an English hotel. It would have been more to the purpose if he had given the cost of a similar flying visit to the ordinary Swiss hotel, or a week's stay in an English boarding-house, remembering always that in England few people are content with the plain first breakfast they enjoy on the Continent. Still, when all allowances are made, the fact remains that Englishmen have not the faculty for hotel-keeping which Germans and Swiss have, a fact which will help to account for the vast gulf which lies between the hotels of the Thames and Oxford, and those of the Rhine and Heidelberg.

It is generally admitted in political economy that men engaged in agreeable and healthful callings must be content with smaller profits than those which attach to occupations pursued under conditions of discomfort or obloquy, and of agreeable callings I can think of none to beat that of the landlord of the chief hotel and posting-house of a country town. Those I came across seemed to have all the enjoyments of a country gentleman's life without his worries. They probably manage the stable and select the liquors of the house, but all the cares of active administration seem to lie in the hands of the landlady and "Miss." They nearly all belong to the local troop of Yeomanry, and something in the cut of the trousers told me that they would be pretty regular at the cover side in the hunting season. Under conditions of this sort it is not to be supposed that rapid fortunes are to be made, and it is hinted that the pleasures of life occasionally operate to keep those two fateful ends from meeting, and to prevent the landlord from extending his business as his less easy-going and more enterprising fellows have done. The demand for accommodation is really greater than ever it was. The crowds of cyclists who now throng the coach roads must spend quite as much as the mail-coach passengers spent, and on the slightest excuse the townsman is ready to set forth in a break, with a dozen other spirits as jovial as himself, to another town a dozen miles away, just for the pleasure of the drive and the dinner at the end. This all means more money circulating in the landlord's business, which would certainly have expanded to something much beyond its present volume had he held to the wholesome maxim of "business first, pleasure afterwards."

Until the controversy about the Manchester Ship Canal, a few years ago, people seemed to have forgotten that such methods of transit as canals existed at all. They were taken to be included in the list of those things which "had been done away with by the railroads"; but the inception of this great work, and the appointment of a Royal Commission on inland navigation, and the late Railway and Canal Act, have revealed the fact that there are hundreds of miles of waterway, over which heavy, rough goods can be carried, though slowly, more economically than over iron rails. One has heard hints in plenty that the railways have deliberately let those canals, over which they have acquired rights, fall to ruin in order to safeguard their monopoly, and the destruction of the upper navigation on the Warwickshire Avon, and the ruinous state into which the Thames and Severn Canal was falling a few years ago, certainly lent a degree of plausibility to this assertion; but to judge from the experience of our voyage, the Railway Canals are in a better condition than those which are independent. The Kennet and Avon navigation, the property of the Great Western Railway, is a fine, well-kept channel from end to end, and a fair amount of traffic still passes over it between Devizes and Bristol by a regular service of boats; whereas the Wilts and Berks, an independent undertaking, is, over a large portion of its course, half-choked with weeds and, from a neglect of dredging, too shallow to take boats with more than twenty tons of cargo on board. At Swindon I marked the dredging-machine, safely housed in a shed, and completely mud-bound, so that another dredger would have to be brought to the spot before it could be released from its oozy prison. All the duties of the canal wharf seemed to be discharged by one aged wharfman, himself as great a ruin as the property he guarded. The North Wilts Canal, the branch to Cricklade, is in a worse state still, and I was amazed to hear that in the winter and spring there is still a considerable brick and timber traffic over it. The locks will open and shut, and that is all, and what repairs are done — I do not think I saw a patch less than five years old—are done in the roughest fashion. In lieu of devoting the water to its legitimate purpose, the Wilts and Berks owners sell it to the Great Western Railway for use in the Swindon workshops. What wonder is there then that the carrying traffic languishes when the bargee has no certainty that even his shrunken load of twenty tons may not be stranded on a mud-bank, and he himself spend laborious days with a punt-pole in speeding it to its destination? The ill will or the ill deeds of the railway companies may have something to answer for; but the real cause of the evil is the neglect of the owners themselves, who have folded their hands to sleep, during a period of industrial activity unparalleled in the world's history, and have done absolutely nothing to maintain their property in even a decent state of repair, while every parliamentary session bristles with railway projects. Canals, if they want to recover some of their lost traffic, must give up their old position of toll-takers. They must become carriers on their own account. If they give a cheap regular service, trade will come as surely as it comes when a line of steamers is put on between two ports. There were rumours of a new management and of a regular despatch of barges, drawn by steam-power, between London and Bristol, viâ the Thames as far as Abingdon, the Wilts and Berks, and the Kennet and Avon; and the earnest wishes I heard on all sides for the success of the new project showed that the prospect of a little competition in the carrying trade was very welcome.

As economists we ought to pray that it may come about; but as inland voyagers we may be permitted to hope that its success may not be too pronounced. A lock in a condition of "calm decay" is an exceedingly picturesque object, though it may be a little exasperating to boatmen who want to get on rapidly. Æsthetically it would be a clear loss to exchange its leaky sluices, its shaky gates, and crumbling walls, with their flourishing crop of ferns, and grasses, and toadflax, and all those persistent vegetables which set up in business for themselves as soon as ever man gives them a chance, for the grimy usefulness of the northern canals, or the hard neatness of the Thames Conservancy; but of such a transformation I fancy there is little danger. The increase of traffic would not be very great, and the presence of a few more barges would be no detriment to the picturesqueness of the waterway; nor would the presence of more bargees detract from the amenity of a canal voyage, for a more unjustly maligned race of men does not exist. We always found them helpful, civil fellows, taking a keen interest in our expedition, mixed with a certain mild wonder that there should exist people who could find pleasure in rowing on a canal and opening locks. And then the reformation will be a distinct gain if it keeps the bushes on the towing-path lopped, and provides that not more, say, than one-third of the navigable channel be devoted to the growth of aquatic plants.

THE HARVEST MOON.

Faded the last faint blush of evening's rose,
And shadows gather in the sleeping vale,
Where, silent now, the rippling streamlet flows
Beneath the mist, that, rising dim and pale,
Hovers above it like a silver veil,
Hiding the tears upon the closed-up flowers,
That seem to weep for the day's vanished hours.

Across the heaven a mellow radiance steals,
The mist grows brighter, and the silver stream
Reflects the tender light which half reveals
Earth's loveliness, and, like an infant's dream,
Makes all things beautiful and holy seem:
The harvest moon along the autumn sky
Holds her fair sway and bids the darkness fly.

O'er fallen leaves, o'er hill, and vale, and plain,
O'er ripened fruit and fields of golden grain;
O'er lovers, lingering in the mystic light,
Whispering fond words beneath the silent night;
O'er the great City in its solemn rest,
O'er wealth and poverty, the worst, the best,
Her lustre falls, and, through the listening air
Breathes but of peace and beauty everywhere;
Serene and pure she mounts the azure heaven,
Telling the wondrous love her God to man has given.

TWO NEW PARKS.

HIGHGATE AND BROCKWELL HILL.

THE way from the "Archway Tavern" is up the hill. And such a hill! the steepest near London, certainly, as perhaps Highgate Hill is the highest thereabouts. To avoid the steepness of the hill, the coach-road was taken through the Hollow-way—which had been a hollow way, perhaps, from the days of the Britons—and then a cutting was made through the ridge of the hill, and the ridge-way carried over the cutting by a tall, graceful arch of brick, which has attained a certain fame as Highgate Archway. But in the popular language the "Archway" means the "Archway Tavern," where there is a general congress of omnibuses and tram-cars all day long. And from this point begins the ascent of Highgate Hill.

In a general way, there is a convenient tram-line, worked by wire ropes, which hauls you up to the top of the hill for a penny, and lets you down again for half that moderate fee. But this morning there is something wrong with the rope, which no longer performs its function, and the cars are stranded helplessly by the road-side. So that it is necessary to walk; for who would be guilty of the cruelty of asking a horse to draw one up such a hill as that? And, in walking, we shall tread in the footsteps of Dick Whittington; and are not long without a reminder of the fact, for here is Whittington's stone—a solid, convincing stone, with an inscription recording the dates of the thrice Lord Mayorship of the former 'prentice boy. The stone, indeed, only claims to have replaced an earlier one.

Whittington looked back over groves and meadows, and heard the faint clamour of Bow-bells over the blossom of innumerable orchards and gardens. Now we look back upon a broad street thronged with vehicles of all kinds, with a shifting crowd of passengers on either hand, while a kind of mart is displayed in the shape of all kinds of wares on the foot-ways. This is the foreground only, over which housetops arise over housetops in misty indistinctness. But Master Whittington had not mastered much of the hill before he stopped to rest; and there is still a good pull up the hill before the summit is reached—or, rather, not the actual summit, but a kind of ledge, where the upward slope is more gentle. Here are grouped a number of fine, old-fashioned houses, while on the near side is a high brick wall, on which a number of workmen have made an extensive breach, while others are at work levelling and making up a roadway through the opening. But this is no street, as you might fear, threatening destruction to the pleasant groves just visible in the opening. Through that breach in the wall, and over that newly-gravelled roadway, the British public—that great monarch—is to make his triumphant entry into his new pleasure grounds, just named, after the munificent donor, Waterlow Park.

As yet there is "no admittance except on business"—an elastic formula generally; but not so in this case, as constables in blue are on the watch, and are equal to the occasion in proclaiming that "there is no road this way." A road there is, by the way, but in this case we see it "before it is made"; and if General Wade is mentioned, there is some justification, for his home was close by in Southwood Lane.

Attracted by the gap in the wall, we have quite overlooked an old-fashioned gateway of twisted iron, firmly secured by padlock and chain; and this iron wicket affords a limited view of a pathway, bordered by shrubs, leading to an old-fashioned portico, or wooden colonnade, over which is seen the gable of a quiet, retired-looking house, rather dingy than otherwise, and slightly in need of repair, but quaint and pleasant, nevertheless, and unobtrusively in harmony with the surrounding verdure. A vigorous pull at the bell arouses the echoes in the ancient mansion, and a brisk constable in the uniform of the Metropolitan Police. Yes, this is Lauderdale House, and the present entrance to the park, which is all anyhow just now, the workmen being busy in all directions. Then the gatekeeper leads the way into the house, where the hall-door opens directly into a panelled hall of moderate size, now empty and bare, but which has one or two characteristic embellishments—an ancient plaque which seems to have been placed over the fire-place, the subject of which is not apparent at a glance, although the constable suggests that it represents "Hercules or something." But as there is a warrior sulking in his tent, his arms hung up "for monuments," and a young woman being led away by elderly persons in a sort of procession, the probability is that

Achilles has something to do with the matter.

And now our cicerone points out with pardonable pride the gem of the establishment—"Nell Gwynne's bath." This is a recess in the hall, containing a marble bath, although one side of it has been removed, and the recess has been adapted to modern arrangements, which relegated the bath to more secluded regions, and fitted up with a slab, so as to do duty as a sideboard. Yet is the construction undoubtedly a bath, and there is no reason to question the tradition that assigns it to that charming and good-hearted, if somewhat erratic, woman. Certainly there are other baths which are also attributed to Mistress Nell. There is one, anyhow, in Coldbath Square, which she is said to have used. But this only shows that the fair actress was a votary of Egeria, and preserved health and beauty by the strict regimen of exercise and cold water.

Another room of fair proportions, and with a roof supported by wooden columns, seems to have served as a reception or drawing-room, and opens upon a pleasant terrace, which goes round two sides of the house, and which, once upon a time, with marble balustrades, vases and statues, gave character and dignity to the surroundings.

From this terraced lawn the view of the house is a very pleasing one. It is one of those timber-framed houses, which lend themselves gracefully to the modifications of time and altered manners. Originally it dates probably from the latest years of Elizabeth's reign, and with timbers painted black, and fitted in with white plaster, was brighter, and perhaps more picturesque, than at present. Yet there is a charm about the plaster and pebbles which now form the outer covering of the upper storeys. Successive generations have added here and there, and patched and altered to their will, and now, in the fulness of time, it is ready to tumble to pieces altogether. Yet we may hope that the London County Council will have it sufficiently well repaired to last for another century or two, so that succeeding generations of Londoners may refresh their historical recollections, and see what manner of building was the country retreat of a statesman and courtier, or of the reigning favourite of a dissolute Court.

It is not for nothing that the house bears the name of Lauderdale, for it belonged to the cruel and dissolute Duke of that ilk—the man whose name is still hateful to the descendants of the Scotch Covenanters, whom he harried and persecuted, while himself cynically indifferent to any kind of religious dogma. He had himself been a Covenanter in earlier days, and one of the band who sold Charles the First to the Parliament; but he was equally ready at the Restoration to dispose of his countrymen and co-religionists. The Duke's chief residence was at Ham, by Richmond; but he frequently resided at Highgate, in this modest house upon the hill, which may have reminded him of the hills of his native Scotland. For Lauderdale had a kind of patriotism about him, his entourage was Scotch, as Samuel Pepys found when he visited his grace at his house at Highgate. This visit is worth chronicling, for here is the very scene of it. The smart little "Clerk of the Acts" strutted about on this grassy terrace while his ungainly host conversed about men and things. Walter Scott describes for us the Duke: "Ungainly in his personal appearance, being a big man, with shaggy red hair, coarse features, and a tongue which seemed too large for his mouth. But he possessed a great portion of sense, learning, and wit."

And now Pepys shall give an account of his visit:

It was on the twenty-eighth of July, 1666, just as now the prime of summer time, that Pepys, after dining at the "Pope's Head" with Lord Brouncker and others, accepted a seat in his lordship's coach, drawn by six long-tailed Flemish horses, "and he and I alone to Highgate. Being come thither we went to my Lord Lauderdale's house to speak with him, and find him and his lady and some Scotch people at supper. Pretty odd company, though my Lord Brouncker tells me my Lord Lauderdale is a man of mighty good reason and judgement. But at supper there played one of their servants upon the viallin, some Scotch tunes only; several and the best of their country as they seemed to esteem them, by their praising and admiring them. But Lord! the strangest ayre that ever I heard in my life, and all of one cast. But strange to hear my Lord Lauderdale say himself that he had rather hear a cat mew than the best musique in the world. . . ." After this admission, perhaps, it is useless to expect much sympathy with Lord Lauderdale.

As to how Mistress Gwynne came to

live at Lauderdale House is not very clear. Probably my lord Duke, engrossed with Scotch affairs, gave the use of his Highgate house to the King, who lent it to Nell, who was the only one of his favourites who refrained from robbing the country in the most atrocious fashion. Still she thought it too bad, so the story goes, that Lady Castlemain's children, and Madame Querouailles, to say nothing of Lucy Walter's boy, should be dignified with honours and titles, and her little innocent remain simple Jack or Tom. ' And it was at this very house at Highgate when the King was sauntering about on the terrace, that Mistress Gwynne urged the claims of her infant son once more, and received from the King the usual lazy procrastinating reply.

It was then that Nell flew into a rage, real or pretended, and snatched up her little urchin, crying that he should not live to be disowned and neglected by his father, running upstairs, held him out of the first floor window, and threatened to drop him upon the pavement below. The child squalled—the King shouted:

"Stay, Nell—save the Earl of Burford."

And the little lad was hauled in again none the worse for the shaking. The lad was afterwards created Duke of Saint Albans, and was the ancestor of those later Dukes who have had a good deal to say about Highgate in one way or another. For it was a Duke of Saint Albans, a descendant of the actress Nell, who married Miss Harriet Mellon, who had left the stage to marry Mr. Coutts the banker, and Miss Mellon's splendid fêtes at Highgate are still a tradition in the neighbourhood.

After the days of the Stuarts the fortunes of Lauderdale House become more obscure. It passed from one private hand to another. Lord Westbury lived there in recent times, and still more recently the house came into the possession of Sir Sydney Waterlow, who devoted it to the service of the Hospital of Saint Barthólomew, as a convalescent home; until a permanent home was built at Swanley. Sir Sydney united the grounds to those of his own residence, called Fair View, which is a modern house built upon the site of Andrew Mavel's cottage, which was in existence in pretty much its original condition, till the new house was built. And all this extent of ground with its belongings, amounting to just upon thirty acres, Sir Sydney has given to the people of London to be used as a public park for ever.

Below the terrace of Lauderdale House are gardens, fountains, greenhouses, and vineries, with plantations and winding walks lying on the slope of the hill. At one point the massive buildings of Saint Joseph's Retreat tower over the scenery; but the grounds in general are so charmingly wooded, and with such contrast and variety of growing trees, while the surface is so diversified with lawns, and dells, and sloping glades, that all sense of limit is lost, and one wanders on, charmed with the foliage and verdure, till brought up by the iron gates that open into the lane just by the gates of Highgate Cemetery. Between, a deep ravine has at some time or other been dammed up, probably soon after the Restoration, when no pleasure-grounds were thought complete without a canal, or, perhaps, a lake with cascades. Anyhow, the result was a pond of portentous depth. There is a hole in one corner that must be at least thirty feet deep, and one would say a probable haunt for pike, and if they had once been fed with a Covenanter or two thrown in, there would have been nothing surprising in the incident considering Lauderdale's character. Of course it would hold whole hecatombs of children, who would perversely tumble in one after another. So the pond is in course of being filled up to a maximum depth of four feet. A friendly police-officer describes the scene of emptying that pond. There were six feet of mud at the bottom, he says. Not being a geologist, he can't undertake to say how long it would take to put together six feet of mud, but he should think a precious long time. There were no bodies found as far as he knew, which is a little disappointing. And no big jack, or, indeed, pike of any kind. But carp—and some big ones, Russian carp mostly—and roach. And eels—ah, there were eels, hundredweights he should say as a matter of calculation. As for the weight of eels that was caught, it amounted to one big eel that had got a hole bitten in him; weight perhaps two pounds. As for the rest, where did they go?

We counted them at break of day,
But when the sun set where were they?

Or, rather, it was just the other way about. There they were at night all wriggling about in the six feet of wet mud, when morning dawned there was only that one. They had taken counsel together, and hooked it. And how they had the chance was this way. The night was very wet, and the clay that the hole was stopped with—the hole that drained the water out — was washed away. There must have been a pretty good procession of eels down that hole. And where are they now? Well, if they were clever enough to get out of that pond, there's no saying where they might go. And so the matter is left, an insoluble problem.

It is quite clear that we have got a distinct and most precious addition to the list of beautiful spots now, or about to be, at the public disposal. The trees alone are a study. Here are elms that date from the days of the Stuarts, and although past their prime, yet bear grandly the burden of their years; limes that Henrietta Maria may have brought from France in her widowhood, when she planted the gardens of Somerset House; and there are fine, well-grown ashes, now so rare, and neglected as ornamental timber; fine Spanish chestnuts, as well as the equine species; with sycamores and planes, and poplars in the lower grounds, with feathery aspens whispering in the light summer breeze. And to these add the more modern varieties of trees and shrubs brought from many a distant clime. And here and there, between openings in the foliage, glimpses are seen of the dim, mysterious world below, that great London, which lies stretched around us.

Yonder there is a break in the foliage, and between a group of dark, Lombardy poplars, and a great bank of verdure, stretches a section of the wide landscape, roofs upon roofs, with churches and public buildings shining out here and there, while the distant parts, the homes of myriads, are resolved into mere patches of light and shade; and in the air, half-mingling with the mist, rises the form of great Saint Paul's; and as the hour strikes, and innumerable bells are chiming it forth in all directions, hark to the deep hum of Saint Paul's, that seems to speak with the voice of the whole city.

Well, here we have a great boon for the people of the north of London, for the thickly-populated districts of Kentish Town, of Holloway, and Islington, who will have a new and charming object for holiday and Sunday rambles.

And now let us take a flight across London, and see what is being done for the south.

If Brixton be flat, and a trifle dull—while a sameness strikes one as characteristic of Stockwell, and even Camberwell affords no very striking features — yet there are pleasant regions beyond, whose charms come as a surprise to those who are strangers to the neighbourhood. At Herne Hill, as you leave the station of the Chatham and Dover Railway, you feel at once the pleasantness of the surroundings. A winding road, bordered by tall elms, and looking pleasantly cool and shaded, leads towards Dulwich; and the elms themselves are just within the palings of Brockwell Park, the new pleasure-ground with which London has treated itself, for it has been acquired by purchase by the County Council. The Park gates are now left wide open, and handbills at the entrance inform the public that they are welcome to use the Park, although it is not yet formally opened. Here is Brockwell Hill, indeed, for the Park occupies a distinct eminence—a wooded knoll, which is more than a knoll, as it rises to a considerable height, with a sweep of turf and wood—and groups with the hills around in a very effective way. For it is a hilly country this, almost romantic in its wooded broken contours; and we seem to be among the foot-hills of some wild, mountainous country, rather than within hail of the teeming Thames-plain, and almost within sound of Bow-bells.

The great feature of the new Park is the grand sweep of greensward, with the timber scattered on the grassy slopes. For a Watteau fête, with groups of gay costumes and pretty faces, no scene could be more appropriate; and on this bright afternoon the young women of the neighbourhood are doing their best to realise one's ideal. They really look very nice, spread over the turf in scattered groups, or sitting on some fallen trunk, with beings of the other sex, or wandering in little parties all to themselves. Family groups, too, are on the ground; the perambulator is not wanting, nor are bands of merry children; and the dogs share the pleasures of the day—the retriever, with an eye to the pond, and asking somebody to throw in a stick, while the fox-terrier sniffs and fancies there must be rabbits about in some of those tempting banks. It is all the more pleasant that as yet there are no formal walks, and people spread themselves over the turf in any manner they please. At the top of the hill stands the house, which bore the name of Brockwell Hall—a structure of white brick of no special character. But it is tolerably roomy and substantial, and will perhaps do duty hereafter as library or museum.

The history of Brockwell Park must be found, if anywhere traced, on its grassy slopes. Clumps of trees on the summit of the mount suggest the remains of tumuli, and there are faint but distinct traces of an entrenchment surrounding the hill, but almost obliterated, probably by long-continued cultivation under the plough. There was an old farm-house here once upon a time, and the place seems to take its name from a well or spring which supplies a small pond on the flank of the hill, and forms a little rivulet, which was one of the feeders of the little River Effra, that followed the course of the valley below. It is the well of the brock, or badger; or possibly of the brook simply; anyhow, there is the spring, which still flows on, while shadowy peoples who may have drunk at its source have vanished without leaving a trace. As Brockwell Farm, the history of the place is lost in obscurity. It is just mentioned in "Manning and Bray" as having once been in the possession of Lord Thurlow. But it seems that the farm was purchased of one Richard Ogbourne, in 1809, by John Blades, glass manufacturer, of Ludgate Hill, who pulled down the farm-house and built the existing house on the top of the hill.

Everywhere round are extensive views; the hills of Dulwich and Sydenham, a really charming country, a sweep of hills with square miles of "politely inhabited groves," as Mr. Ruskin describes, whose early years were spent in the neighbourhood of Herne Hill; and although he falls foul of the Crystal Palace, yet the sight of its glittering domes, and the tall tower that crowns the hill, is not at all unpleasing to the eyes of us poor ordinary mortals. Towards London the view is only bounded by the conditions of the atmosphere. All London lies below, and on clear days the hills beyond and around, from Harrow to Shooter's Hill, with the heights of Hampstead and Highgate, are almost within speaking distance, as it were. It is to be hoped that the Council will form some kind of platform on the summit of the mansion, where people who love a panoramic view, as most do in their hearts, may be gratified by the sight of all the wonderful region around. Signals might be flashed from the new Waterlow Park to the new Brockwell Park, and it would be interesting to know the atmospheric change that might be recorded from such an observatory, and the success or otherwise of the attempts to keep London clear of its gloomy veil of smoke and fog.

The whole circuit of Brockwell Park embraces an extent of nearly a hundred acres; the timber is well grown and often well grouped, while the existence of ancient enclosures is evidenced by the long lines of elms that seem to follow the trace of almost obliterated entrenchments. There are oaks, too, of considerable age and girth, with bushy thickets and pleasant, shaded knolls; and altogether Brockwell Park is a valuable acquisition to the resources of picturesque London, and a charming place of resort for the million who dwell on the Surrey side.

A BUSH PAPER-CHASE.

What is the excitement among the good folk of Kawoo? What is the meaning of the extra burnishing of bits, looking to stirrup leathers, and careful scrutiny of horses' legs, which is going on so vigorously this October morning? The key to it all is that to-day we Kawoo people are going to ride our first paper-chase. Some enterprising spirit has suggested the idea. Since it is a common amusement in many places, why should not our little West Australian town have one also?

Why should we be behind the age? Why, indeed? Why had no one thought of such a thing before? Kawoo is keen for a paper-chase. A committee is formed, and everything settled without delay. For a fortnight no one speaks of anything but the coming chase, it supersedes every other subject, even the possibly coming drought and the price of wool fall into the background; the question of the day is whether A. has furnished his full share of paper, or what horse B. means to ride. Two black fellows were busy the greater part of yesterday preparing the scent, and two sacks larger than pillow-cases stand packed and ready.

At one period a momentous question arose, which threatened to wreck the whole project, and agitated Kawoo throughout its length and breadth: "Was it proper for ladies to ride in a paper-chase? At any rate, was it proper for unchaperoned ladies to do so?" The hearts of the younger unmarried fair sex fell, for many of them were in this chaperonless plight; the ladies whose riding days were over shook their heads, the dreadful word "fast" was uttered. It seemed as if the paper-chase as an amusement for ladies was to be tabooed. The Mrs. Grundy of West Australia is a power not to be laughed at! However, one would-be rider stood to her guns; she had not long come out from England and spoke with authority. She said that in her home county of Turfshire the late High-Sheriff kept a pack of harriers, and that with those harriers every girl in the neighbourhood who had the command of a horse rode, chaperoned or unchaperoned. On hearing this Mrs. Grundy wavered, and, wavering, was lost; the chaperonless damsels grew in boldness, they argued that what was right in England could not be wrong in Australia, and, with the aid of the Turfshire harriers, finally carried the day. Mrs. Grundy's conscience is, however, salved by an arrangement that she shall drive to the race-course, where the chase is to finish, and meet the wearied riders with tea and cake—thus the wing of decorum will be spread over the whole thing.

By three-thirty p.m., on one of the hottest days of the spring season, every one has assembled at the starting-point in the bush a mile or so out of Kawoo. There is the parson, clad in the unclerical garb of white ducks and sun-helmet—he and his sister ride the best turned-out mounts to be found anywhere between Albany and Perth, they have, indeed, the only well-groomed, corn-fed horses in the district. Talking to the clergyman is the little Irish doctor, he has cast his patients and his professional gravity to the winds together for the afternoon, and his brogue grows stronger and broader every moment as he begins to enjoy his holiday; our member trots up from Blackbush ten good miles off; and there is Jones the Postmaster, and Mr. Brown the Inspector of the Police, and many another—not to mention all sorts and conditions of men who have not been specially invited, but who, nevertheless, turn up mounted on every description of beast to see the fun. After a short delay the two "hares" are started, a couple of lithe young fellows they are, the finest riders among all this riding community. Away they trot, each with his bag of scent stuffed hard and tight fixed to his saddle; we all feel we shall have our work cut out to catch them!

Eight minutes law for the hares; then the scent is found, and with a "Tally-ho" we are off on the track.

A mad gallop follows across a sandy, gum-treed country, with a thick undergrowth, and plenty of logs and fallen timber spread about, over which obstacles the clever little Australian horses jump and scramble with the activity of cats. The parson's sister has hunted with the harriers every winter at home since she was a chit of a child; she has a fairly secure seat, and is not wanting in pluck; but she thinks the stiffest fence in Turfshire, the widest brook there, would be mere play after this bush-hunt! However, there is no better stock-horse out than Camel. She wisely leaves him mostly to himself, and gains confidence as she finds herself still on his back. It is wonderful how cleverly a horse that knows his business will twist, at full gallop, in and out between the close-growing trees, judging his distance to a nicety, leaving just room for himself and his rider, though, maybe, with barely an inch to spare on either hand; interfere with him, imagine you know better than he, and ten to one you come to grief against a stem. Little wonder that at first this mode of progression tries the nerves of a novice! Remember, too, that in speaking of logs and timber, we mean full-grown trees, which have been blown down in some gale, and lie as they fell, surrounded by all their mass of broken branches; you clear one trunk of four-feet diameter, only to find another of similar girth on the further side requiring immediate negotiation. Jumping, scrambling, on we go; but already the pace is beginning to tell, and has weeded out some of the weaker horses. The parson gets his helmet knocked off by a branch, and the moment spent in regaining it loses him his place in the run. When the first check comes, barely a dozen of those who started are still to the fore.

Whilst the police inspector and the doctor are casting round for the missing scent, we rest our horses, glad enough of a breathing space after their sharp gallop. There is no lack of beauty on which to feast one's eyes in this wild bush-scene; the ground is like a Turkey carpet, so gaily painted with every variety of bush-flower—the blue-tasselled Kenedia and the Coral-Creeper ramp over the shrubs, the Wattle is a dazzling blaze of gold; while overhead the small, vivid-plumaged parrots scream and flit in impotent rage at the invasion of their solitudes by this mad-brained human crew.

It is a wonderful picture in the eyes of the fresh-come English girl, to whom everything in the colony is still new and strange, from the zinc and shingle-roofed houses, which greeted her on her arrival four weeks back, to the ball she attended last night, at which her first partner was orthodoxly clothed in correct evening get-up, her second in grey tweed, and her third in a makeshift between the two—his upper person in a swallow-tail, his lower in light-grey continuations. On one only previously accustomed to an English ball-room, this diversity of apparel strikes curiously. But it soon becomes a matter of course; as do the swarming flies, which at first seem a veritable martyrdom; the monotonous croak of the frogs; the tough beef; the laugh of the jackass; the brilliant-coloured parrots; the heavy scent of the white-blossomed gums; and the thousand other unfamiliar sights and sounds of the Antipodes!

Hark! a coo-ey from the inspector. He has found the scent on the further side of a swamp, and is off like a shot, the others tearing after him. A bog brings another sportsman to a standstill—plump! he has gone in up to his knees in a hole before he can say "Jack Robinson!" There is a good deal of water out, which we splash through; then a friendly yell is given by some one in front—"'Ware sawpit!" Only just in time the warning comes; it requires a sharp swerve to avoid the danger. These pits are the greatest nuisance in the bush; the bushmen make them, and just leave them when done with for any unwary person to tumble into. No horseman likes jumping a pit, for the edge is often rotten, and always encumbered with ragged timber, over which many a good horse, and rider too, have come to dire grief.

The scent turns, and leads us along a track where we meet the first human being we have encountered since the start—a man in charge of a team, who looks ludicrously astonished at the sight of half-a-dozen people galloping in hot haste, apparently after nothing, in such a lonely place. Close to the track we disturb three kangaroos; one old gentleman sits up quietly gazing at us for full thirty seconds before he makes off. No one is going quite so fast as they were; the horses are all getting short in their stride. However, there is plenty of work to be done yet; the scent quits the track, and again gives us some unpleasant timber-jumping, followed by a spell of thick undergrowth and close-growing old paper-barks, beneath whose boughs we have to pass almost lying on our horses' necks.

It was just here a winter or two ago that a couple of children were found, who had been lost for three nights. Scouts had been despatched in every direction through the bush without finding a trace of them. It was a bushman, following a cattle-trail under the paper-barks, who at last came on the poor little mortals huddled together beneath a tree. The elder child, a girl of fourteen, had divested herself of her outer garments to wrap them round her little sister, who lay asleep in her arms. The two had strayed from their paddock into the bush, where they had wandered about for the greater part of three days, subsisting on berries, without meeting a soul to help them; yet when found they were barely twelve miles from Kawoo, and the search-party must have passed more than once close to them. The little one suffered no ill-consequences from her adventure; but the elder sister paid the penalty of her sacrifice of clothing. It was long before she recovered from the effects of the exposure to the cold and damp of those three nights in the bush.

A second story has a more tragic ending. A stockman failed to appear in Kawoo on the day he was expected; he was to have attended a sister's wedding, coming in from a station thirty miles out. At first no uneasiness was felt, it was only thought that some station business had delayed him. But after several days, when news reached us that Dick Forster's horse had returned riderless to the station, we guessed what had occurred. Our fears were too well grounded. The unfortunate man's body was discovered lying close by the spot where the two children were found. It was surmised either his horse had bolted with him, or he had been riding fast and carelessly, for it was plain that he owed his death to a violent blow on the temple from one of the low-growing branches. It was a gruesome sequel to the bridal festivities; but the bush holds countless tales as sad and sadder, for, like the sea, it too often gives no sign of the devastation it works in its vast solitude, except, perhaps, after long years, when a few nameless, whitened bones tell some wanderer that there once stood a man.

But we have little time to think of such dolorous subjects. Amidst that labyrinth of branches it is occupation enough to steer a safe course for oneself. It is a welcome change, after brushing through some almost impenetrable scrub, to at last emerge on the mail road—a mail road, but one that has never known MacAdam. The meagre way in which the scent has been scattered for the last mile, has warned us that the run is nearing the close. It is evident that the hares are making direct for home. Another five minutes and one is sighted not far ahead; a stern chase follows, but it is no use, the hare has the lead and keeps it, gaining the trysting-place on the race-course one minute in advance of the inspector, who, on his long-legged bay, has been making the running all the way. Close behind is a Kawoo damsel, who has ridden as a true Australian girl should, as if to the manner born, and almost level with her is the parson's sister; the little doctor—a man on a diminutive pony, so small that its rider's legs appear to be walking on either side, but who has, notwithstanding, got over the ground in a truly miraculous manner—and a couple of Kawoo lads complete the number of those who have seen the run through. We find the parson and several others already in camp, having failed to pick up the scent after the first swamp; they had made straight for the race-course. The rest of the party turn up by twos and threes; some had lost the scent; some had followed a false track. Our usually dignified-looking member rides in hatless, a handkerchief protecting his cranium from the sun's rays, his proper head-gear having vanished in the bog of whose moisture the postmaster still bears visible traces from head to foot.

Oh, how hot and dusty, how tired and thirsty we all are! Why is the belle of Kawoo drinking her tea beneath the shade of her double gauze veil? She confesses, in confidence to her neighbour, that she is ashamed to show her face in its present burnt, heated condition. Never mind; every one is in like case: beetroot and peony would most nearly describe the shades of complexion gathered round Mrs. Grundy's most welcome tea-pot. Coolness and freshness of appearance are incompatible with an eight mile gallop when the thermometer is registering a hundred degrees in the shade. But in spite of heat and dust every one is in excellent spirits; every one has marvellous adventures to relate; every one talks at once, and no one thinks of listening.

As the sun goes down we remount and ride slowly homeward, agreeing that this Kawoo paper-chase has been an immense success, and that another shall be held as soon as possible. Kawoo will ride many another before the summer season has fully set in, rendering such violent exertion impossible; but none will quite come up to this first one, since novelty is everything. One fears, however, that the last of the paper-chases can be at no distant date, for, even at this primitive Kawoo, the bush is retiring slowly, but surely, before advancing civilisation. Cultivation and railing are extending hand-in-hand every year with rapid strides, and the wire fence threatens, only too shortly, to bring about the doom of our latest amusement.

MRS. DAWE'S LADY-HELP.

BY BARBARA DEMPSTER.

Author of "Through Gates of Gold," "A Dead Hand," "A Spring Moon," "His Guardian's Wife," "Those People," etc., etc.

CHAPTER I.

"AND oh, Miss Smith, if you would put up the clean curtains in the morning-room, and wash all the flower-vases, and turn out that chest of drawers in the dressing-room; and do see that Martha doesn't ruin the mutton; and you might perhaps make a list of what we are to get in town to-morrow," and Mrs. Dawe, the wife of the Vicar of Longheath, stepped into the pony-carriage which was to take her and her two daughters to a tennis-party.

The two daughters, prettily dressed, graceful and languid, followed, and the groom, letting go the pony's head, drew aside to let the party drive off.

Miss Smith, standing in the portico of the Vicarage—to which she had come to carry out their cloaks and parasols, looked after the pony-carriage, a curious little smile breaking around her mouth. The tall, gawky youth, who filled a variety of posts in the same household, from footman to odd boy, glanced at her queerly. He had the greatest respect and admiration for Miss Smith. But she did not encourage confidential relations. Though now as she slowly withdrew her eyes from the drive, and met the quizzical, half-indignant expression in his, the smile deepened into a laugh.

"Lor'! And with all the things as went afore, I'm thinking it won't be easy to remember," he said, with a grin, which was honest and kindly. "I'm blest if I know where to begin."

"Well, we must do as much as we can," said the lady-help, lightly. "And you'd better go on with your mowing."

Difficult as was her position, Miss Smith had managed, since her two months' sojourn in the same household, to preserve its balance.

Thomas went off now with far more alacrity than he would have shown to any of his mistress's commands; and Miss Smith, after a lingering, longing look round the sunny, rose-scented garden, and a most reprehensible thought of a hammock and a novel, retired indoors to perform faithfully some of the multitudinous tasks for which her services had been engaged, in return for a small salary and the privilege of being treated as "one of the family." If this latter advantage meant to be at the beck and call of every member of the family; to fulfil every duty each separate member preferred to leave undone; to mend, and sew, and work, and attend to the wants of everybody but herself, then decidedly Miss Smith was treated as one of the family!

She went now into the morning-room to put up the clean muslin curtains. She brought the steps herself from the kitchen, not to call away the harassed, incompetent servant from her work, and then mounted to the top of them, with hammer and nails, to do a little carpentering before the curtains could be put into their place.

Miss Smith's capabilities, happily, were as varied as her duties.

Yet to look at her now, as she sat perched on the steps, carefully inspecting one of the broken fittings, there seemed something slightly incongruous about her appearance and her occupation.

She was a slender, upright girl, with an unmistakeable air of aristocratic grace and ease about her, which not even the deep-bibbed, pink cotton apron and the plainly-made grey frock could disguise. The hands that held the fastening, though a little soiled with the work she was doing, were slim and pink-palmed, and might have graced a duchess. She was not pretty, in the ordinary acceptance of the word—not nearly so pretty as the Vicar's two daughters—but her figure was far more perfect, and the small head, set on the round, fair throat, had a carriage to which they could never aspire; though, in secret, they had tried hard to imitate it. Her eyes were brown—not large enough, but long and thick-lashed, which, with her straight, dark brows, gave an almost Oriental type to her face. The complexion was not perfect by any means—far too colourless for real beauty, unless she were moved or excited.

The lines of the mouth and chin denoted pride and strength of will. The mouth, a little sad, when in repose, was full of sweetness, and a certain bright mischief when it smiled.

The Dawe girls were fond of alluding to her colourless complexion, her irregular features. But though lacking the perfect lines of beauty, she had what is far rarer and more attractive, that indescribable charm which awakens interest, even in a casual observer. She sat now absorbed in her work, the straight, dark brows frowning a little over the broken fastening. In a business-like way she set to work to mend it, and then, standing up on the steps, she put it back into its place. The curtains which were to be hung lay on a chair below her. She was just descending to get them, when she heard a sound at the door, which stood wide open.

Some one had been standing there for the last five minutes contemplating her, though she had not known it.

"Is that you, Martha? Come and give me those curtains, please," she said, arranging the rings on the pole. The curtains were held up to her. She took them, without looking down, and dropping one across the steps proceeded to hook up the other; "you needn't wait, Martha," as the handmaiden still lingered. "If I were you I would go and peel your potatoes—you didn't do enough yesterday, remember—I want them cooked as soon as you can."

"How many shall I peel, miss, to-day?" respectfully.

Miss Smith started, dropped the curtain—turned hastily round—lost her footing. There was a crash, a little feminine shriek, a deep male exclamation, and then Miss Smith, hammer, nails, and all, fell into a pair of outstretched, masculine arms. At least, she, personally, fell into them. The hammer, taking a less direct course, struck the head to which the arms belonged, and then bounded off at a tangent, while the nails chose an eccentric course of their own, and showered themselves down impartially on the masculine and feminine specimens of humanity, clasped in each other's arms.

It was all over in a second. Miss Smith wrenched herself free, and glared at the unknown intruder, and the cause of her luckless mishap.

"I'm so awfully sorry! I hope you aren't hurt!" said that intruder.

"I took you for Martha!" stammered Miss Smith, angrily.

"I'm sorry I wasn't," he said, meekly. Then, very energetically: "I deserve to be kicked! I do hope I haven't hurt you!" anxiously.

"Not at all!" freezingly. "But I wonder why Martha showed you in here instead of into the drawing-room. Do you wish to see Mr. or Mrs. Dawe? They are all out, at present."

"Then I guess I'll hang around till they come in," with a suddenly most pronounced nasal drawl. "I found the front door open, and walked in. You see I am James Brown. Mr. Dawe is my uncle."

Miss Smith felt incredulous. The Dawes had particularly impressed on her that they had no near relations—only distant connections, all of whom were titled people.

She had heard their names over and over again. Certainly, Mr. James Brown's had not been among them. There was nothing aristocratic in this young man's rough, badly-made, decidedly shabby clothes; and his pronounced Yankee twang was far removed from the languid, high-bred tones of the Dawe family.

"Perhaps you had better wait in Mr. Dawe's study," she said, doubtfully, thinking that everything of the slightest value there was carefully locked up.

Then she blushed, as something in the bright, keen eyes looking at her, made her fancy he had suspected her passing thoughts.

She turned away, with that slight uplifting of the small, well-set head, which so irritated the Dawe family when some speech or act of theirs had given rise to it, and led the way to the room where Mr. Dawe wrote his sermons, transacted the business of the parish, and disputed with his churchwardens.

Writing-table, cupboards, safe, all were securely fastened. The few loose manuscript sheets of a half-finished sermon lying on the table would have proved to those who knew the quality of Mr. Dawe's sermons little temptation to any one.

"Mr. Dawe won't be long," she said, coldly. "He said he would be back at half-past four. Oh," staring at the visitor's forehead. Just over the right eye was an enormous swelling. A bruised and bleeding dent in the middle of it enlightened her as to its sudden appearance.

"Oh, did I do that?" her coldness gone, her face full of dismayed distress.

"What? Oh, that," putting his hand to his forehead. "It isn't anything. The hammer just grazed it."

"It's a fearful bump. You will be black and blue in a minute. Sit down here for a moment."

She flashed out of the room into the kitchen. To get some butter and send Martha flying up to her room for toilet vinegar was but the work of a moment, and she was back again in the study before the young man had finished a very leisurely and comprehensive survey of the apartment.

"Sit down," she said, imperiously, as she found him standing before the strong safe, contemplating it with an expression of intent interest.

He turned with a start as she spoke, as if he had not heard her entrance into the room, and for a second something strange and embarrassed darkened his face. But it vanished, and he sat down at her bidding.

"What are you going to do?" he asked. "I say, it's awfully good of you. Please don't trouble," as she began deftly to apply the butter to the great bump on his forehead. "It's all right," laughing, while a faint colour showed itself under his swarthy skin.

"It isn't! I might have killed you with that hammer!"

"Is this the stuff, Miss Smith?" came in a gasping voice from the doorway; and Martha, breathless, her cap awry, rushed in, bottle in hand.

She was short, and exceedingly fat and shapeless. Her hair was sandy; her round moon of a face showed freckled wherever it was not smeared with black from the kitchen grate. She stopped to stare, open-mouthed, at the dark stranger to whom Miss Smith was ministering. Staring was her normal condition. Miss Smith gently roused her from her wondering trance, sending her back to the kitchen, and with a deep-drawn breath, such as might have been heaved by an awakening grampus, she withdrew.

"So that's Martha?" said the stranger, ruefully. "I should hardly have thought our identities could have been confused."

Miss Smith stared, in her turn, at the

wiry, well-built stranger, with not an ounce of superfluous flesh on his bones; at the keen eyes, and powerful, swarthy face. And then, as his meaning dawned on her, relaxed into a laugh.

"You don't think, really, that there is any resemblance?" he asked again, with a grave anxiety, which something in the depths of the keen, dark eyes belied.

"You quite deserved it," she said. "But as you meanly accosted me when my back was turned, and had not the common politeness to speak when you were spoken to, I could not be expected to know by instinct that you were anything else than you pretended to be."

There might have been a hidden blow in the last part of the sentence, for her manner froze again, and, repeating to him again to stay there till Mr. Dawe returned, she left the room, shutting the door behind her.

The young man looked at the closed door with a wicked light dawning in his eyes.

"She doesn't believe my tale, evidently. Thinks I am after the umbrellas." He looked round the room. "She knows I'm safe here; and probably considers that a gentleman who has expansive views on the subject of his fellow-creatures' property will not feel any great desire to possess a sermon. The only thing not locked up now, I'll wager."

He went over to the writing-table, and, with his hands thrust deep in his pockets, looked down at the scattered manuscript sheets, an expression of intense disgust darkening his face. Then he sauntered round the room, and tried cupboards and drawers.

"The old game," he said, and the dark disgust deepened on his face. "The miserable hours I've spent in this hole! I wonder how they'll meet me now. Throw me a crust as they would a starving dog. That'll be about all the mercy or pity I shall get from them."

He stared moodily out of the window for some moments. Then — because he could never be inactive for long—roused himself.

"I wonder who she is," he thought, with a slight smile; "scarcely the governess. My fair cousins must be too old for one now—thank Heaven, for the governesses' sakes!" with a bitter curl of the lip. "What a time they did have! She can hardly be a visitor, by her dress and occupation. I should scarcely fancy that even my managing aunt would expect her friends to put up the curtains. She told me to stop here; but there's no reason why I should. So——"

A few seconds later Miss Smith, emptying the flowers from the dining-room vases into a big tray on the hall-table, looked up to see the swarthy stranger contemplating her once more.

"Mr. Dawe isn't in yet," she said, shortly, not feeling at all inclined to entertain him.

"I don't want—my uncle," with the slightest emphasis on the words. "I want something to occupy my mind. I don't care for sermons—besides, that one in the library isn't finished yet. You wouldn't have me begin a good work and not finish it, would you? I mayn't be here next Sunday to hear the 'lastly' delivered from the pulpit. And I don't know how it was, my uncle's sermons never seemed to do me much good. I'll carry those vases for you."

"Thank you," severely. "They aren't ready."

"Oh! I don't want to hurry you," sitting down on the arm of an easy-chair, and contemplating her with the most placid expression of patience. "I can wait till they are done."

She looked at him, met his eyes, opened her lips to snub him; then laughed. Why, she scarcely knew herself, unless it was that before that queer, shrewd twinkle in his dark eyes, dignity and severity seemed to vanish as something ridiculous and out of place.

It was six o'clock when Mrs. Dawe and her two pretty daughters returned from their tennis-party. As it happened, Mr. Dawe, who had been detained by unexpected business in the neighbouring town, drove up the drive at the same time, and pony-carriage and gig stopped before the Rectory door.

"Why, mamma, who is Miss Smith talking to?" exclaimed Minnie, in a very aggrieved tone. "A young man! Over there under the beech on the lawn."

Mrs. Dawe looked, and turned white as a sheet.

"Henry," she exclaimed to her husband, in a choked voice, as he helped her to alight from the pony-carriage, "it's that wicked, good-for-nothing James Brown!"

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CROSS CURRENTS.

By MARY ANGELA DICKENS.

Author of "A Mist of Error," "Her Inheritance," "A Social Success," "Kitty's Victim," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XX.

It was a windy March morning, and Humphrey Cornish, alone in his studio, cast an anxious glance up at the dark sky, which was visible through his window. He cast an anxious glance, also, at the door, as though he expected some one, and then he returned to his contemplation of the canvas before which he was standing.

Nearly two years had passed since he had sketched for Selma those dresses for Pauline which she had never worn; but Humphrey was as little altered as was the room in which he stood. There were a few additional beauties about the room, in the shape of valuable artistic properties. Its owner was an A.R.A. now, and his financial difficulties were a thing of the past. Humphrey's face was a little more thoughtful, a little more worn. As he stood there looking at his picture, its expression was one of concentration, thought, and even of painful effort; but in spite of this, the impression conveyed curiously by both studio and painter was one of peace, of human thought, and work at its finest and least demonstrative. The two years had passed quickly for Humphrey. Time was marked for him mainly by the work he did in it, and the work he did faded into insignificance in his eyes as soon as it was accomplished, and the work that lay before him took its place.

He was still looking at his picture when the opening of the door made him turn his head, and Helen came in.

"She will be down directly, dear!" she said.

It was a plumper, graver, more matronly Helen to whom the two years past had been too full of experiences to allow of their seeming quick in the living, or short in the looking back. The pretty blue eyes had lost their girlishness and were deeper and sweeter; her voice was fuller and older, and though she looked as happy as ever, it was the happiness of a woman, not of a girl. There was a little Helen upstairs, a very little Helen indeed, with brown eyes, and bright curly hair, and Helen wondered now how she had ever thought herself happy without the gift those baby hands had brought her.

She came up to Humphrey and stood by his side looking, as he had been looking, at the picture.

"Have you much more to do?" she said. "It looks to me finished."

"Not much. I could do it in an hour or two."

"It always makes me feel as if I wanted to cry!" said Helen, looking at it as though she were trying to understand what it was that could have such a very unusual effect on her.

The subject of the picture was taken from "Cymbeline," and there was only one figure in it—Imogen, who had apparently just risen from the rough stone by which she stood with an open letter in her hand. The figure was perfect in pose, the colouring and arrangement exquisite; but the power of the picture, the power which went straight to Helen's womanliness and touched it as no mere beauty could have done, lay in the face.

The features were Selma's—Selma's with the beauty of a noble womanhood added to them, but the expression was Imogen's. The eyes, which seemed to meet the eyes of every one who looked at the picture, were wide and dark with anguish, and the beautiful lips were parted as if to speak. And every line of the white, lovely face seemed to radiate innocence, and simple, womanly dignity and grief.

"It is Selma's features that touch you," said Humphrey, quietly, studying his wife's face as she looked at the picture. His work on that picture had been his life for months past, and he dared not trust the unconscious criticism which Helen's face conveyed. But Helen shook her head.

"No!" she said. "It's not that. I don't think it's quite so like Selma as it was. I mean she isn't quite so like it somehow." She paused a moment, looking into the pictured face. "She is so good," she said, softly, and sympathetically speaking of the pictured face, as though it were a living woman. "She is so good, and it's so dreadful for her."

She stood a moment longer and then turned away, and Humphrey said:

"It is getting very late, Nell."

"I know!" she said. "She is really coming. She says she was so late last night that she couldn't get up this morning. She sent a note down to the theatre instead of going to rehearsal. I'm so glad the sittings are over, Humphrey. She has been tiresome about them lately."

"You forget that it is very kind of her to sit to me at all," remarked Humphrey, quietly.

Helen laughed. "I'm always forgetting all kinds of things about her," she said, and then her smile died out rather suddenly. "I feel as though I hardly knew her," she said, with a little sigh.

Humphrey made no answer; he was studying his picture again, but this time rather absently. A few minutes later the door was opened with a quick, imperious touch on the handle, and Selma came in.

Helen had said that she felt as though she hardly knew her sister, and it was not strange that she should feel so; Selma was so entirely and indescribably altered that only the features of the Selma of two years before seemed to be left. Her eyes were large and beautiful as ever, but the dreaming youthfulness was gone, and they were brilliant and eloquent with the brilliancy and eloquence which is conscious of its own effect; the lovely mouth was lovely still—lovelier, some people thought, for the new expression into which the girlish curves had subsided. In her carriage, in her every movement and gesture there was an added something which separated the new Selma immeasurably from the old, and the something was perhaps a gain; if she were more self-conscious, she was also more finished and perfect in manner. But in her face, lovely as it was, though the latent power had certainly developed, there was as certainly something lost; the depth and dignity of expression which should have strengthened, in the course of that developement, had nearly disappeared. She was a little thinner, and she was looking rather pale and dark about the eyes this morning as if from fatigue. Miss Selma Malet had been for nearly two years one of "society's" most distinguished features, and there were times when her physical strength was tried by her life.

"I'm late, Humphrey," she said, carelessly, as she went up to the fire by which Helen was sitting and held out to the blaze two slender, delicate hands, on which were some beautiful rings in these days. "I'm afraid you've been waiting for me."

"I'm afraid you will be very glad to think that I shall not have to ask you for another sitting," answered Humphrey.

"Really?" returned Selma; and then, as a sound from upstairs called Helen out of the room, she turned and moved idly to where Humphrey was standing. "So she is nearly finished," she said, looking critically at the picture; "nearly finished. Are you under the impression that you have painted—me, Humphrey?"

She spoke the last pronoun with a curious emphasis, proud, laughing, and serious, and she looked at him as she spoke with an imperious demand which was not all affected. The picture was intended for the Academy, and it had originated in a suggestion made towards the close of the last season that Miss Malet's portrait must be in next year's Exhibition. The suggestion had been eagerly taken up by two very fashionable portrait painters; but Selma had said no to both of them. Humphrey should paint her, she declared at home. Humphrey should paint her and become the fashion; and Humphrey had smiled quietly and considered her attentively as he said:

"I am not a portrait painter, Selma."

Selma, however, was not accustomed to having her word gainsaid, and she had apparently set her heart on having her own way in this case.

"Nonsense, Humphrey!" she said. "You have painted me heaps of times. Paint me in character if you like." And Humphrey, with his artist eyes on the face and figure before him, had stipulated that the picture must be painted after his own fashion, and had asked her to sit to him as Imogen—a subject he had long had in his mind.

He looked at her now with the same attentive, rather sad, expression on his face as he said:

"Is it less like you than you expected?"

"My dear Humphrey," she returned with a little laugh, "it's an admirable picture, and I hope it will be a great success; but really any model would have answered the purpose quite as well as I have done; and one of the regular men might as well have painted me, for any good it will do you from that point of view. It isn't in the least like me."

"What is the matter with it?" he asked, taking up his palette as she turned away and walked to the raised daïs. She stopped and looked back, first at the picture, and then into a long looking-glass let into the wall, which faced her as she stood. She was dressed in Imogen's dress, and her beautiful hair, as it fell about her, was the hair that Humphrey had painted; but these trifling points of similarity, and the superficial likeness of the features, seemed to make the deeper contrast only sharper. She stood a moment, looking from the glass to the picture and back again, and a faint colour came to her cheeks.

"You have painted a different woman," she said, and then she turned away again, and posed herself in silence. The silence lasted a long time. Humphrey worked on, growing every moment more absorbed, and something in the stillness, or the atmosphere of the place, seemed to depress Selma. She sighed a little, and moved restlessly.

"Are you tired?" said Humphrey.

"A little," she answered, absently. Then rousing herself, she said, quickly: "I beg your pardon, Humphrey. Did I fidget? Is that better?" There was another pause, and then she said: "I am afraid I have been troublesome about the sittings, Humphrey; but I am very sorry that this is the last."

"They have been more of a tie than you expected, I am afraid."

Selma laughed.

"That means, I suppose, that you could wish I had considered them more of a tie," she said. "Life is such a rush, Humphrey. Last season hardly seemed to have begun before it was over; the summer vanished before I knew the season had gone; and now it's March before I seem to be well settled into November. The last eighteen months have gone in a kind of flash."

She paused a moment, but Humphrey did not answer; and after a minute or two she went on, with another little laugh:

"There is no rush about you, Humphrey. You've no idea how quiet and peaceful you seem in here, or how soothing the sittings have been. I am very sorry this is the last," she repeated, with another sigh.

"Do you want soothing, Selma?"

"Well," she said, with a gaiety which was perhaps a little forced, "I am bound to say that I never feel the need except when I am undergoing the process. I become conscious then that it is a very long time since I was not too busy to think; but, after all, what would one have? One must go with the times; and it is hardly for me to quarrel with life, is it?"

She turned to him as she spoke, regardless of her pose in her brilliant consciousness of her success, and instead of answering, he said, quietly:

"Turn your head to the right, please." Then as she obeyed with a quick, petulant movement, "Thank you," he observed, and painted on in silence, until she said, in quite a different tone of voice:

"Do you want to keep me long to-day?"

"How long can you give me?"

Selma hesitated.

"There are some people coming to tea," she said. "And I have to dress, you see. Will another half-hour be enough?"

"Quite enough, thank you. Don't wear yourself out, Selma, before the season fairly begins."

"And don't be late, Selma, this afternoon," said Helen, who had come into the room in time to hear Selma's last speech. "Last time you asked people to tea I had to talk to half-a-dozen friends of yours I didn't know at all for nearly half an hour, and we none of us enjoyed it."

"Selma's friends," as she called some three-score of Selma's society acquaintances indiscriminately, were something of a trial to Helen. She had vaguely understood last season that Selma was a great success; that she was always going out; that she knew everybody, and that everybody knew her; and she had taken a delighted pride in all her sister's proceedings. When Selma said carelessly that there were "some people" who would like to call, she had assented with alacrity, and was rather disappointed at first that Selma allowed so few visitors. "I can't have you overwhelmed, dear," she had said to Helen. And before very long Helen found the occasional afternoons, and the dozen or so of people who came to them, quite as much as she cared for, unfailing delight as it was to her to see Selma the centre of attention. She never said as much, even to herself; but she was conscious of a secret antipathy to "Selma's friends," one and all. "They make her seem so far away," she said to herself.

In spite of Helen's words to her on the subject of punctuality, several people had arrived that afternoon before Selma came downstairs. Helen was talking to Julian Heriot, who came very occasionally to Selma's afternoons, and to a lady as to whose name she was entirely in the dark, and glancing with anxious eyes towards the door, sorely divided between dread of the appearance of more "people" and hope of the appearance of Selma.

"My sister has been sitting to my husband all the morning," she said, apologetically, as her fears were realised and she had to receive Nora Glynn, a pet aversion of hers. "She will be here in a moment, I hope."

And then to her inexpressible relief the door opened again, and she subsided behind the tea-table as Selma's entrance took all further responsibility off her hands.

Selma was evidently quite accustomed and quite prepared to talk to half-a-dozen people at once—or rather to let them talk to her, for she did not exert herself in the least. She wore one of the frocks which were a constant source of admiration to Helen—a hybrid between fashion and art, in which she looked far more brilliantly beautiful than in the dress in which Humphrey had painted her as Imogen. Her self-possession, though it was the self-possession of self-consciousness now, was absolutely perfect.

During the next hour Helen's little drawing-room seemed full to overflowing, though there were never more than a dozen people at a time in it. They came by twos and threes, were polite even to the verge of patronage to the mistress of the house, laughed and chatted with Selma and went away again to be replaced by others. Every one who came knew every one else, every one who came was easy and amiable with the consciousness that it was an informal function to which many who would have liked to come, did not come, not being invited.

"How go the rehearsals, Miss Malet?" asked Julian Heriot, as he brought her a cup of tea in a temporary lull.

She took it from him with a smile of thanks. "I am very glad to see you, Mr. Heriot," she said. "I thought you did not mean to come. Sit down and talk to me."

He did not take the chair her gesture indicated, but stood looking down at her as he said:

"Did I say I should not come? That was very rude of me."

Selma laughed, a pretty, low, musical laugh, which was as new in her as the expression of her eyes as she looked up at him.

"You generally are rude, in a quiet, sarcastic way, don't you know?" she said. "One is so used to it from you. The rehearsals? Oh, they are dreadfully tiresome."

"Don't you like your part?" enquired Nora Glynn, who had just come up to say good-bye.

"It isn't a part," returned Selma with a little shrug of her shoulders. "There's one scene with which I suppose I must try and do something, but really I haven't troubled much about it yet."

"You've been busy about your frocks, I suppose," said Miss Glynn, interestedly. "I hear they are wonderful. But what a trouble one has with them!"

Selma turned a serenely-surprised face upon the other. "I did not know you had a voice in the matter," she said. "I thought all your things were chosen by the management. Yes, my frocks are rather nice, I think, and I'm thankful to say they are nearly ready."

Nora Glynn had flushed angrily under Selma's eyes, and she held out her hand to say good-bye.

"I'm so glad," she said, recovering herself valiantly. "Oh, by-the-bye, have you heard what a success the girl in America has made with your part in 'Shadows'? I hear it is quite a hit. Isn't it extraordinary? I should have said there was nothing to be done with it! Good-bye, Mr. Heriot. Good-bye again, Miss Malet."

"Shadows" was the play which had run all through the last season at John Tyrrell's theatre. Miss Malet had failed to do anything in it but look like a vision of perfect beauty; it was a miserable part, every one had said.

As Nora Glynn turned away, Selma looked up at Heriot, with a calm little smile, and said:

"How she enjoyed telling me that! How she hates me!"

"You were rather hard on her," answered Heriot, laughing.

"Was I?" returned Selma, echoing his laugh. "Well, her airs are really insufferable, and either she gets worse or I get less tolerant. I am constantly obliged to try and extinguish her."

"If it is not too rude a thing to say, your words suggest the question: Why does one meet her here?"

"Why? Ah, the reasons are feminine, Mr. Heriot, and I shall not attempt to translate them. But what about 'Shadows,' really? You don't mean to say that the Americans have extracted anything from Marie?"

Her voice was a little piqued under the laugh with which she spoke, and Heriot looked at her curiously as he said:

"It's a peculiarly American talent, isn't it, the talent for 'striking oil' in unexpected places?"

"But has she really?"

"So they say," he answered, carelessly.

Then there was another influx of people, and Selma rose and went to receive them. She was talking to the newcomers, and saying good-bye to some who were going away, standing, laughing and talking, in the centre of the group when the door opened again, and a man came in alone. The servant's announcement fell unheeded. Helen was at the other end of the room, and Selma's back was towards the door. The new-comer was standing hesitating, as though he had made a mistake, when Selma turned, quite suddenly and unaccountably, and saw him. With a little gesture of apology she left the group of which she was the centre, and went towards him, her most brilliant, gracious, and self-possessed self.

"Ah, Roger," she said, "how do you do? You will find Helen over there."

She had turned away again before he could answer, and Roger Cornish crossed the room to Helen.

"I didn't know you had a party," he said, in a low voice. "I'm awfully sorry, Helen."

"It's not a party," returned Helen, in the same tone, moving with him to the tea-table. "They are a few of Selma's friends. How is baby?"

"Very seedy," answered baby's father, despondently enough. "That's what I came to see you about, Helen. Mervyn wants you to go and see her to-morrow. She's dreadfully anxious, Helen."

Mervyn and Roger had been married very shortly after their engagement, and the tiny specimen of humanity, which was now nearly six months old, had been an anxiety for all his little life, and his very frailty seemed to make him the centre of the universe to his father and mother. Roger's tenderness for his little son, so like his tenderness for his little wife, was always half-amusing and half-pathetic to Helen, and she answered, cheerily:

"You are dreadfully anxious too, poor old boy. You are looking quite thin!"

Roger Cornish was certainly thinner; but his face was the better for it. The air of strength and capability which had always pervaded it, had grown with time, and his blue eyes were deeper and steadier, though they had lost nothing of their old simple directness. They were rather haggard to-day, and he smiled as Helen spoke; but before he had time to answer her, Selma, whose guests had nearly all departed, came up to the table with a late arrival—John Tyrrell.

"Give Mr. Tyrrell a nice cup of tea, Helen," she said. "He has come from the theatre, and he is tired. I take it for granted that you have come to scold me," turning to Tyrrell with a little laugh, as he shook hands with Helen; "and I wish to propitiate you."

"I'm glad you know you deserve to be scolded," he answered, lightly. "Why did you not come to the rehearsal?"

"Because I was otherwise occupied," returned Selma, daringly. "Oh, Roger, are you going? How is Mervyn? Not very strong! Oh, I am sorry. Give her my love, please; I wish I could make time to come and see her. Good-bye."

She shook hands with him, and then, as he and Helen left the room together, leaving her alone with Tyrrell, she turned to the latter, and said:

"Come and sit in this nice managerial-looking chair; I will bring you your tea, which is what I would do for no one else.

Is anything wrong at the theatre? You don't look pleased."

"Your fancy, I assure you," he said, quickly, obeying her half-imperious, half-appealing mandate, and taking her cup from her hand. "Who would not be more than pleased in my place?"

Selma laughed, and turned away.

"I wish you wouldn't tease me so!" she said, and then there was a pause and Tyrrell looked at her reflectively.

The two years that were gone had been to John Tyrrell on the whole as unsatisfactory as any two years he had ever spent. Two years ago he had prophesied within himself two things of Selma, reasoning from what he believed to be her feeling as to Roger Cornish and his engagement to Mervyn Dallas. He had prophesied, firstly, that she would be ready to marry any man who might offer himself; and, secondly, that she would throw herself, heart and soul, into a society life. As to his first theory, he had been obliged to own himself entirely in the wrong. Selma had not only shown no signs of desiring to marry, but she had shown very unmistakeable signs of intending not to marry; and Tyrrell had temporarily bowed to what he called the contrariety of women. But even this falsification of his first theory had not thrown him so entirely out in his calculations as had the realisation of the second. Selma had taken to a society life indeed, but she had taken to it with a dash, and brilliancy, and a success which seemed to carry her completely out of his reach as she had never been before. Tyrrell was far too keen to think of pitting himself against the intoxicating rush and excitement of a first season — and such a first season. He had stood aside as it were with his most cynical smile, contenting himself with the conviction that, though there were a dozen men making love to her, she was far too deeply absorbed in herself and her new position to listen to any one of them. He was satisfied to see that their old relations as master and pupil never died out of her remembrance, and that her manner, increasingly wilful and imperious as it was, differed distinctly from her manner to the rest of the world. The beautiful Miss Malet became always Selma with him.

But with every month of restraint, with every additional obstacle, his determination to make her his wife had strengthened. Not only was the brilliant and popular woman of to-day infinitely better worth having than the girl of two years ago, but he had studied the position, and planned out his moves until his credit with himself as a diplomatist was at stake.

With the beginning of the second winter, he had come back to town thinking that now, when the first excitement was over for her, his first move must be made. But Tyrrell was not a man to risk a refusal in any case, and he knew, moreover, that the old friendly relations between them once broken, his game would be infinitely more difficult to play. For four months now, therefore, he had been feeling his way, and he was perfectly well aware that he had not even made a start. At every turn he was baffled by the very fact on which he had congratulated himself during the previous season, the fact that Selma never forgot that he was, as she had once called him, "her oldest friend."

As he sat now in the "managerial chair" looking at the graceful figure turned away from him towards the fire, he was deliberately reviewing the position, and he moved slightly as though recalling himself to the actual moment as Selma said, lightly:

"Is there any news?"

She took a fire-screen from the mantelpiece, and sat down in a low chair.

"Allison has sent in his notice."

"Really?" commented Selma, calmly, though she coloured a little as he watched her.

The man alluded to had been a prominent member of Tyrrell's company; a young man who had been talked of as a very rising young actor.

"He is going out to Australia."

"Really?"

"Don't you feel a little guilty, may I ask?"

Selma turned to him with a quick movement, half petulant, half deprecating.

"I knew you were going to be angry with me about that very foolish young man," she exclaimed. "I think it's very unkind of you, Mr. Tyrrell. I couldn't tell that he would be so silly, and I couldn't accept him to prevent his going to Australia, I suppose. I dare say he'll get on very well in Australia."

"I'm not angry," answered Tyrrell, with a tone in his voice that Selma did not understand. "I've told you several times that I've no right to be angry with you—no more right than any other man."

Selma leant forward and smiled up into his face. "And I've told you as often that I give you the right," she said, imperiously. "You think I don't pay much attention to what you say; perhaps I don't. You think I'm spoilt; perhaps I am. But I like to think that there is some one who will tell me disagreeable truths still, though I know it's an odd taste. I like to remember that you knew me when I was little, and I don't think it's patient of you to give me up because I don't quite please you."

Tyrrell's cigarette-case was empty when he went to bed that night, and he had spent two hours in hard thought. Caution and patience have both their limits, and he believed that those limits were now reached. The first and essential point to be gained was that Selma should, without being startled or disturbed, be brought to think of him, however remotely, in the light of a possible lover. The idea must be suggested to her very gradually—so long as it was not suggested by himself, she might even smile at it if she liked, at first—but it must pervade her life little by little until it became as familiar to her as it was now undreamed of, as natural as the air she breathed.

When he left his study at last, the fire was out and he shivered slightly. But the policy of inaction had had its day, and his plan of campaign was arranged.

CONCERNING SOME MORE GEORGIAN DINNERS.

Goldsmith—immortal Oliver, whom all of us love—enjoyed a singularly wide experience of dinners, from the lean meals which barely kept body and soul together during his studentship at Edinburgh, when he and two other medical aspirants lived for a whole week on a single loin of mutton—a brandered chop on the one day, a fried steak on another, chops with onion sauce on a third, and so on until all the meat was consumed, and the seventh day's broth was made out of the bones—to that palmier time when he was a welcome guest at the well-furnished tables of Beauclerk, and Sir Joshua Reynolds, and Mr. Thrale.

In Green Arbour Court we may fairly assume that he often went without a dinner, and might have exclaimed, like the Roman Emperor, "Perdidi diem"; and still more often dined on such scrannel fare as a couple of herrings or a basin of soup. But when he removed to Wine Office Court, he had risen in the world, and could allow himself a larger supply of "creature comforts"; could even invite Dr. Johnson to dine (or sup) with him. It was then that he became a diner-out. Dining with the bookseller Davis, he was introduced to Dodsley, the publisher and poetaster, and to "Bozzy," as yet unknown in the world of London. "Strange enough the dinner must have been. As Goldsmith discussed poetry with Dodsley, Davis, mouthing his words and rolling his head at Boswell, delighted that eager and social gentleman with imitations of Johnson; while, as the bottle emptied itself more freely, sudden loquacity, conceited coxcombry, and officious airs of consequence, came as freely pouring forth from the youthful Scot."

It must be confessed that Goldsmith was nothing of a gastronome. He could relish a good dinner, no doubt; but he could also relish a dinner at Highbury Barn—twopence per head for two dishes and pastry, including a penny to the waiter! Probably his imagination never rose above the level of the bill of fare which Squire Hardcastle, in "She Stoops to Conquer," puts before Young Marlow and Hastings, who have been misled into taking the Squire's house for an inn. "For the first course, at the top, a pig and prune sauce; at the bottom, a calf's tongue and brains; item, a pork pie, a boiled rabbit and sausages, a florentine, a shaking pudding, and a dish of taffety cream." No doubt, Goldsmith, like Hastings, even in the presence of "a green and yellow dinner at the French Ambassador's table," would have said in his heart of hearts, "I'm for plain eating!" We may doubt whether even at the wealthy Streatham brewer's, Mr. Thrale, the menu was often more refined. The middle-class Englishman in those days had a holy horror of "kickshaws" and "made dishes," and regarded it as part of the duty of a patriotic citizen to feed upon "joints" and "puddings," with a little fish, and occasionally a head of game. The prejudice was shared by the country squires and parsons; and only a few of the higher aristocracy cultivated what may be called the ethics of the cuisine.

That was a memorable dinner given by Boswell at his rooms in Old Bond Street, one day in October, 1769, when his guests consisted of Sir Joshua Reynolds, Johnson, Garrick, Goldsmith, Murphy, Bickerstaff, and Tom Davies. Reynolds keeping the company waiting, Goldsmith, "to divert the tedious minutes, strutted about in a new suit of ratteen, lined with satin, and silk stocking breeches, made for him by that most long-suffering of tailors, Mr. William Filby." How wittily and pleasantly the party talked, after dinner, may be read in Boswell. It was on this occasion that Goldsmith so happily said: "There is no arguing with Johnson; for when his pistol misses fire, he knocks you down with the butt-end of it;" and praised Pope's character of Addison as showing a deep knowledge of the human heart.

In his delightfully easy piece of humour, "The Haunch of Venison," Goldsmith lets us into the knowledge of a middle-class dinner, which he supposes to be given by an acquaintance at Mile End. Fried liver and bacon at the top, tripe at the bottom; and spinach at the sides, with "pudding made hot." In the middle a venison pasty should have figured; but, alas! the baker to whom the pasty had been carried, crust and all, had neglected his solemn trust:

And so it fell out, for that negligent sloven
Had shut out the pastry in shutting his oven.

Then there was that first Academy dinner—that annual feast of Art, Letters, and Statesmanship, of Rank and Wealth, established in a felicitous hour by Sir Joshua Reynolds—at which Goldsmith took occasion to praise "the marvellous treasure of ancient poems" which the unfortunate Chatterton, under the pseudonym of Rowley, had poured out upon an unheeding public, and made known the young poet's suicide in an obscure street in London—to the great surprise and concern of the man who had neglected him, Horace Walpole. There was also that dinner before the first performance of "She Stoops to Conquer," when the poor, anxious dramatist could hardly speak a word, and was so choked with conflicting emotions that he was unable to swallow a mouthful; and that jovial dinner at General Oglethorpe's, when Johnson and Boswell were fellow guests, and "Goldy," after moralising on the effect of luxury in enervating a people, and maintaining a discussion with Johnson, sang a couple of songs, one of them being Tony Lumpkin's song of "The Three Jolly Pigeons."

From Goldsmith I naturally pass to David Garrick, who belonged to the same brilliant company, and whose social qualities were not less admired by his contemporaries than his genius as an actor. His easy wit, his savoir vivre, his gay espièglerie—one readily falls into the use of French words when speaking of a character with so much of the French vivacity and polish about it—his fine temper, and his conversableness, made him the most delightful of companions at the dinner-table, where he shone equally as host or guest. A man with such rare talents for society (and so great a love of it) was necessarily in constant demand; but we may be sure that he never felt happier than when among his old friends of "The Club"—Johnson, Beauclerk, Reynolds, Murphy, Goldsmith, Bennet Langton, Cumberland. Yet these men met each other so frequently, and under such similar conditions, that one wonders they never found a certain monotony in their intercourse.

It is pleasant to recall the turtle dinner given by Lord Sandwich, the "Jemmy Twitcher" of contemporary lampoons, at Hampton Green. A present of a fine turtle had been made to him by Admiral Sir Edward Hughes, who had brought it from Ascension Island, and Lord Sandwich sent to London for a cook to dress it. The guests were the leading persons of the neighbourhood, and Garrick was among them. The turtle was much enjoyed, both calipash and calipee; and there was much lively talk, a pleasant evening concluding pleasantly with some dramatic recitations by the great actor. Miss Ray, soon afterwards shot by her mad clerical lover, the Rev. Mr. Hackman, was present at this occasion.

Garrick's own dinners at Hampton were model entertainments. There was good cheer, good wine, and good conversation; for his was a conversational age when Englishmen seem to have talked better than ever before or since. Horace Walpole was at one of these parties, "the Duke of Grafton, Lord and Lady Rochford, Lady Holderness, the crooked Mostyn, and Debun, the Spanish minister; two Nugents, of which one is Lord Chamberlain, the other Groom of the Stole; and the wife of a Secretary of State. This is being 'sur un assez bon ton' for a player." Another turtle dinner came off at Garrick's villa, the "pièce de résistance" being furnished by Burke, who wrote: "I send you a late turtle, a 'rosa sora,' as good for the palate as the other for the nose.

Your true epicureans are of opinion, you know, that it contains in itself all kinds of flesh, fish, and fowl. It is therefore a dish fit for one who can represent all the solidity of flesh, the volatility of fowl, and the oddity of fish." Garrick's art as a mimic was often exercised at the Hampton dinners. Thus, he would give what he called "his rumbo," and leaning on the back of his chair, would represent all the phases of drunkenness with wonderful effect, from the first burst of noisy hilarity to the last stare of vacuous imbecility. Was the performance intended as a warning to his guests not to pass beyond the cup of moderation? At all events, Garrick in society was inimitable,—

> A merrier man
> Within the limits of becoming mirth,
> I never spent an hour's talk withal.

Garrick naturally reminds one of Foote, who so mercilessly quizzed him.

Samuel Foote, dramatist, actor, mimic, was also a ready wit and a genial table-fellow. At one of his dinner-parties when Garrick was present, a somewhat pompous announcement was made of "Mr. Garrick's servants." "Oh, let them wait," cried Foote; adding in a stage whisper, "but, James, be sure you lock up the pantry," an allusion to Garrick's supposed parsimonious housekeeping which the rest of the company duly appreciated, though nowadays, I fancy, we should think such a speech offensive.

Dining with Lord Stormont, who was really as penurious as Garrick was said to be, Foote observed that the wine was sent round in the smallest of decanters to be poured into the smallest of glasses. The host meanwhile expatiated on its fine flavour and great age.

"'Tis very little of its age," said Foote, holding up the tiny glass.

One day, when he was dining at Sir Francis Delaval's, a guest, excited by the wine, endeavoured to fasten a quarrel upon him for his habit of mimicry.

"Why, what would you have?" said Foote, good-humouredly; "of course I take all my friends off, but I serve them no more than myself. I take myself off."

"Gadso," exclaimed the other, "that I should like to see."

Foote seized his hat, bowed, and took himself off immediately.

In his drama of "The Patron" occurs a reference to the great civic delicacy, which for so many years has been a standing joke against corporations, and a standing dish at their banquets. Sir Peter Pepperpot, a West Indian merchant, proposes to send a couple of turtles to his Yorkshire borough.

"What," says his friend Younger, "have the provincials a relish for a turtle?"

"Sir," replies Sir Peter, "it is amazing how this country improves in turtle and turnpikes; to which, give me leave to say, we, from our part of the world, have not a little contributed. Why, formerly, sir, a brace of bucks on the mayor's annual day was thought a pretty moderate blessing. But we, sir, have polished their palates. Why, sir, not the meanest member in my corporation but can distinguish the pash from the pee. Ay, and sever the green from the shell with the skill of the ablest anatomist."

"And are they fond of it?"

"Oh, that the consumption will tell you. The stated allowance is six pounds to an alderman, five to each of their wives. The mayor, recorder, and rector are permitted to eat as much as they please."

Johnson's sketch of our humorist is eminently good-natured. "The first time I was in company with Foote," he says, "was at Fitzherbert's. Having no good opinion of the fellow, I was resolved not to be pleased; and it is very difficult to please a man against his will. I went on eating my dinner pretty sullenly, affecting not to mind him; but the dog was so very comical, that I was obliged to lay down my knife and fork, throw myself back upon my chair, and fairly laugh it out. Oh, sir, he was irresistible! He upon one occasion experienced in an extraordinary degree the efficacy of his powers of entertaining. Amongst the many and various modes which he tried of getting money, he became a partner with a small-beer brewer, and he was to have a share of the profits for procuring customers amongst his numerous acquaintance. Fitzherbert was one who took his small-beer; but it was so bad that the servants resolved not to drink it. They were at some loss how to notify their resolution, being afraid of offending their master, who they knew liked Foote much as a companion. At last they fixed upon a little black boy to deliver their remonstrance; he was to inform Mr. Fitzherbert, in all their names, upon a certain day, that they would drink Foote's small-beer no longer. On that day Foote happened to dine at Fitzherbert's, and this boy served at table; he was so delighted with Foote's stories, and merriment, and grimace, that when he went downstairs he told them, 'This is the finest man I have ever seen. I will not deliver your message. I will drink his small-beer.'"

George Selwyn must not be forgotten among the diners-out of this period. He is remembered by the good things he said — almost as numerous as the good things he swallowed—and by his singular propensity for witnessing death scenes, public executions, and other repulsive sights.

His bons-mots are only too familiar. Everybody knows that when one of the waiters at Arthur's had been committed to Newgate for felony, Selwyn cynically exclaimed, "What a horrid idea he will give of us to the people in Newgate!" When a man named Charles Fox had been hung at Tyburn, and the young Whig statesman enquired of Selwyn whether he had attended the execution, he replied, "No; I make a point of never frequenting rehearsals." When the beautiful Lady Coventry, one of the famous Miss Gunnings, showed him a splendid new dress, covered with large silver spangles, each as big as a shilling, he said, "Why, my lady, you will be change for a guinea." On one occasion being a passenger in a stage-coach, and much bored by a fellow traveller, who, imagining from his appearance he was ill, kept asking about his health, "How are you now, sir?" he at last snapped out, "Very well, I thank you; and I mean to continue so for the rest of the journey."

Selwyn was at dinner one day, where among the company was James Bruce, the Abyssinian explorer, whose report of his discoveries was received with considerable incredulity by his contemporaries, though their authenticity has since been established. Being asked what musical instruments were used in Abyssinia, Bruce, after a moment's hesitation, answered, "I think I saw one lyre there." "Yes," whispered Selwyn, to his next-door neighbour, "and there is one less since he left the country." —But this, in truth, is an old joke, and may be found in the Elizabethan jest-books, while it has been versified by George Colman.

Selwyn was one of the party who dined at stated periods at Strawberry Hill, and constituted what Walpole styled his out-of-town party. The others were "Gilly" (George James) Williams, Dick Edgcombe, and Walpole himself.

One of Selwyn's acquaintances was the notorious Duke of Queensberry, "Old Q," as he was popularly called, a voluptuary whose life was one prolonged indulgence in sensual pleasures. At his house in Piccadilly, and his villa in Richmond, he assembled, at his splendid dinner-table, all the most distinguished of his contemporaries, for his manners were noble and polished, and his conversation, always entertaining, revealed a strong and manly intellect, with a thorough knowledge of humanity, or at least of its worse aspects. Wilberforce, when a young man, dined with the Duke at Richmond. "I always observe," he writes, "that the owners of your grand houses have some snug corner in which they are glad to shelter themselves from their own magnificence. I remember dining, when I was a young man, with the Duke of Queensberry, at his Richmond villa. The party was very small and select. Pitt, Lord and Lady Chatham, the Duchess of Gordon, and George Selwyn—who lived for society, and continued in it till he looked really like the wax-work figure of a corpse — were amongst the guests. We dined early, that some of our party might be ready to attend the Opera. The dinner was sumptuous, the views from the villa quite enchanting, and the Thames in all its glory; but the Duke looked on with indifference. 'What is there,' he said, 'to make so much of in the Thames? I am quite tired of it. There it goes, flow, flow, flow, always the same.'"

And now room for Sir Joshua Reynolds, one of the shining lights in the Georgian firmament. Allan Cunningham, who loses no opportunity of depreciating this great artist and most amiable man, insinuates that his table was scantily supplied out of sheer parsimony. But Northcote explains that Sir Joshua would invite a certain number of guests, and order dinner to be prepared accordingly; and then, in the course of the morning, two or three other persons would drop in, and he would say: "I have got So-and-so coming to dinner; will you join us?" which they would only too readily consent to do. The consequence was, there were sometimes more guests than covers; but nobody complained, nor was unwilling to come again. "If Sir Joshua had really grudged his guests," says Northcote, "they would not have repeated their visits, and there would have been plenty of wine and provisions next time. Sir Joshua never gave the smallest attention to such matters; all he cared about was his painting in the morning, and the conversation at his table," to which he himself was no mean contributor. Perhaps no man was more generally beloved than Sir Joshua; and the reason is not far to seek, for any one acquainted with Madame d'Arblay's entertaining Diary knows that to his fine genius as a painter he added a singular sweetness of temper, generosity of disposition, and grace of manner. Certain it is that round his table in Leicester Square assembled all those of his contemporaries who were distinguished by intellect or virtue. Boswell enables us to appreciate the quality of his guests by preserving the round robin which was drawn up at one of Reynolds's dinners, and presented to Johnson, in respectful suggestion that the epitaph for Goldsmith's monument in Westminster Abbey should be written in English rather than Latin, on the ground "that the memory of so eminent an English writer ought to be perpetuated in the language to which his works are likely to be so lasting an ornament." This round robin is signed by Reynolds, Dr. Joseph Warton, Gibbon, Edmund Burke, George Colman, R. B. Sheridan, Dean Barnard (afterwards Bishop of Killaloe and Limerick), Sir William Forbes, and others.

Reynolds, I need hardly add, was a "clubable man," and one of the original members of the famous Literary Club, which began by supping once a week, but about 1775 dropped this practice in favour of dining once a fortnight during the Parliamentary Sessions. He belonged also to the Dilettanti, whose dining-room in Pall Mall he enriched with several portraits.

Courteney assists us to some interesting particulars of the great painter's dinners. His table, he says, was frequented by men of the first talents, who met "with mutual complacence and good-humour." Party politics were never allowed to be introduced; but literary and artistic subjects were discussed with liveliness, intelligence, and good taste. Impromptu flashes of wit and humour lighted up the social board; but story-telling, premeditated "bons-mots," and studied witticisms were promptly suppressed. The host himself was well fitted to promote "the flow of soul," for he conversed agreeably on most subjects, and with authority upon some. Moreover, his tact and amiability prevented any sudden jar or discord bursting in upon the general harmony.

"There was something singular in the style and economy of his table that contributed to pleasantry and good-humour; a coarse, inelegant plenty, without any regard to order and arrangement. A table, prepared for seven or eight, was often compelled to contain fifteen or sixteen." See Northcote's explanation of this mishap: "When this difficulty was got over, a deficiency of knives and forks, plates and glasses, succeeded. The attendance was in the same style; and it was absolutely necessary to call instantly for beer, bread, or wine, that you might be supplied before the first course was over. He was once prevailed on to furnish the table with decanters and glasses at dinner, to save time, and prevent the tardy manœuvres of two or three occasional undisciplined domestics. As these accelerating utensils were demolished in the course of service, Sir Joshua could never be persuaded to replace them. But these trifling embarrassments only served to enhance the hilarity and singular pleasure of the entertainment.

"The wine, cookery, and dishes were but little attended to; nor was the fish or venison ever talked of or recommended. Amidst this convivial, animated bustle among his guests, our host sat perfectly composed, always attentive to what was said, never minding what was eat or drunk; but left every one at perfect liberty to scramble for himself. Temporal and spiritual peers, physicians, lawyers, actors, and musicians, composed the motley group, and played their parts without dissonance or discord.

"At five o'clock precisely dinner was served, whether all the invited guests were arrived or not. Sir Joshua was never so fashionably ill-bred as to wait an hour, perhaps, for two or three people of rank or title, and put the rest of the company out of humour by this invidious distinction."

It was at a dinner at Sir Joshua's that Johnson scalded his mouth by hastily and awkwardly eating of a beefsteak pie when too hot. Northcote, who gravely records this remarkable incident, adds that Johnson passed it off with a smile, saying that "beefsteak pie would be a very good thing if it could ever be cold."

The elder Pitt, the great Earl of Chatham, was singularly abstemious; but the profuseness of his kitchen astonished even epicures. Like Napoleon, whenever he felt inclined to eat, he expected his table to be served immediately, so that a fowl was boiling in the pot any hour of the day. As a table companion, he was most charming. Wilkes, in "The North Briton," drawing a Plutarchian parallel between Pitt and Rigby, though it was almost an insult to Pitt to bring him into juxtaposition with so inferior a man, closes in the following manner: "In their more private character, both Mr. Pitt and Mr. Rigby have generosity and spirit; in other things they differ. Mr. Pitt is abstemious, temperate, and regular. Mr. Rigby indulges more in convivial pleasure, is an excellent bon vivant, amiable, and engaging. Mr. Pitt, by the most manly sense, and the fine sallies of a warm and sportive imagination, can charm the whole day, and as the Greek said, his entertainments please more the day after they are given. Mr. Rigby has all the gibes, and gambols, and flashes of merriment which set the table in a roar; but the day after a cruel headache, at least, succeeds."

Edmund Burke was almost as abstemious as Chatham, and his narrow income compelled him to keep a modest table. At Beaconsfield he saw but little company—few guests, but choice—Wyndham, Reynolds, Johnson, Madame de Genlis, Sir James Mackintosh. He gave no great entertainments, and his invitations "to eat mutton" were no mere façon de parler. But what guest ever thought of the simplicity of the fare while listening to their host's eloquent and various talk?

It would be unpardonable to forget the dinner at which James Barry, the artist, entertained Burke, when the former was living at 36, Castle Street. "Sir," said Barry to the statesman, who had been his first patron, "you know I live alone; but if you will come and help me to eat a steak, I shall have it tender and hot from the most classic market in London—that of Oxford." Burke agreed, and on the hour appointed, arrived in Castle Street. There the fire was burning with a steady glow; the steaks were broiling on the red-hot coals; and having spread a clean cloth on the table, Barry put a pair of tongs into his visitor's hands, saying: "Be useful, my dear friend, and look to the steaks while I go for the porter." Burke did so; and the painter soon returned, pot in hand, exclaiming: "What a misfortune! The wind carried away the fine foaming top, as I crossed Titchfield Street." The steak was tender, and done to a turn; host and guest sat down together; Barry was full of anecdote; and Burke often declared that he had never spent a happier evening in his life.

One cannot think of Burke without recalling another of the brilliant orators of the time, Richard Brinsley Sheridan, wit, statesman, dramatist, and—diner-out. It is needless to dwell upon the failings of this gifted man; they are part of the stock-in-trade of the commonplace moralist. That he was too fond of "the bottle," too much addicted to the pleasures of the table, and the attraction of "good company," everybody knows; and there are some of us who can never mention his name without turning up our eyes, shaking our prudent heads, and thanking Heaven that we are not as that man was! Truth to tell, he did not make the best of his life or his genius, and the lesson of his dying hours is not one to be forgotten; but many who sin as Sheridan sinned, have neither Sheridan's excuse nor Sheridan's temptation.

At Brooks's club-house he was conspicuous among the hardiest drinkers and most brilliant talkers; at Carlton House as at Devonshire House his rare powers at conversation made him a welcome guest. The most recherché dinner-tables in England were for years regarded as incomplete unless brightened by that sparkling wit. As when, after a brief pause in the conversation, he exclaimed: "By the silence that prevails, I conclude Lauderdale has been cutting a joke."

Charles Lamb's dinners would supply material for an entertaining page or two, if one had Charles Lamb's felicity of treatment. We might begin with his tête-à-têtes with Coleridge at "The Salutation and Cat," a tavern near Smithfield, where over their chops and porter they discussed metaphysics and poetry. We would pass over, for pity's sake, that terrible meal where his poor, mad, but gifted sister Mary plunged the knife into her mother's heart, and dwell on the dinners with Southey and his young wife under their roof in Hampstead, his dinners with his sister in their lonely Temple lodgings, "up four pairs of stairs," and those occasional symposia with his friends, at which the hard-worked, over-spent, struggling man of genius too often exceeded in wine "or its equivalents," and those gayer dinners, in later and more prosperous days, when Proctor, Talfourd, and Hazlitt sat at his genial table, and an extra glass of wine or punch "not only unlocked the poor casket in which his rich thoughts were shut up, but set in motion that machinery in the absence of which they would have lain like gems in the mountain or gold in the mine." For Lamb, like Addison, could never do justice to himself until a stimulant had enabled him to conquer his natural shyness and reserve, and then, if the company were sympathetic, he poured forth his happy puns, his quaint allusions, his choice bits of criticism, in a current of delightful talk—his quips and quiddities often rendered the more telling by his slight stammer, and the whimsical expression of his quaint but amiable features.

One cannot readily forget the little dinner given by Haydon, the painter, at which Lamb, Wordsworth, and Keats were of the company, and Lamb in one of his gayest and most unrestrained moods; when he insisted that the guests should drink to Voltaire, as "the Messiah of the French nation—and a very proper one too," and "Newton's health, and confusion to mathematics." And afterwards, when a dull man, a Comptroller of Stamps, joined them, and in his ineptitude blurted out, "Don't you think Milton was a great genius?" and again, "Don't you think Newton a great genius?" Lamb started up, and seizing a candle, exclaimed, "Sir, will you allow me to look at your phrenological developement?"

Then there were the Wednesday evenings in Inner Temple Lane, which Talfourd and Proctor have so fully described, with the names and qualities of the guests whom they drew together, and the homely fare and the cordial greeting that awaited them, the cold beef and can of porter on the sideboard, which the conversation of Coleridge and Wordsworth served to transmogrify into Olympian manna and ambrosia — food fit for the Immortals! Lamb himself was by no means inappreciative of the results of good cooking. "I am no Quaker at my food," he writes. "I confess I am not indifferent to the kinds of it. Those unctuous morsels of deer's flesh were not made to be received with dispassionate services. I hate a man who swallows it, affecting not to know what he is eating; I suspect his taste in higher matters. I shrink instinctively from one who professes to like curried veal. There is a physiognomical character in the tastes for food. C—— holds that a man cannot have a pure mind who refuses apple-dumpling. I am not certain but he is right." When he removed to Colebrook Row, Islington, his garden grew "vines, pears, strawberries, parsnips, leeks, carrots, cabbages, to delight the heart of old Alcinous," and I doubt not but that the produce, fresh and dewy, was served up to him and greatly relished! Whether at Islington, or Enfield, or Edmonton—his last change of residence—his hospitality was never at fault, and his friends always found the warmest of welcomes at his modest table.

Here are a couple of extracts which will communicate a fine flavour to our pages.

He writes to Manning: "If thou wouldst contrive to wheel up thy dear carcase on the Monday, and after dining with us on tripe, calves' kidneys, or whatever else the cornucopia of St. Clare may be willing to pour out on the occasion"—a suggestion of a bill of fare which must have made Manning's mouth water! We may readily translate the "cornucopia of St. Clare" into Clare Market.

Again: "I have a bed at your command. You shall drink rum, brandy, gin, aquavitæ, usquebaugh, or whiskey o' nights; and for the after-dinner trick, I have eight bottles of genuine port, which, mathematically divided, gives $1\frac{1}{7}$ for every day you stay, provided you stay a week."

QUITE INEXCUSABLE!

A COMPLETE STORY.

YOUNG Mr. and Mrs. Hobart Berkeley were very superior people: there cannot be the slightest doubt about it. They were the acknowledged leaders of a small and select circle of folk who considered (and rightly) that they comprised within that boundary the sweetness and light—the whole of it—which was to be found in the city of Lanford. They were the remnants of the great army of Æsthetes which has melted away with such rapidity of late years; the faithful few who still touzled their hair, and contemplated melancholy works of art in fine attitudes and with their heads on one side. These people were known among the Philistines as "The Perfectionists."

Among this select company there were none who could hold a candle to Mr. and Mrs. Hobart Berkeley; to speak vulgarly, they "ran to hair" more than any of their compeers; nor was there any one to approach them in the matter of attitude or dress. They spoke in voices of such exquisite cultivation that it was almost impossible for an outsider to understand what they said.

Mr. Hobart was a reciter, and was accustomed to entertain his friends with selections from the great dramatists. He spent a good part of his time in rehearsal; and you might hear his voice declaiming the poet's lines whenever you passed the house. Sometimes Mrs. Hobart would accompany him to slow music on the piano; and in summer, when the windows were open, quite a small crowd of errand-boys and others would assemble round the railings and stare through the shrubs.

When that nervous old lady, Mrs. Crowson, came to live next door, she was at first terrified almost out of her life by the ravings and stampings of her dramatic neighbour; and on one occasion, being suddenly waked up from her afternoon nap by the noise, she was certain a murder was being committed in the next house, and shrieked for the police. It was only when actual enquiries had been made by her attendant, Miss Minch, and the reassuring information furnished that Mr. Hobart Berkeley was only rehearsing the soliloquies in "Hamlet," that the poor old lady quieted down; but I believe she lived from that time more or less in dread of her neighbours, and was prepared for anything.

The Perfectionists were all devoted to one another, and formed perhaps the most perfect Mutual Admiration Society which ever existed. They were never tired of each other's company; indeed, they considered the company of other folk not worth the having. They met frequently and had "evenings," when surely any one but a "Perfectionist" would have been bored to death; at least, that is what ill-natured outsiders used to say.

The Berkeleys entertained oftener than any one else, and the same ill-natured folk used to say, also, that that was because Mr. Hobart liked to hear himself rant. It was the Miss Wraithbys—who lived at the corner, and who were not on terms of intimacy, and who were, consequently, never invited, and who were, also consequently, just a trifle vituperative in speaking of the Berkeleys — it was the Miss Wraithbys, I say, who were accustomed to make these and other unkind remarks.

It was notorious, said they, that Mrs. Berkeley, though she was so well up in Browning and had such fine taste in colour, still could not manage her house properly. "The servants, mum, is always leavin', account of so much company bein' kep'," Jane reported; and the Miss Wraithbys thanked Heaven they were only ordinary mortals and not like some people!

It was the pet ambition of the Hobart Berkeleys to entertain notabilities. Not great ones in the ordinary sense; not those who, in the outside world, received the acclamations of the vulgar; but small poets, musicians and the like—literary and artistic small-fry, famous only in the narrower circle of the cultured. Mr. Danby Crofts, the poet of the emotions, had written a tragedy; Herr Schweizer, the eminent German pianist, had composed a number of sonatas—if Crofts or Schweizer would but enter the humble door of No. 4, Trafford Square (which I omitted to state was the abode of the Berkeleys), there was great joy upon those premises, and all the rest of the circle was invited to meet the celebrated man.

It was but seldom, however, that such visits took place. "If only we lived in London!" Mrs. Hobart would sigh. It was almost too much to expect that "lions" would travel down to Lanford, which is at least twenty miles away from the metropolis, and back again, for the express purpose of being appreciated and admired.

It happened that about this time the celebrated Herr Krampf came over from the Fatherland in order to disport himself at the cost of a number of pianos in this country. Herr Krampf was a most distinguished pianist; his fame had preceded him; and with a certain kind of people he became a lion of great proportions. His belief in himself was only equalled by the contempt with which he regarded all other musicians, both past and present. He was one of the moderns in so far as he detested all tunes; "nothing so low" ever disfigured the compositions of Herr Krampf. An air from an Italian opera caused such agony to his sensitive nature as to seriously endanger his health. He fortified himself against such attacks by a liberal diet; and a course of beef-steaks and port wine had enabled the Herr to live in spite of Philistinism, and had supplied him with the strength which he expended upon the keyboard, and for the display of which he is justly famed.

A cousin of Mrs. Berkeley's—one Mr. Langley Brown—who lived in London, and who occasionally reported himself to his friends at Lanford, happened in one of his letters to remark that he had met the celebrated German at one of Mrs. Burlington's "at homes." Mr. Langley Brown, it may be remarked at once, was accustomed to think of his relatives with feelings of levity; he laughed at their pretension of culture; was bored by their raptures over the incomprehensible; and, in fact, considered that Berkeley and his wife, with all their crew, as he called them, were no better than a set of fools.

Young Brown, I say, in an unguarded moment, happened to mention Herr Krampf; and knowing with what interest his communication would be received, he gave a number of particulars respecting that gentleman. Mr. Brown had held conversations, it appeared, with the Herr, who was most affable; he was astounded at the pianist's performances, which he described as marvellous; and, generally, he drew the long bow to such an extent as to make up a very interesting letter.

Truth compels me regretfully to state that Mr. Brown was indebted for most of his particulars to his imagination, having, as a matter of fact, been nearly finished—as he described it to a crony—by Herr Krampf's first performance, and making his escape almost immediately, under cover of the applause which followed that event. Was it not notorious that when he was in a good humour the Herr would play before a room-full by the hour together; that expressions of admiration only stimulated him to further exertion; that, in fine, he never knew when to stop?

Mr. and Mrs. Berkeley were immensely interested by their cousin's communication, and they were immediately consumed with longing to get hold of Herr Krampf and make him perform for the edification of their circle.

"My dear Langley" (wrote Mrs. Berkeley with much excited underlining),—"Do you think you could prevail upon Herr Krampf to come down to Lanford to play for us? You are evidently on good terms with him, and your persuasions would, no doubt, have great weight. We would arrange for any evening that would suit Herr Krampf. You might inform him that he can rely upon appreciation with us, quite as keen as any he can find in the metropolis. As to the fee, my dear Langley, that must not stand in the way. If you explain our position in the musical world to the Herr, I think that should have great weight with him. I rely upon your kind——" and so on and so on, for quite a page of polite flattery.

When Mr. Langley Brown received this letter, so far from feeling any gratitude to his relatives for the great trust they had reposed in him, he cursed their foolishness with a great liberality, and regretted his own thoughtless letter which, at the time, he had considered rather clever and amusing.

"Confound it!" he said to himself. "I suppose I shall have to write and explain that it's out of the question;" and his friend Thompson coming in at that moment, Mr. Langley laid the letter before him, with further comments and injurious expressions regarding the Lanford people.

"Why, won't the old buffer go down for them?" remarked Thompson, innocently.

"Go down? Why, man, he would as soon think of voyaging to the moon. Your ignorance of matters of public notoriety is amazing. Krampf is the lion of the season; he can get almost any fee he likes in London, for there's a tremendous competition for him for 'at homes' and things. I don't know the man, for one thing—not a great deprivation, I can't stand classical music;—but even if I did, I haven't the cheek to ask him for this Lanford business; he'd feel grossly insulted. The fact is, I pitched in too much of a tale, and now I suppose I shall have to cry off and tell 'em the real state of the case—a very humiliating thing to do."

"Very," said Thompson, sympathetically.

"And I should really enjoy taking a rise out of 'em somehow; I don't like giving in like this." Mr. Langley broke off disconsolately, his mind a prey to the most gloomy reflections. His dismal reverie, however, was almost immediately interrupted by the appearance of some object which caught his eye in the street below. "Hallo!" he cried, briskly, "there goes old Kaufmann. What a jolly old Teuton it is! How do, Kaufmann?" and he nodded from the club window, as the passer-by looked up, and grinned a recognition. "How like these German fellows are to each other, aren't they?"

"Remarkably," assented Mr. Thompson, drily, and then he offered a remark to his friend which appeared to tickle that gentleman considerably, for, after exclaiming, "By Jove!" Mr. Langley was seized with a convulsive fit of chuckles, which was of a very acute nature and lasted some time.

"A splendid suggestion!" he cried, at length; "I'll go and see Kaufmann this very afternoon."

Said Kaufmann played a 'cello in the orchestra at the Thespian Theatre, and a jovial old Bohemian he was. He played the 'cello because they wanted a 'cello player; but he might just as well have taken any other instrument, for he could perform upon them all—except, I believe, the trombone—with a very fair amount of skill. Langley had known him some years, and delighted in the company of the old musician, who had had experiences of life in every capital in Europe, and could entertain you with a thousand stories of his adventures, the celebrities he had met, and what not.

The interview between this worthy and Mr. Langley Brown was of a confidential character, which, unfortunately, prevents any account of it being given. When, however, old Kaufmann was saying good-bye to his young friend at the door, he shook his head with an air of severity, and observed:

"You are a ferry onbrincibled young man!"

Upon which the other burst into a guffaw, and walked off without any appearance of repentance.

Mrs. Hobart Berkeley awaited with great impatience Mr. Brown's reply to her letter. When the reply came, the news it told was almost too good to be true.

"Oh, Hobart," cried the lady, after hurriedly perusing the letter, "Herr Krampf can come! Langley has got him to promise. 'I do not think,' he says, 'that he would have done it for any one but me: I am coming down with him. After I explained the kind of people he had to do with, he said he should not think of taking any fee. The Herr'—Langley speaks of him as 'The Herr' all through in the most familiar manner—'is quite content with the appreciation which he knows he will receive. He will play his own compositions solely: most of which will be heard for the first time, so that you ought to feel honoured in being the first to make acquaintance with his latest works. The Herr can come on Thursday, the fifteenth proximo.' Oh, Hobart, isn't it perfect?"

And Hobart agreed that it was, and wondered whether Herr Krampf could be persuaded to accompany a recitation on the piano. He must certainly, he said, get something up at once in view of such a golden opportunity.

When the eventful evening arrived, which was to witness the introduction of the star to the best society of Lanford, there was, as may be imagined, excitement in the Berkeley mansion. Hobart went about darkly muttering to himself; savagely frowning at inanimate objects, apostrophising the book-case as "friend of my youth"; taking, in a word, his last chance of rehearsal. Mrs. Hobart having done all that was to be done, lay on the sofa holding a book of poems, but she was much too excited to read them. It was a relief when the time came for the guests to arrive.

The celebrated Krampf and the cousin were to arrive somewhat later than other folk, the Herr's many engagements keeping him in town until the last moment. For some time, therefore, the company assembled at No. 4, Trafford Square, merely existed, and with what patience they might muster; Mr. Hobart, it is true, recited a poem of his own composition in a thrilling manner, but nobody paid much attention to him. There was a good piano in the drawing-room; but, in honour of the virtuoso, a splendid new Broadwood had been hired for the occasion, and it was round this monstrous instrument that all the interest circulated.

Finally, the long-looked-for appeared. Herr Krampf was announced and entered the room, accompanied by Mr. Langley Brown. The great man charmed everybody, particularly the ladies, by his benignity. Only two of the company had seen him at a distance in a London concert-room; they agreed in a whisper that he looked a trifle older seen close to. Mr. Brown, himself, as carrying in his person reflected greatness, was well received: he always dates from that evening the first impression he made upon the virgin heart of Miss Kerfew, Canon Kerfew's charming daughter. Mr. Brown appeared to be on excellent terms with the distinguished pianist. There was evidently a very friendly understanding between them. As they had entered the room, Herr Krampf seemed to have made a jocular remark to his companion, for the young man underwent a momentary convulsion. What charming bonhommie! What condescension! How everybody then envied Mr. Langley Brown!

Herr Krampf was in an excellent humour. As he rested his large person upon the music-stool, he beamed through his spectacles upon the company with quite a roguish twinkle in his eye. Those who were ever present at one of the Herr's public performances, will remember certain fads or mannerisms which he invariably introduced. One of these was the careful dusting of the piano keys with a large white pocket-handkerchief before he would touch a note. There was quite a breathless interest while Herr Krampf now performed this little duty, with, as it seemed, more elaboration than was quite necessary. Some who sat close to the piano asserted that he winked at this moment, in a solemn manner, upon Mr. Brown who sat by his side; and that the younger gentleman underwent another quiet convulsion; that statement, however, may be open to doubt; a slight hallucination, probably, due to the excitement of the moment.

"Ach!" cried the pianist to Mrs. Berkeley, as he prepared to begin; "you haf a Proadwood! Zat is goot."

He then appeared to become absent in his mind for a moment and to ruminate deeply. Finally, he muttered half to himself: "I must haf some, or I cannot blay"; and producing a snuff-box, he inhaled a pinch of the rappee with great apparent enjoyment. Strange to say, the only person who appeared at all surprised or shocked by this proceeding was Langley himself. He had the temerity to kick the Herr under the piano, and whispered to him: "Confound it, K., remember where you are!" in a severe tone: a speech which was not overheard by any one. The ladies were all charmed. "How quaint it was—this snuff-taking! Quite an old-world custom!" And Herr Krampf's broken English, "How charming"; and the handkerchief business, "How very, very charming!"

In the midst of a death-like silence, and having previously turned up his coat-cuffs with great care, the Herr struck one chord, lifted his hands magnificently and looked with a searching glance round his audience. Every one was in ecstasies. What a touch! What feeling! What expression! What soul!

The pianist proceeded. He played entirely without the score. What a memory he must have! At the close of his first piece there was delighted acclamation. Each one mentioned to his neighbour the points of genius he had specially noticed—points which divided this great man from all the rank and file, and which raised him at once to the very highest place. All were enthusiastic except one mild old gentleman who seemed to have got in by mistake somehow (he had been brought by his friends sorely against his will), and who evidently didn't understand anything about high-class music, and who was very properly looked down upon in consequence.

Under cover of the applause, the old German turned to Langley with a satisfied smile.

"Zat is not bad for an extemporisation—hein?" he said. "It is a goot biano. I am enjoying myself. Zis is better zan scraping."

The good-natured man played quite a number of times until he had really roused the company to a fever-heat of excitement, and until the mild old gentleman had fallen asleep with his head against a cabinet in the far corner. He was so kind that he readily promised to accompany Mr. Hobart Berkeley's recitation: and he did, with a vengeance. He played so loud, in fact, that not one syllable of the poem was audible. Poor Hobart stood gesticulating wildly, while the Herr crashed and thundered until all were filled with amazement, and Mrs. Hobart with trepidation, lest there should be damage done to the piano.

When the time came for the company to refresh themselves, Herr Krampf showed himself to be as mighty in his character of trencherman as in that of pianist. He punished the provisions to such an extent, as to cause quite a famine; and a number of people, who did not know how to take care of themselves, got next to nothing in consequence. He also drank copious libations and became so merry that Mr. Brown began to be alarmed, and tried to restrain the Herr's mirth.

"My good fellow," remonstrated the Teuton, in a whisper, "I cannot blay for nossing. It is long since I so much enjoy myself," and he tossed off another bumper as he spoke. He was perfectly affable, this great man; he did not mind being introduced to everybody; and, be sure, all the guests were anxious to have this honour. He took snuff constantly, and when, having offered poor Hobart his box, that gentleman meekly took a pinch, and nearly sneezed his head off, the Herr roared with laughter so that there appeared to be danger lest he should have an apoplectic fit.

Before the evening was over he was "hail-fellow" with every one, cracking jokes with the ladies, and devoting himself to them so gallantly that he won all their hearts. When he was asked, quite the last thing, if he would not play again, after shaking his head a great number of times, and exclaiming: "But I cannot blay after supper," he was finally persuaded to sit down before the key-board, taking his seat on the music-stool in a somewhat unsteady fashion. He played an extraordinary fantasia which was pronounced to be "so characteristic," "so bizarre," "so uncommon," but, towards the close of the piece, the mild old gentleman's face assumed a look of recognition.

"Ah," he whispered to his fair neighbour, Miss Cromer, who was listening in a rapt attitude, "there is something I know at last; it is 'Pop goes the weasel!' with variations. How very cleverly he is doing it!" and the old fellow looked quite gratified by his own sharpness of perception.

"Mr. Hastings!" (that was the mild old gentleman's name), "Mr. Hastings!" hissed the lady, with an agonised countenance, "what are you thinking of?"

The innocent old man was quite taken aback, and apologised humbly at the conclusion of the piece.

"It was, of course, my mistake," he stammered. "I—I do not understand music, I am afraid." He was painfully aware that in spite of whatever he could say, Miss Cromer evidently looked upon him as a person of weak mind, who ought to be taken care of.

It seemed, however, that the Herr had heard the old gentleman's remark, for as he got up to go (it was announced that he had to catch the night train to town), he addressed the assembled multitude in the following terms (that young rascal of a Langley was making himself agreeable to Miss Kerfew in a corner in the ante-room, else surely he would have stopped the Herr's mouth):

"Ladies and shentlemen," the old German began, waving his snuff-box in the air in an oratorical manner, "before I go, zere is a leetle mistake I will set right: you haf not quite zee right pronouncing of my name. I will tell you how it should be pronounced." (Every one on the qui vive here so as to give their unenlightened outside friends the benefit of first information from the fountain-head.) "I find you call it 'Krampf.' I haf not called it so myself, but zat is what you call it. Zee way to pronounce my name is Kaufmann — K-a-u-f-m-a-n-n. Joseph Kaufmann" (here he bowed magnificently). "I haf the honour to blay the 'cello in the orchestra at zee Tespian Teatre. As to zee ozer great musician whose name also begins wiz a 'K,' you will be glad to hear zat he is blaying before zee Queen at Windsor zis efening, as you will see in zee morning papers. Zere is" (continued the Herr, now backing himself out of the door with the politest of bows), "zere is one shentleman here who has a head for music; he is zee shentleman in zee corner—Meester Hastings, I belief—he is a sensible man; he knows zee tune of 'Pop goes zee weasel,' when he hears him. Ladies and shentlemen, I vish you a ferry goot efening." He was gone.

There is no typographical arrangement of marks of exclamation by which I can even faintly represent the effect upon the room of Herr Kaufmann's speech. If he had cast a bombshell among the company he could not have produced a greater surprise. Let us draw the kindly veil over the scene of humiliation.

The worst of it was that the story got out, and the poor Perfectionists were most unmercifully chaffed by the Philistines. They entertained a horror of German music from that date onward.

When Langley afterwards remonstrated with old Kaufmann for letting out the secret, the old fellow replied with a chuckle:

"My dear boy, I could not help it. Zey were so solemn. But I am afraid zey will neffer forgive me—or you either, you rascal."

And, as a matter of fact, relations have, to put it mildly, been strained between Langley and the Berkeleys ever since that fatal evening. But Miss Kerfew has quite forgiven him.

LONDON ON FOOT.

It is the Sunday before Ascot; the date is fixed for us not by the ecclesiastical calendar, but by certain signs that are visible on the highway. Now it is a four-horse coach that is being driven quietly along, a few horsey-looking men outside, and the inside filled with horses' clothing and kit-bags. Then comes a string of "flys" with horses ambling steadily past, and drivers half-dozing on their boxes, and evidently not on the job to-day, but making for some distant part. Again there is a fourgon of luggage, then a phaeton and two or three cabs loaded with miscellaneous items—hat-boxes and portmanteaux mixed with saddles, bridles, halters, and rugs. Mr. Spigot the East End publican and a few friends are jogging along in a roomy break, with wine and mineral-water cases stuffed here and there. And following these is a private omnibus, full of men-servants and maid-servants, with a batterie de cuisine and other household implements on the roof.

We could not go much "straighter" for Ascot than along the road through Brentford,

For dirty streets and white-legged chickens known,

and so by Hounslow, famed for highwaymen, where the road for Bath and Bristol forks off from that to Winchester and Salisbury. And then by Bedfont, long a haunt of the Driving Club in the days of the heroes of the road celebrated in song:

> Here's to the heroes of four-in-hand fame,
> Harrison, Peyton, and Ward, sir;
> Here's to the dragsmen that after them came,
> Ford and the Lancashire Lord, sir.

As a slight memorial of those happy days, stand the fighting cocks in Bedfont Churchyard, cunningly clipped out of "the yew-tree's shade." Having got thus far, there is Staines Bridge before us, with Egham close at hand and Ascot beyond.

With all this exceptional traffic for Ascot bound, there is also the usual Sunday concourse of vehicles, four-horse breaks and pleasure vans for Kew, Richmond, and Hampton Court. And bicycles stream along with stealthy whirl, threading in and out among the more ponderous vehicles. But one feature of the scene we miss: where is the useful familiar omnibus which on Sundays, instead of making fruitless journeys to Liverpool Street or the Bank, takes its customers for a pleasant jaunt to Kew Gardens or Richmond Park? Where is the regular 'busman, the driver smart and spruce with a flower in his button-hole, the conductor who, with his vehicle well filled, can snatch some leisure moments for his Sunday paper. Why tarry the wheels of their chariots?

Then somebody suggests "the omnibus strike," and the conviction strikes home that this threatened crisis has actually come to pass. Now strikes concern us not at present, nor the questions they involve; but the outward aspect of things under such conditions excites a good deal of interest. We may have seen London under a good many aspects—in gloom for disaster; in rejoicing for the soldiers' return; decked with flags for public pageants; or barred and shuttered in the fear of riot and disorder. But to adopt the words of the old Jacobite song, "Far we have travelled, and muckle have we seen"; but London without omnibuses never saw we yet.

As far as the train will take us towards the centre of affairs let us take a Sunday excursion. There are signs of excitement along the route; people gather on the kerbs and exchange chaff and slang with the drivers of any public vehicles that may be passing. There are omnibuses here and there to be seen, but of the private speculative character, and not belonging to any of the regular lines, and these are received with cheers and gratulatory shouts. Then we come to the stables of one of the companies, the gates closed, and proclamations of various kinds affixed to the gate-posts, while knots of men gather here and there, and a strong detachment of police try to keep people moving on. And now we are at the starting-point of an important route where hitherto rival companies have contended for the traffic. Here, on a fine Sunday afternoon, in a general way, there would be a constant stream, a double row of omnibuses arriving and departing, and, as the time for getting homeward arrived, a struggle for places, on the part of the public, all round. But now there is not an omnibus to be seen, and the wide roadway is pretty well filled with a respectable crowd, who form a hedge on each side of the traffic. And that is still considerable, in spite of the absence of the 'buses. Thomas, the coachman, with the rounded face and bulky limbs, the more genteel Jeames, who sits by his side, these have not struck, although jocularly adjured to do so by the crowd. And a number of fine carriages with high-stepping horses, and smart servants, and smart people inside, are driving westwards this Sunday afternoon. "They're off to their baccarat, they are," suggests a cynical bystander. And we hear stories of very jolly houses "out beyont," where Sunday stretches only as far as the gates of the pleasant, secluded grounds, and where all the games and diversions of the week are kept up on Sundays, only more so. Not that there is any reproach conveyed in such remarks.

The assistants, many of them more or less connected with omnibuses and horses, are generally of opinion that they "would like to have a go at it themselves." Equally do the early birds who are on their way to Ascot meet with approval:

> We have been there, and still would go,
> 'Twas like a little heaven below.

Such the general sentiment; while "if this only lasts, Bob, we'll see the Ascot Cup together."

There are plenty of females in the crowd: wives of the 'busmen and others interested in their welfare, and quite a number of children—boys especially—all neat and tidy, the 'busmen of the future. To-morrow those velvet jackets and neat knicker suits will have to be "put away," probably to make up the rent, and if there are no wages forthcoming next Saturday, where will Jacky and Tommy be then? Such forecasts, however, do not trouble the minds of the men, although perhaps they make the mothers anxious.

We all—who go on omnibuses—are by sight acquainted with the 'bus-driver's wife, a neat little woman, who lies in wait for the omnibus with a basket—sometimes also with a baby—containing—the basket, that is—the driver's hot dinner. She is a pretty good cook probably, for the steak pudding or the bit of beef and Yorkshire has an appetising savour. The conductor, by the way, generally has his dinnner cold, and keeps it under the cushion of the 'bus till he is ready for it.

These scenes are very well for Sunday, and afford a certain amount of distraction. But how will it be on Monday when London, intent on its business or its pleasure, finds not an omnibus to help it on its way? Well, Monday morning comes, and the omnibus strike looms hazily upon us, like an evil dream. The morning paper confirms the evidence of the senses. No 'buses to-day, or next to none. And yet, arriving at the usual starting-place, one half expects to find the omnibus waiting there. But all is a blank.

The annoyance is all the greater that we have grown accustomed to cheap fares, and to launch ourselves to and fro to any part of London at small cost and with tolerable promptitude. In fact, with certain limitations, where can we find a freer, easier, and pleasanter way of getting about than on the top of a London omnibus? The limitations alluded to are that when you most want the omnibus, you can't get it. It is a broken reed on a rainy day. But that is a defect inseparable from public vehicles; you are far worse off in Paris or Brussels. And, in addition, we have a tolerable system of railways serving the metropolis, and a very imperfect network of trams, the imperfection due to the prejudices of the Londoner, so that he has not cause for complaint. And all this makes an omnibus strike an inconvenience only, and preserves the metropolis from actual calamity.

But how to get to Piccadilly Circus without an omnibus? There is a way, certainly, by going half round London by Underground; but that also involves an omnibus for the last section of the journey, and who can say whether that railway omnibus may not have struck too? On the whole it is better to walk. And the attempt makes us feel how small we are in comparison with the immensity of London.

Soon, on the way, we come to the extensive stables and yard of the Road Car Company; the great gates closed, and policemen mounting guard over the doorway. Drivers and conductors hang about in groups, and discuss the situation. There are a few horsekeepers at work feeding the horses; but this is all that is going on at a place where, in a general way, there is so much well-regulated activity. Following the round, one feels that there is a certain sombreness and dulness in the aspect of things. There is plenty of ordinary traffic, and the tide of vehicles going to Ascot is setting in even more strongly than on Sunday. Here is the London cabman combining business with pleasure, and going for an outing which he hopes will bring profit as well as delight. Sometimes he takes his wife and family too, packed into the vehicle with layers of sacks full of chopped hay and straw, with oats, and perhaps beans—happy cab-horse!—in more modest proportions. And then there is the ever active army of tradesmen's carts, the vans loaded with every kind of merchandise; the carriages of the magnates of the City whirling away towards Temple Bar, the phaeton and high-steppers of the stockbroker. But how much we miss the useful, familiar omnibus! Their varied colours, red and blue, and green and white, although crude perhaps in themselves, and hardly satisfactory to the artist's eye, yet give much of their glitter and charm to the streets of London.

At Sloane Street corner not an omnibus to be seen; where are the crowds that came charging up from Fulham, from Brompton, from Walham Green, and from farthest Putney? There is not one to answer to the call; not a voice invites you to the Circus, to King's Cross or the Bank. You may go there if you like, but how and as you can. At Hyde Park Corner, where more streams unite, there is the same dismal blank. And along Piccadilly, although the world is well awake and carriages are abroad, shopping going on, and people driving to shows and exhibitions, yet half the zest and go of the street seems lost without the bright gleam of the cheerful, familiar 'bus. And when it is an affair of Piccadilly Circus, one writes Ichabod, in a metaphorical way, upon the paving-stones. For what had London to show more characteristic and unique than the constant arrival and departure of the 'buses at this or other well-known centres of traffic? It is the visible, audible pulse of life in the great City; we see the corpuscles hurrying along, we hear the heart beat, so to say, atoms of the great world are whirling visibly before the eyes. Beauteous women, and others as ugly, children in all the delight of youth, old age that is helped trembling down the steps, the myriads intent on some kind of toil, the thousands equally intent on pleasure, all the world indeed pass in and out of the omnibuses, are seen for a moment, and vanish in the great gulf.

And now the Circus is a blank. In spite of the whirl of vehicles, the hansoms as innumerable as the stars in the sky, the clash and clatter of all kinds of other vehicles, the place seems but dead and lifeless to us. For where is our well-known 'bus? In vain we watch for its coming, dexterously threading its way through the crowd of traffic to the well-known corner. Veteran of the London streets, do you feel yourself lost now and abandoned, a mere castaway drifting helplessly you know not where? Stay, there is a sail in sight! Actually an omnibus. It is a Pirate, it is true, but in such distress even a Pirate is a welcome sight.

MRS. DAWE'S LADY-HELP.

BY BARBARA DEMPSTER.

Author of "Through Gates of Gold," "A Dead Hand," "A Spring Moon," "His Guardian's Wife," "Those People," etc., etc.

CHAPTER II.

"To think of his coming here, now, of all times! With his vulgar plebeian talk—and the Bishop coming! Mamma, can't you send him away? He is dressed like a plough-boy. We really can't introduce him to the Bishop as our cousin!" and tears of vexation and disgust sprang into Minnie's pretty eyes. It was after breakfast the following morning.

Mrs. Dawe and the girls were in the morning-room. Miss Smith was there too, receiving orders for the day, or rather the week.

The Bishop of the Diocese was coming, at the end of it, to hold a confirmation. He was to arrive the previous day, and to sleep at the Vicarage. This necessitated many intricate arrangements in the domestic economy of the household, which, under Mrs. Dawe's government, was usually carried out in the most cheese-paring of systems. As these new arrangements all fell directly or indirectly upon Miss Smith, her work was well cut out for her.

"Why doesn't papa tell him to go?" exclaimed Gwen, the second daughter. "I'd soon get rid of him!"

"I wish to goodness we could," cried Mrs. Dawe, passionately. "If he weren't a relation," in a less violent tone, "we might speak more plainly. As it is, he will take no hints."

"I'm not afraid of him! I'll just tell him plainly——"

"You'll do nothing of the kind, Minnie!" said Mrs. Dawe, sharply, then she caught Miss Smith's eye and controlled herself again. "We can't be inhospitable. If he hasn't the feelings of a gentleman, and is too thick-skinned to see that he isn't wanted, we must put up with him. It's a painful thing to have to discuss before strangers," she said, turning to Miss Smith, and speaking in rather a forced tone. "But, I suppose, most families have a black sheep. James was brought up in our family as if he had been our own son—he is the son of Mr. Dawe's sister, who died when he was only seven, and he was a source of nothing but trouble and disappointment to us. He grew worse as he got older, and finally he ran away and left us. From that day to this, eight years ago, we have heard nothing of him. Now when he is at his last resources—a penniless pauper, he comes back to sponge on us," the voice rising into more genuine feeling, "and to disgrace us before——"

"The Bishop."

With a start everybody turned in the direction of the open window.

Outside, leaning against the creepers that clung about it, was Mr. James Brown. He stood there, absorbed apparently in the summer-garden scene before him, giving no sign of having spoken. Mrs. Dawe's face flushed scarlet and then paled with anger.

"Lounging about as usual!" she said. "You might go and see what your uncle is doing at the stables."

"All right, aunt," with cheerful alacrity moving away.

"It's dreadful!" cried Minnie. "He doesn't know what shame is! He's quite equal to telling the Bishop that he's employed in a 'store,' as he calls it," mimicking the nasal twang.

"And then his clothes!" exclaimed Gwen. "Did you ever see such shocking things? And he has no luggage but that little shabby bag; so, of course, he has no dress-suit. Surely!" as an appalling suspicion broke on her, "he won't expect to be at the dinner-party!"

"He will! Horrid fellow!" said poor Minnie, who had a most hopeful ambition, of which the Bishop's unmarried chaplain was the foundation-stone, "and he'll spoil everything!" with despairing, spiteful pathos.

"Poor relations are very awkward things," said Miss Smith, suddenly.

Mrs. Dawe looked at her sharply. She did not read in her lady-help's face, the meaning she expected to see there; but the annoying conviction that it was lurking all the same, in those unfathomable brown eyes, prompted her next speech.

"I do wish you wouldn't wear your hair in that shockingly untidy fashion, Miss Smith!" she said, snappishly; "it doesn't look respectable."

Miss Smith's only reply to the rudeness was to gaze innocently at the pretty head of Miss Dawe, who, in secret imitation of the picturesque arrangement of the lady-help's wavy hair, had ruffled her own smooth, silken locks into what she believed the same appearance of artistic disorder. A celebrated artist, who had spent a night at the Vicarage a week or two before, had actually had the extraordinary taste to express unlimited admiration for Miss Smith's head, and had even gone so far as to sketch it, unknown to her, as she gathered fruit in the garden. Minnie, who had seen the sketch, did not think it worth while to tell Miss Smith of the little incident. But she understood Miss Smith's calm glance now, and resented it hotly.

"You speak as if you had some experience of poor relations," she said, sneeringly. "But I suppose everybody has some."

"Don't be a donkey, Minnie," said Gwen, crossly, ashamed of the ill-bred speech. "Aren't you nearly ready to get dressed, mamma? There is Thomas with the pony-carriage, already," and she went off to get ready. Her mother followed. Partly from good-nature, partly from indolence, she hated these outbursts of family temper, and often longed—as intensely as she could long for anything—for a rich husband to appear on the scene, and carry her off into an atmosphere of peace and luxurious ease.

"I wish, Miss Smith," said Minnie, from the depths of the most comfortable chair in the room, "you would rearrange the drapery of my dinner-dress by Friday night. It is so stiff and ugly. Not that it makes much difference how one looks with a relation like James Brown at the table. Relation, indeed! He's done things bad enough to be turned out of any respectable house," with bitter significance.

"What has he done?"

"Well, it isn't very pleasant to talk about. But he's done pretty well all he can," spitefully. "The last thing he was caught in, was trying to break open papa's strong safe in his study."

The colour rushed deep and scarlet over Miss Smith's face. A sudden little recollection, brought back by Minnie's words, had come to her. It was, that she had found Mr. James Brown standing before the safe when she had returned to the study, with the butter. He had been contemplating it, with an absorbed interest, which struck her now for the first time. The crimson rush of colour, recalled Minnie from her petulant ill-humour.

"I oughtn't to have told you," she said, uneasily; "mamma and papa would be so angry. They made us promise never to repeat it. It was a servant, who came across the skeleton-key, after he left, in his room, who first found it out. She told people; but the story has been hushed up as well as we could. You won't let it go any farther, Miss Smith?"

"No," said Miss Smith, absently. She was looking, in imagination, into Mr. James Brown's dark eyes.

"If it got about that we had a cousin a thief, it would ruin everything!" The thought of the Bishop's chaplain bringing a lovely flush to her cheek. "It's bad enough as it is. But, anyway, Gwen and I mean to do our best to get rid of him before Friday. If papa and mamma are too kind to turn him out, we will make it so unpleasant for him," with an angry laugh, "that he will be only too glad, thick-skinned as he is—to go!"

The threat was well carried out. Mr. James Brown had arrived on the Monday. Before Wednesday was over, he had received enough girlish impertinences and snubs to make any man, who was troubled with even the smallest amount of sensitiveness, ashamed and uncomfortable. Mr. and Mrs. Dawe did not correct the girls, though they themselves were never guilty of any open show of rudeness or inhospitality. They treated the returned prodigal with the most frigid dignity. But a queer fancy came to Miss Smith, that they did not correct the two girls because they would have been glad to see him driven out of the house, though they did not wish to do it themselves.

As for Mr. James Brown himself, it was plain, as Gwen and Minnie indignantly and scornfully said, that he had no feelings of a gentleman left. He had no more sensitiveness than the door-mat on which they wiped their pretty little feet soiled with the dust of the country lanes. Scornful innuendoes, open insult, angry reproaches might fall about him like hail-storms, he always showed the same easy, obliging temper, performing any little service they would allow him to do for them, with the willing alacrity of an obedient spaniel.

Miss Smith, busy though she was—too busy to have time, except at meals, to exchange a word with him—saw it all.

As "one of the family" she always had her meals with them, when they were alone. Mr. James Brown not being looked upon as a visitor, the usual order of things continued, and she sat down at table with them. As Martha was utterly incompetent as a cook, and as Mr. Dawe's temper—it was called digestion—was seriously upset if the dishes were not to his taste, Miss Smith's share of the family repast, was often a broken one. She would come in flushed from the kitchen fire, after the others had sat down, having lingered to get the next course well on its way, and would often slip out once or twice again during the meal itself, to see that Martha had neither in her incapable flurry upset the sweets on to the hearth, nor dished up the savoury Mr. Dawe always liked with his dinner, for the benefit of the dog.

So that she might superintend these culinary details without creating a disturbance at the family table, her seat was placed nearest the door.

It was convenient, but draughty.

Gwen, one day, had made a comment on it, but as no one else cared for the place, and it was so obviously the most convenient position for one who had to combine "making herself useful" with being "one of the family," Miss Smith was left in undisturbed possession.

Mr. James Brown sat near her.

But he rarely addressed her. All his efforts were spent in making himself agreeable to his two pretty cousins.

On Wednesday evening the dinner happened to consist of various made-up dishes, which all required equal care. The first course was just finished when Miss Smith slipped into her place and sat down before her cold plate.

No one noticed that her dinner was cold.

Mrs. Dawe and the two girls were discussing, in an animated fashion, the placing of the guests for the grand dinner-party that was to be given in honour of the Bishop.

Mr. James Brown, apparently, for once felt that he had nothing to do with the conversation. In a general way, whatever subject it might embrace, he gave his opinion, whether it were asked for or not. No cold stares nor haughty snubs could suppress him.

Miss Smith's eyes, studiously bent on her plate during these family conversations, might probably have betrayed the high-bred indifference of her face which was only occasionally broken by a queer little quiver of the mouth. She sat down now and began to eat her dinner—or rather make a pretence of doing so—for half-cold hashed mutton was an abhorrence to her.

"And then that leaves Captain Hope to take in Miss Grantham," said Minnie, "and it is all arranged, thank goodness!"

"And who am I to take in—Miss Smith?" It was like a bombshell cast into the middle of the family dinner-table.

Even Miss Smith started and looked round at the audacious speaker.

Mr. James Brown leant back in his chair contemplating the amazement he had created.

"Oh—we——" stammered Minnie. "Well——"

"We never thought you would care to dine with us," said her mother, coming to her rescue. "You always used to hate dinner-parties."

"But I may have changed since then. I reckon I'd like to have a little spree with a real bishop," in his most pronounced nasal twang.

A gasp went round the family.

"We don't talk of 'sprees' where bishops are concerned," said his aunt, coldly.

"And it's as well not to drag in music-hall expressions before ladies," said his uncle, with pompous contempt.

"Yes—I think I should like to assist at this dinner-party," went on Mr. James Brown, as if he had heard nothing.

"But you can't!" exclaimed Gwen. "You've no dress-clothes!"

"Been looking in my bag?" mildly turning to her.

"Of course not!" she retorted, but flushing crimson.

"How do you know, then?" more mildly than before.

"Don't talk rubbish, James!" said Mrs. Dawe, angrily. "Is it likely the girls would do such a thing?"

"I thought it was a little queer," he said, reflectively.

The usually good-natured Gwen darted a furious look at him. She understood, if none of the others did, the real meaning of his words. He had caught her, the day after his arrival, standing by his open bag in his room. She had made some confused excuse which he had apparently believed.

"However," he said, brightening up again, "I must have some one to take in. May I take you in, Miss Smith?" turning with cheerful alacrity to her.

Mrs. Dawe and the girls flushed crimson with anger, confusion, and amazement. Miss Smith lifted her eyes from her plate and looked straight into his, not a ripple of feeling disturbing the gravity of her face; but from her eyes flashed a light of such quick mischief and laughter, that Mr. James Brown's were fairly dazzled before it.

"I couldn't very well come in to dinner," she said, gravely. "I have no evening dress with me, and some one must look after Martha!"

Mrs. Dawe and the girls were relieved. Miss Smith's graceful good-breeding had made things straight for them, and yet they felt most unreasonably angry with her.

"It was most impudent of James to drag her in!" said Gwen, when they were alone after dinner. "I felt quite sorry for her. I don't suppose she has ever had an evening dress in her life."

"It's all Miss Smith's fault," retorted Minnie. "It is that forward manner of hers, showing plainly that she expects everybody to treat her on an equality. After all, she's nothing but a servant, though she calls herself a lady-help! You made a great mistake, mamma, allowing her to have her meals with us."

"What could I do?" exclaimed Mrs. Dawe, fretfully. "You know she held out about that, and I couldn't afford to lose her. What with the difficulty in getting and keeping servants, in these days, one must put up with everything. And pushing and impertinent as she is, she can make herself very useful."

"And you'll have James making love to her, like he did to Miss Fane, and taking her part against us!" said Minnie. "It's just the sort of thing he would do—marry a servant."

"Don't talk like that, Minnie," exclaimed Gwen, who was recovering from her fit of anger. "She isn't quite a servant—and I'm sure I don't know what we should do without her. Suppose she went off at a moment's notice to-morrow, for instance, like a lot of the others have done?"

"Please," cried Mrs. Dawe, paling at the awful possibility, "don't say such things. Just mind how you speak to her, Minnie. And if I find James corrupting her mind against us, when we have always treated her with every consideration, I will turn him out of the house at all risks."

NOTE.

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CROSS CURRENTS.

BY MARY ANGELA DICKENS.

Author of "A Mist of Error," "Her Inheritance," "A Social Success," "Kitty's Victim," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXI.

EASTER was over, and it was the day after the production of the new play at Tyrrell's theatre, for which Selma had been rehearsing during Lent. Miss Tyrrell was lunching alone, and enlivening her luncheon with a desultory inspection of the criticism of the new piece in the morning papers which Tyrrell, who never took lunch, had just sent in to her from his study. The piece had been a success, and the notices, though not striking, were favourable; Miss Tyrrell, having gleaned the main points, found the detailed criticisms uninteresting, and, having finished lunch, she was idly re-reading the details given in one of the papers as to the distinguished audience which had been present, when the door opened and Tyrrell came in.

"Are you ready, Sybilla?" he said. "There is no hurry."

Miss Tyrrell, who had on her head an arrangement of feathers, which she would have described as a bonnet, put down her paper and looked up at him.

"I'm quite ready when you are," she replied. "We do not want to be there at the beginning, though, I think."

The function to which Miss Tyrrell and her brother were going together was a very fashionable charity concert, at which Selma was to recite, and as she stretched out her hand for her gloves, which lay beside her on the table, Miss Tyrrell said:

"Dear Selma seems to have made a sensation last night. I hope she won't be overtired."

Tyrrell laughed. He was looking very handsome and self-confident, and his fine physique showed no traces of the hard work the production of a piece always involved for him. Tyrrell was far too practical and keen a man to rely on his popularity to the extent of neglecting his business, and his work at the theatre during the last few weeks, though it was no part of his social system to pose as a hard-worked man, had been incessant and severe. His voice had a hard, self-confident ring as he answered:

"I think not. I don't think she has any intention of over-exerting herself this afternoon, unless she finds the congratulation she receives exhausting. Every one will go round to the artists' room this afternoon, no doubt."

"I had an idea that you thought she would do nothing with the part?" observed Miss Tyrrell.

"She did nothing with it at rehearsal, and she did nothing but the one scene last night. It was quite a sudden thing, and, by Jove, how strong it was!"

"Dear girl, she will be more run after than ever," murmured Miss Tyrrell, as she rose. To her, as to Helen, though from widely different causes, Selma's popularity was a rather overwhelming spectacle. The "dear girl" was certainly no longer to be patronised.

The first part of the concert was nearly over when the Tyrrells arrived, and as they reached their seats, in the interval between two songs, a curious change, which she fondly hoped was a youthful blush, passed over Miss Tyrrell's artistic countenance.

"Dear me!" she exclaimed, in quite a fluttering voice, "isn't that Lord Ellingham next us? Yes, it is! Ah! Lord Ellingham, how do you do?"

Lord Ellingham was the same elderly and well preserved gentleman as he had been when he assisted at Miss Tyrrell's tea-party so long ago, when the Duchess's matinée was first discussed. He had been a prominent member of artistic society for many years past; but in his youth and early manhood he had unfortunately found himself unable to concentrate his admiration of the beautiful as expressed in womanhood, and he was consequently still a bachelor. He was very well off, and it was dawning upon him that after a certain age the married state presents distinct advantages to man; with advancing years he was becoming an easy subject for delicate feminine diplomacy, and he responded to the charming smile bestowed upon him by Miss Tyrrell with an alacrity which warmed that lady's virgin heart.

"Fortune smiles on me," he remarked, gallantly.

Miss Tyrrell, after settling herself in her seat, and zealously emulating Fortune, turned to her brother:

"Don't trouble about me, John," she said, sweetly. "You said you wanted to see Selma, didn't you? You will find me here if you like to come back for me."

"Very well," he answered, quickly. "Yes, I am going round. Lord Ellingham, if I should not turn up again, you'll see my sister into a cab, I know." And with a gesture of farewell he turned away and disappeared.

If he had seen the look of comprehension with which Lord Ellingham followed him, he would have smiled as at the first sign of fruit from carefully-scattered seed. Nearly a month had gone by since the night when Tyrrell had marked out his course of action; he had pursued it steadily ever since, and was still pursuing, and beginning to look for results.

"Hallo, Brodie!" said Tyrrell, a minute or two later, as he turned into the passage leading into the artists' room; "what are you doing here?"

The man to whom he spoke, who was just in front of him, turned at the sound of his voice. He was a dramatic critic of a severe turn of mind, who was very rarely to be met behind the scenes.

"I want to speak to Duncan," he said, bluntly, as he returned Tyrrell's greeting; "and I want to get away before your protégée makes a fool of herself."

"Who do you mean by my protégée?" returned Tyrrell, quietly. "If you are speaking of Miss Malet, my dear fellow, don't you think it's time the protégé idea was exploded?" He paused a moment, and looked the other man full in the face with a great deal of meaning in his eyes, and then he said more lightly: "As to making a fool of herself, you are a sworn enemy to recitations, I know."

"I am," answered the other man, emphatically. "I am a sworn enemy to the depraving craving for something out of the common, which sends a fashionable audience into ecstasies over the recitation by Miss Malet of 'Twinkle, twinkle, little star,' or something equally soul-stirring. You can't see genius with a fool's-cap on every day of the week, consequently it's a bigger draw than genius in its native purple."

"You can't see the latter every day either, more's the pity," said Tyrrell, with a smile. "This is not the day for genius, Brodie!"

"It is not," returned the other, even more emphatically than before; "you're right, Tyrrell. When such a phenomenon does happen to come along, nowadays, the chances are ten to one that society gets hold of it, and makes it—what it's making of Selma Malet. That girl has genius—I said so when she first came out—and it broke out last night again in spite of everything; but she'll be little better than a professional beauty in a year or two."

Mr. Brodie stopped, suddenly remembering the new impression Tyrrell had given him when he disclaimed what he called the "protégé" notion—the startling impression that Tyrrell had another relationship with Miss Malet in view—but before he could find words in which to apologise, Tyrrell clapped him lightly on the shoulder, saying:

"You're a cynic, my dear fellow, and you don't appreciate popularity."

They reached the door of the artists' room on the words, and, as Tyrrell opened it, the sudden light and confusion of voices, coming in sharp contrast to the darkness and quiet of the passage, made the two men pause for a moment. Then some one said, "Shut the door or they'll hear in the room," and Tyrrell shut it quickly and went up to Selma.

The room was nearly full. Half the musical and dramatic profession were helping in the programme in some capacity or other, and a good many people, artistic and literary, who were not there on business, had taken advantage of the informal nature of the arrangements to come round to the artists' room to exchange comments on the production of the night before at Tyrrell's theatre, and to congratulate Miss Malet on her last success.

Selma was standing in the middle of the room receiving congratulations on all sides, radiant, beautiful, and triumphant. She was talking to Julian Heriot at the moment, and she turned gaily to Tyrrell, holding out her hand as he said, in a voice and with a smile which seemed to more than one of those who gave way to him to take possession of her in an indefinable way: "You are not overtired, I am glad to see!"

"Not in the least!" she answered, lightly. "Ah, Mr. Brodie, have you come to say something kind to me?"

She offered him her hand as she spoke with a smile that few men could have resisted, and Mr. Brodie looked at her for a moment with something in his keen eyes which was almost like pity.

"You wouldn't thank me for real kindness!" he said, rather grimly.

"That's what people say when they mean something too horrid!" cried Selma. "Did I do so badly last night?" she asked, with the laughing challenge of unassailable success.

"You did a great deal too well," was the answer. "But you did it in spite of yourself, and you would have done it better two years ago, if you will pardon my bluntness!" Mr. Brodie moved away with a slight bow as she turned to Tyrrell and Julian Heriot.

"Brodie revels in sardonic enigmas. If you've seen his notice of you in this morning's paper, Miss Malet," said Heriot, looking at her curiously, "you must know that he is consoling himself for the acute pain it is to him to praise." He paused a moment as she laughed merrily, with another keen look at her, wondering whether the truth of Mr. Brodie's just uttered words and the undertone of his published and more flattering criticism were really alike utterly unperceived by her, and then he said: "Well, I've no business here, I suppose, and I've a great deal of business elsewhere. That's painfully prompt, Miss Malet!" he added, as Selma instantly offered to shake hands with him.

"I'm setting you a good example!" she said, laughing. "You said when you came in that you hadn't a minute to spare, and you've been here half an hour. Good-bye, Mr. Heriot!"

"Good-bye, Miss Malet!" he responded, and with a gesture of farewell to Tyrrell he left the room.

Selma was turning to speak to a famous soprano, who had just come in, when Tyrrell stopped her.

"Come and sit down, Selma," he said, in a low voice, "I want to speak to you."

He drew her away from every one, made her sit down and stood over her, bending down now and then as he talked, obliging her by his attitude to look up at him. His words were all about business connected with the theatre, but they were inaudible to the rest of the room, and, by the time it came to her turn to recite, more than one glance had been directed towards them and more than one pair of eyebrows had been slightly elevated. He waited while she was on the platform, and when she came off, amid tumultuous applause after giving a recitation little more artistic than that foretold by Mr. Brodie, he said, in a voice which was audible to several people:

"Is your sister coming for you or may I take you home?" He had never suggested such a thing before; but Selma, flushed, laughing, and excited after any number of rapturous "calls," did not notice.

"Helen is coming," she said. "I expect she is waiting. Will somebody please find my cloak."

There was an instantaneous rush in search of it, and when it appeared Tyrrell took it calmly from the indignant young man who was bearing it proudly on his arm, put it on for her, and, apparently quite oblivious of the expression — or rather expressions, for they were numerous and conflicting—on the countenance of the defrauded one, took her away as one whose right it was to do so.

The action, trivial as it was in itself, was made significant by his manner, and it came as a climax on the impression that their previous tête-à-tête had made. As they disappeared, there was a moment's silence in the room, and then Nora Glynn's hard little voice made itself heard.

"It seems to me," she said, significantly, as she turned to the looking-glass to touch herself up preparatory to going on the platform, "it seems to me that we are all going to have a surprise."

John Tyrrell had not studied the follies or foibles of mankind in general, and London society in particular, for five-and-twenty years in vain. He had created the impression he intended to create, and as the season progressed he kept it cleverly before his world, never forcing it, never hurrying it, but never letting it die out. But the cleverest and most admirably calculated scheme can be helped on in its developement by all kinds of unconsidered trifles; and about a month after the concert Tyrrell's plans were materially advanced by a small being, of whose existence he was hardly aware—the little brown-eyed Helen.

It was an afternoon late in April, and Helen and Selma were standing on the landing outside the nursery door, the latter dressed — and very elaborately dressed — for walking. Helen's usually bright face looked as though she were being torn by conflicting emotions; but she shook her head decidedly.

"I couldn't bear to leave her," she said. "Of course I'm dreadfully disappointed because of Imogen; but it would be worse to be thinking about her all the time."

It was the day of the private view of the Royal Academy. Humphrey's picture had been hung in an excellent place; it had made a great sensation on the varnishing days; at the press view there had been rumours abroad that it would be the most prominent picture of the year; and under these circumstances Selma had insisted that Helen should go with her to the private view instead of leaving her to go with Miss Tyrrell. Tyrrell, hearing of the arrangement, and hearing also that no known force would succeed in dragging Humphrey to such a function, had suggested that he should call and go with them; and though he had never done such a thing before, and Selma told him laughingly that he was anxious to be at hand to act repression to her success, she had agreed to it as a delightful arrangement. And now the afternoon had arrived, Tyrrell was waiting in the drawing-room, and little Helen had a little cold. Big Helen, between her wifely pride and her motherly anxiety, had been nearly torn in two. But little Helen had won the day, as had been inevitable from the first, and her mother laid her hand once more on the nursery door, as she said:

"Go down, dear! Mr. Tyrrell has been waiting ever so long."

"Mr. Tyrrell can wait!" answered Selma, lightly. "Oh, I am so sorry, Nell. Is she asleep?" with a little gesture towards the nursery, "May I come in and look at her?"

"Come quietly," said Helen. She opened the door very softly as she spoke, and they went in together, and stood by the little cot which held half Helen's world. The brown eyes were shut now, the breath was coming softly and easily, and the little face was flushed with sleep. There was a little dimpled fist lying clenched on the pillow, and as Helen stood by with all the disappointment gone from her face, Selma, after standing for a moment looking down at her small niece, suddenly stooped and lifted the little fingers very tenderly to her beautiful lips. Then she turned away and kissed her sister little less tenderly.

"Good-bye, dear," she said, "I shan't pity you."

A minute or two later she had passed quickly downstairs, and had opened the drawing-room door.

"I'm afraid you've been waiting," she said, as Tyrrell came forward to meet her. "We shall have to go without Helen, I'm sorry to say. My niece—I don't believe you knew I was an aunt—has a cold in her tiny head."

"I did know it," returned Tyrrell; "it's a very proud position—for your niece." He paused a moment as Selma turned away with a laughing, petulant gesture. She always took such speeches from him as sarcastic reflections on the homage she received. Then he said, slowly: "Mrs. Cornish cannot go with us? Then, we go alone?"

Selma turned to him with a laugh.

"Obviously, Mr. Tyrrell; shall we quarrel, do you think?"

"I think not," he returned, looking at her, quietly.

"Then we had better start," she said, with her attention concentrated on the glove she was buttoning. "I want to see Imogen, and there will be no seeing anything in another half hour. You look very thoughtful," she added, as she lifted her head and met his eyes. "Are you angry with poor little Helen?"

"No," returned Tyrrell, quietly, as he opened the door for her; "I am not at all angry with poor little Helen."

His feelings towards that small and unconscious assistant were cordiality itself when they arrived at Burlington House.

It was early in the afternoon; the rooms were hardly filled, and people were on the look-out for the appearance of celebrities of all kinds. Selma's entrance would, in any case, have been one of the events of the afternoon, and before they had passed through the first room, Tyrrell was aware that his well-satisfied anticipations were more than realised. The sensation produced by their arrival together was immense. Selma herself was, perhaps, the only person in the room who was entirely unconscious and untouched by it. She had not been for two seasons in society for nothing; she would have understood the position quickly enough if any other man had been concerned. But with Tyrrell, old habit was stronger than her new perceptions. That any one should look upon him in any other light than that of her "oldest friend" simply never entered into her head. She would have walked about with him all the afternoon if he, thinking it better to content himself with their entrance, and with the fact that they were met in the first room by two of the greatest gossips in London, had not looked up his sister and quietly contrived that she should be seen with them on and off all through the afternoon.

"Give my love to poor little Helen," he said to Selma, as he put her into a hansom. "Are you coming with us to the Stanhopes' to-night?"

"No," she said, "I refused. I——" but the policeman, who was presiding over the departures from Burlington House, did not wait for her explanation, and she was driven away.

It was a large "at home" to which Tyrrell had referred, and when he arrived alone with his sister that night, there was more than one murmured exclamation of disappointment. Nearly all the people in the room had been to the private view, and were eager to see further developements of the romance which had been whispered about for weeks, and which had assumed such solid proportions in the eyes of society that afternoon. Everybody was talking of Humphrey Cornish's picture of Miss Malet, and everybody had something indefinite to add about Miss Malet and Mr. Tyrrell.

Miss Tyrrell was beginning to wonder why every one looked at her with the same inquiring smile as they spoke of the Imogen picture. She had early established it as a principle that all the credit of Selma's success was due to her, Miss Tyrrell, and that consequently admiration of Selma was subtle homage to her discoverer; but she thought to-night that that particular form of homage was rather overdone. She had a little private disappointment, too, of her own, and she was feeling languidly bored when she suddenly revived to a marvellously artistic interest in life in general, and in the elderly gentleman who was approaching her with the jaunty alacrity of early youth in particular.

"How do you do, Lord Ellingham?" she said. "I had no idea you were here."

Lord Ellingham had just come up from the supper-room, where he had spent the last half-hour with an elderly and unamiable dowager, and he responded eagerly to Miss Tyrrell's graceful and gracious reception. She was very amiable, and she did not look elderly.

"You were not at the private view," she said. "That was very wrong. I consider it such a duty to make myself acquainted with the progress of Art in one's own country, though the progress, alas! is small enough."

"I agree with you," answered Lord Ellingham, promptly—he could have found it in his susceptible heart to disagree with nothing so insinuatingly enunciated by a lady—"I agree with you. I was not there, unfortunately, but I have heard all about it." Lord Ellingham spoke with what Miss Tyrrell mentally and very ungrammatically designated as "everybody else's exasperating smile." As a matter of fact, the only thing he had heard about the private view was the interesting statement that Miss Malet and Mr. Tyrrell had been there alone together; and he continued: "Is Miss Malet here to-night? I hear her portrait is the picture of the year. I hear, too," he added, with a meaning smile, producing one of the many details as to John Tyrrell's intentions, which society had been busily employed all the evening in fabricating, "I also hear that Tyrrell has bought it."

"That my brother has bought the Imogen!" exclaimed Miss Tyrrell. "My dear Lord Ellingham, what an idea!"

"Is it so unlikely?" answered Lord Ellingham, with another smile, and then Miss Tyrrell caught his eye, and a flood of light rushed in upon her. It brought with it such a sudden revelation, and the dreadful probability of the idea suggested to her became so instantly apparent that it absolutely took away her breath. What was to society rather a joke, was to the present mistress of John Tyrrell's house little less than a thunderbolt, and Lord Ellingham's fate was sealed on the instant.

"It seems to me unlikely," was what she said, suavely enough. "An actor, my dear Lord Ellingham, is unfortunately not a millionaire. It is hardly one of the pictures with which I should like to live—a little crude, I consider it."

"I wish we could compare notes on the subject," answered Lord Ellingham. "Have you been in the conservatory this evening? It is really very charming. Ah, there are your brother and Lady Latter," he added, as he moved away with Miss Tyrrell to be charmed by the effect of coloured lamps and palms, bowing as he spoke to Lady Latter.

Lady Latter returned his bow and then turned again to Tyrrell. They were standing together at the end of the room, he leaning up against the wall in a careless characteristic attitude, she playing with a large feather fan. They were carrying on a conversation in tones little lower than usual. The room was crowded, and yet as she looked for a moment straight into his eyes, something seemed to rise round them and shut them off alone together in a solitude which nothing could destroy. She turned her head away again immediately, unfurling her fan lightly as she did so, and there was something in her eyes, something which dominated their usual insolent audacity, which made the careless tone in which she spoke almost horrible by force of contrast.

"Who would have accused you of being so commonplace?" she said.

"I am happy to say that no one has ever accused me of eccentricity!" returned Tyrrell; his voice was as imperturbable as was his handsome face.

"Is the position as comfortable and dignified as it looks?" she asked, with a laugh.

"I beg your pardon?"

"The position of 'follower' to a fashionable beauty! It is a new part for you—generally cast to younger men or to old fools. I hope you are enjoying it?"

"May I ask by whom I am 'cast' as you say for the part in question, and who is the heroine of the romance?" inquired Tyrrell, calmly.

Lady Latter shot a quick glance at him and bit her lip.

"What innocence!" she said. "Well, you have educated your protégée to some purpose; and you are in good company! She has been talked about with nearly every man in London worth mentioning in the course of her three seasons."

For one instant, there was a gleam in Tyrrell's eyes as he turned his head slowly towards her which boded Lady Latter no good. But, as he looked at her, his intention apparently altered, and he looked away as indifferently as before, bowing to some one on the other side of the room. Lady Latter seemed to be losing her self-control; the laugh with which she had finished her speech was harsh and unpleasant, and her eyes sparkled evilly.

"I have never heard that solid foundations were a requisite of society gossip!" said Tyrrell.

"You were taking unnecessary trouble to provide it with solid foundations this afternoon, then," returned Lady Latter, with another laugh. "Or, perhaps you think that the protégé fiction is all protective. It is a pretty fiction, and useful, I have heard." She was still moving her fan carelessly to and fro, but all her self-command seemed to be concentrated in her preservation of her negligent attitude. She looked with glittering, unseeing eyes at Julian Heriot in the distance to whom she should have bowed, and her words came rapidly and recklessly as though she hardly knew what she said. Tyrrell looked at her again, and his eyes were very calculating and very hard.

"Had you not better recognise Heriot?" he said, quietly. "What has he done that you should cut him?"

She paused a moment, and then, as she faced him with her dark face, darker than ever with impotent rage, he said, slowly and deliberately: "Of the protective capacities of useful fictions no one is better calculated to judge than Lady Latter. I am afraid I am monopolising your attention!"

He bowed slightly and turned away.

It was a fairly long drive home for John Tyrrell and his sister that night, but not a word was spoken by either on the way. Each appeared to have something to think of.

THROUGH PERSIA TO INDIA.

THE most natural route for any one who desires to ride from Europe to India would be a prolongation of Burnaby's famous ride to Khiva, and MacGahan's ride to Merv, and so through either Afghanistan or Cashmere to the line of the British Raj. But although the days of what the Duke of Argyll facetiously called "Mervousness" are over in this country, the days of Russian jealousy of British travellers in Central Asia are not. Thus it came about that Mr. de Windt, who once travelled all the way from Pekin to Calais by land, and who formed the project of riding from the Caspian Sea, by Merv and Bokhara, to Cabul and the Indian frontier, found himself checked at Tiflis by the Governor-General of the Caucasus, with the order, "No road this way." It was awkward and disappointing, but there are as many roads to India as to Rome, and if one cannot get through Turkestan, there is no Russian embargo in Persia and Baluchistan. Thus compelled to alter his plans, Mr. de Windt determined to make for Quetta by way of Teheran—a curiously roundabout way, if you look at the map, but yet one full of interest and novelty. From the recently published narrative* of the journey we glean the following particulars.

Tiflis, of course, has been often mentioned by travellers, but perhaps never yet fully realised by the stay-at-home. It is a sort of connecting link between Europe and Asia—a city of contrasts and of composite population—a mixture of Georgian and German, Persian and French, Russian and Circassian, Tartar and Armenian, Greek and Jew. In appearance the city is a blend of Paris and say, Bokhara, but the Asiatic features are very pronounced and picturesque, especially in the bazaars. There you may daily see the stalwart Russian soldier in green tunic, the Arab merchant in white robe and turban, the Georgian and Circassian in scarlet tunic, the Turk in fez and frock coat, Greeks and Albanians in their national petticoats, Khivans in furs and funny conical hats, Tartars, Turcomans, Parsees, and Negroes, bartering after the approved Oriental manner, within a stone's-throw of an elegant boulevard, with European shops, cafés, tramways, and the electric light. What a shock for good Haroun Alraschid!

It is sad to think that the commercial morality of the bazaars is not above suspicion—at any rate when the Frank is the purchaser. "It takes two Jews to rob an Armenian, and two Armenians to rob a Persian," says the proverb of the place; but anybody can rob a wretched Faringhi.

From Tiflis there is now a railway to Baku, on the shores of the Caspian—a city of petroleum and sixty thousand inhabitants, essentially European in character. Fifty years ago it was only a tumble-down, fourth-rate Persian settlement, and now is becoming rapidly one of the richest cities of the East, by reason of its naphtha springs, which yield some one hundred and seventy thousand tons of oil yearly. Everybody thinks, talks—almost eats and drinks—petroleum. The atmosphere is saturated with it, and for miles around the city there is not a trace of vegetation—nothing but bleak, desolate steppe and marsh.

There is no temptation for any one unconnected with the mineral oil industry to linger at Baku; but there the steamer must be taken to convey you to the Persian shore of the Caspian. It is one thing to arrive at the further shore and another thing to land at Enzelli, the port for Reshdt. There is a dangerous bar across the harbour with only five feet of water, so that when there is any wind blowing, which is generally, the passengers for Enzelli have to go back to Baku. Mr. de Windt could not land, but he would not go back to the city of naphtha again, so he resolved to risk a run through the surf at a place called Astara, and from there make his way to the regular Persian post-road. It was a difficult and a dangerous plan, attended with much discomfort, but it succeeded, and in a few days the traveller, attended by a Levantine servant well acquainted with Persian, was en route for the capital of the Shah.

The road lay through Reshdt, the great junction of the traffic between Persia and Eastern Europe, but reputed the most unhealthy city in Persia. Its very name is said to mean death, and a proverb runs, "If you wish to die, go to Reshdt." It is one of the dampest places in the world, where the sun is seldom seen, and where, even on a rainless day, the clothes become saturated with moisture. Reshdt fever is a terrible disease, due partly to this moisture and the exhalations from the marshes, and partly to the bad water. The town, however, is prettily situated, and its society includes about a score of Europeans.

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* "A Ride to India across Persia and Baluchistan," by Harry de Windt, F.R.G.S. (Chapman and Hall, Limited).

The traveller in Persia has the choice of two modes of progress—either by caravan, which is a slow and tedious process, or by post (or "chapar"). This last is usually adopted by Europeans, but can only be done on one of the Government post-roads, which, however, are often mere tracks, more or less hidden by drifting sand or snow, which can be only followed by an experienced post-boy ("shagird chapar"). The distance between the ramshackle edifices serving for post-houses is usually about twenty miles, and the posting charge is twopence-halfpenny per mile per horse, with a small pourboire to the "shagird." The horses, however, are nearly as bad as the roads and the post-houses.

It is the month of January when Mr. de Windt begins his adventurous ride, notwithstanding that the whole country is wrapped in snow, and that couriers report the roads into the interior to be almost impassable. He is too anxious to get on towards India to be daunted by thoughts of snowdrifts in a land always associated with roses, and sunshine, and luxurious indolence. The first day's march gives a fair foretaste of the hardships and discomforts to be encountered. The first night in a Persian post-house is instructive.

"Imagine a small one-storied building, whitewashed save where wind and rain have disclosed the brown mud beneath. A wooden ladder—half the rungs missing—leads to the guest-chamber, a large, bare room devoid of furniture of any kind, with smoke-blackened walls and rotten, insecure flooring. A number of rats scamper away at our approach. A large hole in the centre of the apartment affords an excellent view of the stables, ten or twelve feet below, admitting at the same time a pungent and overpowering odour of manure and ammonia. A smaller room—a kind of ante-chamber—leads out of this; as it is partly roofless, I seek, but in vain, for a door to shut out the icy cold blast. Further search in the guest-room reveals six large windows, or rather holes, for there are no shutters, much less window-panes. It is colder here, if anything, than outside, for the draughts are all ways at once; but we must, in Persia, be thankful for small mercies."

And so, toiling through snowdrifts, and finding accommodation at nights in such places as that described, the travellers are at length gladdened by the sight of the dingy brown walls, mud houses, and white minarets of Teheran, the city of the Shah. There, at least, is to be found European society, and all, or most, of the luxuries of civilisation.

Strange mixture, too—this city of the Shah—of narrow, dark, tortuous streets leading into large squares with running water in deep tanks in the centre, after the Persian fashion, and broad, tree-lined boulevards leading through the European quarter to the Palace of the Shah, otherwise "Asylum of the Universe," and "King of Kings." As seen from the outside, the palace is a shapeless, ramshackle structure, with whitewashed walls covered with gaudy red and blue pictures of men and horses, the figures being rudely drawn. "The interior is a pleasant contrast to the outside, although even here, in the museum, which contains some of the finest gems and 'objets d'art' in the world, the various objects are placed with singular disregard of order, not to say good taste. One sees, for instance, a tawdrily-dressed mechanical doll from Paris, standing next to a case containing the Darai Nor, or 'Sea of Light,' a magnificent diamond obtained in India, and said to be the largest yet discovered, though somewhat inferior in quality to the Koh-i-noor. A cheap and somewhat dilapidated cuckoo-clock and toy velocipede flank the famous globe of the world in diamonds and precious stones. This, the most costly and beautiful piece of workmanship in the place, is about eighteen inches in diameter, and is said to have cost eight millions of francs. The different countries are marked out with surprising accuracy and detail, Persia being represented by turquoises, England by diamonds, Africa by rubies, and so on, the sea being of emeralds. The museum itself is about sixty feet in length, by twenty-four feet broad, its ceiling composed entirely of looking-glasses, its parquet flooring strewn with priceless Persian rugs and carpets. Large oil-paintings of Queen Victoria, the Czar of Russia, and other sovereigns surround the walls, including two portraits of Her Majesty the ex-Empress Eugenie. It would weary the reader to wade through a description of the jade-work and 'cloisonné,' the porcelain of all countries, the Japanese works of art in bronze and gold, and last, but not least, the cut and uncut diamonds and precious stones temptingly laid out in open saucers, like bonbons in a confectioner's shop. The diamonds are, perhaps, the finest as regards quality; but there is a roughly cut ruby surmounting the imperial crown said to be the largest in the world."

The next stage in the journey was a ride of about two hundred and eighty miles from Teheran to the ancient and famous city of Ispahan; but short as the distance was, it occupied about a week, owing to the deep snow. On the road is passed the sacred city of Koom, a city of mosques and sepulchres, mostly in a state of dilapidation. Here is the mosque containing the tomb of Fatima, with dome covered with plates of gold, or of a substance which is believed to be gold. The renowned Fatima El Masonna ("Free from Sin") died here on her way to the city of Tus, where she was going to visit her brother. Arriving at Koom, she heard of the death of her brother, and died herself of a broken heart. The legend goes that the body of Fatima was carried to heaven soon after her death; but here, at any rate, is her tomb and the great mosque ordered to be erected to her memory by Shah Abbas.

Koom was once a very extensive place, but now accommodates only some ten or twelve thousand inhabitants. It has a large bazaar, and is noted for a white porous earthenware, but has otherwise neither commerce nor art. In appearance it is more like a Spanish or Moorish than a Persian city, with picturesque white houses, coloured domes, gay awnings, and carved balconies overhanging the river.

Thereafter the road lightens, the snow disappears, and the face and character of the country can be perceived. It is a fertile land, but not so fertile as it might be made by irrigation. Persian soil naturally laughs with harvest when tickled with a hoe, with little oases of grain and garden even in the most sterile deserts. What a land it might become with systematic cultivation, and with fair and just treatment of the peasantry, now crushed to the earth by oppression and exactions of all kinds!

No reader of Eastern tales but has cherished fond delusions of sherbet, and no schoolboy but has fancied he possesses the real thing in the acidulated powder which "fizzes" so provokingly when you are thirsting for a drink. The real Persian sherbet seems to be simply a glass of cold water with a lump of sugar in it; but it may be flavoured endlessly. Thus there are sherbets prepared with syrups of raspberry or pineapple, with lemon, orange, or pomegranate juice. The water must be always cold, and, if possible, have blocks of frozen snow floating in the cup, but the mixture should never effervesce. Thus perishes another illusion. The most expensive of all sherbets, popular only among the higher classes, is made from the distilled flowers of a particular kind of willow.

Ispahan is another city of ruins, said to be fifteen miles in circumference, one-third of which consists only of heaps of stones marking the remains of former palaces and dwellings. In 1667, Chardin stated the population at over a million; to-day it is under fifty thousand. The governor's palace, and the Palace of the Forty Pillars, are the only buildings that retain any signs of their former glory. The first-named has a dome of wonderful tile-work, a pair of massive carved and embossed gates of solid silver, a fine well-kept garden with huge marble tanks of water, in the centre of which is the Madrassa, or college, the residence of the students, consisting of sixty queer little boxes, ten feet by six, with walls covered with beautiful arabesques.

The Palace of the Forty Pillars is more imposing in name than in reality. There are, in fact, only twenty pillars, which are supposed to be doubled by reflection in a dull and somewhat dirty pool at their feet. The palace is a tawdry, gimcrack structure, painted in abominable taste, but famed until lately for containing the most beautiful and costly carpet in all Persia. Here are many pictures of Shah Abbas and of various incidents in his career—he is the most renowned and beneficent ruler Persia has ever had—and here also, curiously enough, are some old English portraits of the time of Queen Elizabeth.

Ispahan, as every schoolboy knows, was once the capital of Persia, but it has long fallen from its high estate, and now its chief trade is in opium and tobacco. Some silks and satins are made to a not very considerable extent, and also sword blades of an inferior quality. The streets are narrow, but not so narrow as the twin city of Djulpa, the Armenian settlement which adjoins the old Persian capital. There the widest street is not ten feet across, and a third of the width is filled up by a deep ditch and a drain lined with trees. Djulpa is clean and well kept as compared with Ispahan, but it is also a city of ruins and of departed greatness. In the neighbourhood are the celebrated shaking minarets, two towers of mud so constructed that any person standing on the roof of the building between them can by a slight movement cause both to vibrate.

The country immediately surrounding Ispahan is dreary desert, but then comes a long stretch of cultivated land between Ispahan and Shiraz, the city of Persian poetry. Much of this land is given up to the cultivation of the poppy, and the production of opium is now a great and growing industry in Persia, where, however, the drug is not smoked, but taken in the form of small pills.

Wine-making, also, prevails more or less all over Persia, and is conducted in a primitive manner. The grapes are trodden out in a large earthenware pan, and the whole mass is stowed away in jars of twenty to thirty gallons. A little water is added, and in a few days fermentation begins. The whole is then stirred up twice a day for ten or twenty days, after which the refuse is allowed to sink to the bottom of the jars, and the wine is drawn off and bottled. It is considered fit to drink in about forty days. The wine of Shiraz is the best in Persia. It is a white and very sweet wine, which developes in three or four years a nutty flavour, but after that begins to acquire an unpleasant sweetness again. The fault of all the Persian wines seems to be excessive sweetness; but the country seems capable of producing good vintages with proper management. The consumption, too, is considerable, notwithstanding the supposed prohibition of the Mahommedan faith.

Very curious are some of the Eastern domestic practices. Thus, death is as much a ceremony as marriage. As soon as the doctors have pronounced a case hopeless, the friends and relations of the sick man crowd into his chamber, and while drinking tea and sherbet, and smoking their hubble-bubbles, watch the dying agonies of their friend. Such a scene is described by Mr. de Windt: "The wife of the dying man sits at his side, occasionally holding to his nostrils the Persian substitute for smelling salts, i.e., a piece of mud torn from the wall of the dwelling and moistened with cold water. As a last resource a fowl is often killed and placed, warm and bleeding, on the patient's feet. This being of no avail, and death having taking place, the wife is led from the apartment, and the preparations for interment are commenced. Wet cotton-wool is stuffed into the mouth, nose, and ears of the corpse, while all present witness aloud that the dead man was a good and true Mahommedan. The body is laid out, a cup of water is placed at its head, and a moollah, ascending to the roof of the house, reads in a shrill nasal tone verses from the Koran. The professional mourners then arrive, and night and day is made hideous with their cries, while the washers of the dead proceed with their work."

About a hundred miles from Ispahan, on the road to Shiraz, is the strange rock-village of Jezdi-Ghazt. It is built on the summit of a rock about half a mile long, cut off by a deep abyss which is crossed by a drawbridge. There is but one narrow street, covered with striped awnings and wooden beams. The houses are mortised into the rock, and all the windows face outwards to the desert, none towards the street. This place traces its history to a point long before the Mahommedan conquest, and is inhabited by a lawless population of some five hundred, who are a terror to the neighbouring towns and villages. Owing to the peculiar habit of discharging all the sewage of the town down the face of the cliff, it has been nicknamed by the Turks "Filth Castle."

Shiraz, more than any place, comes up to one's conception of what a Persian city ought to be—lapt in gardens, and bathed by fountains, and languorous with the odours of roses and cedar. It stands in a beautiful fertile plain some twenty-five miles by twelve, surrounded by barren mountains, beyond which again is a dreary waste. Outside the walls the plain is smiling with fields of wheat, and barley, and maize, while nestling up to them are the shady gardens and the bowers of rose and jasmine, dear to Persian poets. Thirteen centuries ago Shiraz was founded, but during the last two centuries it has gone steadily downwards. The population is now less than half of what it used to be, and the streets which are overthrown by frequent earthquakes are never rebuilt. Apathy seems to be the "note" of the land of the King of Kings. Even the famous gates—one of them a miracle of tile-work—are crumbling away, and only the mosques are kept in anything like order. There are fifteen large ones, with gilded domes, besides numerous smaller edifices, and all are jealously guarded from the heretic.

The climate of Shiraz is delicious, but is declared to be most dangerous. It is said to be a hotbed of disease, and is called the Fever-box. This is due to the miasma which arises from the plains after the heavy spring rains, when the water stagnates under a blazing sun. Cholera, too, breaks out here with fearful violence every two or three years; so that, poetic and beautiful as it looks, Shiraz is not a desirable place for permanent residence.

The fruit of Shiraz is famed, and the plains yield two harvests a year of rice, cotton, maize, and garden produce. Unfortunately, the peasants do not benefit much from the bounty of nature, as they are ground down and oppressed to the last degree. They have no inducement to improve their condition or save money, because as soon as they begin to accumulate they are compelled by the rulers to disgorge.

Some very fine, delicate tobacco is grown here — tobacco which is never exported. It is smoked in a narghileh, that is, through water. Here, in days of old, used to be some five hundred weaving-factories for silk and carpets. Now there are only ten, making a coarse white cotton material, and a few cheap rugs. There is a little glass and pottery making and some work in mosaic, while the people of Shiraz are famed for being the best penmen in the East.

Of course, everybody knows that Shiraz was the home of Hafiz, the great poet of Persia. His body is buried beneath a block of solid marble planted in a shady cypress grove, just outside the city, and surrounded by the Garden of the Seven Sleepers, which is the favourite summer resort of the Shirazis. An expanse of smooth-shaven lawn, white beds of lily and narcissus, marble tanks bubbling over with clear cold water, and gravelled paths winding in and out of the trees to where, a hundred yards or so distant, a sunk fence divides the garden from a piece of ground two or three acres in extent—a perfect jungle of trees, shrubs, and flowers. Here, from about four p.m. till long after sunset, you may see the Shirazi taking his rest undisturbed, save for the ripple of running water, the sighing of the breeze through the branches, and croon of the pigeons overhead. Now and again the tinkle of caravan bells breaks in upon his meditations, or the click-click of an attendant's sandals as he crosses the tiled floor of the kiosque with sherbet, coffee, or kalyan; but the interruption is brief. A few moments and silence again reigns supreme, the perfection of rest, the acme of the "dolce far niente."

The women of Persia are allowed more liberty than those of other Oriental countries, and it is common enough to see ladies unattended in the bazaars of Ispahan and Shiraz. The women, however, are ignorant and indolent, and more frail than fair. Indeed, we are assured that female beauty is rather a rarity in Persia, in spite of the poets.

From Shiraz to Bushire involves a stiff climb over a mountain-pass, not without risk to life and limb. At Bushire the Persian Gulf is reached, with steam communication with all the world. Mr. de Windt, however, only took passage across the Gulf to Sonmiani, on the shores of Baluchistan, and there resumed his ride. The coast line of Baluchistan is said to be six hundred miles long, and to be marked by just one solitary tree, which serves alike as a landmark and a standing joke.

Not a trace of vegetation can be seen on the seaboard from Persian to Indian frontier, and just now and then a mud hut to show that the country is not utterly uninhabited. The cliffs rise steeply from the sea to sharp, spire-like summits.

Sonmiani is a small place at which the steamers call to pick up such cargo as may be sent down from more favoured districts in the north. It is a collection of dilapidated mud huts in a howling wilderness of rock and scrub. This is fairly typical of most of the country between the seaboard and Kelat, to which our traveller was bound, much of which had never before been traversed by a European. There is not much temptation for another to follow him except at the call of duty or science, for the land is bleak and the people uncouth.

The Baluchs are nomads, their country is barren, and they have neither manufactures nor commerce. Therefore, with the exception of Quetta, Kelat, Beila, and Kej, there are no towns, and Quetta is really a British settlement. The other towns named are mere collections of tumble-down mud huts, with a ramshackle wall and fortress. The nomads live in tents made of bent poles covered with coarse camel's-hair cloth, or dried palm leaves. At Beila, however, is some cultivation and some appearance of trade in the bazaar. Here Mr. de Windt found not only cutlery and Manchester goods, but also photographs of Mrs. Langtry, Ellen Terry, Nelly Farren, and other popular actresses.

Kelat, which attained such prominence during the Russo-Asiatic scare of a few years ago, is a place of some fifteen thousand inhabitants, picturesquely situated on the edge of a fertile plain, cultivated with wheat, barley, and tobacco. The town is built in terraces up the sides of a limestone cliff, some hundred and fifty feet in height. The palace of the Khan occupies the summit and overhangs the town, defended by a few imposing-looking, but practically useless, cannon. The garrison consists of about a thousand Afghans, chiefly deserters, ragged and undisciplined. The Khan is as much afraid of his army as his subjects are, and to keep them happy allows them to periodically raid and loot the surrounding villages. The town is a filthy and unhealthy one, and art and industry are as stagnant as trade.

Mr. de Windt had an interview with the Khan, whose general appearance—scowling expression, keen, piercing black eyes, and sharp, hooked nose—reminded him of Cruikshank's drawing of Fagin the Jew. The Khan was dressed in a long, loose white garment, with red silk embroidery. He wore a white Cashmere shawl over his shoulders, a conical violet silk cap, and a pair of pointed green morocco slippers turned up at the toes. Round his neck was a massive gold necklace, thickly studded with diamonds, rubies, and sapphires. The Khan is not remarkable for intelligence, or for information about European affairs. He had never heard of the Russian Socialists, and the British Parliament was spoken of by him as a human being. It is said that at the Viceroy's durbar at Quetta the Khan was shown into a dressing-room before tiffin was served, and immediately began to consume the cakes of Pears' soap, which he seemed to think some special sort of "hors d'œuvres!" His chief passion is money, which he gathers and hoards with all the delight of the traditional miser.

We cannot follow Mr. de Windt further. One fine Sunday morning he rode into Quetta as the bells of the station church were ringing for service; and so bronzed, battered, and tattered was he by long exposure and hardships, that the fair ladies and well-groomed gentlemen of the station ignored him as a somewhat ruffianly-looking "native." By-and-by he took train to Bombay, and so back to London, after many curious and novel experiences.

APPLES AND APPLE CULTURE.

PART I.

There was a time, and not so many years ago, when England stood first in the world for the quantity and quality of her apples. She has now, however, lost this pre-eminence. The United States exceeds her in quantity, and her own daughter, Canada, excels her in quality. There is something humiliating for us in this fact; but it is not for this alone, nor chiefly, that we wish to draw attention to the subject, but that the entire question of apple growing may receive additional attention. As a nation we cannot afford to be behind our neighbours, and we must not be content to lose ground as, unfortunately, we are doing.

Before we make the suggestions we have to offer, it may be interesting to glance at the history of the apple and apple cultivation on both sides of the Atlantic. It is a subject in which all are concerned, from the youngest child to the most venerable sire.

The apple is, as on all hands confessed, one of the most useful, most widely known, and best appreciated of all the fruits belonging to temperate climates. In its wild state it is known as the crab-apple, all the various sorts now in use having been, as it is said, originally produced from the crab. If any doubt remained as to this, the fact that the crab-stock is now, as it has long been, very widely used for grafting the different varieties, should settle it.

The crab is generally distributed through Europe and Western Asia, growing in as high a latitude as Drontheim in Norway. The Siberian crab belongs to a different species. As a rule, wherever the crab flourishes, the apple may be grown to advantage. We have seen the crab growing in elevated regions in Wales, but apple-trees are little cultivated there, and the cheaper sorts of apples are fetched out of Herefordshire in huge waggons for making cider. That the apple might be grown there, at least in sheltered situations, may be inferred from the fact that, speaking generally, the apple may be cultivated successfully in higher latitudes than any other fruit, even up to sixty-five degrees. Its blossoms are, however, more susceptible of injury from frost than the flowers of either peach or apricot. Were it not that it comes into flower much later than most other fruits, it would be even a greater sufferer from night frosts, so fatal to its fruit-bearing, than is commonly the case. The apples which are grown in the higher latitudes of the north are commonly hard, small, and crabbed, and little suited for general use, the best fruit being produced in hot summer climates, such as Canada and the United States. Besides Europe and America, the apple is now cultivated in Northern India and China, as also in Australia and New Zealand.

It is probable that apples may have been first cultivated in Britain by the Romans, at the time of their occupation of the island; but the names of many varieties indicate a French or Dutch origin of much later date. Two hundred years ago, Ray, the naturalist, enumerated seventy-eight varieties in cultivation in the neighbourhood of London; now the number has been calculated at two thousand. They are distributed all over the country, though Devonshire, Somersetshire, Herefordshire, and Kent take the first rank. The writer has lived for years in all these counties, excepting Somerset, and in some other parts of England, and moved about in most counties. In Kent alone has he grown apples to any extent. His knowledge and observation would give to Devonshire and then Herefordshire the palm as to quantity; but to Kent, having respect alike to dessert, culinary, and cider fruit, the first place should be given for quality and variety. And this claim for the garden county must be emphasized if you consider dessert fruit only. This is partly owing, speaking generally, to greater skill in cultivation, but chiefly to the much larger amount of sunshine in the south-eastern county as compared with Devonshire and Herefordshire. In some parts of Kent you can find a ripe apple any month in the year, excepting, perhaps, in July, and the Gooseberry Pippin, if carefully stored, will keep even into that month. Nowhere else in the country, so far as the writer knows, can that be done.

There are a large number of pippins, from the Ribstone downwards. As the name implies (Pépin—seedling), these have been raised from the pips of the apple. They rank among the very best varieties, as the Woodstock Pippin, or Blenheim Orange, the King Pippin, and Cox's Orange Pippin. When a small boy, some fifty or sixty years ago, the writer found in an old wheat stubble a seedling apple. He took it up and nurtured it in a flower-pot for a year or two, and in a very few more years it grew into a respectable little tree. He gave it to a friend who was entering a newly built house. It grew and bore fruit, and he believes it was called a "Lemon Pippin." When it had been in that spot for fifty years he had an opportunity of seeing it; the house was empty, but the next door neighbour informed him it kept up its good reputation as a good fruit-bearing tree.

Some of the old varieties of apples, like some of the old sorts of potato, have almost run out, at least in some districts. New varieties are brought out year by year, and some of them are improvements on the old. One of the most useful of all the pippins is that which was supposed to be the head of all the rest—the King Pippin. It is not that, but it is a very valuable variety. Like the Blenheim Orange, it is good all round. The trees come early into bearing, they suit almost every kind of soil; if the ground is good and the trees are not crowded, they produce fine, large, coloury fruit, which have a good flavour, and will serve as dessert fruit, for culinary purposes, and for cider. Indeed the cider made from King Pippins is of the very highest class. The fruit will keep good until Christmas; but if grown in a light, thin soil, not many days after that date. The King Pippin, too, is valuable as suited to light and thin soils, it being, as they say in Kent, "fleet-rooted."

The subject of apple cultivation is now, and not a day too soon, coming to the front. In most counties we are sadly behind the times and the demand. Not only have we not progressed, but we have seriously retrograded. Much earlier in the century, and even before the century began, there was an impulse given to apple growing, but in few cases were they grown as a leading profit-producing crop; and for many years, while in gentlemen's gardens and in the case of some fruit-growers, there has been an intelligent endeavour to advance with the times and their requirements, farmers generally have either wholly neglected their orchards, or have looked after them in a careless and slovenly manner. They have acted unreasonably in the majority of cases. Corn and roots they have cultivated carefully; but to their orchards little attention has been given. Potatoes, and turnips, and mangolds have been manured and well attended to; but the apple-trees have been left very much to look after themselves. In some cases the orchards have grown into forests; in others the trees have been blown into all sorts of positions, and not a few have been laid prostrate, or even blown up by the roots, and have lain lingering out a useless existence, and, when dead, have been suffered to decay on the ground, and become a harbour for nettles, docks, and other productions equally mischievous. In these cases there has been no planting of young trees, nor care to make the best of what might be a profitable part of the holding. In hundreds of cases we have seen the trees moss-grown and crowded with useless wood, so that the fruit would be small, while, as it grew mainly at the top, the wind would save the trouble of gathering.

In reference to apple growing, it might be well to say a few words in relation to aspect, soil, sorts, planting, and general treatment, including pruning, manuring, and general care-taking.

As apples never can come to full perfection without plenty of sun, it is obvious that a good aspect is important. Level ground will generally be found best for orcharding, as all operations can be conducted more conveniently, and the trees, when in well-kept order, standing in lines in all directions, present a better appearance. But if the orchard must be on the slope, by all means let it have a south aspect, not west or north-west, as it would be open to the high winds which often prevail in the autumn; not north or north-east, as then it would be the more exposed to the frosts which often come in May; not east, for, besides other reasons, the trees would be the easier prey of the blighting winds of spring-time. In rather wet ground an orchard on the slope would suffer less from want of draining.

If you come to soil, there are few parts of England where the soil is unsuitable for apples; but then the soil must be properly treated. Whatever you plant or sow, the ground must be prepared to receive it, or it will not do well, even if it grows; and fruit-trees are no exception to the rule. And yet men that take care to have what they call "a good season" for their wheat, and barley, and oats, and turnips, will "stick in"—we do not call it planting—a young fruit-tree with no preparation at all, or next to none, and as little pains.

One very important thing in making an apple orchard, is to suit your sorts to the soil and the climate. Even in so small a country as England, there are considerable varieties in climate as well as soil, and as climate affects the quality and texture of the wool of the sheep—the wool being heavier in cold, and lighter and finer in warm climates—so both soil and climate affect the apple, both in appearance and time of ripening. As an illustration of this, the writer may remark that he has an apple-tree, which is part of one that was root grafted some twenty years or more ago in East Kent. In 1875 it was planted in Herefordshire, where it made only moderate growth, though the soil was good. Its rather ill-shapen form suggested the idea of dividing the tree at the root—not a plan to be recommended, though it has answered very well—and it was so divided, and seven years ago one part was planted and has flourished in Surrey, while the other portion has developed into a good tree in Herefordshire. The point is this, that the portion planted in a light soil in Surrey, while obviously the same in kind, is more coloury, ripens earlier, but does not keep so long. Having more sun, however, the apple is sweeter. The old Ribstone Pippin has—if we may so say—a very critical taste as to soil. It is commonly reputed to be, even when all circumstances favour it, a very "shy bearer," but when the super-soil is ill-suited or its roots get down into a disagreeable subsoil, the tree "dies back" at the ends of the branches, and the efforts at fruiting are more or less abortive. It must be remembered that what food is to the animal, the soil is to the tree; its food is there. The sun warms, fructifies, and sweetens, and also gives colour to the fruit; but in the soil is its food; and the roots should be so distributed that the tiny mouths at the ends of the rootlets should have unobstructed opportunity of imbibing the nutriment of the soil by means of the rains which hold that nutritive matter in solution. Into the questions relating to early, late, and medium varieties, as also the fitness of any particular sort or sorts for certain soils, our space will not allow us to go; a respectable and practical nurseryman, or an intelligent apple grower will be able to advise any novice.

The matter of planting is a very important one—it is, in fact, almost everything; for, all other conditions being favourable, careless or slovenly planting will render all efforts at fruit growing more or less abortive. All trees for the orchard or garden, and whether dwarf, half-dwarf, pyramidal, espalier, or standard, should be planted in rows or lines. The roots below will require as much spread as the branches above. The larger roots are intended to fix the tree firmly in the ground, and to be the broad channels of nutriment to which the smaller roots contribute what they derive from the soil. The writer was once told by a man of nearly three-score, who had lived in the country all his life, that if the tap-root—the radicle or first root of the germinating seed, which strikes down like a carrot—of an apple-tree be cut, it will never bear. Now this is the very reverse of true. A tree will never bear satisfactorily if the tap-root be not cut. The tap-root serves its purpose while plants are in the first stages of existence; but after the laterals are thrown out of it, its use is mainly at an end, and it must be cut so as to prevent its striking down into the subsoil, which often is cold, ungenial, and dead. Thousands of years ago, in the time of Job, who employs the figure of a vigorously growing tree as an emblem of his former prosperity, experience taught people what common-sense should tell them now, that the roots of a tree, especially a fruit-tree, must be "spread out," so as to have the full benefit of rains, and dews, and sun: "My root was spread out (Heb. opened) by the waters, and the dew lay all night upon my branch." (Job xxix. 19.)

We have seen people dig a hole about the size of a small earthen pan, in which to set a tree which is to stand, and grow, and bear fruit for generations; and we have seen gardeners even cramp up the roots in this small hole, and afterwards wonder that the tree did not grow. How could it? No; if there is to be growth, there must be freedom. The hole must be larger and deeper than the tree alone requires, in order that brick-ends, stones, and such like may form a kind of foundation on which the tree is to be placed. A nurseryman told the writer, not long since, that a recent correspondent of a horticultural journal recommends that a sheet of iron should be placed for the tree to be planted on. Of the practical value of this suggestion we offer no opinion, but we have proved the other plan to be sound and good. There is no chance of the tap-root striking down, nor of the laterals getting down too far below the surface, and the bricks and stones act as a drain, and yet retain a coolness in hot weather.

Every fresh-planted tree should have two strong stakes, or at least one, to which the tree should be securely fastened, but care should be taken that there be no abrasion of the bark. Peas, potatoes, turnips or other roots may be cultivated as an undercrop, as also any kind of small fruit, such as currants or gooseberries. If it is intended to lay the orchard down for grass, there should be three or four years of tillage, with a free use of manure, before it is sown with grass; but the plan of growing grass beneath fruit-trees is not so commonly followed now as formerly; fruit is required, and finds a ready market, if not too far from London or a large town, black-currants paying better than red or gooseberries.

The general treatment of an apple orchard includes pruning, manuring, and general care-taking. Into the detail of pruning we have not space to go; but we may remark that without careful pruning no tree will do well; but, of course, a standard requires less than a pyramid or a bush. It is a common fault to plant too thickly. The writer had an orchard of that character some years ago. The fruit was small in many cases, ill-coloured, and often spotted. The Covent Garden salesmen would not look at them; so the best were picked out, and the rest ground for cider. To remedy this the axe, saw, mattock, and pruning-knife went to work; every second tree was removed, or headed down and grafted, and superfluous boughs removed from those that remained, with the result that fine, large, well-coloured, saleable apples, more in bulk if less in number than before, were produced. There was now ample room for rows of black-currants and gooseberries, and as these were well dressed every winter with strong liquid manure, the fruit of the orchard was doubled, or more than doubled in value.

But hardly any precaution will effectually prevent blight. The trees may bloom and look very promising, but in a few days the hopes of the grower may be blasted. The insect whose eggs were laid the previous summer will suddenly appear with new-born energy, or crawl up the tree from its hybernation below, and make miserable havoc of one's expectation. A friend recently related the story of a Somersetshire farmer, who had a large orchard. One morning in the spring he said to his spouse:

"Woife, I be zure us'll have a hundred hogsheds (hogsheads) of cider this year."

"Do 'e think zo?" said she.

"Yeas, I do;" said he, "but I bayn't zure not till arter Tarnton fair."

Taunton fair came and went, and then the tale was altered.

"Woife," said the farmer, "I told 'e us'd have a hundred hogsheds o' cider; but the blight ha' come, and us won't have one."

Remedies against blight are various, just as the insect pests are many. Washing the trunk and limbs with a thick limewash is good in some cases, and at least checks the growth of moss, besides giving a healthy stimulus to the tree; burning weeds and other rubbish which make thick smoke under or among the trees, is also a potent remedy against the encroachment of insects, especially when done when the blossom has just fallen or is falling. But there is no remedy for late frosts and east winds, which probably do more harm that all the various kinds of insects put together.

But after all said and done, if the farmer is not a thinking man, if he does not understand his calling, and if he is content to let things go as they may, without troubling himself with the reason why, he must be content to play a losing game. As a rule the American farmers are moving on better lines, and their success should remove the scales from the eyes of the large number in this country who reason only on the principle that what has been is to be. It is a pity that such dullards and sluggards should succeed, as otherwise there would be a premium on slothfulness, and the impetus to progress and improvement would be destroyed.

THE SURREY SIDE.

SOME FAMOUS GARDENS.

VAUXHALL is still in existence; don't we hear the monotonous chant of the railway porters, as they slam the carriage doors—"Vauxhall and Waterloo only"—and there is Vauxhall Bridge as everybody knows, one of the plain and ugly iron structures of the early part of the century; but the traces of the old gardens of delight, the Elysian fields of the writers of a century ago, are few and far between. The place resembles rather Tartarus, or other gloomy regions, with railway viaducts darkening the air, and gas-works, iron-works, and factories of all kinds, as general surroundings, among which rows of pallid warehouses, with a painful uniformity about them, are aligned upon the ancient walks and terraces of Vauxhall Gardens.

The original Vaux or Fawkes, or, as it was often spelt, Fox Hall, an ancient manor house, with noble grounds attached to it, is connected in popular traditions with the famous Guy Fawkes and the notable Gunpowder Plot. The conspirators no doubt occupied a house, and stored their powder, on the banks of the river close by; but antiquarians say that here is the palace of the Norman Fulkes de Breauté, from whom the ancient family of Fawkes claim descent. But Guy himself was a cadet of this distinguished family, and so we come round to the Plot again. But if there be anything in all this, it is a curious coincidence that in 1615 the manor was in the possession of the widow of John Fawkes, who had been neither baron nor knight, but simply citizen and vintner.

In any case, the gardens of Vauxhall started on an independent existence, as public pleasure grounds, soon after the Restoration. John Evelyn mentions them in 1661 as "The new Spring Gardens at Lambeth, a pretty contrived plantation." They must not be confounded with the old Spring Gardens, in the same parish, which were in existence, with a bowling green and Royal keeper, in Charles the First's time, and which were closed by that monarch on account of the dissolute manners prevalent there; when their diversions were transferred to the Spring Gardens "behind the Mewse," that is to the site, that still bears the name, by Charing Cross. Pepys goes there about the same time "To hear the nightingales and other birds, and here fiddles, and there a harp." The Spectator introduces us to Vauxhall in May, 1712, Addison himself being the writer, who was not an unfrequent visitor to the gardens. He had promised Sir Roger de Coverley to go by water to Spring Gardens in case it proved a good evening. The evening promised fair, and good Sir Roger was punctual. We see the crowd of watermen at Temple Stairs, all eager for a fare.

The Spectator, who after running the gauntlet of Thames ribaldry which excites the pain and indignation of the worthy knight, brings us to the gardens, and bids us notice "the choirs of birds that sung upon the trees and the loose tribe of people that walked under their shade." The nightingales, however, seem hardly to have realised the descriptions of the advertisements; and Sir Roger, on leaving the gardens, severely intimates to the mistress of the house, who sat at the bar, that he wants more nightingales.

From the date of the Spectator's visit, little is heard of Vauxhall till 1730, when the gardens were purchased by Jonathan Tyers who soon contrived to make the place famous, and to lay the foundations of a handsome fortune on his own account. Tyers was a wax chandler from Bermondsey, it is said, and took the gardens on the advice of his friend William Hogarth, the painter, who subsequently adorned many of the supper boxes that formed one of the chief attractions of the place with designs from his own pencil.

With new scenery and decorations Tyers opened the gardens, in 1732, by a grand assembly which he termed "the ridotto al-fresco." The ridotto is defined, at a later period, by Lord Byron in "Beppo."

> 'Tis a hall,
> Where people dance and sup and dance again;
> Its proper name perhaps were, a masked ball,
> But that's of no importance to my strain.
> 'Tis on a smaller scale, like our Vauxhall,
> Excepting that it can't be spoilt by rain.

This last indeed was, in later years, the curse of Vauxhall. Some offended deity seemed to lie in wait and pull the string of the shower-bath whenever Vauxhall was en fête. Farmers in want of rain would pray for the opening of Vauxhall, and its bad weather was as proverbial in its time as the Queen's fine weather is now. But in the days of Jonathan Tyers a cycle of warm, seasonable summers assured the prosperity of Vauxhall. The place became the height of fashion. Its broad, formal walks were crowded with the beaux and wits, all the patched and powdered beauties of Court and city rustled in their silks and satins, under the shade of its trees. You might stroll along the walk of Triumphal Arches among the rank and fashion of the hour, or admire the reigning beauty as she rested in the temple of Comus, where was a sham, ruined aqueduct in the background, and the ruins of Palmyra in the distance. Then there were rural downs with thickets of musical bushes, where musicians were concealed underground, to surprise and delight the company. But this latter practice was discontinued, we are told, as the damp did harm to the instruments, the feelings of the fiddlers not being reckoned, it seems, of any account. When darkness came on there was the music-room or rotunda, with its gilded columns and sparkling roof, and the lamps that gleamed softly among the trees, and the orchestra outlined in sparkling stars of light.

After the music came supper. Supper in Gothic pavilions adorned with Hogarth's satiric sketches, or with Hayman's ambitious paintings, scenes from Shakespeare, battle pieces, a gallery of British heroes. This last by the way was in the Rotunda, and about the painting of it a little anecdote is told which is characteristic of the period. Among British heroes, who so well entitled to a place as the Markis o' Granby, whose rubicund face was destined to adorn so many hostelries besides that of the great Mr. Weller? The Marquis is more often heard of than seen; but he is recognised at Vauxhall, and Tyers obsequiously requests that his noble guest will grant his artist, a celebrated artist, Mr. Hayman, a sitting. The Marquis had heard of Hayman, and promises to visit him. In effect he presents himself at the studio. He has long heard of Hayman's reputation—the artist bows—as one of the best boxers of Tom Broughton's school. The Marquis himself had formerly some little prowess in that line, and has often longed to measure himself with a boxer of renown. "A set to, and then a sitting." These are his lordship's terms from which there is no abatement. Hayman urges his mature years, his gout—but all in vain. The Marquis himself is no chicken, and he too is a martyr to gout. They pull off their coats and square at each other; the artist commences with due respect to the countenance of his noble sitter till, heated with the contest, he ends by knocking the Marquis through an unfinished canvas, and falling on the top of him amid a shower of paint-pots and easels. The noise brings up Madame Hayman, who gives each of the combatants a good shaking and sets them on their legs again.

To return to the supper parties in the painted boxes, say such a party as that described by Horace Walpole, who visits Vauxhall in 1750 with a bevy of fine ladies. There we may see Lady Petersham, who pulls off her mittens and tucks up her sleeves while she stews the seven chickens in a china dish over the lamp, assisted by Betty the fruit-girl, who waits at table. These were Vauxhall chickens, you will remember, "half-a-crown a-piece, and no bigger than a sparrow," as a frugal country squire exclaims, who sups in an adjoining box. The Grub Street author contents himself with bread and cheese and porter, and sups for sixpence. All classes are mingled in this general gathering, for the cost of admission is only a shilling, and a certain propriety of dress is the only qualification for admittance to the scene of fashionable gaiety. Swords must not be worn, says an edict; but they are worn, nevertheless, and sometimes drawn, although on the whole order seems to have been very well maintained.

The fashionable world has never been noted for keeping early hours, and Vauxhall modelled itself accordingly. The gardens opened at nine o'clock, and then on a fine summer's evening charming was the spectacle afforded by the bright river, crowded with boats and barges, filled with people in the brightest of evening costumes, with music on the water, and songs and laughter everywhere in the air. Till 1750, when Westminster Bridge was built, the only practical access to Vauxhall from the fashionable part of London was by water; but people of mode and distinction would be conveyed to Millbank in their chairs, where three ferry boats, reserved exclusive for chairs, would ply backwards and forwards till five o'clock in the morning. The Prince of Wales—the luckless Prince Fred, was a great patron of Vauxhall; and we hear of him, attended by the lords and ladies of his Court, coming to Vauxhall in his barge, listening to a concert of music, dancing in the great room, and returning at midnight to Whitehall, attended by a "concert of trumpets and French horns on the river."

In these days silver tickets were sold at twenty-five shillings, which admitted two people to the gardens which were open three days a week, for the season, which lasted from May to the end of August. But in 1740 the price was raised to two guineas. As the tickets were transferable, the practice arose of letting them out for hire, and at various taverns on the route a ticket admitting two might be hired for the night for a shilling, on leaving a sufficient deposit for its return.

When Westminster Bridge was opened, in 1750, Tyers constructed a temporary private carriage-drive from the foot of the bridge to Vauxhall; and such was the pressure of the great world to avail itself of the new route, that, on the opening night, the line of coaches reached from Vauxhall to beyond Lambeth Church, a distance of more than a mile.

But the new bridge and the new roads seem to have destroyed some of the rural charm of Vauxhall, if they did not banish the nightingales, which were still advertised as attractions.

And as the century grew older, too, the seasons seem to have changed a little. Vauxhall opened in May, and now it gives one a shiver to think of an open-air fête in that chilly month. The opening of Vauxhall had more than once to be postponed on account of bad weather, yet substantial prosperity still attended the place, and when Jonathan Tyers died, in 1767, he left a substantial fortune, including the gardens, to be divided among his four children. Tyers himself was something of a character. Born to contribute in Johnson's sonorous phrase "to the gaiety of Nations"—and he made the name of Vauxhall celebrated all over Europe! so that in Paris we have "le Vauxhall populaire," as a description of fêtes given on the Boulevards, and there was a Vauxhall of the Foire S. Germain, while the Hague had its Vauxhall, as, no doubt, have other European capitals—Tyers was nevertheless a sober, melancholy man. His favourite reading would be the "Night Thoughts" and Blair's "Grave," with "Drelincourt on Death" as an alternative. He had a fine country house on the hill above Dorking, where now shines the white mansion of the Cubitts, and its grounds were adorned in edifying contrast to gay Vauxhall with all kinds of mortuary emblems. A grotto led to the Valley of the Shadow of Death, adorned with skulls and bones, while in an alcove were paintings of various painful deathbed scenes.

The son of Vauxhall Jonathan was Tom Tyers, well known to Boswell and Johnson and the literary set of that day, and he is described in No. 48 of the "Idler" as Tom Restless. But the management of the gardens fall into the hands of Bryant Barrett, who had married one of Jonathan's daughters. And from this time Vauxhall was carried on, very much on the strength of its former reputation, and without much effort to adapt it to the changing tastes of the age. A good illustration of this period is found in a "Vauxhall Fray," which occurred in 1773, and occupied public attention for a time to the exclusion of such trifles as the troubles in the American Colonies, which were then coming to a head.

The lovely actress, Mrs. Hartley, who was as good and amiable as she was beautiful, was one night at Vauxhall in company with her husband, the elder Colman, and a stout and sturdy parson of dramatic sympathies, the Reverend Mr. Bates. While listening to the music, the actress was annoyed by the rude behaviour of a knot of gilded youths, the Macaronis of the period—a set of effeminate dandies, who seem to have resembled the "chappies" of a more recent period in their ways. These youths, by persistent and confident staring, seemed determined, in the words of a metrical version of the affair,

> To give affront, which is not common,
> Unto the sweetest, fairest woman.

As Mrs. Hartley openly expressed her annoyance, the gallant Bates interposed his stalwart person, drawing upon himself the sneers of the Macaronis whom he then loudly designated as a "set of impudent puppies!" The young gentlemen, resenting this designation, and following Mr. Bates for an explanation, the parson energetically promised to wring the nose off the face of any one who annoyed him or his companions, and he seemed to be quite capable of fulfilling the threat. Then began a "row." The youths of fashion gathering in defence of their order, while Mr. Bates was sustained by the general public; and as Mr. Bates seems to have been unsurpassed in power of chaff and repartee—the most brilliant speech recorded of the Macaronis being "Twig the curate!"—and pre-eminent in physical prowess, the Macaronis appeared to have been overpowered on all sides, and effected a retreat after exchanging cartels of defiance with the enemy.

Among the dandies was one Captain Croftes of Burgoyne's horse, his Colonel himself being a dramatic author and destined to become famous for defeat and surrender in the coming American war. As a soldier, Croftes could not sit down under insult. Still the cloth of his assailant protected him.

"Not at all!" said the gallant Bates. He waived all considerations of that kind, and would meet Croftes where he pleased, and the sooner the better. Pistols were obtained and the parties and their seconds had arranged to drive down to Richmond Park; or Wimbledon Common might serve their purpose. The Captain's friend, who had shared in the row, though not it seems in the insult to the lady, was the Hon. Tom Lyttleton, a youth of genius whom some modern critics have even sought to identify as "Junius" of the celebrated letters. But here the party were joined by the Hon. Fitzgerald, who, it seems, was also in the row as the ballad testifies:

> But many ills do him environ
> Who madly meddles with a syren:
> And such Fitzgiggo's case was partly
> For gazing upon Madam Hartley.

Now Fitzgerald was a noted duellist, he had been "out" any number of times, and on one of these occasions had had the crown of his head carried off by a pistol bullet. But on this occasion he represented his friend Captain Mills, who also held himself insulted, and who insisted on instant reparation. But here Tom Lyttleton interposed. He pronounced that Bates could not be expected to fight the whole party, and for his part he thought his friends had behaved foolishly, and the parson very pluckily; and so advised his men to shake hands and make it up with mutual apologies. And this they did; Parson Bates and the bold Captain. Captain Mills still remained unsatisfied, but he did not, Fitzgerald explained, however, care to fight with deadly weapons, but would give the bold parson a good thrashing with his fists, and if the parson would not fight him in a regular set-to, why then he would follow him and beat him in the streets. So, as Mr. Bates explained half-apologetically, for the sake of peace and quietness, he agreed to give the Captain the satisfaction he desired. They met at once and fought in a public room, the gallant parson scoring here once more, knocking his opponent out of time in about half an hour, and sending him home in a coach with both eyes closed up. Mr. Bates had hardly received a scratch, and came up to time next morning for breakfast with the Honourable Tom, who seems to have conceived a genuine admiration for the parson's prowess.

Then the newspapers get hold of the affair, and the "Morning Chronicle" of the twenty-seventh of July gives it an important place in its columns, and Mr. Bates has to give a corrected version of the matter, and the Macaronis rejoin. Then the parson makes a discovery. The Captain Mills whom he thrashed was no Captain at all, but a hired bruiser, to whom Fitzgerald had promised twenty guineas if he gave the parson a thrashing; and the pugnacious Bates makes the most of this, characterises his assailants, and pretty justly, as cowards and assassins, and generally gets the best of it all round in this literary war. All the world takes sides one way or the other. Even the French Court takes an interest in the matter, and couriers pass to and fro with the latest details. Finally we must crown honest Parson Bates as the victor of Vauxhall, and hope that somebody made him a Dean at least, or that, anyhow, a good benefice rewarded his prowess.

From this time Vauxhall goes on in the old way, but rather on the declining scale. Country people visited the place, and talked about it all their lives afterwards, as all that was the embodiment of gaiety, and brilliance, and extravagance. But people who went there a good deal began to yawn over it. Other gardens, which offered more novelties in the way of entertainments, began to compete with it. The "Dog and Duck," which occupied the site where Bedlam new stands, for a time attracted the fashion. As Burgoyne, of American fame, or perhaps Garrick, who wrote his prologue, sings:

St. George's Fields, with taste and fashion struck,
Display Arcadia at the "Dog and Duck."

It was old Sampson, one of Astley's most prominent rivals, who, leaving the "Three Hats" at Islington opened a circle for horsemanship in the grounds of the "Dog and Duck," and attracted crowds that way. But Barrett of Vauxhall, who wrote himself J. P., managed, by his influence with his brother magistrates, to get the license withdrawn from the "Dog and Duck," and Vauxhall was relieved from the dangerous rivalry. But "the family" finally disposed of Vauxhall Gardens in the year 1821, at a price of about thirty thousand pounds, and they were opened next year with great éclat by one Bish, a lottery contractor, with whom were associated Fred Gye and Richard Hughes.

The new venture had its own organ, "The Vauxhall Observer," which announced not only concerts with extras in the way of fireworks, pandean bands, etc., but also stage performances, rope dancers, theatrical imitations, etc. The stage for ballets was in the cross walk The Moorish Palace for rope dancing, and Cosmoramas terminated the grand south walk. Then there was the Bay of Naples, and Mount Vesuvius as a set piece, and all the attractions of the Vauxhall cuisine and cellars, ham and chickens, punch, burnt sherry, burnt port; but the prices were woefully enhanced. The chicken, formerly thought dear at half-a-crown, became four shillings, arrack punch was twelve shillings a quart, and the prices of wines doubled or trebled. Admission was three and six a head, and afterwards four shillings.

But by the year 1840 the whole affair was bankrupt. Bad weather still persistently persecuted Vauxhall, and a poet of the period records in halting numbers,

That since July fifteen
(Your own day, good St. Swithin)
Few folks have been seen
Outside the gardens, and nobody within.

Then comes the latest period of Vauxhall, when it was opened, with renewed éclat, by Andrews, Mitchell, and Alfred Bunn, the impressario, and the favourite poet of Mr. Punch, who came into literary existence in the same year. Jullien held the baton as conductor. The conventional ten or twenty thousand extra lamps were continually turned on, and the attractions of the night are epitomised by the poet Bunn himself in the Vauxhall papers.

Of this period may be recorded "one famous night in the summer of 1849," when, as Forster relates in his biography of Charles Dickens, "with Talfourd, Edwin Landseer, and Stanfield, we went to the Battle of Waterloo at Vauxhall." The Duke himself was there "in a bright, white overcoat," accompanied by the ladies of his family, "and everybody cheering and clearing the way before him." If Mr. Forster's memory is to be trusted, young Hernandez and a circus were part of the attractions of the evening; but the Battle of Waterloo was tedious, and Talfourd repeatedly ejaculated, after the alleged precedent of the great Duke, "Would that the Prussians were here!"

From this time Vauxhall struggled on, a good deal overmatched by the more vigorous management of Cremorne, sometimes opened for a season and sometimes closed. Its last season was in 1856, with a circus, fireworks, and other attractions. Believe one who was there, that it seemed rather a dull Cremorne, as far as the entertainments went; but there was the old orchestra with its myriad lamps, the pavilions and supper boxes. Hayman's and Hogarth's pictures had been sold long ago, and the whole place had rather a ghostly, ancient appearance. And then in soaking downpour of rain came the end of it all, the last lamp extinguished, and the scene of more than two centuries of festivity closed for ever.

There is not so much to be said about the Surrey Gardens, although many people yet living remember them as a pleasant place of resort up Kennington way. These were Zoological Gardens first and chiefly, and may boast of distinguished lineage, for when the Royal Menagerie in the Tower was dispersed, many of the animals were obtained by Mr. Cross, who established his once well-known collection in Exeter Change. When the Change was pulled down, after a temporary sojourn at the King's Mews, now Charing Cross, Cross procured the Manor House grounds at Walworth, consisting of fifteen acres of land and three of water. The lake was a very pleasant feature, and gave great effect to the firework displays upon it. But for a long time the gardens placed their reliance upon zoology, and a very excellent collection of animals was shown, at one time competed with the Regents' Park collection, at all events in carnivora. A famous unicorn was a great attraction in 1834. But it was found impossible to "rope in" the public with zoology, and eruptions of Vesuvius, and other light entertainments were provided, with bombardments and sieges as time went on. But the whole affair was sold up in 1856, and a great music hall erected, where concerts were given for a time; and then Mr. Spurgeon had it for Sunday services while his "Tabernacle" was being built, and here thronged the duchesses and people of fashion to hear the young lion of the pulpit. Soon after Mr. Spurgeon had left it the music hall was burnt down, but was rebuilt and opened again in 1861. But the grounds were soon after sold and built over, and model dwellings and rows of new houses now occupy the site of Surrey Gardens, and people might pass a dozen times without dreaming that here were once shady groves and a shining lake, with walks, and parterres, and pleasant seats occupied by family groups, or dreaming youth, or lovelorn maidens, as it used to be in days gone by.

MRS. DAWE'S LADY-HELP.

By BARBARA DEMPSTER.

Author of "Through Gates of Gold," "A Dead Hand," 'A Spring Moon," "His Guardian's Wife," "Those People," etc., etc.

CHAPTER III.

THE next day was intensely hot.

Miss Smith was up by six. It was her only chance of getting through all that was to be done. The Bishop was to arrive on Friday afternoon. All the cooking that could be done was to be done on Thursday, leaving only what was absolutely necessary for the next. All the rooms too were to be set in order so that the Friday might be free from flurry and bustle. When the Dawes assembled round the breakfast-table, Miss Smith had already done three hours' good work. After breakfast she began again. Mrs. Dawe helped a little, but she had a variety of other business to attend to, and left to Miss Smith most of the domestic arrangements. Martha, flurried, excited, hysterical, was incapable of doing anything except what was wrong. The woman who came from the village to assist, was stupid and slow. The girls were going to a tennis party in the afternoon, and were reserving themselves for its fatigue. Minnie spent the morning trimming a hat, appealing constantly to Miss Smith for advice, and Gwen shut herself up in her room to write letters.

Mr. Dawe, who never neglected his work, was in his parish all the morning.

Mr. James Brown, who seemed the very laziest young man that ever lived—though, as Mrs. Dawe never failed to remark, he was not too lazy to put a fork to his mouth at other people's expense—sat in one of the big wicker chairs in the hall the whole morning. He lay back in his chair, by the open door, his eyes half closed, his pipe in his mouth, the newspaper unread by his side, the hot, drowsy stillness of the summer day outside apparently soothing him into a state of blissful contentment, from which not even the sharp tongue of his cousin Minnie could rouse him. Even Miss Smith, busy, worried, found time to wonder at his indolence as she came and went through the hall, or passed from looking after things in the kitchen, to superintend and assist upstairs.

Luncheon time came. She was literally too tired to eat. The heat was oppressive, her head was aching, and instead of coming to table, she went up to her room and laid down for half an hour.

She rose unrefreshed, with throbbing nerves, and went downstairs again. The girls, looking fresh and dainty as two blush roses, in their pink muslins, drove off to their garden party, Gwen expressing a hope, as she passed, to Miss Smith, who stood pale and heavy-eyed in the hall, that she would not get too tired with all the work.

A curious muffled sound seemed to come from the direction of Mr. James Brown, who was standing near, holding his cousins' parasols and dust-cloaks, which he was to carry to the pony-carriage for them. But when Miss Smith looked up quickly, he was lounging off to the door, and, a few moments later, he was carefully arranging the girls in the trap.

When he returned into the house, he dropped into the easy-chair again, and, drawing out his pipe, leant back, apparently contemplating spending the afternoon as he had done the morning. Miss Smith glanced at him, something faintly contemptuous breaking the pale suppressed weariness of her face.

Then she retreated to make the jellies and cakes.

Mrs. Dawe said she had important letters to write, and retired to her bedroom, locking herself in, that no one might come and disturb her. If orders were wanted, they could be had from Miss Smith. Mr. Dawe retreated to his study—to compose his sermon.

A quarter of an hour later, if any curious person had lingered a few moments outside their respective doors, peaceful, muffled sounds might have been caught, which would have suggested the suspicion that letters and sermons had had a peculiarly soothing effect upon Mr. and Mrs. Dawe's active brains.

It was half-past four o'clock. The sun's rays seemed to fall hotter and hotter upon the country Vicarage.

Even in the stone-flagged dairy, where Miss Smith was making her jellies, the heat seemed to grow every moment more unbearable. The nerves in her head were throbbing and beating like sledge-hammers. It seemed as if a tight band of hot iron were slowly closing round her temples. The moulds began to waver in a strange uncertain fashion before her eyes, which seeming irregularity of conduct was only momentarily checked by an iron-willed effort on Miss Smith's part to conquer the faintness stealing over her. She would finish the jellies and get the cakes out of the kitchen oven, and then——

Even Miss Smith's will and high-bred powers of self-control had their limit.

She suddenly staggered, wavered to and fro, and then fell.

When she recovered consciousness, she was lying on the turfed bank, outside the dairy door.

Her face and hands were wet, and a cool breath of air was playing on her.

Suppressed chokes and snivellings, mingled with the deeply-drawn breath of some more self-controlled being, aroused her to the fact that she was not alone, and as the mists cleared from her eyes, she saw the hysterical Martha kneeling on one side of her, and Mr. James Brown on the other.

He was holding a basin of water, and as she looked helplessly up at him, he, perhaps a little awkwardly, but very gently, laid a freshly-dipped rag across her forehead.

"That's right," he said; "run now, and get some wine, Martha."

"There ain't none," sobbed Martha; "leastways, it's all locked up. Even to the knife-powder."

"But we can do without the knife-powder; go and get some wine."

But Miss Smith struggled up into a sitting position.

"I am all right now," she said, in very uncertain tones; "it was the heat."

"It was my infernal relations," said Mr. James Brown, with such ferocious energy, that the nervous Martha jumped and gasped out a faint exclamation, staring at him with wide eyes and dropping jaw.

"You had better go back to your work, Martha," said Miss Smith, who was rapidly recovering her sense of the fitness of things. "It was very kind of you," she added, to Mr. James Brown, as the sobbing maid retreated: "I don't know how I could have been so silly." She made an effort to rise. It was not very successful.

Mr. James Brown put his arm round her and lifted her to her feet.

"Thank you," she said, blushing faintly, feeling curiously like an obedient child, instead of a very firm-willed, self-contained young woman.

"And what are you going to do now?" he asked, grimly, looking down into the colourless face with its heavy eyes.

"Oh, various things — oh, dear! the cakes in the oven! They'll be spoilt!" with a cry of dismay. She made an effort to walk; but the sudden throbbing of all her nerves again brought back the faintness.

Without a word, he caught her in his arms, and carried her, in spite of her half-laughing, half-indignant remonstrances, to a little summer-house near.

"You stay here till I come back," he said; "I'll see about the cakes."

He strode off and disappeared into the dairy, to make a short cut to the kitchen.

Miss Smith lent back against the wall of the summer-house, physically unfit to move. For once she felt as if she did not care whether her work were done or not. For the moment, at least, she had collapsed completely.

The Bishop must make the best of the cakes, burnt or otherwise. She was too weak and weary to do more than wonder dully at the curious change in Mr. James Brown's manner. About five minutes later, opening her eyes languidly at the sound of a footstep, she saw Mr. James Brown again. He had a cup of tea in one hand, and a small plate of biscuits of her own making in the other.

"They are done to a turn," he said, as if baking cakes had been his occupation from his earliest days, "and Martha and I both think that a cup of tea would do you good."

"It is very kind of you," listlessly taking the cup.

"Not me. It's all Martha. I found her sobbing over the kettle when I went into the kitchen. Luckily it was just going to boil over, or she might have put out the fire before it had a chance. But what an intelligent creature she is!"

"That's right," as just the faintest of smiles flitted across the lady-help's pale lips. "Now I should never have thought of that cup of tea. For my dull brain only suggested wine, which is locked up. Martha flew straight to the kitchen and made the tea. Won't you have a cake, Miss Smith," handing her the plate.

She shook her head, the smile growing brighter as the tea refreshed her.

"They are all for 'the Bishop'—greedy old chap? So you aren't going to dine with him. Not even that convenient place you have at table for slipping in and out of the room, to see after the courses, while your own dinner grows cold, would be sufficient for to-morrow night, when you will have not only cooking and dishing-up, and dressmaking and decorating and every other possible or impossible thing that my thoughtful relations can put on you, but you will also have to keep out of the way of 'the Bishop' and his chaplain, who I believe is an unmarried man."

It was Miss Smith who gazed at him now, in blankest wonder.

What did all this mean? Had this indolent, thick-skinned, servilely-good-natured young man, whose only ambition, apparently, had been to please his pretty insolent cousins, been taking in everything, even to the fact of her draughty seat and cold meals? He had never seemed even to notice her existence, which ignoring she had set down to the fact that she was only the lady-help, and that he was but of the same flesh and blood as the vulgar-minded family in whose service she was.

"That's right," he said, with a sudden relapse into the placid good-nature with which he always met his aunt's rude coldness, and his cousins' impertinencies. "Pile it on, I'm 'one of the family,' you know. Would you like me to say what you think of us? It will save you the trouble, you know."

She met the shrewd, piercing eyes for an instant, then caught her breath and laughed.

"No!" she said.

"We deserve it!"

"Don't say 'we.'" The mortifying conviction of the mistake she had made still with her.

The oddest of lights flashed into his eyes. She did not understand it, but it confused her a little.

"I don't know how I could have made such a mistake," looking into the strong face of the Dawes' relation, and with unprejudiced eyes now reading it aright. "But I really didn't misunderstand you the first day!" pleadingly.

"Though you were afraid to leave me with the umbrellas."

"Oh!" colouring and laughing. She was beginning to feel oddly nervous with this young man, who seemed to read her most secret thoughts. "It was after I had nearly killed you that I thought you weren't quite——" she stopped, colouring again.

"I forgive you," he said, meekly. "Though that awful gaze in your eyes was nearer killing me than the hammer was. But I wasn't surprised, since I had told you I was a relation of the family."

She could not help smiling. There was something comic in the contrast of the meek tones, with the shrewd, powerful face. But the innate delicacy, which revolted from discussing her employers with a comparative stranger, made her rise. Perhaps he understood, for he said no more. That evening, when the rest of the party entered the dining-room for dinner, they found Mr. James Brown already there. He was seated at the table. The Dawes stared. Then a flush of angry understanding coloured Mrs. Dawe's face.

"You've taken Miss Smith's place, James!"

He rose indolently, but kept his hand on the back of the chair.

"Perhaps Miss Smith wouldn't mind letting me have it, and taking mine," he said, with his drawling, nasal twang. "I feel the heat very much, and there's a nice current of air here. I remember, in the winter, you had to hold on to your chair, unless you wanted to have it blown from under you."

A mingled expression, wholly angry, crossed the family faces. Miss Smith bit her lip, looked at Mr. James Brown from under her long lashes, as if measuring her will against his, then sat down in the chair which that calm, determined-looking young man had indicated for her.

Perhaps she still felt physically unable to compete with him, for she looked pale and weary yet. But Miss Smith had no intention of giving up her own will for any young man. Not even for this one, whom all her womanly instinct and judgement told her she might trust.

The little episode, slight though it was, had a most disastrous effect on the mental equilibrium of the family party.

The dinner was not a pleasant meal.

The girls' good-tempered chatter about themselves and their pleasant tennis party, changed, under the annoyance caused by their cousin's conduct, into playful, though decidedly spiteful, teasing of that same individual, while Mrs. Dawe sat silent and furious, looking all the things she dared not utter.

Miss Smith was glad to get out of the family circle, and telling Mrs. Dawe that her head was aching, she announced her intention of going to her room for the night.

A look into her face proved the truth of the assertion, and not even Mrs. Dawe felt justified in opposing her intention, especially as Miss Smith had been working like a slave from the early morning.

With a deep, long-drawn sigh of thankful weariness and relief, Miss Smith closed and locked the bedroom door between her and the Dawe family.

It was a bare, cheerless room—after the servants'—the most sparsely and poorly furnished in the whole house; but to Miss Smith—under the circumstances—it was a very paradise of peace and rest.

Now, as she sank down into the broken wicker-chair by the open window, she drew in a long, deep breath, and the most wonderful change came into the usually pale, still face.

It quivered and glowed into a passion of indignation, bitterness, pity, the beautiful eyes shining like stars.

"Oh! It is too horrible! And to think that girls have to bear this! Not often though, or surely they would go mad! How could I have borne it, unless—— Oh! what a dreadful family! Is there any one good thing in it?"

The whiff of a now well-known pipe—she had wondered once or twice if Mr. James Brown took it to bed with him—the light, firm step, which she had learned to distinguish from the rather shambling tread of Mr. Dawe, on the gravelled path below her window, made her start, and a faint smile softened the indignant passion of her eyes.

She instinctively drew farther back from the window, though a moment later she wondered why she had done so. What did it matter to her whether he saw her or not?

"He is certainly a most curious young man," she said. "My experience of young men is wide; but I don't think that I have ever met one quite like him." The smile grew in her eyes as she sat recalling Mr. James Brown's conduct during the past day or two. Under the light that his behaviour of that afternoon had cast on it, this conduct took a new aspect.

"Yet what an absurd, ridiculous young man he seemed. I wonder, too, what has possessed him to come and smoke that never-ending pipe here!"

The dusk of the summer night settled down over the garden. The stars stole out "silver-footed" from the fathomless blue of the heavens overhead. The air was fragrant with the breath of sleeping flowers, and mingling with their sweetness floated up the scent of that "never-ending" pipe, while the light, firm step paced to and fro on the path below. When Miss Smith, laying her pretty head down on her hard and comfortless pillow, fell asleep at last, the light, steady tread, and the scent of that pipe, seemed to follow her into the land of dreams, and fill her with a curious sense of peace and safety.

NOTE.

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By MARY ANGELA DICKENS.

Author of "A Mist of Error," "Her Inheritance," "A Social Success," "Kitty's Victim," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXII.

The subjects which occupied Miss Tyrrell's mind during her drive home were, apparently, sufficiently serious to deprive her of her night's rest, for she did not appear at breakfast the next morning. Her presence was not in the least necessary to her brother's comfort, and he was serenely absorbed in the morning paper, when he was interrupted by a knock at the door, and the servant, who acted, on occasion, as Miss Tyrrell's maid, came in.

"If you please, sir," she said, "Miss Tyrrell wishes me to say that she is taking breakfast in her room, and she wishes to see you before you go out this morning if you will let her know what time."

"Let her know at what time I am going out?" asked Tyrrell.

"If you please, sir."

"I shall be in the study until twelve o'clock, tell your mistress. She can send for me, of course," said Tyrrell, returning to his paper as the woman answered "Yes, sir," and left the room.

There was a smile on Tyrrell's face as he glanced down the column of the newspaper, which was not called up by the political leader he was reading. He was by no means unprepared for an interview with his sister, and it spoke well for the progress of his plans that she should demand it.

"I thought so," he said to himself. "Poor Sybilla! It's a blow for her!"

But the expression on his face was less sympathetic than amused, and the smile still touched the corners of his mouth as he finally gathered up his letters and departed to his study. An hour and more had passed, and he was lazily wondering whether his sister had reconsidered the position, and intended, after all, to fortify herself with further observation before she spoke, when he heard her step in the passage, and the next moment she opened the door.

"Good morning," he said. "Why did you not let me know you were down?"

"I thought I would come to you here," answered Miss Tyrrell; "you are not busy, John?"

"Not particularly," he said. "Come in." And as she shut the door, and sank gracefully into a chair, he pushed his own chair round slightly as he sat at his writing-table—his letters had been finished some time ago, and he was smoking a cigar—and waited to hear what she had to say with the same little smile of amusement on his lips. Miss Tyrrell apparently found his expectant attitude rather confusing, for there was a moment's pause before she spoke.

"It is quite unnecessary, I am sure," she began, "that I should tell you how deeply I am interested in dear Selma."

As there was no one present to be impressed with the information, Tyrrell thought that, on the whole, it was unnecessary; but he only made a little gesture of assent, and waited for her to proceed.

"The poor dear girl has been a great deal talked about," continued Miss Tyrrell, with a sigh. "I am sure I only wish I could persuade myself that she has never given occasion for talk; but if she is careless, John, her friends cannot be too careful for her."

Miss Tyrrell paused solemnly, and her brother, with an irrepressible gleam of humour in his eyes, responded:

"Very true."

"Of course we both know, you and I, that you have known her since she was a little child, and that she looks up to you as to a guardian, and, equally of course, we know that you are not likely to fall in love like a boy, John; but we cannot expect the world to consider these things," said Miss Tyrrell, with a sigh of gentle superiority to the world and its ways, and a glance at her brother's unmoved countenance. "When once people have talked—especially if it is not for the first time—there are sure to be unpleasant things said when the talk comes to nothing."

Tyrrell knocked the ash from his cigar, and held it suspended between his fingers as he looked his sister quietly in the face. She had not explained herself, and he knew it; but it suited him to understand her. He preferred to come to the point at once.

"If you mean that people are 'talking,' as you say, about Selma and myself," he said, "I have no intention that such 'talk' should come to nothing!"

"Do you mean to say that you are thinking of marrying?"

Miss Tyrrell's surprise was well acted; she had had plenty of practice on the social stage. She had no doubt whatever that her brother meant to marry Selma; but the knowledge was not at all to her liking, though it was not so unendurably bitter as it might have been. She would thoroughly have enjoyed an attempt at giving her brother a very bad quarter of an hour, if, for reasons of her own, she had not thought it more prudent to content herself with the administration of stings of an intangible nature. She was no match for Tyrrell's keenness of observation, however, and he looked at her quickly, as it occurred to him that she was taking it better than he had expected.

"Yes," he said; "I am."

"You propose to marry Selma Malet!"

"I propose to marry Selma Malet," was the placid response, as Tyrrell put his cigar to his lips again.

There was a moment's pause, and Tyrrell wondered whether his sister contemplated hysterics. "It could be done artistically," he told himself, with a grim smile. He was immensely surprised, and, being human, considerably relieved when she said:

"Am I to understand that it is settled?"

Tyrrell looked at her again in growing surprise. She spoke as though she were thinking of something else, and, instead of the hysterical symptoms he expected to see, he noticed that Miss Tyrrell looked nervous.

"It is not settled with Selma, if you mean that," he answered. "I don't want that to get about. There is plenty of time."

There was another pause, and Miss Tyrrell looked helplessly round the room.

"I—I'm sure I hope it will turn out well, John," she murmured vaguely, and John Tyrrell, thoroughly puzzled, rose.

"I hope so, too," he answered. "It's time I went down to the theatre. This was what you wanted to see me about, I suppose?"

Miss Tyrrell clutched her pocket-handkerchief, and rose likewise. It was quite impossible to come to the real point of the interview, she felt, with "John" standing over her like that. Miss Tyrrell was two years older than her brother, and though this painful fact was shrouded in mystery from the world in general, naturally he knew it, and naturally she knew that he knew it; that he knew also that he himself was forty-seven, and that he was not incapable of working a sum in simple addition. These simple facts, coupled with such knowledge of her brother's character as she possessed, rendered the intelligence she wished to convey to him a little delicate in her eyes.

"I have—there is another little point," she murmured, looking coyly at her handkerchief. Such is the force of imagination that there was a faint, wintry colour in her cheeks; and, as Tyrrell looked at her, an idea dawned upon him. It was such an exquisitely ludicrous idea in his eyes, that its first effect was to make him bite his lip sharply to keep himself from laughing aloud. And then his face grew suddenly hard and stern.

"She's such a fool," he said to himself. "It may be any one." Aloud he said, interrogatively: "Yes?"

"It's really a very trying thing to tell you, John," fluttered Miss Tyrrell, plaintively. "Especially if you will stand up. But, under the circumstances, I'm sure you can't help feeling for us."

"Us!" repeated her brother, with no trace whatever of the sympathy thus touchingly demanded in his voice. "Who is the other?"

Miss Tyrrell clasped her hands gratefully.

"Now that is very kind of you," she said, quite forgetting, in her agitation, that there was no audience, and speaking in her most artistic voice, "to help me out so nicely. He—it—it is—Lord Ellingham, John."

Miss Tyrrell at this stage was quite overcome with maiden confusion, and, in spite of "John's" erectness, she sank in artistic folds upon the chair from which she had just risen. She missed the expression on her brother's face, which was a pity, for it was a sight to be seen.

"Lord Ellingham," he said. And then, reflecting that as he said to himself it might have been worse, his sense of humour asserted itself, and he said: "You haven't told me why I am to sympathise with you and Lord Ellingham, Sybilla?"

A delicate tremor convulsed his agitated victim, and she murmured, faintly:

"We are engaged."

Tyrrell always congratulated himself as upon his greatest artistic achievement that he did not laugh aloud. He contemplated his sister for a moment before he observed, adapting some words she had used to him earlier in their interview:

"I should hardly have expected you to fall in love like a girl."

Miss Tyrrell, who had regretted the words on which this comment was founded as soon as she had uttered them, stretched out a deprecating hand.

"We cannot account for these things," she said. "Dear Lord Ellingham has been most devoted, and I have not a heart of stone."

There was a suggestion of gurgle about her voice that warned Tyrrell that he would be wiser to withdraw.

"Certainly not," he replied, promptly, and with commendable gravity; "Lord Ellingham is an excellent choice, Sybilla. You'd better ask him to dinner." And Tyrrell departed to the theatre, leaving Lord Ellingham's betrothed in possession of the field.

John Tyrrell's reflections on the engaged couple during the day were complimentary to neither lady nor gentleman. Miss Tyrrell had a little money of her own, so that her brother's marriage would have made no material difference to her, and to marry Lord Ellingham, either for his own sake or for the sake of his position, seemed to Tyrrell an incredibly foolish performance. There was nothing definite, however, to be said against the match. That the lady was forty-nine, and the gentleman at least ten years older, were facts to which no one was prepared to swear, and which, after all, concerned themselves alone. And from the point of view of Tyrrell's own schemes with regard to Selma, his sister, self-absorbed and complaisant, was much more agreeable to contemplate than his sister jealous, injured, and spiteful, as he had calculated on finding her. Nothing that could be used by him to his own ends ever escaped Tyrrell's attention, and he took instant advantage of the fact, that, under the circumstances, Miss Tyrrell might be used by him as a valuable ally. Consequently, a fortnight after the engagement with Lord Ellingham was formally announced, Selma received a tenderly pressing invitation from the bride-elect to spend a week or so at her house, or, rather, at Tyrrell's house.

"Ask Selma to stay here," Tyrrell had said. "And, Sybilla," he had added, in a tone which his sister never disobeyed, "say nothing to her, you understand."

Tyrrell did not intend that Selma's first thoughts of him as her lover should spring up under his sister's fostering care.

"Do you think of going?" asked Helen, when Selma told her of the invitation bestowed upon her by Miss Tyrrell at a dance the night before, with an air of spontaneous cordiality delightful to behold.

The sisters were together in the dining-room as Helen asked the question, and Selma, who was standing at the open window in the bright May sunshine, answered carelessly:

"Yes; I go out with them so much, you see. Besides," added she, with a little irrepressible smile, "I dare say, poor Miss Tyrrell wants some one to talk to about her trousseau. The wedding is to be next month."

Helen's eloquence on the subject of Miss Tyrrell's engagement was unusually flowing. She considered it, as she expressed it, "Perfectly dreadful to see a woman make herself so ridiculous." But on this occasion she continued her needlework in abstracted silence, and Selma, rather surprised, went on, affectionately:

"I shan't go until after the twentieth, Nell"—the twentieth of May was Helen's birthday—"are you thinking of that? Oh, Nell, what's the matter?" she finished, moving swiftly across the room to kneel down by her sister's side with both her beautiful arms round her, as Helen first lifted a pair of tearful blue eyes to her, and then wiped them hastily with an air which seemed to assert aggressively that she had not been crying.

"What is it, darling?" repeated Selma, tenderly, lifting to her a face which Miss Malet's admirers would hardly have recognised.

"It's very silly to cry," said Helen—this was indeed one of the first principles of her simple philosophy. "It's Mervyn's baby, dear; it's dying, poor mite, and I can't help thinking how I should feel if—if—oh, poor little Mervyn!" And if it was silly to cry, Helen was very silly indeed for the next few minutes; she leant her cheek against Selma's dark hair, and her bright pitiful tears came thick and fast as she thought of her own little Helen asleep upstairs. Selma held her very close, but there were no tears in her eyes. They were bright and rather wide, and she was very pale.

"Poor little Mervyn!" she repeated very low. "Has it grown suddenly worse, then?"

"Yes!" answered Helen, forgetting that she had thought Selma almost unconscious of the small Roger's very existence. "Roger came in last night. Oh, poor fellow, he's heartbroken!"

Selma rose suddenly, her eyes brighter than before, with a look on her face as though she were keeping something at bay.

"Babies—babies get better so wonderfully, don't they?" she said. "Perhaps they are over-anxious, Helen. Dear, I can't bear to see you cry." She touched her sister's hair tenderly as she spoke, and Helen dried her eyes and looked up at her fondly. It wasn't to be expected, she thought, that Selma should understand as she herself did.

"It is silly!" she said, answering her last words. "I think I'll go and see if little Helen is awake and bring her down."

The little, suffering life of Mervyn's baby came to an end that night, and Helen, when she told her sister with many sympathetic tears, was disappointed that Selma, though she was very sweet and comforting to Helen herself, seemed to be more occupied with an unsuccessful evening frock than with Mervyn and Roger's grief. Selma's engagements grew more numerous every day as the season advanced, and during the week that followed her sister hardly saw her; she was always either just going to a party, or just going to pay some calls, or just going to the theatre. And the few moments for which she was to be seen each day gave Helen the impression that she was doing more than was good for her, her eyes were so bright and feverish, and her manner so restless and excited.

"Don't over-work yourself," Helen said, when the day arrived on which Selma had arranged to go to Miss Tyrrell for a week, and she stood on the doorstep to see her sister into the hansom. "Take care of yourself, dear."

"Take care of yourself," returned Selma, gaily, as she kissed her. "And take care of my niece, Nell. Good-bye!" she sprang quickly into the cab and was driven away.

Selma had no luggage with her. She had sent it on in the morning, declaring that it would make her feel as though she were going away for months, if she drove off in state with a portmanteau. She had driven some distance — almost to the Tyrrells' house—with an absorbed, set expression in her eyes as though she were battling with pain of some description, when a sudden determination seemed to take possession of her; her pale face changed and flushed suddenly, she lifted her head impulsively, and stopped the driver. "Go to No. 10, Harringford Square," she said.

The cabman, who knew his fare well enough by sight, and was consequently observant of her looks and tones, wondered at the peremptoriness of the order; and when, twenty minutes later, he drew up at No. 10, Harringford Square, he wondered again at the face he caught sight of as Selma paid him. Her colour fluctuated with every breath she drew, and her hands were shaking so that she could hardly shut her purse. The man drove slowly away, looking back at her as she stood waiting on the doorstep.

"Is Mrs. Roger Cornish at home?" she asked of the woman who opened the door.

"Mrs. Cornish is at home, miss!" was the answer; "but——"

"I know," interrupted Selma. "She is not seeing any one. But I think she will see me. Tell her that Miss Malet is here, please." And with the unconscious arrogance which admiration had bred in her, Selma gave the woman no choice but to obey her.

"This way, miss, please," said the latter meekly, and a moment later Selma found herself alone, where she had been only once before—in Mervyn's drawing-room. She gave one quick glance round and caught her breath sharply, and then she moved to the window and stood there looking out with her hands clasped tightly together, until the sound of the door opening made her turn, as a little fragile figure in deep black ran straight into her arms.

"Oh, Selma!" it cried. "Oh, Selma!" Selma held it to her in a clasp which was almost painful, and there was a silence.

Mervyn was the first to speak. She lifted her face from Selma's shoulder and said in a low, thin little voice, from which all the tone seemed to be gone:

"How good of you to come!"

There were no tears in her eyes; but there was that look on her face which is more pitiful than tears—the look which comes when the first shock is past, when grief is such a close companion that such expression of it is occasional and rare.

"I couldn't keep away," said Selma, impulsively. "Mervyn, I can think of nothing else. Ah, my poor little Mervyn!" she added, with her beautiful eyes full of tears, as she looked into Mervyn's face, so thin and white against her deep mourning.

"Thank you, dear," murmured Mervyn, clinging to her again for a moment. Then she moved and said, "Sit down, dear."

Wifehood, motherhood, or sorrow, perhaps all three combined, had given Mervyn a dignity which sat quite naturally on her now. Except for her first gesture as she ran into Selma's arms, the little demonstrative Mervyn of old days was gone. It was Selma who knelt by her side as she sat down and took both her hands in hers.

"He suffered so, poor little one," the little, toneless voice went on, as if in answer to the sympathy in the beautiful face lifted to hers. "I—I remember that always, Selma, and—it comforts me." Her voice trembled, and large, heavily-dropping tears rose in her eyes. "One couldn't wish that he should suffer; but, Selma, I miss my baby so!"

She turned her head away and leant it against the back of her chair, crying, not passionately, but with the quiet tears which are all the sadder, because there is no merciful exhaustion to be hoped from them; and Selma let her face fall upon the small, cold hands she held, kissing them softly again and again, with broken words of sympathy and affection as Mervyn told her the sad little story of her baby's life. Her tears had stopped before she finished, and her voice was only a little weaker and sadder than it had been from the first, as though nothing could add to the grief which nothing but time could lessen. There was a pause after she finished, and then she looked at Selma with a faint little smile. "I thought I was never going to see you again, Selma dear," she said.

"It is very sweet of you to think of me at all," said Selma. She rose as she spoke, and took a chair near Mervyn.

"I haven't even seen you act for a long time," went on Mervyn, with another little ghost of a smile. "But, of course, I know you are getting on splendidly. Are you satisfied and happy, dear?"

Selma laughed lightly. "I've not arrived at the satisfied stage," she said. "That is in the future. But I am on the way to it, I suppose. Every one is very kind to me."

"I'm so glad," returned Mervyn. "I always knew it would be like that. I only wish you weren't always so busy, dear; it's so sad never to see you. I am so sorry Roger should miss you, Selma. He will be so disappointed. He goes to see you act often, and tells me all about it."

"How is he?"

"He—he is so good and so strong," Mervyn answered, softly, with a loving light in her eyes which made her strangely like and unlike the Mervyn of old days. "He feels it so dreadfully, and he doesn't think of anything but making it easier for me. If you could stay with me a little," she went on, pleadingly, "you would see him. I expect him in early." She waited for an answer; but there was a moment's dead silence. Then Selma rose hurriedly.

"I mustn't stay, I'm afraid," she said. "I only came for a few minutes, because—I was so sorry. You'll—you'll tell him, Mervyn?"

"He will be so sorry," answered Roger's wife, looking at Selma with a smile which seemed to bring the past very close to them—the past as a peaceful memory, untouched by any trace of bitterness or pain. "He always thinks there is no one like you, and you know I think so too. Good-bye, dear," she added, as Selma bent to kiss her. "I wish you need not go. Oh, Selma, how beautiful you are!"

"Selma, how beautiful you are!" John Tyrrell would have given a good deal, blasé and cynical as he was, to have been able to say the same words when he received Selma in his own house half an hour later. The accusation most frequently brought against Miss Malet's beauty by her detractors was, that she wanted colour; she was too pale, they said, and her eyes were too dark. But no such fault could have been found with her now, as she stood in the hall as Tyrrell explained to her his sister's absence. Her cheeks were flushed and burning with a lovely vivid colour; her eyes looked feverishly large and shining, and glittered and sparkled brilliantly.

"Sybilla will be in directly, no doubt," said Tyrrell, thinking, as he spoke, that he had never seen anything more perfect than her face. "Will you come and let me entertain you in the study until she comes, or would you prefer the state and ceremony of the drawing-room? I am very glad to see you here, Selma," he finished, suddenly dropping the mock deference which was a standing joke between them, and speaking in a tone of quiet cordiality, while his eyes met hers with an expression which they very seldom wore. But Selma's eyes had wandered restlessly away, and she answered:

"It's very kind of you, Mr. Tyrrell. Don't trouble about me, please. One gets rather tired of being entertained, you know."

Her voice was rather hard and sharp, and there was a certain reckless disregard for the courtesy or discourtesy of her words, not uncommon in spoilt beauties, but new in Selma. Tyrrell looked at her with a slight considering frown. He was not surprised, and he was not particularly disturbed.

"I won't entertain you, then," he said. "Come into the study and we will sit and say nothing!"

"What an inviting prospect!" exclaimed Selma, with a little disdainful laugh which rang sharp as her voice did. "Thank you, Mr. Tyrrell, but I think solitude will suit me better. I will sit and say nothing in my own room, with your kind permission," and, with another mocking laugh, she turned away from him and went quickly upstairs.

Tyrrell returned to his study with a slight smile, and solaced himself with a cigarette. It was a new departure on Selma's part, he told himself, but not on the whole an important one. Half an hour had passed, he had taken up a book, when there was a soft knock at the door, and, before he could speak, Selma came in, straight across the room to where he stood as he rose to receive her.

"I am so sorry," she said simply, in a low voice. "You are so good to me, and I was so rude. There—there is nobody so good to me as you are, and I cannot bear to think of your being angry." All the colour was gone from her face, her eyes as she raised them for a moment only to his were dark and heavy, and her pleading voice shook a little.

"Of what are they made?" was Tyrrell's reflection on women in general, as he listened to her and looked at her. "This is another creature!"

"I could never be angry with you, Selma," he said, and even on the stage his voice had never been more beautiful. "Don't you know that nothing you could say to me would make any difference."

"I know that you are the kindest friend I have in the world," she said, softly, stretching out her hand as she spoke and letting it rest in his. "It was horrible of me, Mr. Tyrrell. May I—may I sit here with you, now?"

His only answer was a smile as he wheeled her round a chair, and as she sat down, he said:

"Are we to sit and say nothing?"

Selma lifted her eyes to him deprecatingly, and, to his amazement, they were full of tears.

"Let us try and think that it is a long time ago," she said, "a long, long time ago, before I began to come out. Mr. Tyrrell, sometimes I behave as though—as though I had forgotten; but, indeed, in my heart I never do. I know, always, that I owe everything to you—to your help, to your advice. Talk to me as you used to talk when I came here every day, when there was no rush and nobody but you."

"That is a very long time ago, Selma," he returned.

He did not sit down, but stood looking at her beautiful, softened face, with eyes which might have startled her if she had looked up. She did not look up, nor did she make any answer, except a little sad gesture of acquiescence; and, as he watched her, his face paled slightly, and he drew a step nearer to her.

"Selma," he began. But he was interrupted. Before Selma had time to read the expression on his face, the door behind them opened, and Miss Tyrrell's voice said, suavely:

"How shocking of me to be so late!"

THE TREASURE OF SANDOWN CASTLE.

A COMPLETE STORY.

I HAD been for some while engaging in conversation one of the most ancient seafaring men it had ever been my good fortune to behold. His quavering tones affected one almost as the pages of a black-letter history might in their suggestion of remoteness. Waterloo, the invariable time mark of the aged, this bleared-eyed, tottering old waterman assured me was fought upon the very day that he was married. He told me that he had no knowledge of his real age, but that he was popularly reputed to be nearly a century old, "which I dessay," said he, with a look of pride, "ain't very fur out." He had followed the water since a boy, and had only given up going upon it when his trembling hands and nerveless arms rendered him useless in a boat. Now he informed me he subsisted upon a few shillings a week which was paid to him for looking after some marine stores, together with a slender pittance granted him by the parish; that he lived in a little tarry hut, which he indicated; and that the loss of his last tooth, some forty years since, having left him no longer able to chew the quid, his chief solace in life was a pipe and a half-ounce of tobacco.

This extremely interesting old longshoreman and I sat together on the keel of an inverted boat upon the shingle slopes of Deal beach. The waters of the Downs stretched bright and dancing before us, and the scene was full of life and colour, for there had come a fair slant of wind at last, and the fleet of vessels were hastily getting their anchors and expanding their lofty heights of canvas. The summer breakers, seething lightly upon the pebbles, formed a very fit accompaniment to the trembling tones of my ancient companion.

"This is a famous old town for smuggling," said I, following with my gaze the burly figure of a coastguard as he tramped over the crunching shingle. "Is there much contraband traffic carried on nowadays, do you know?"

The old fellow withdrew his short clay pipe with a palsied hand. "Lord preserve ye, sir," he quavered out, "smuggling's dead an' gone years'n years ago. Ne'er a man along this here beach knows more about such like work than me. When I was a young 'un many's the time I've been running goods across from Calais and Dunkirk on black nights, in luggers that sailed like the very wind, with a man-o'-war astarn chasing us, and slapping shot after us as though we was only a target. Smuggling!" continued the old man, with a little sparkle coming into his dim eyes, and a quivering energy into his shrill tones, "why, what does young folks in these days know of the risks us men used to run? More'n once have I seen our luggers sunk by the revenue cutters 'cos they wouldn't heave-to, and once I was wounded here with a musket-ball as I was a-running away," and he indicated one of his attenuated calves with a hooked forefinger. "Four times have I been took by man-o'-war boats, and nine times been inside of Canterbury jail during King's pleasure for robbing of His Majesty's revenue. Some rummy things used to happen to us sometimes too. You ain't in no perticler hurry, sir? Then I'll just give ye a bit of a yarn.

"It was in the winter time of the year 1820, as near as I can recollect, for my memory ain't quite what it were, that me and seven other young chaps went away from this here Deal beach in a mackerel boat called the 'Happy Return,' bound across the water on our usual errand. We launches in the early morning, sets our big lugs, and with a fair wind and tide away we goes. Lord, how them luggers used to sail, to be sure! There was never anything to beat that there 'Happy Return.' I can see her now, in my mind's eye, as she used to lie on the beach just over against the 'Hoop and Griffin,' sir. I've seen her walk away from frigates, reckoned the fastest craft of their time, as easy as you'd beat me now in a race," and the old fellow rumbled into a mirthless laugh. "Well, we clears the Sou'-Sans'-Head, and then hauls our wind for Ostend, to which port we was bound this time. We knew there'd be plenty of eyes ashore watching our manœuvres, and pretty well guessing our business; but we'd got our nets aboard, and had made every preparation to lead folks to believe we was merely going a-fishing. The breeze came with a sort of fierceness in it when we got out behind the Goodwins, and we went rattling along like a sleigh over the ice. We made a smart passage that trip, sir, and no mistake, for we left as it might be at six o'clock in the morning, and the clocks were just striking ten by the time that we'd got the lugger safely moored inside of Ostend harbour, and as snug as a baby in its cradle. The foreigners was always glad for to see us chaps come into their places, since they knowed very well that we'd come to traffic along with them, and ye may be sure that our deceiving of the English revenue wasn't overmuch consarn to them.

"Well, sir, we lies in harbour all day. Towards evening most of our chaps went up town to buy the goods we intended to run, for we looked to be ashore at Deal again afore daylight next morning. I stopped aboard the 'Happy Return' along with a young chap named Billy Fidler to look after her. We was sitting together aft smoking a pipe o' baccy, when a man comes to the edge of the pier up above, and stands looking down at us. I didn't take much notice of him at first, just observing that he was dressed in pilot cloth, with a roundabout hat like what parsons wear. But he stood staring at us for such a long time that at last me and Billy begins to stare back, seeing which, he sings out in plain English, 'Good evening.' I nodded back, and then he gets upon the ladder running up and down the pier, against which our lugger was moored, and comes slowly down it, and steps aboard. When he was on deck, he comes straight across to where we was a-sitting in the stern-sheets, and speaking to me, says:

"'Can I have a few words along with you, mister?'

"'As many as you like,' says I, ''specially if you mean business at the back of it.'

"'Right you are,' he says, 'and business,' he says, 'is just what I do mean. I reckon now you come from Deal, don't you, and that you're over here on what you call the smuggling lay?'

"'Well,' I answers, with a grin, 'free-and-easy, mate; and as you've guessed it right I don't mind telling you,' for don't you see, sir, there wasn't no call to be perticler in concealing our business in a place where everybody knowed all about it.

"'And when d'ye reckon upon going back, may I ask?' says he.

"'To-night,' says I, 'as soon as the water flows and the flood tide makes we shall be off.'

"'Will you take a job to carry a chest of goods for me?' he says. 'I ain't going to tell you what's in it, and there'll be no call for you to consarn yourselves about that. I'll give you twenty pounds to set that chest ashore just t'other side of Sandown Castle, just to the nor'ards of it, and then ye needn't trouble further, for there'll be a party waiting to receive it.'

"Well, I snaps his offer up sharp, sir, as you may take your oath on't, for, as we was a-running goods on our own account, 'twas easy enough to put his box in along with ourn; and as to his being a spy, or a revenue officer in disguise, for all his being an Englishman, why, I never took to that notion at all. No, no, this consarn was genuine enough, as I seed at once; the bargin was struck, and the man paid half the money down on the nail afore we started, telling me that we'd get the other half at Deal, and then away he went, saying that he would send his chest of goods aboard by'n-by, when it came on dark. Well, about six o'clock, by which time it was quite dark, the month being January, a small boat comes rowing quietly down the harbour, and as she floats alongside, I made out that she had got a couple of hands in her, one of which was the chap that had boarded us. He sings out softly when he had laid his little craft to:

"'Here's the chest. Bear a hand, some of you, to get it aboard. It's precious heavy.'

"Upon this three or four of us leaned over the gunwale of the lugger, where the sheer of her brought it low down and close to the water aft, but when we come to tackle the chest we found it too heavy to hoist in that fashion, so we were obliged to bend the halliards on to it and sway it away like that.

"It was a big, square box, seemingly made of oak, and very strong, sir, with iron clamps and great battens nailed along to prevent its splitting. It was as heavy as two of our strongest chaps could move, and as soon as I clapped eyes on it I reckoned it contained something valuable. We turned to and stowed it away down in the lugger's well, under a fleet of herring-nets, the chap in the pilot-cloth suit standing and looking on all the time, telling us every minute to be careful of it, and so on, till he saw it safe and sound; then him and the other cove got into their boat again, and away they rows up the harbour. About half an hour afterwards our own cargo comes down, consisting of three hundred tubs of sperrits, a dozen bales of baccy, a small parcel of lace, some silk, and about twenty pound weight of tea—worth in them days twenty-five shillings a pound. This was a valuable cargo, considering how high duty was in those times, and we stowed it away as quickly as we could, covering the lot under tarpaulins and nets; and then the breeze having drawed a bit more east'ardly, and we being anxious to get ashore again, we looses the lugger's moorings, and puts to sea."

Here the old fellow paused, pulling off his cap to extract from it a spotted red handkerchief, which he applied to his nose with a shaking hand. He then dried his eyes, which were chronically humid, replaced the handkerchief, and proceeded.

"Ye may call it pretty nigh ten o'clock when we had got clear of Ostend with our lugs hoisted, and the 'Happy Return' fairly started for home. The weight of the wind had took off a little, and we reckoned that though we was running nearly afore it, it would take us all four hours' sailing to cover the distance. It was a frosty night, very dark and clear; the sea was as black as ink, and there was nothing to be seen the 'rizon round saving the lights of the town we were leaving behind us. Some of us turned in to sleep, there being no occasion for all hands to remain on deck, so long as there was a man to tend the helm and another to keep a bright look-out. At about one o'clock in the morning I was called up to go and take the tiller, it being then my turn to stand watch. We then reckoned ourselves betwixt seven and eight miles from the English coast, and about ten from Deal.

"Well, we kept all on going through it, me steering of the boat, and keeping her head well up for the South Foreland, whose high light was then in sight off the port bow. Presently I could make out the crowded lamps of the vessels in the Downs, and as our business was to give them a wide berth, lest a revenue cutter, or, worse still, a frigate, should lay amongst 'em, I luffed a little, intending to keep well outside of them, and then jibe over and run in directly for the land to the nor'ard of Deal, where the sand-hills, as you know, sir, stretch desolate and lonesome," and as he spoke his quivering hand traced upon the air a viewless diagram of his navigation.

"We had made all our plans," continued he, with a little rasping cough, "and knew that there'd be people waiting for us when we arrived; parties as was as much consarned as ourselves, sir, and as would keep a bright look-out upon the blockades, as the coastguards of them days was called, although there wasn't generally much trouble in bribing them chaps to look in t'other direction, or consent to be bound hand and foot, or any other such tricks out of a score of ways and means which we employed. Our signal was to be three quick flashes with a lantern, which, if all was right ashore, was to be answered with three similar flashes, and if all was wrong, why, then with only one flash.

"Sandown Castle then, sir, wasn't but a mere heap of ruins as ye see it now, but a proper kind of a fortress, inhabited by a corporal of Artillery and about a dozen men under him. They talk of the sea having encroached at that spot; but Lor', sir, when I was a boy it used to wash right up to the Castle walls at high water just the same as it does now. Well, this here corporal had been a boatman hisself, being in fact a Deal man, and many a good turn did he use to do us smugglers, although, poor chap, I must say we used always to pay him well for it. We flashed our light and waited, the lugger then being close in to the breakers which we could hear roaring along the beach. In a minute or two we saw the answering flashes ashore, and then we knew that it was all right and that we might heave ahead as soon as we liked. So we turned to smartly, and hoisted out the little punt we carried, and in a jiffy she was full of tubs and me and another man were pulling her ashore with muffled oars. We ran her on to the beach where there were plenty of people, all in the job, to meet us, and each man taking as big a load on his back as he could carry, sets off across country to a 'rondy-vous' very well beknown to us all, and in the shake of a mosquito's tail the boat was empty, and us rowing back to the lugger for another freight. Well, sir, we got all our cargo safely ashore, and then we carried the chest which we had shipped for the party at Ostend to the beach. The word was now passed round to know if there was anybody there to receive it, and I was middling surprised when the Artillery corporal stepped forward from out the little crowd of people and says, 'Yes, I'm to receive that there chest.' I was standing, holding one end of the big box, and he walks across to it, and laying hold of the other end, sings out, 'Lift up, my lad,' with which, being a great powerful man, he swings his end clear of the ground. I did the same, and we staggered along towards the Castle moat, which wasn't more'n a stone's throw from where we had come ashore. We hadn't got half-way, however, before a cry was raised that the blockade patrol was coming along, and instantly all the men set off at a scamper, bolting away in every direction like a pack of urchins startled by a bobby.

"'Hurry up, for Heaven's sake,' whispered the corporal, puffing and blowing under the weight of that blessed chest. 'It'll just about be good-night to us if we're took with this here box.'

"We reached the little drawbridge that went across the fosse, as ye'd call it, to the Castle itself, and then we crouches down in the gloom of the walls whilst the relief guard goes tramping by as unconsarned as possible, which showed that they hadn't seen our men running away. But when they comes to the lugger's boat, lying drawn up on the beach, they stops, and seeing nobody minding her, they goes and takes a look. However, fortunately, we'd got every blessed article out of her, and they found nothing that ye might call 'criminating evidence, so after walking round and round her several times, and talking among themselves, at last we hears one of them say, 'Come on, lads; quick march!' and away they tramps again.

"When the sound of their steps marching along the shingle had died away, me and the corporal tackles the chest again, and this time we got it fair inside the Castle walls, where all was black as ink. The sodger then says to me: 'Hold hard, Dan'l'—for I was well beknown to him—'hold hard,' says he, 'and I'll go and fetch a light.' So we sets the chest down, and off he goes, and presently returns with a great lantern, which he had slung round his neck that he might have his hands free. We passes down some stone steps, into a gloomy underground passage, where our footsteps sounded hollow, and our voices echoed all round.

"'Dan'l,' says the corporal to me, presently, 'd'ye know what's in this chest, mate?'

"'No, Tom,' I says, 'I don't. The chap as shipped it told me not to consarn myself about that, so I didn't make no inquiries, though I reckon it's something of pretty considerable value.'

"'It is so,' he answered, dropping his voice, 'and 'twixt you and me and the bed-post, Dan'l, I don't mind telling you what it is, for I reckon that, out of respect for your neck, you won't breathe a word about it. There's the gold and silver plate,' says he, 'of some of the finest churches on the Continent in this here box. They call it sacry-lidge, I believe, and for us to be took with this here chest 'ud be certain hanging. Therefore I'm going to stow it away in a place in this here old Castle which ain't known to any person in it but myself.'

"On this he leads me through such a maze of passages that I could no more have found my way back alive than"—my old companion paused, looking about with his blinking eyes in search of an image, then quavered out—"than I could chuck a pebble as far as yonder Goodwin Sands. I knew we was right down underground by the noise of the surf, which seemed overhead, sometimes sounding loud, and then becoming soft and distant again. Presently the corporal stops opposite a great black door at the end of a short archway, all studded over with nails like the soles of my boot. 'This here,' said he, 'used in years agone to be the powder-magazine, and a first-rate hiding-place there is just out of it.' So he opens the door which creaked like to set all my teeth of a jump, and in we steps, lugging the chest in along with us. We sets it down upon the beachy floor, the corporal saying that he'd stow it snugly away by-'n-by. He then puts his hand in his pocket, and says he: 'I'm to pay you t'other ten pound,' and he gives me the money with a crown piece for my trouble in helping him. He then shows me the way back again, reminds me to hold my jaw, and wishes me good-night."

"Well?" said I, finding the ancient waterman paused whilst he slowly applied his handkerchief to his eyes.

"Well," he echoed, "the rum part of this here yarn lies in the fact that I was the last man as ever see that corporal, though I dursn't then own it. From that night he was never heard of again. Nobody knew what had become of him. He was reckoned to be a deserter, but what I want to know is what did he do with that chest of plate? He couldn't have run away with it, for it was much too big a job to try and carry off all that was in that heavy box in one night, with no one to help him and no one to see him. Years and years passed, and presently the old Castle was sold and pulled down. Many and many a time since have I crawled under the ruins of it, in and out among the underground passages, but never could find the place where I helped the corporal to carry the treasure to. And it's my opinion," concluded the old fellow, rising both in body and voice, and striking the beach with his stick to emphasize his trembling words, "that there it lies still: a whole chest full of gold and silver plate hid away in them ruins. Only think of it! And now it's dinner time, and I must be off. Drink your health, sir? Ay, that I will, thank you kindly," and away hobbled my interesting old friend to the sign of the "Yarmouth Packet."

Sandown Castle, at the present day, is nothing more than a great heap of ruins, standing upon the border of the desolate stretch of sandhills to the north of the quaint old town of Deal. It is circled by a fence save on that side to which the shingle of the beach slopes in billowy undulations, and the wayfarer, tempted to explore the crumbling pile, is warned by unsightly boards that the ruins are dangerous. Yet the old structure was not lacking in historic interest. Built in the reign of Henry the Eighth, it was, during the stormy days of the Restoration, the place of imprisonment of the celebrated Roundhead leader, Colonel Hutchinson, who died within its grey walls. From its buttresses, too, sallied forth the gallant Rich to oppose the landing of the Cavaliers under Prince Charles, and although they got a footing on the low-lying shore, yet his pikemen and musqueteers speedily put them to flight. The Castle had been gradually falling into a state of dilapidation until the year 1854, when the Government sold it as old material, on condition that the foundations should be allowed to remain as a protection against the inroads of the sea. The stronghold was demolished, but the pile of its foundations, with their intricacies of subterranean passages and dungeons and other cavernous retreats, still remains to this day.

Ruminating as I strolled by the water's edge upon the aged boatman's yarn, I thought I would kill an hour that afternoon by exploring the heap of ruins. Accordingly arming myself for the expedition with a candle and matches, I set out in the direction of the Castle. I took care to ascertain beforehand the state of the tide, for at high water it not uncommonly flows into the underground structures of the place, and I had no mind to be caught by the flood and drowned like a rat in a hole. Having ascertained that the tide would not be at its top for at least six hours, I passed the gaunt, deserted windmill so familiar as a landmark to mariners in the Downs, and arrived at the wooden fence surrounding the ruins. Over this I easily clambered, and descending the grassy slope of what had originally been the Castle moat, I entered through a small crumbling archway and found myself in a spacious apartment of bare grey stone, with a dome-shaped roof, and lighted by a hole above. The floor of it consisted of the shingle of the beach, intermingled with small blocks of the masonry which had doubtless been dislodged by unusually heavy waves. I passed through this cavern and entered another similar apartment, communicating with it by a narrow passage. It was gloomier in here, for there was no hole in the roof, and the daylight had to find its way in by the entry. Little enough suggestion of hidden treasure here, thought I, kicking aside a great heap of seaweed with my foot, and yet who shall say what may be buried behind the stones of this old place?

I passed through into a third such vaulted room, and here it was almost dark, especially to my sight after the glare of the sunlight upon the sea. I paused a moment, noticing how resonant and distinct the thud of each breaker sounded, as it curled over on to the shingle. I groped about in my pocket, and brought out a box of matches and the candle. I struck a lucifer, but the damp draught blowing through the cavern instantly put it out. It cost me half the contents of my match-box to ignite my candle, and when it was fairly alight I had to screen the flickering flame in the palm of my hand to prevent the current of air from extinguishing it.

I took a survey of the interior, on the glimmering white walls of which the shadows started out in illusive and fantastic proportions to the wavering candle-light. The shingle floor of this apartment was as level and regular as a rolled carriage-drive, and although I might know by the fringe of sea-grass around the base of the stonework that the water frequently flowed into the interior, yet there were no detached fragments of the structure lying among the pebbles as in the first dungeon I had entered. Indeed, all looked as solid and staunch as upon the day it was built.

I was just in the act of passing out of this place and through into the next darksome room beyond it, when, holding my candle close against the wall and continuing to screen it with my hand, the light fell upon the tracing of a small archway in the masonry; an outline of brickwork let into the stone wall, as it seemed to me, and like what we should speak of as a blind window in the architecture of a house. Being whitewashed over like the rest of the wall, it was scarcely decipherable upon the pallid surface, and was indeed a thing to escape the observation of nine hundred and ninety-nine people, whilst the thousandth, noticing it, would imagine it some design at ornamentation. I naturally concluded that there had existed a window here which had been filled in. But with this idea came the further consideration that an open space must lie beyond a window, and as I knew that I now was in about the centre of the ruins, so I perceived that it was impossible that the space behind that dead arch should be outside the Castle walls.

The lower part of this mere outline of a window came to within half a yard of the pebbly floor of the place, and, raising my foot, I kicked it hard, anxious to find out whether the ring of my boot upon the stonework would denote the presence of a cavern beyond. But what was my surprise to discover by the hollow thud of the echo that the space enclosed by the tracery of the arch was filled, not by bricks or stones, but by boards, which perceptibly started to the smiting of my foot, and seemed to require but a little effort of battering to knock them altogether away.

I am free to confess that, as I stood there, screening my flickering candle, and listening to the hollow booming of the breakers upon the beach outside, the story of the ancient boatman recurred strongly to my mind. I had gathered from his quavering version that the chest of sacrilegious booty still lay concealed among the crumbling boulders of this old ruin. But then, I reflected, if it lay beyond this boarded aperture, it was scarcely conceivable that it should so long have escaped discovery. And yet, thought I, administering a vigorous kick which dislodged a little shower of mortar, I will set my mind at rest as to what does lie beyond this obstruction, with which I fell to knocking down the hoarding in right good earnest.

Five minutes of strenuous exertion served to loosen the whole framework, so that to each blow of my foot it creaked and swayed. Now, thought I, for a "coup de grâce," and I dashed up against the boards with all my weight. There was a sharp rending and splintering, and then to the pressure of my shoulders the entire hoarding fell backwards and disappeared into the gloom behind with a loud crash. As it did so a puff of mouldy-smelling air blew out the candle I held in my hand. The corner of the dungeon in which I stood was quite dark, the little daylight that sifted through merely faintly illuminating the centre of it. I struck another match, caught the flame in the hollow of my hand, and reignited the wick. The aperture through which I had broken might measure about three feet across, and as much again from its base to the point of its concavity. The space which lay beyond it was densely black. I leaned through it, and holding the candle high over my head, whilst I contrived to shield it from the cold current of air, tried to survey the interior, but the radiance only threw up dimly a small patch of the shingle floor of the place. Determined upon pursuing my discovery, I very cautiously threw my legs over the sill of the archway, and dropped to the ground on the other side. I warily advanced a few paces, and found that I had stepped clear of the draught flowing towards the opening, and that my candle burnt bright and clear. I elevated my arm, raising the light well above my head, and now the extent of the cavern I had broken into was plainly revealed to me. It was a square apartment of considerable size, running probably a dozen yards both ways, with a lofty roof, arched into a dome after the fashion of the dungeons I had passed through. The walls were whitened, and glimmered out feebly to the rays of light which fell upon them. My attention was almost immediately taken, as I stood glancing about, by an object in the corner furthest from the spot where I had halted, which looked like a deeper stain on the gloom there. I advanced towards it, my footsteps crunching hollowly over the shingle. Whilst I moved, the oscillation of my arm made the candle-light fitful and illusive, so that I could not discern the outline of the dark heap I was approaching; but coming to a stand within arm's length of it and flashing the illumination broad upon the vague mass, what was my horror and astonishment when there leapt out upon my vision the spectacle of a human skeleton, seated upon a great black chest, its grinning skull drooping forwards, its bony hands resting upon its knees, and yet a few tatters of clothing clinging round its gaunt and naked ribs!

I started back with a half-uttered exclamation of terror and surprise, so utterly was I amazed by this sudden apparition.

That the chest upon which the skeleton rested was the identical box of which the aged boatman had told me I had very little doubt; and that the weird anatomy perched grim and motionless on top of it was the remains of his friend the corporal, who had never been heard of since the night of the smuggling adventure, I was equally certain. I had a loathing to touch that bony sentinel, but yet to come at the chest that he was silently guarding it was evident I must displace him. On the shingle floor, within a little distance of where I stood, lay a rusty iron shovel, the handle of which was broken off near the cross-piece at the end of it. This I picked up, and with the end of it gently pushed the skeleton over the edge of the box. It fell with a hollow, clinking sound and the sharp snapping of several bones, still preserving its sitting posture. I then hooked the iron rim of the blade between its ribs, and dragged it into a corner, where I left the ghastly object, and returned, all trembling with eagerness, to break open the massive-looking chest.

I was fully prepared to find it securely locked and barred, but to my surprise the lid yielded to my first tug at it. I raised it upon its creaking hinges, peered into the black interior, and then gave a little cry of disappointment. The chest was empty. For at least five minutes I must have stood blankly regarding it by the dim light of the candle, and musing upon both the mystery and fruitlessness of my discovery. Speculation as to how the skeleton came to be sitting upon the chest, and, stranger still, how the place should have been boarded up in the manner I have described, with its ghastly occupant within it, was idle. Yet thus it was. However, I determined upon keeping my secret. The treasure, to be sure, was gone from the oaken case which had held it, but how did I know that it still might not lie concealed somewhere within that gloomy cavern?

But my narrative has now run into greater lengths than I intended, otherwise I should like to tell you of the curious manner in which I eventually discovered the treasure buried in the shingle of the place. I got through the archway, and into the outer dungeon again, carefully replacing the hoarding after me, so that it should escape the observation of any persons who might stray into the place. I then blew out my candle, and made towards the gleam of daylight visible at the end of the stony corridor, and a few moments later I had again emerged into the brilliant sunshine which was pouring down upon the yellow shingle slopes of Deal beach.

APPLES AND APPLE CULTURE.

PART II.

In America there is a native species of apple, the "Pyrus Coronaris", but no attempt has been made tó improve it. It is rather a shrub than a tree, but the blossoms are as beautiful as those of the cultivated kinds, the fruit being as large as a small peach, with a much more agreeable perfume than the ordinary apple, but hard in flavour to a cultivated taste.

It is to the Old World that America is indebted for what is now the leading fruit of that part of the world. The apple is of more general value as a native product and as an article of commerce than all other fruits combined.

The first trees known to bear on that continent were planted in Governor's Island, near Boston, and gave ten apples, tenth October, 1639. It is probable, however, that the apple was known to the Indians at an earlier date, as they were found growing near Indian villages, having been brought thither by the French missionaries. In that case, as the French missionaries came from Canada, it is probable the fruit was known in Canada, which was then a French colony.

Governor Endicott established the first nursery in America, in 1640, importing the young trees from England. A tree planted near Hartford, Connecticut, in 1641, was still bearing fruit in 1850, more than two centuries after. The first nurseries for raising apple-trees were established near the city of New York and in New Jersey. This fruit soon got into extensive cultivation, but, besides domestic use and the making of cider, it was of comparatively small advantage to the grower. Towards the middle of the present century, however, the apple became valuable as an article of commerce. Apples were peeled and dried in the sun, and subsequently barrelled for export. Apple butter was made to some extent—cheese, we suggest, might have been a more suitable designation, as there was no use of butter in any way in the manufacture. It was made by simply boiling cider down, six gallons to one, into the consistency of butter or cheese. The Germans introduced the manufacture, but it never became an important industry, like barrelling.

By the invention of peeling and drying machines greater facilities have been acquired, the cost has been greatly reduced, and much waste prevented. But the great and growing improvements by which apples are successfully barrelled, stored, and brought into distant markets, and the impetus given thereby to apple culture everywhere, have made fresh fruit so cheap and abundant at all desirable seasons, that drying has been largely superseded, and the growing and marketing of the fruit in a fresh condition have become the chief objects of this department of trade.

The well-known energy of our American cousins has wonderfully developed the culture of apples. The extent to which it has advanced may be seen in a few simple figures.

It is on record that Western New York alone ships annually about two million barrels, equal to at least six million English bushels, the worth of which to the growers is about three million dollars, or six hundred thousand pounds; that is, an average of about half a dollar per bushel. With anything like a crop every year, this would pay the grower far better than wheat or any description of cereal product. If we extend our view to the whole of the United States, we find that the annual marketable value of the entire apple crop is not less than fifty million dollars, or ten million pounds sterling—a grand addition to the exports of a nation, upon which, in Great Britain at least, there is no duty to pay.

Raising apples is a principal business of most nurseries, some nurserymen having hundreds of acres with little else but apples. The stocks are raised from seed, and not, as in this country, by the utilisation of the Crab or the Paradise stock. It is said that as many as two hundred bushels of apple-pips are sometimes sown by a single firm, from which millions of stocks are produced, selling, when one year old, at from two dollars (eight shillings) to six dollars (twenty-four shillings) per thousand. These stocks are grafted before being planted. The operation is performed by men and boys during the winter season. The stocks are then packed in sand or sawdust, and stowed away in cellars, to be planted out in nursery rows in the spring. After two summers' growth, these realise, wholesale, from fifty to two hundred dollars (ten pounds to forty pounds) per thousand; that is, from twopence-halfpenny to tenpence each, a good deal cheaper than they can be purchased in England. The distribution is effected chiefly by means of agents and local dealers.

In dealing with an apple crop, American growers have the good sense to handle the fruit carefully in removing it from the trees. This is done in many parts of England; but in others, Devonshire and Herefordshire especially, the apples are shaken down, or even knocked down. This is all very well when the fruit is to be used for cider, but when it is to be marketed for domestic use, it is absurd to the last degree. The fruit is seldom sightly, always has some bruises, and will not keep. Knocking the apples down is past absurdity, it is wasteful and wicked, as multitudes of the fruit-bearing spurs must of necessity be knocked off. This slovenly and wasteful process accounts in a large measure for the fact that some apple-trees bear a crop only each other year; the spurs with their beautiful buds, in which the fruit is to be found in embryo, are wantonly and carelessly destroyed, and the munificence of Providence abused. It is a rare thing to see a clean, sound, good sample of apples in Herefordshire, which may be charged on, first, the slovenly cultivation, and, second, the absurd and lazy method of shaking down the fruit instead of gathering it carefully.

The American growers a[illegible] keen in making the best of their app[illegible] growth. The best and soundest fruit are b[illegible]lled, as we have said; but there will s[illegible] remain a considerable quantity not qu[illegible]p to the mark, which they grind up [illegible] cider, and after pressing the pomace ca[illegible]fully they wash it, and separate the see[illegible] or pips, which sell for about one poun[illegible] per bushel. Many people in this country are impatient about their apples, and gather them before they are properly matured; in consequence of which the fruit is not full-flavoured, and sometimes shrivels, and is not in marketable condition. In Western New York, where a great deal of apple barrelling is done, the fruit remains on the trees unt[illegible] the middle of October, when it is han[illegible] picked very carefully, and placed so a[illegible] avoid the slightest bruise. The impe[illegible] and those in any way injured are rej[illegible] and the sound placed in perfectly [illegible] barrels. When the barrels are fill[illegible] fruit is pressed in tightly by mean[illegible] hand lever adapted to the purpose[illegible] apples are somewhat pressed into one another, so that there may be no shaking. They say this pressing does not injure them, but in this, we believe, they are mistaken. They argue that as one apple stays where pressed into the other, the air is excluded from the bruise. But it is a bruise for all that, and the cellular tissue of the apple is, in part, crushed. This explains why American apples which have been barrelled always, or nearly always, exhibit bruises, and will not keep long when the barrel has once been opened. This is a great hindrance to the sale of this class of fruit, as in the small towns and country places of England, where the sale must necessarily be slow, the fruiterers find it does not pay to purchase them. It is the action of the air in exciting fermentation which causes decay. When the barrels have been filled in the orchards, they are stored in some cool place until frost sets in, when they are stacked on their sides in cellars.

In a former article we mentioned the action of soil and climate in modifying the character, colour, and flavour of the apple. This is seen very markedly in the United States, where there is such great diversity of soil and climate. It is only in those parts of America where the autumns are early and cool that the apple for preservation can be raised with success. In the warmer parts, apples which in more temperate localities keep through the whole winter before maturing, are ripe in the autumn. The great belt of the North American Continent for about a hundred miles north and south of the great lakes is the principal American apple region. The Alleghany ridge, through Pennsylvania, Virginia, and North Carolina, is also famous for its successful apple cultivation. In Morganton, North Carolina, is [illegible] tree which has been known to yield [illegible] hundred and twenty-five bushels in a single season; and one at Greenville in [illegible] same State has produced one hundred and twenty bushels. But the apples [illegible] this region, though large, do not colour well, and the same is the case with the very large fruit of Iowa and Nebraska, while the same varieties in Canada and Michigan colour beautifully. In many parts of California the preservation of winter apples succeeds well, but not to as great perfection as in Oregon and Washington Territory.

Apple-trees do not live so long, it is said, in the States west of the Ohio River as in those east of it, the drier climate not favouring longevity. About fifty years is the average age of an apple-tree in the former States, while in the latter they will attain to double that age. In some favoured eastern locations apple-trees have reached three feet in diameter, while two feet or less is the average size.

We have made no mention of Canada, but Canada is even ahead of the United States in the quality of her apples. "Canada First," was the verdict of the judges at the Colonial Exhibition in London, and every unbiassed person, able to judge, must have endorsed the decision of the judges. Canada has a summer climate exactly suited to the requirements of the apple, and it is more than probable that the rigorous winter may kill a good deal of the blight which exists in the shape of insect life.

The Canadian tinned apples are, beyond doubt, the best thing of the kind that we have tested, and we have tested these many times with only one result—entire satisfaction.

But England, at least, to say nothing of Scotland, and Ireland, and Wales, ought to revolutionise her apple culture; she has land enough, and a climate which, if not equal to Canada and the United States, is capable of making the cultivation of apples a paying concern. But it is little likely to be attempted to any large, and, certainly, any hopeful extent, unless under the three or four conditions which we propose to name.

First of all, there must be a thorough and intelligent acquaintance with this branch of horticulture. A man cannot grow apples as he might turn a barrel organ. Care, diligence, and a thorough understanding of all that belongs to pomological science is, indeed, a first condition.

Then, second, the landlord must aid him in this material improvement of his property. Landlords ought to foster everything tending to an increase in knowledge of this branch of horticulture, by encouraging Pomological Societies, and such like. Moreover, it would be only just in most cases for the proprietor of the soil to aid the tenant in the improvement of his property, at least to the extent of finding trees. And another thing is: the tenant must have security of tenure, to encourage him in the expenditure of labour and money. And, not least, the tenant who improves his land by the cultivation of fruit ought to be secured against the imposition of additional tithes. This most unjust and unwise imposition has proved a great barrier against improvements in both agriculture and horticulture.

But, it must be allowed, apple culture has many drawbacks, among the greatest of which are the results of frost and blight. There is very little to be done against frost, except to avoid a northern or eastern aspect and a situation near boggy ground, where in damp or frosty weather the atmosphere would be saturated with moisture.

Blight, it is next to impossible to guard against. It is one of the woes of humanity which we cannot entirely escape. The Codling moth (Cerpocapsa pomonilla) is in many places the most troublesome on account of its nocturnal habits, by which means it escapes the keen eyes of the birds. Where orchards are few and far between, and the insect is pressed for food, scarcely an apple escapes this worm. Gathering the fruit as it falls, and feeding cattle on it, destroys countless numbers which would develope into moths; but this does not save the apples. A more excellent way would be to burn the brushings of hedges and ditches, and all kinds of weeds and rough litter under the trees, about the time the worm has changed into a moth, and before the female has deposited her eggs, so that the next year's progeny would be destroyed; in addition to which the small birds which prey on these insects should be preserved in such numbers as not to be a nuisance in other things. The insect commonly, having left the fruit on which it has developed and fattened, crawls down the trunk of the tree and hides itself in the ground, where it undergoes the changes which make up its very mischievous life. These insects are sometimes caught by placing haybands round the trunks of the trees. This worm or moth is European in its origin, but it follows the apple all over the regions where it is grown.

The Americans whose orchards are somewhat near the coast, are often troubled with the canker-worm (Anesophery Pometeria), which feeds on the foliage, and leaves the tree as if scorched. It does not, however, go far inland.

The apple is not so subject to serious diseases in America as in England, the "Twig Blight," by which branches of one or two years' growth die, being the worst.

The varying influences of climate and soil on the flavour, appearance, and time of maturity of the apple make numerous varieties a necessity, and repeated experiments in planting and rearing and general treatment very important. This brings us round to the same point as dwelt on before, namely, the diffusion of intelligent ideas and the results of experiments, which may be made available to all sorts and conditions of apple growers. The Americans have a work on the apple in which there are no less than two thousand kinds named and described; they have also State Societies, and a national body known as the American Pomological Society, which issues yearly volumes of its proceedings.

The apple, it must be conceded, is the most wholesome of all fruits, as it certainly is the most useful; and these considerations, together with the large and increasing demand by all classes of society for what must be reckoned a necessary of life, should lead to such results as would place England again not second among the apple-producing communities of the world. As Canada has surpassed the parent country, so Australia is making rapid strides to overtake her elder sister in the northern regions of the New World; whether she will do so, and whether the old country will shake off her lethargy and rise to the occasion, remains to be seen.

Meanwhile it must be borne in mind that if old England is not to be last in the race, greater facilities must be granted for the acquiring of land, and more favourable conditions for holding, cultivating, and improving it.

A FAMOUS LITTLE WEST INDIA ISLAND.

Very few travellers for pleasure condescend to visit the West Indies, and only during the past two winters has the fact been established that they are excellent places of refuge for those who either cannot or do not care to face the bitter American winter. Still fewer are those who dream of disembarking at the once famous little island of St. Kitts.

For this very reason I, exploring the West Indies during the past winter, determined to see something of an island with the name of which I had been familiar ever since the old-time romance of the Spanish Main and the isles of the Caribbean Sea had cast its web of enchantment around me. I had seen Jamaica, and Haïti, and Trinidad, and Barbadoes, and had been charmed and amazed. At St. Kitts I did not expect to be either charmed or amazed, but felt that I should be interested, and so, in spite of assurances on the part of fellow-passengers on board that smartest and most comfortable of Royal Mail steamers, the "Eden," that we could "put in time" far more profitably and agreeably at St. Thomas, we determined to land at St. Kitts.

The process of landing at one of the smaller West India Islands is an amusing experience. The arrival of the home mail steamer is incontestably the event of the island fortnight. Everybody comes into town, the humbler black folk simply to the waterside to bask in the sun and to see what goes on; the "buckra folk," many of whom have ridden in miles from their estates, to come on board the steamer, not because they have any business there, but because it is the proper thing to do, and because a little excitement in their lonely, humdrum life cannot be made too much of. It is even deemed necessary that the local police force should come off — nominally to keep order amongst the turbulent, pugnacious boatmen who swarm around the accommodation ladder, but in reality, we can't help thinking, in order to give the men a wholesome notion of their own importance, and perhaps with some idea of impressing us passengers similarly. Directly the health officer has been satisfied, the deck of the steamer becomes a scene of the wildest excitement. Passengers who want to get off meet passengers and others who want to get on board on the narrow ladder; the "deckers" forward are chattering, and screaming, and laughing, and crying, and pushing, and tumbling in one great jumble of black-faced, gaudily attired humanity, and as each "decker" has collected around him his Lares and Penates, and that extraordinary assortment of boxes and parcels which follows the negro on his migrations, and as each married couple have their usual allowance of children, the effect can be better imagined than described.

St. Kitts does not impress the stranger otherwise than as being a happy, prosperous-looking island. Indeed, but for the central mass of hills, not gloriously wooded to their summits like the hills in the other islands, but still hills, it would be almost ugly. Little Nevis, its neighbour, is really more attractive, although for your own sake it is not worth while saying so to a St. Kitts man.

We land at a little old jetty which might have done duty in Lord Nelson's day, pass through a double line of grinning, staring blacks, to whom the arrival of white strangers is an event, go through the form of having our baggage examined in the oddest and queerest of little custom houses, and make for our "hotel." There is exactly double the number of "hotels" in Basseterre, St. Kitts, that there is in the other smaller West Indian Islands—namely, two. Out of the West Indies they would rank as fifth-rate boarding-houses, but they are locally known as hotels, and so we call them. We were tolerably familiar by now with that great drawback to West Indian travel, the want of good accommodation, and did not expect much. We did not get much. At our selected hostelry, kept by a highly respectable coloured woman owning to the highly respectable name of Mondesire, we were comfortably, not luxuriously lodged, plentifully regaled, and moderately charged. The sanitary arrangements—well, they were West Indian, and so, be it said in fairness, was the bath; and for more than clean beds, a good bath, and decent food one must not ask in the West Indies. And so we were in Basseterre, the capital of St. Kitts; in the days of the old French and Spanish wars as active, and bustling, and rollicking a little place as there was in a particularly active, bustling, and rollicking part of the world. We had often wondered what sort of a town it was as we read about it in the musty pages of the old "Gentleman's Magazine." We had of course not expected to find it much more than a shadow of its old self, but we were not prepared for the absolute lifelessness and decay by which we were surrounded.

The streets are well planned on the block system, but the houses generally are mean and decrepit, and are oppressed with that air of neglect and decay which so impressed us in Kingston, Jamaica. But for the presence of ever-laughing and chattering Sambo and family, Basseterre could hardly be classed amongst the lively places of the earth, for there is little movement in the sad-coloured streets, and nobody ever seems to go in or out of the sepulchral vaults which are called stores. Still there was an old-world charm about Basseterre which counterbalanced its dulness and lifelessness, and we soon got to think even that the intrusion into it of smart, active, metropolitan life would spoil the illusion.

There is a square in the middle of the town with an atmosphere of solid respectability about it which whispers of good days gone by. It is now called Pall Mall Square, but in the days of the old sea-dogs it was known as The Pasture. Around an enclosed space, planted with palms, and mango-trees, and tamarinds, and ornamented with a waterless fountain, are gathered the good old houses of Basseterre. Evidently in the old time this was the central point of the town. Rodney and his captains no doubt knew it well, and we may think that even Nelson, with Mrs. Nisbet from Nevis on his arm, may have sometimes sauntered in the shade of the trees. At any rate we at once connected it with the following old-time incident as described in the "Gentleman's Magazine" for July, 1744. "We," that is, the people of St. Kitts, "have ten privateers already at sea, and are fitting out four more; we flow in money, a division being lately made between one or two privateers; each man had two hundred pounds. A man-of-war coming down from Antigua, sent her barge ashore to press some of the privateers' men, which amount to about one thousand in number; but they seized the barge as soon as she came ashore, and having with infinite labour got her into the middle of the town, made her full of punch, and were very merry on the occasion."

Shades of the dead! what a stir would be made in quiet old Basseterre to-day if half-a-dozen blue-jackets, much less a thousand, started to carouse in its streets!

The Court House looks on Pall Mall Square. There is only one other British Government building that we know of in the world which presents a more dejected and lamentable appearance, and that is the Court House at Roseau, Dominica. There is nothing of interest inside except a mighty beam of wood still sticking in the three feet thick wall as it was hurled there by a hurricane. Next to the Court House is a quaint old family residence, now occupied as a fire station. Flanking it is a fine, stone-fronted mansion, long occupied by the old island family of Berridge, and further down, but not facing the square, the really imposing old seat of the Woodleighs, now known as Spencer House.

Elsewhere in the town there is little to call for remark. The church, standing on the site of the old one destroyed in the great fire of 1868, is large, but more uninteresting than the generality of West Indian churches, which are usually rich in old-time memorials remarkable for their heraldic embellishments, and the quaint wording which makes them the pathetic records of a grandeur and prosperity which can never be eclipsed, if ever it is equalled again.

The island of St. Kitts is almost entirely given up to the cultivation of the sugar-cane; hence, as in Barbadoes, the absence of that magnificent forestry which is the distinctive charm of West Indian scenery, gives the island a bare and naked appearance, although in its way a cane piece in the full glow of the tropical sun is a beautiful sight. We were the recipients here, as elsewhere, of that fine, genuine West Indian hospitality which is yet much more than a mere tradition, and spent the best part of a week on a large sugar estate on the north side of the island. To the stranger the life is pleasant enough, but it must be insufferably dull during the long months of the year when nothing is doing. The modern planter, however, as often as not, gets over this difficulty by spending half his year at home, and returning for the busy season when the crop is being got in.

The very limited society is pleasant enough; but, from our metropolitan point of view, a yearning must sometimes arise for fresh faces and fresh topics of conversation, over and above the little local gossip and the all-absorbing "shop" about centrifugals, and vacuum pans, and Demerara crystals, and hogsheads. Hence, it may be imagined with what delight a new arrival is hailed, and how a new player is welcomed to tennis-grounds upon which people are accustomed to meet who know each other's play as well as they know each other's faces.

Up to the time of the Crimean War there was a considerable garrison at St. Kitts, as at all the West Indian Islands. For sanitary and strategical reasons, a solitary offshoot from the Mount Misery range, known as Brimstone Hill, was chosen as the head-quarters, and here an enormous outlay of money and labour resulted in the formation of a series of fortifications which won for St. Kitts the title of the West Indian Gibraltar.

A visit to Brimstone Hill is intensely interesting and not a little saddening, for when the troops were withdrawn, the forts with their barracks, and storehouses, and magazines were left empty and deserted, and have remained so ever since.

An eleven mile drive along the coast, by a road fringed with Flamboyants—trees which, like the Frangipanni, burst forth first into leaf, and then, after every leaf has fallen, into masses of bright-tinted flowers — with sand - box trees, white cedars, and an occasional cabbage palm—stateliest and most solitary of West Indian trees—thickly dotted with native villages, about the squalid huts of which scores of children swarm, brings us to Sandy Point town.

It is hard to realise nowadays that Sandy Point was, less than half a century ago, a gay, bustling, wicked garrison town. There are ruins all about it of the old military buildings and offices, remains of sturdy stone edifices built to defy time and climate, many of them with considerable architectural pretensions, now abandoned to the blacks, who find that the big, neatly hewn stones form excellent foundations for their miserable shanties, and make impenetrable back-yard walls. At Fort Charles, built two hundred and twenty years ago, and still retaining some of its old guns, has been established a leper hospital—an admirably arranged institution, under the untiring, ceaseless supervision of a medical officer who probably knows the military history of the world in general, and of St. Kitts in particular, as well as any man living. Leprosy is a gruesome object for contemplation, but the enthusiasm of a professional man with his work at heart brooks no denial, and we had to inspect the victims of this terrible malady. Only one thought was troubling the mind of our cicerone, as he took us from the male to the female division, and from the latter to a bastion of the old fort, the ground of which was littered with huge, ancient pieces of artillery, and this was how the masses of metal were to be got out of the way, in order that a further extension of the hospital might be commenced.

From the Lazaretto we went to old Sandy Point Church, whereat the garrison officers and their ladies attended in full state in the "good old times," and to the newly built hospital beyond, and then we struck inland to explore Brimstone Hill.

A hot, dusty road, running through cane pieces, leads us to the base of the hill. A still hotter and dustier track winds up the hill itself. Very few feet tread this old military way now, but forty years ago we can imagine how lively it must have been with the constant passage of red and white uniforms, the blare of bugles, the crash of the regimental bands, and the ceaseless ebb and flow of the heterogeneous human tide which a military station always attracts.

We pass through a massive gateway. No smart sentry challenges us. The gate, long robbed of paint, hangs on a single hinge, and luxuriant creepers are gradually hiding the cannon-ball-topped gate-posts from sight. To our right, amidst a veritable jungle, is a magazine, still sturdy and fit for use, but open to all the winds. Up, up goes the pathway, ankle-deep in dust, strewed with fallen boulders, and often half hidden in bush. More magazines, a vast storehouse, a wall with embrasures, and under the wall, overlooking the blue sea, the old military cemetery. Such stones as remain upright are almost undecipherable, but we contrive to make out that the majority of those whose memories they record died quite young men, and the hideous phantom, Yellow Jack, strides before us.

Perfectly quiet and peaceful is the old burial-ground now, and as we push our way through the dense undergrowth we find it hard to realise that the masses of building rising on the hillsides above us and around us were so short a time back the homes of busy, active life. Up we go, past huge tanks, veritable triumphs of the mason's craft, built to hold millions of gallons of water, and so well fulfilling their original purpose that at the time of our visit—a period of severe drought in the island—the owners of estates on the level land below were filling daily hogsheads of water from them. Past ravelins, and bastions, and curtains, and demilunes, and walls of prodigious thickness, covering every salient point of the precipitous hillsides; some standing up clean, fresh, and unbroken, as if the engineers had but just left them; others pushed out of plumb and undermined by the vigorous growth of parasite plants; others almost completely hidden from sight by masses of hibiscus and wild guava bushes, and the dark, heavy foliage of the mango. We pass under stately gateways with the date 1794 above them, with huge cannon belonging to G. R. guarding their bases, on to what was the grand parade-ground, now a tangled wilderness of scrub; through magnificent series of lofty, airy quarters, all built of good stone, and apparently ready for immediate occupation; then out on to the saluting and signal-point at the very summit, where we creep for shade into an embrasure, and look forth on the scene far below and far around.

There is not a sail on the broad blue expanse of sea. Saba and Eustatius rise out from it on our right hand, whilst on our left the peak of Nevis pushes its head through the only clouds in the sky. There is not a sound, not even the hum of an insect or the chirp of a bird; but in the old, stirring times when these waters were full of English, and French, and Spanish men-of-war, and swift privateers, and stately merchantmen, this signal-station must have been the centre of constant excitement and anxiety, and the news flashed from it more than once bore the purport of life or death to the English West Indies.

Our cicerone, a negro, tells us that he can well remember the old garrison days, and shakes his head with a meaning twinkle in his eyes as he speaks. It must have been a gay, rollicking life according to him, and the officers quartered on Brimstone Hill seem to have made the very best of matters. There were parties by day and parties by night. There were dances in Sandy Point, to attend which the fair Creoles thought nothing of riding a dozen miles, or of even coming over from Nevis. The subalterns were wild young fellows, too, and the stories he told of their midnight exploits at Basseterre and Sandy Point, of their buggy races, their steeplechases over the hills, and their harum-scarum frolics, only seemed to accentuate the silence and desolation around us.

But a new era is dawning for St. Kitts, as for the other West Indian Islands, and the alert acuteness of Sir Graham Briggs is hastening it on. Although during our stay we noted that almost every article of food was imported, the rich soil of the island is capable of being made to yield anything in the way of vegetables, whilst in the possession of good pasturage, St. Kitts and Nevis stand almost alone amongst the smaller islands.

One or two St. Kitts institutions deserve a brief notice, and we have done. The local paper, "St. Kitts Daily Express, a Periodical for the Homes of the People," is, we should imagine, the smallest newspaper in the world. Only one side is printed, and of this two columns are occupied by advertisements, and the third by foreign telegrams and the market reports.

The telephone, one of Sir Graham's innovations, is a far more popular institution than the Periodical for the Homes of the People. As St. Kitts young ladies find it pretty hard work to kill time, they hold long conversations by telephone, thus obviating the necessity of mounting a pony or having the buggy put to in order to reach the nearest friend, who may be miles away. Strange to say, although there is a telephone, there is no telegraph in the island.

There is, "mirabile dictu!" no club at St. Kitts, but at "The Rooms," the upper floor of a house, the stranger may read such newspapers as have not been carried away to lone plantation homes, and play billiards. No drink is sold on the premises.

MRS. DAWE'S LADY-HELP.

BY BARBARA DEMPSTER.

Author of "Through Gates of Gold," "A Dead Hand," "A Spring Moon," "His Guardian's Wife," "Those People," etc., etc.

CHAPTER IV.

THE next day was all bustle and excitement. Miss Smith had not a moment to herself till five o'clock, when, every domestic detail finished, Mrs. Dawe and the girls went to change the old dresses they had worn all day, for smarter toilettes, in which to receive the Bishop, whom Mr. Dawe had gone to the station to meet. A little later, a thrill of excitement once more ran through the house as the Bishop arrived. Then it settled down to afternoon tea in the drawing-room, presided over by Minnie, in the prettiest of morning frocks, with smiles on her face, and the bitterest of disappointments at her heart. The Bishop's chaplain, the Rev. Bertram Anson, had not come. He had been suddenly taken ill at the last moment, and his place hastily filled by a substitute—a middle-aged clergyman with spectacles who, before he had been ten minutes in the drawing-room, alluded to his wife and six children. Poor Minnie! She could have wept, had not she been obliged to smile. She and the Rev. Bertram Anson had met on two previous occasions, and had become such good friends, that she had hoped everything from this brief sojourn under her father's roof.

After tea and a saunter in the garden, they retired to their respective chambers to dress for dinner. Mr. James Brown's appearance, when he entered the drawing-room before dinner, created much astonishment. He looked remarkably well. It seemed that he had a dress-suit after all —of the newest cut, too—and it fitted him perfectly. Gwen actually found him good-looking, under this new aspect, and spoke quite prettily to him, before the guests arrived.

"How nice you look, James! Why don't you always dress decently? You only want a buttonhole. Let me pin in this carnation for you."

"What nonsense!" exclaimed her mother, sharply, she being well acquainted with Gwen's rather impressionable nature. "James can put it in himself. Here is the Bishop," as the door opened.

The other guests began to arrive. Mr. James Brown, to whom had been given the plainest and least important guest, was, to the relief of his relations, very quiet; and whether owing to his subdued tones, or the fact that he made some effort to reduce it, the Yankee twang was scarcely noticeable.

In the general buzz of conversation round the dinner-table, his voice was entirely lost, and as Miss Grainger was a totally insignificant person in Mrs. Dawe's eyes—she only being asked for the sake of the connection with whom she was staying—that good lady was not the least uneasy when she saw her in earnest and animated conversation with her scapegrace nephew.

The dinner was a great success, every dish under Miss Smith's clever hands being the perfection of cookery. The table decorations, too, under the same dainty touch, were a marvel of grace and beauty. She had insisted upon having the entire arrangement, much to Mrs. Dawe's annoyance, who did not consider that a lady-help could possibly know what was the most fitting manner of decorating a table for an important dinner party.

But as that young lady showed plainly that, unless she did all, she would do nothing, Mrs. Dawe, once more complaining bitterly of the "tyranny" of "common, vulgar persons," submitted.

The result was exquisite to all; yes, with the exception, perhaps, of Mrs. Dawe, who preferred more gaudy colouring. Pale pink flowers mingled with white, veiled or fringed with the delicate green fronds of maiden-hair, were scattered down the table. Every piece of silver—and the Dawes had a good deal—that could be utilised to hold the flowers, much to Mrs. Dawe's dismay, had been pressed into the service, and a variety of other innovations, such as she had never seen in her life, had been introduced. She would never have yielded to Miss Smith's judgement in such matters, had she not been genuinely in awe of that young lady's quiet determination. But her spirits rose as she heard the various comments made on the table. The Bishop took the innovations as such a matter of course, that she began to lose her uneasiness, and believe that Miss Smith had picked up the ideas from some fashion paper, or from hearsay; and when the Bishop happened to remark that he had seen some similar arrangement of flowers at a certain noble lord's place, only that the tone of colour had not been half so perfect as here, she felt proudly satisfied.

"You must have a perfect artist in your gardener," he said. "I always tell my wife that our table is enough to take a man's appetite away. Our man has no more taste than a clodhopper, though he grows peaches and grapes to perfection."

"Oh, we don't leave the decorations to the gardeners," she replied, with a calm smile. "I think a lady's touch and fancy, are so infinitely superior to the best."

"Ah, it's the young ladies, is it?" peering with kindly, short-sighted eyes at Minnie. "I might have guessed that fairy decorations were only made by fairy fingers. I congratulate you, Miss Dawe. I wish my wife and I had such dainty hands to help us."

Minnie smiled, though she flushed faintly, as if even her elastic conscience reproached her for taking the credit of another's work to herself.

There happened to be a slight pause at that moment in the buzz of laughter and conversation, and the Bishop's speech was heard distinctly. Everybody, admiring the flowers anew, glanced at Minnie, who sat smilingly accepting the compliment.

"Yes; I reckon we're doin' a mighty good business in our stores. There aren't many that can beat us Chicago way, and if your brother thinks of comin' West, I'll do him a good turn, and get him fixed in some way, if he likes. That is if he don't mind beginnin' pretty low down at first. I ran errands, and kept a watch on the customers—mighty light-fingered they are sometimes—when I was first taken in. But I held on; an' now——"

"What did you think of the Academy this year?"

But Mrs. Dawe's feeble, desperate effort to fling herself into the yawning gulf of family disgrace, was not noticed by the Bishop, who, with the rest of the table, was looking in the direction from which came the loud Yankee drawl, which had broken in on the fatal pause. Mr. James Brown, looking blissfully unconscious of the sensation he was making, was addressing the lady he had taken down.

"There's nothing like the pig line. Not that they stick in our store entirely to that. The bosses are too knowing."

"Will you not try that entrée?"

Mrs. Dawe's voice, raised into a piteous wail, reached the Bishop's ears at last; and he turned hastily to help himself to the entrée, which was being held to him. A second later everybody was talking again, doing his or her best to drown the sing-song drawling voice, feeling instinctively that it was a disturbing element in the family peace.

Perhaps Mr. James Brown felt that he had made himself rather too conspicuous, for he subsided again, and the rest of the dinner passed without a hitch.

But the anger and mortification of the Dawes were without measure.

"I told you he would disgrace us," whispered Minnie furiously to her mother, as the women scattered about the drawing-room. "Why didn't you turn him out at first?"

"I wish to goodness I had! And to think of him sitting there now, without the check of women's society! Heaven only knows what he will say. Your father is such a coward. He'll never dare stop him."

"He'll get talking to the Bishop. There's no bound to his impertinence," exclaimed Minnie again.

"It's all your own fault," said Gwen, passing with the album which she was going to show to some of their guests. "He did it out of spite, I am sure, because you took all the credit of the flowers to yourself, instead of saying that Miss Smith did them. I am certain he did." She passed on, leaving Minnie aghast at this new meaning given to her cousin's conduct.

Matters only went from bad to worse, as far as the Dawes were concerned. The rest of the guests seemed to enjoy themselves very much. Particularly the Bishop. To the dismay of Mrs. Dawe and her daughters, he entered the drawing-room a little later with Mr. James Brown himself, and, what was more, was laughing heartily at some little story that objectionable young man had just told him. Mr. Dawe looked sulkily pompous, and Mrs. Dawe heard from him the fact that her suspicions had been realised. Mr. James Brown had deliberately addressed the Bishop after the ladies had withdrawn, and had not only monopolised his attention, but with his stories, his descriptions of the "low" life out West, had gained the hearing of all the table. Mr. Dawe, who liked to shine at his own table, was full of disgust. His pompous reflections had been lost in the roars of laughter, excited by some of Mr. James Brown's experiences. The culminating stroke had been made when the Bishop had said to him, as they rose from the table:

"Really, Dawe, your nephew is an acquisition; he's the most amusing young fellow I have met for a long time."

And it actually seemed as if he had meant no empty compliment. Two or three times in the course of the evening he was seen conversing, and always with an expression of the deepest interest, with that vulgar young man. And as if that were not enough, the lady guests seemed as much misled by him as the men, and pronounced him delightful.

The next morning, as Miss Smith, who was quite as anxious to keep out of the way of the Bishop and his chaplain, as were the Dawes to conceal her, was just coming out of the dining-room, where she had been to put a bowl of fresh roses on the breakfast-table, when she came face to face with the chaplain. It was still a little before breakfast time, and she had not expected any one to be down yet. For a second the stout, elderly man and the slim, dainty girl stared at each other with about the same expression of helpless consternation and astonishment. Miss Smith had not heard of the change in the chaplains.

"Miss Carr!"

"Hush!" with a quick gesture, "not that! I am 'Miss Smith';" then, in answer to the look on his face, "You won't expose me, will you?" with a pretty, pleading, though slightly nervous smile. "I will explain," she checked herself abruptly, as a sound behind her made her glance round. Minnie Dawe stood in the doorway behind her. She had entered from the garden through the French window of the dining-room, and had come up just in time to hear.

Miss Smith crimsoned to the tips of her ears, then went very pale, and with a quick look into Mr. Bellamy's perplexed face, she moved away without another word. But that look from those long-lashed eyes went deep into the worthy man's heart, and set every nerve in his kindly being thrilling, as he looked after her.

"Have you ever met Miss Smith before?"

He turned with a start.

Miss Dawe was watching him, her face full of suspicion and curiosity.

"Miss—I——" he stammered, the expression on Miss Dawe's face completing his disturbance.

"Yes." Then her irritation at his presence in the place of the admired chaplain goaded her into ill-bred bluntness. "You called her Miss Carr. What did you do that *for*?" looking at him with angry curiosity.

"I thought — yes — I have met her before," stammered the helpless chaplain, who, between that glance from the brown eyes, and the suspicious scorn of these blue ones, felt anything but happy. "She—is she staying here?"

"Staying here, yes, in a way," a slight curve of the pretty lip. "She is our lady-help."

"Your lady-help! Your——" he stared in speechless blankness.

"Yes," angrily, all her vague suspicions springing into active distrust. "What do you know of her?"

"Nothing in particular, at least—" he stopped, evidently much disturbed.

"She's not what she seems," quickly; "I said so all along. I am sure there is something in the background. Now you can't deny it, Mr. Bellamy."

He passed his hand through his sandy locks in perplexity. He could not deny it.

"What do you know about her?"

"Really, Miss Dawe, I would rather not say," with quiet dignity, as that parting appeal from the brown eyes touched him again and gave him back his self-possession.

"But you must," with angry ill-breeding; "she is under our roof, and I think we ought to know anything you have to say about her."

"I have nothing to say, except that it is the very last place I should have expected to meet Miss—Smith in!" turning away with a feeling of deep relief to greet the Bishop, who at that moment came downstairs.

It was about an hour after breakfast. Miss Smith was out in the kitchen-garden gathering scarlet-runners for luncheon, Thomas's services being needed for the sake of appearances in the house. It was a glorious summer morning. There was the whirr of wings in the hot sunlight, the musical monotone of insect life, above, below, around. The air was fragrant with the perfume of thyme and old-world flowers, which the new world has relegated to its kitchen-gardens.

Miss Smith stood among the beans, her basket on her arm, pulling at the scarlet-runners. Under the big shady hat the straight brows were puckered, and the mouth drooped a little, either from weariness or worry.

Mr. James Brown, who was standing among the raspberry-bushes at the other side of the path, noted all this. The tall bushes almost hid him from view, and she had been too preoccupied as she came down the path, to notice him.

"Good morning, Miss Smith."

She started violently, so violently that the basket fell from her hands, and she looked so frightened as she turned to face him that even that young man's well-balanced mind was astonished. He stepped out of the raspberry-bushes on to the path.

"I always seem to have the ill-luck to frighten you," he said.

"Oh! It doesn't matter!" recovering herself. "But I wasn't thinking of you—at the moment."

"No—I don't suppose you were," in a sad tone. "However," more briskly, "I'm just as glad that you weren't—under the circumstances."

"Why?" involuntarily.

"Because you looked as if the subject of your thoughts was more than objectionable."

She flushed, bit her lip, then laughed as she caught the glint in his eyes.

"You won't tell me who it was?" he suggested, insinuatingly.

"No," shortly, stooping to pick up the basket. But he lifted it deftly out of reach of her fingers. She had never been treated in this cool, masterful fashion by a man before, and her whole being rose in revolt against him. She made a haughty effort to recapture her basket. Then collapsed from sheer helplessness.

If he would only let go of the handle. But he held it as placidly as if no fire had flashed from the proud brown eyes. For very dignity's sake, she could not drag it away from him.

"There is an artless and peaceful amusement to be found in gathering beans for a Bishop's luncheon," drawled out Mr. James Brown in his most nasal twang. "It suits a man's soul and his constitution, and makes him feel like a boy again, going round under his neighbour's apple-trees, wishin' that the rosiest-cheeked were his, and calculatin' how they might be without drawin' too much attention to his own insignificant person," pulling the beans with the most supreme unconsciousness of, or indifference to, the haughty poise of the slim girl-figure by his side.

Indifference or unconsciousness had its effect, and changed the disdainful silence which felt that it was quite thrown away on this hopelessly irrepressible young man, into spiteful attack.

"Will you please tell me, Mr. Brown, how it is that sometimes your American accent is so particularly pronounced," in a tone that meant "unpleasant," "and at others, is scarcely noticeable?"

"So you've noticed that," turning quickly on her, a gleam of triumph in his face, and speaking without the faintest accent.

"Any one could see it," she retorted, sharply, colouring with disconcerted vexation before the pleased triumph in his face. She was annoyed at having let him see that she had noticed anything about him. "I don't know why you should pretend to be what you are not, unless——" she stopped, too proud to descend into a taunt.

"I only do it to annoy my relations. That's what you meant; you needn't deny it," calmly. "Perhaps you are right. But sometimes it is convenient to appear what we aren't, you know," with a gravity which seemed a mockery.

She flashed an angry, suspicious look at him, then something in his steady eyes seemed to abash her. The angry words died on her lips, her eyes drooped.

For a moment she stood, like a shy schoolgirl, framed by a background of scarlet and green bean flower and creeper, the summer sunlight falling about her. There seemed to be something peculiarly attractive about her, under this new aspect, judging from his expression.

But as she looked up, it vanished, and he began to pick some more beans.

"I think we had better make haste," he said, "or we shall be late with 'the Bishop's' luncheon."

"I really wish you would go away," she said, laughing, in spite of herself, at the ludicrous calmness with which he took on himself a share in the preparation of that worthy individual's meal, "you have hindered me enough already."

"Then I'll pick to make up lost time; you can pick too, you know, if you like," with cheerful condescension. "Only you had better keep near me, because of the basket," as, with a petulant turn of the head, she walked away from him down the bean row.

He followed her, and they picked away in silence for a few moments.

"Don't you think," sadly, breaking the silence, "that we have picked nearly enough beans for that old — I beg his pardon, he's a jolly old boy—the Bishop, I mean. I know he'd be sorry for us, if he only knew how often we have heard of him this week."

"I think we have enough," she said, feeling the utter absurdity of trying to be angry with this most unprovokable young man. "I am sure it is very good of you to help—Martha like this. She has so much to do this morning."

His face fell. The malicious pause before the word "Martha" was so slight as to be scarcely perceptible. He glanced at the piquant face which met his gaze with the gravest simplicity. Then the shadow passed.

"She's such a good girl," he said, with cheerful good-nature. "It's quite a pleasure to help her a little."

The answer was so totally unexpected, that Miss Smith bit her lip. Then the pique vanished, and she broke into genuine laughter, and they carried the basket back to the house, the best of friends.

NOTE.

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BY MARY ANGELA DICKENS.

Author of "A Mist of Error," "Her Inheritance," "A Social Success," "Kitty's Victim," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A FEW hours after Miss Tyrrell's appearance in her brother's study, there was nothing of which John Tyrrell was more convinced than that he owed her a debt of gratitude for her most timely arrival. A few minutes later, he told himself, and he would have thrown away the self-restraint of two years, he would have deprived himself of all he had diplomatised during the last two months to effect, he would have allowed himself to be deceived by what he knew to be in reality one of the great obstacles in his way, Selma's feeling for him as an old friend; he would have been carried away by the opportunity, by her beauty and gentleness, like a mere boy. The knowledge gave a shock to his self-respect, to his reliance on his own judgement, which caused him to pull himself up sharply, and mature his plans with a deliberate coolness and self-repression, intensified by the touch of self-contempt with which he did it. The air was already full of reports about himself and Selma, and some of these reports, it seemed to him, must inevitably come to her ears before long; but he renewed his determination to give her time to get thoroughly used to them; possibly, he thought, by the end of the season she might even have come to the point of wondering why he did not propose if every one was expecting him to do so; in any case, when she should have arrived at the point of looking upon his doing so as a matter of probability, her present affectionate gratitude to him would become a help and not a hindrance. He would wait until the end of the season, he resolved, and then he would speak.

The rush of the season grew fast and furious as May gave place to June, the long days and short nights—an arrangement of nature transposed by society—went by in an incessant round of gaiety, and among all the fluctuating objects of society's interest, there were two subjects of gossip which never flagged. One was Miss Tyrrell's marriage with Lord Ellingham, which was to take place in the first week of July; the other, infinitely more interesting, as leaving room for unlimited conjecture, was the expected engagement of Miss Malet and Mr. Tyrrell. In one respect only, so far, were Tyrrell's calculations at fault. There was perhaps only one person in the London world who was utterly innocent and ignorant as to any such report, and that person was Selma herself.

Selma was not standing either the fatigues or the admiration of the present season so well as she had stood them during the two last. She was rather harder and more reckless in manner, and she was thinner; but it was said that she was more beautiful than ever for the little flush which was now so often in her cheeks.

The first week of July came with sunshine such as is not often seen in London, bringing not only Miss Tyrrell's wedding-day, but also an event which Helen considered infinitely more important than any number of fashionable marriages. Humphrey's picture of "Imogen" had more than justified the prophecies as to its being the picture of the year; it had made such a sensation as no picture, not relying for its success on the popularity or cheap sentiment of its subject, had achieved for many years. It was well understood in the art world that it was not the temporary sensation of a season, a popular craze which would die away, to be succeeded by something different, but the lasting mark made by a true artist on his time, and when, in the spring, a vacancy occurred among the Royal Academicians, it was a foregone conclusion among the Associates that Humphrey Cornish was the man to fill it.

The election took place rather later in the summer than usual—on the first of July—and on the following morning Selma, coming downstairs about eleven o'clock, opened the studio door, and found Humphrey there alone.

"May I come in, Humphrey?" she said, with a pretty touch in her voice that was half-patronage, half-deference. "I want to congratulate the new R.A."

Humphrey turned to her, brush in hand, with a smile of invitation.

"Come in by all means, Selma," he answered. "I don't see you here often, now."

"No," she assented, with a little sigh as of a victim to circumstances, as she came up to look at the work he was doing. "I'm so busy, Humphrey."

He studied her face for a moment without speaking. She was looking better that morning than she had been doing lately—less feverish and over-excited—but perhaps for that very reason the rather hard and imperious expression, which now underlay with always increasing distinctness all the transient phases which passed across her face, was more than usually apparent in spite of her smile.

"As you say," said Humphrey, quietly, "you are very busy!"

"It's a regular treadmill," she said, with a light laugh. "I shall retire for the season after Miss Tyrrell's wedding to-morrow, I think. There is not much more to come, and I think I've done my duty. Thank goodness I shall have no more work at the theatre after to-morrow night." The next night was to be the last of Tyrrell's season. "But this is not saying what I came to say," she went on again, with that little touch of patronage which a vainer man than Humphrey could not have resented, it was so pretty and unconscious. "You are really elected, Humphrey! I am so delighted."

"Thanks," answered Humphrey, simply.

"I met your president the other night," she said, "and I told him that if he resigned his own position to you it would be an entirely insufficient reward for the trouble I gave you over the sittings for 'Imogen.' I hope you will bury my shortcomings in oblivion, under the circumstances. This is nice, Humphrey," she added, turning to the canvas by which they were still standing. "What are you going to do with it?"

Almost for the first time Humphrey tacitly declined to discuss his work with her.

"It's only a beginning," he said, lifting it from the easel as he spoke, "I shall not work at it any more this morning."

"It looks pretty," responded Selma, turning carelessly and uncomprehendingly away. "Where is Helen, Humphrey? I want to talk to her before I go out."

All the world was going that afternoon to a large garden party—one of the regular events of the season, and touchingly alluded to by Miss Tyrrell on this occasion as her last appearance. The interest attached to the relation between Selma and Tyrrell in the eyes of society had heightened as time added a touch of mystery to them, and every large party was spiced by the excitement of watching their proceedings. This particular garden party, the garden being very large and rambling, had a reputation for advancing such affairs considerably, and public hope and anticipation had been concentrated upon it accordingly for some time past.

"Everybody will be here of course," sighed Miss Tyrrell, plaintively, as she and Selma, followed by Tyrrell, made their way across the hall through the increasing stream of new arrivals to the drawing-room, where their hostess was receiving. "How do you do?" nodding effusively to some friends who were too far off to hear her. "It will be dreadfully trying, dear girl; almost worse than to-morrow," she added, alluding to her wedding-day with an agitated flutter which did duty for a blush, and, before Selma could do more than smile sympathetically, the human stream behind them had to stay its course while they were being shaken hands with by their hostess with the effusive cordiality due to one of the features of her party. A few minutes later Miss Tyrrell, having coyly allowed herself to be appropriated for the moment by Lord Ellingham, who was one of the first people they met, Selma and Tyrrell passed slowly through the animated, smartly-dressed crowd out on to the terrace together, shaking hands, or bowing and smiling to every second person they met.

It was not wonderful that Miss Malet never entered a room full of people without making a sensation. There was something about her apart from her beauty and grace, apart from the exquisite self-possession of manner which social success had brought her, that separated her from the crowd under any circumstances. To-day, in one of the soft white frocks which she affected a great deal that summer, with a large hat framing her bright and animated face in curves which seemed to emphasize its beauty, her loveliness was perfect.

There was no pause in the babel of talk and laughter which came from every part of the wide stone terrace; but there was hardly one among all the crowd of people thronging it from end to end who did not glance at her again and again as she stood with Tyrrell close to her just outside one of the drawing-room windows, talking and laughing with the numerous admirers who had gathered round her directly she appeared.

"By Jove, she is a beauty!"

The comment was made in a low voice by a man at the extreme end of the terrace, and his companion answered him in the same tone with a laugh, which, slight as it was, was as insolent as the eyes with which he was staring full at Selma.

"Tyrrell is not the man to give himself away as he's doing for nothing," he said. "How long do you give them?"

It was an unusually wide stone terrace running the whole length of the fine old house, and a flight of three or four wide stone steps with low stone balusters led down to the garden, which stretched away from it; but, large as the terrace was, it provided scarcely breathing space, much less elbow room, for the crowd of people who were congregated on it and on the steps, and there abruptly terminated. Everything was bathed now in glorious July sunshine, the grey stone of the house, which made such an effective background; the gay colours of the women's dresses; the bright flowers and green trees in the garden. But the latter were brilliant and sparkling with moisture. A great deal of rain had fallen in the night, and even in the morning, and only a few enterprising spirits had ventured forth from the terrace to walk up and down on the wet grass and gravel; consequently, the guests invited with a view to the space afforded by the lawns and walks, were politely squeezing one another to the verge of suffocation in a space which would not comfortably have accommodated a quarter of the number.

It was evidently the thing to remain on the terrace; but Selma had not reigned for two seasons for nothing, and she objected strongly and speedily.

"It's suffocating!" she was saying to Tyrrell, as she stood at the top of the steps. "How stupid to stay here. Let us go and see who is in the garden. No; I don't want to speak to Lady Latter, Mr. Tyrrell," she added, imperiously, as he returned the bow of that lady, who was making her way slowly in their direction. "I don't like her, and I don't know how you can. Come along!"

Lady Latter had several men in attendance, and she was talking and laughing as recklessly as usual; but her eyes were following Tyrrell and Selma as they passed alone together a few paces down the garden before Miss Malet became again the centre of a small group of people who had come up from the lawn to shake hands.

One of Lady Latter's train saw the direction in which she was looking, and laughed.

"Tyrrell's in luck," he said—he was rather young and inexperienced, and Lady Latter was educating him, she said. "When will it be announced, I wonder?" And then he caught Lady Latter's eye, and wondered what in the world he had said to make her look as she did.

"Possibly," she said, with an odd ring in her voice, "when there is something to be announced! Don't be so knowing, Jack!"

"I'm not!" he protested, eagerly, and inadvertently. "I mean," as she laughed, "it's a fact, you know. Every one says so. I can't think why they should go on keeping it dark, when everybody knows it."

"It does seem odd," returned Lady Latter, derisively. "Jack, don't be a fool!"

There was no derision in her eyes, though, and she seemed to be hardly aware when her disciple excused himself rather huffily, and departed. Her face was hard and preoccupied, and it had not softened or altered at all, though she had exchanged many words and much rather loud laughter on her way, when a few minutes later she found her way to where Miss Tyrrell was holding a farewell reception.

"Dear Lady Latter," she exclaimed, pressing the hand Lady Latter offered her, tenderly—there was hardly a woman in London for whom she had a greater natural dislike, "I was afraid I should miss you. It is so difficult to see every one."

"It is difficult to see any one in such a crush," returned Lady Latter. She paused an instant, and then went on with a laugh which grated painfully on Miss Tyrrell's refined and artistic ear. "And I think we are all occupied in watching the progress of your brother's little romance. It's really too kind of him to give us so much to talk about."

Miss Tyrrell replied with a little non-committal laugh she had adopted for such occasions, and Lady Latter drew a little closer to her.

"It must be a great relief to you to feel that you are not leaving your brother alone for long," she said, and the words contrasted oddly with the hard tone in which she spoke, and with the expression of her eyes, as they rested on Miss Tyrrell's face. Miss Tyrrell saw only the opportunity for an attitude and not the trap, and fell into the latter with promptitude and despatch. "It is!" she said. "It is! How could I have brought myself to leave him alone?"

"Then he is going to marry her?" Lady Latter's tone was carelessness itself; but there was a note in it which brought Miss Tyrrell to herself with a sudden cold shock of reality, though she could not have said the next instant what had so startled her. She had said rather more than she had meant to say, but it was of no consequence, she thought.

"Now that is hardly fair, dear Lady Latter!" she said, "to take advantage of me like that! But, as it is you who ask the question, I don't mind admitting the truth. As it is not public property yet, however, I need not ask you to say nothing, I am sure."

Lady Latter laughed again.

"To say nothing!" she said, in what Miss Tyrrell condemned as a singularly inartistic voice. "No! I shall say nothing, of course! What has become of Miss Malet? Oh, there she is on the lawn!"

Lady Latter stood for a moment, motionless, with her black eyes fixed upon Selma with an expression which struck Miss Tyrrell as peculiarly unpleasant; then she moved away without another word.

"She is certainly the rudest woman in London!" was Miss Tyrrell's mental comment.

Selma's movement towards the garden had been followed by half the people on the terrace, and she and Tyrrell had drifted apart in the moving kaleidoscope of men and women into which the smooth lawn was transformed. She was standing at the end of the garden, talking to Julian Heriot, and as the stream continued to flow from the terrace she laughed lightly.

"I came off the terrace to get away from the crowd," she said, "and now the crowd is here! How delicious this garden would be with no one in it."

"Am I to take that as a hint, Miss Malet?" was Heriot's response.

"No, no!" she answered, laughing, "of course not! Only a garden always seems to me to be spoilt by this kind of thing, don't you know. It should be quiet and peaceful." There was a look in her eyes, as she spoke, which Heriot had very seldom seen in them—a look as though the picture her words had brought before her had touched her. She turned away from the crowd as she finished, and Heriot walked by her side, looking at her for a moment, before he said, rather suddenly:

"Tyrrell will miss his sister very much."

Selma started as though his words had recalled her to the present, and lifted a pair of innocent, unconscious eyes to his face.

"I'm afraid he will," she said. "Poor Mr. Tyrrell! It is rather sad for him, isn't it?"

"He will marry, perhaps," said Heriot, his dark, cynical eyes looking straight into hers. Selma came to a full stop, her cheeks flushing with astonishment and amusement. "Marry!" she cried. "Mr. Tyrrell marry! Oh, what an idea, Mr. Heriot!"

"Is there any reason against it?" returned Heriot, carelessly moving to continue their walk. "He is—quite eligible."

"I suppose he is," said Selma, thoughtfully. "I wonder why he never has married. How odd it would be!"

"Should you be pleased, Miss Malet?"

"I?" answered Selma, glancing at him with wondering eyes. "I—yes—of course, I suppose I should, if he married a nice woman."

Julian Heriot made no comment, and they strolled on in silence for a few minutes. They had wandered gradually—and unconsciously on Selma's part—away from the crush on the lawn down a shady path which led to the second garden, separated from the other by a high old yew hedge. At the bottom of the path, Selma turned absently, as if to retrace their steps, and Heriot stopped short.

"Miss Malet," he said, "I'm going to make a fool of myself." He spoke so quietly that Selma glanced at him in doubt as to whether she had heard aright, and then she saw that his thin, clever face was quite white, even to the lips. "Nobody could be more keenly alive than I am," he pursued, deliberately, "to the imbecility of what I am going to say. I've argued the matter out with myself over and over again. There's not the faintest reason why you should like me; you've given me no more encouragement than you've given to dozens of men. I should be a preposterous match for you. There's nothing to be said against it that I've not said to myself. But, Miss Malet, will you be my wife?"

Selma had heard him through with a face which, by the time he ended, was nearly as white as his own. She had heard the last words, many a time before, from all sorts of men, and had answered them gently always, though often with little distress of mind for the speaker. But, in this case, not only was the shock of surprise inexpressible, but there was something in Julian Heriot's tone and manner—something desperately hopeless and reckless, in spite of his perfect quiet, that made the position terribly painful.

"Oh, Mr. Heriot!" she said, in a low, grieved voice. "Oh, Mr. Heriot!"

"I am not quite idiot enough," he went on, in the same tone, "to think of telling you what I feel. I've not had much respect for love all my life, and I can't talk about it now. Very likely I shouldn't make you happy. I've never made myself happy; but—I would try." He stopped abruptly, and a little soft cry came from Selma.

"Please don't say any more," she said. "I'm very, very sorry, Mr. Heriot; but it's impossible, it's quite impossible. Oh, what can I say?"

A little twitch passed across his face, and there was an instant's silence. Then he said:

"Thanks. Don't trouble. It was my mistake entirely. Shall we go back now?"

"I am so sorry, Mr. Heriot."

"Please don't think of it," he repeated, turning as he spoke and moving by her side in the direction from which they had come. "Beautiful grounds these are, aren't they?" The indomitable cynicism which would not spare its own pain even to the extent of acknowledging it, the contrast between the last words and the set white face with which he spoke, shook Selma as no words could have done. She could do or say nothing to make it easier for him; but she could spare him the polite conversation he evidently intended to compel himself to keep up; and she sat down on a garden seat which was fitted into a recess cut in the thick yew hedge.

"I—I will stop here a little while, I think," she said; "it is so hot. Don't—don't let me keep you, Mr. Heriot." She held out her hand as she spoke, lifting her eyes for an instant to his face. He took her hand, pressed it for a moment sharply in his, and then dropped it and turned away, leaving her without another word.

Selma watched him out of sight with liquid, pitying eyes, and, as he disappeared, the expression seemed to die gradually out of her face, leaving it very still and inexpressibly weary. It was very quiet in that empty corner of the large garden; from the distance came the hum of voices and laughter, and from farther off still—a strange background to the quiet around her—the wonderful subdued roar of London; but the trees were motionless in the hot July sunshine, and the air was almost oppressively still. Selma had not moved, she was sitting just as Heriot had left her, a graceful white figure outlined by the dark yew hedge behind her, every line of her pale, tired face relaxed and softened, and with an absent look in her dark eyes, when she became vaguely conscious of voices somewhere near her, and roused herself slowly with a little sigh. She turned her head to listen, and from the other side of the hedge, her own name, uttered by a voice she did not know, caught her ear.

"Selma Malet? No, I've not been introduced."

Selma rose, as she heard the words, with a little smile, and stooped to pick up her sunshade which lay on the seat by her side. As she did so her movement was suddenly arrested, her lips did not close, though the smile was a smile no longer, as the next words in the same unknown voice, a good, full man's voice, fell on her ears.

"She's the saddest sight I've seen for many a day!"

Selma did not catch the answer. She was conscious of a certain confusion of brain for a moment, and then it seemed to clear again as the voice resumed.

"A great success you call her! My dear fellow, she is the most pitiable failure in London. She has genius—splendid genius, and she is crushing it out as fast as may be in the mill of society."

She was standing upright now, white, and trembling a little. There was a confused murmur of response, and then she heard:

"Look at it for yourself! You remember her when she first came out, and you saw her the other night. The actual deterioration in her is appalling. She made a failure last year; if she had made such another this year it might have startled her! A success? A mockery! She has such a genius that it lights up, in spite of herself, a performance below mediocrity! There is no work, no thought, no art in what she does, only the innate power which she has not yet suppressed. I wonder whether she will have to answer some day for what she has wasted!"

She was leaning back against the hedge, her two hands clutching one another painfully, and a little inaudible gasp came from between her white lips. She had no consciousness of listening, no consciousness of anything but the dreadful, passionless, unknown voice, which seemed to have come out of the silence to tell her the truth.

"They said when she first came out that she meant working—that she was an artist at heart. I wonder whether she really supposes that this society business has anything to do with art, or I wonder how she reconciles it with her old ideas. She must have had ideas when she played Bianca! By Jove! only two years ago! And now she's content to be the fashion! It's moral suicide."

A resistless wave of roaring, hissing sound seemed to surge up over Selma's brain, drowning everything else, and when it subsided again everything was still and quiet as it had been when she sat alone on the garden seat. The owner of the voice had passed on.

A quarter of an hour later one of the men-servants came up to Miss Tyrrell in the garden.

"Miss Malet told me to tell you that she was gone home, madam," he said.

BURNHAM BEECHES ON BANK HOLIDAY.

If Eastertide has been wintry and forlorn, and Whitsuntide but the mockery of a summer festival, there is still always hope for the August Bank Holiday. As this is to many the last chance of the year for obtaining a fresh full breath of country air, anxiously enough are the weather prospects discussed; and as the ominous clouds come sweeping up in endless procession from the south-west, every break in their ranks, and every gleam of sunshine is hailed with enthusiasm as the harbinger of the fine settled weather which ought to accompany the joyous harvest month.

But there seems to be an endless supply of those black, thunderous clouds. If the sky is clear of them for awhile, their masses lurk in huge battalions on the horizon. The thunderstorm that forms such an important part of the short English summer is continually muttering and rumbling in the distance. Yet the weather is not utterly hopeless on the eve of the great holiday. The thousand and one adventurous people who hope to "make a bit" out of it anyhow, do not despair of it. Dealers and costermongers with carts and barrows are already on their way to distant stations, where experience has shown that the much desired "bit" may be met with under favourable conditions. All night long the rumble of wheels may be heard. Swing-boats, roundabouts, caravans, are on the march, and heavy vans loaded with tents and booths, and with provisions for the army of holiday makers, who will be spread over the country when the day is sufficiently advanced, should the day hold out the least prospect of fine weather.

If the morning forecasts are unpromising, hope still lurks among the openings in the clouds and the occasional bursts of sunshine, and as there is clear shining here, while there is rain over yonder, there is always hope for those who have planned more distant expeditions. A shower may turn one from Richmond or from Kew, and a downpour deter from Hampstead Heath or Wimbledon Common; but it takes something stronger to put off those intent on going further afield. And thus while local traffic is slack, and suburban lines are traversed without hindrance from over-crowding, no sooner are we launched upon a main line expedition, than the experience of a Bank Holiday crowd begins. The train must have been well packed at Paddington, it was rammed tight at Westbourne Park, and here, at Ealing, the intending passengers are in the plight of the odd boots, and brushes and combs, and tooth-powder boxes which must be crammed into the portmanteau, already threatening to crack with repletion. Happily there are no limits to the elasticity of railway carriages on such occasions. Six on each side and six in the centre is the recognised allowance for carriages whose usual complement is eight. Beyond that, complaints arise of over-crowding. Yet there is a genial toleration among those on pleasure bent. People actually squeeze themselves into still smaller compass to make room for new comers. Children are packed in here and there, and jovial and friendly remarks are freely interchanged.

The bulk of us are for Windsor bound, where there are the attractions of the Castle, with its state apartments and unrivalled terraces—its chapels, and towers, and stately battlements—and the great park for rambles and picnics, and the river with its charming prospects. But almost as many are for higher reaches of the Thames, either at Taplow, Maidenhead, or Twyford. Still, when the train stops at Slough, there is a respectable contingent who alight on the platform; and outside four or five omnibuses are waiting, whose conductors are hailing for the Beeches; and these are all well filled and are driving off one after the other.

The rain, which had been freely rattling down during the railway transit, has now ceased. The sky is blue, the sun is shining. Everything glitters and glistens with raindrops, and a delightful freshness and fragrance is in the air. The commonest of country roads is pleasant with its hedgerows, and tall trees, and the sweep of open fields, green, or brown, or golden with the coming harvest, as the case may be. It is not the road along which the omnibuses are tearing, and streams of pedestrians are passing; but a quiet road over the first railway bridge on the right after leaving the station, and this seems to lead in the direction we want, which is towards Stoke Pogis Church.

"Can I tell you the nearest way to Stoke Church? Yes, that I can, and will," says a stout and pleasant-looking man, who, with his children, is having a holiday, too, like the rest of us. "And what's more," he adds, with the calm deliberation of one who has all the day before him, "I'll show you the very church itself." And he leads the way—not his way at all, but ours—towards an opening where a belt of tall trees rises against the sky, while over the trees appears a taller spire. "There, that's Stoke Church, and you follow the road till you come to a cross-road—well, it ain't a cross-road because it don't cross; but anyhow, it runs off sharp to the left, and you follow that till you come to a stile, or it might be a gate—I can't call to mind just now whether it's a stile or a gate, but one or the other, there's a path on the other side of it, and you follow that and it will bring you straight into the churchyard. And what's more," continued the good man, anxious that there should not be the slightest mistake about the matter, "I can show you the very place if you'll step on a bit further" —steps that led the worthy man still further out of his way—"there, follow your eye along that telegraph-post and beyond you'll see a cow." There was the post plainly enough, in fact, there were dozens of them, a whole row cutting aimlessly as you might think across the country; but the cow was a more definite object, especially as it was a black and white one. "Yes, that's the cow, and between the post and the cow there lies the gate, or it might be a stile."

The stile—it is a stile after all, with a good, broad top inviting one to rest and be thankful, and it leads, or rather shows the way, to a pleasant corn-field and meadows beyond. Everything is very still and tranquil, with the gentle whispering of the tall upstanding corn, while the shadows of the clouds chase each other over the broad fields or rest for a moment upon the tall tree-tops, while sunshine lights up the red roofs of some quiet homestead, with barns and yellow stacks, or gilds the quaint gables of some ancient manor bosomed among the trees. The path leads to where a broad meadow opens upon a churchyard with gleaming white tombstones, and a quaint old church with many gables and an ivy-mantled tower, from which rises a tall wooden spire which is no doubt a faithful renewal of the old original spire; but immediately in the foreground rises a curious kind of monument, in the form of a cenotaph, planted in the midst of the meadow, which is a memorial of the poet Gray, to whose memory, indeed, the church itself and all its surroundings seem to be unconsciously dedicated.

It is indeed the very churchyard of the "Elegy"; the sight of it carries conviction on that point, although it has no longer the complete calm and seclusion that breathes in the verses of the poem. For one thing, the churchyard has been much enlarged, and with its verdant turf and beautiful flowers, bears a bright and riant aspect, while the frail memorials of the rude forefathers of the hamlet,

With uncouth rhymes and shapeless sculpture deck'd,

although not altogether wanting, are eclipsed by more pretentious memorials of the dead in marble and granite. We pass through a beautiful but modern lych-gate, and along an avenue of beautiful roses—beautiful in form and lovely in perfume—to the porch of the old church, where at once,

Beneath those rugged elms, that yew-tree's shade,

we may witness all the ancient glamour of the scene. For the old yew-tree, where the poet has so often rested, is still in full growth and vigour.

The interior of the church, too, is good, with its quaint little transepts and the ancient chapels that do duty for organ-croft or vestry-chamber. There is a chimney, by the way, rising from one of the transept roofs, that gives a pleasant, homely impression. In a corner, too, is a modest slab that bears the poet's name, and which traditionally is above his customary seat at church.

"Yes, that is where Mr. Gray was used to sit," says the cheerful voice of an elderly dame who is busy about the place—a nice, old-fashioned dame, who is just in keeping with the aspect and traditions of the place. The church-door stands hospitably open, and several groups of visitors are seen wandering about the place.

The old lady can't be expected to remember the poet, who died some hundred and twenty years ago; but she knows all about him, speaks of him with respect as "Mr. Gray," and one of the gentlefolks, and shows his grave in the churchyard beneath the chancel window. "They put 'un down here, sir, along with his aunt and mother." It is a plain, old-fashioned brick tomb, with a stone slab atop, and an inscription written by the poet to the memory of an excellent woman, for whom his devotion seems to have been the one strong passion of his life.

And judging from the unfailing current of pilgrims who visit the churchyard at Stoke, the lovers of Gray are a large and increasing class. The spot does not attract the crowd even on Bank Holidays; but hardly a day passes during the summer without the visit of a party of Americans. "Yes, there's been some American young ladies here already," says the old lady—did we not meet them in the lane?—"and I'm glad I come along to-day, which is not my regular day, for, being Bank Holiday, I shall see many old faces."

She has had the care of the church for the last sixteen years, and in the cycle of Bank Holidays she has come to know people who make the pilgrimage every year, and who are glad to meet the old lady, and chat about bygone days.

And now adieu to the country churchyard, and so by another footpath through meadows, where the lowing herd is grazing, as one cow, on the rich sward. And yonder rises the quaint turret of Stoke Hospital, founded by one of the dead and gone Huntingdons, with its clock and many windows; and presently we come upon the highway that leads to Farnham Royal, a pleasant, winding road, overshadowed by trees, all in their richest verdure. A few cyclists whirl past, and pedestrians for the "Beeches"; but the stillness and country quietude is profound till it is broken by the sound of a high-pitched, human voice, raised in warning accents: "Halloa! Halloa! Halloa!" Echo faintly repeats the sound, and still the cry is repeated in varying startling cadence: "Halloa! Halloa!" and then a shot is heard, and all is still. Has somebody shot the persistent crier out? Why, no; for here he begins again, in another place. After all it is only a man in an immense orchard, or fruit garden, scaring birds. And still the shouting goes on till it fades away in the distance.

Here is the village of Farnham Royal, a three-cornered little village aligned upon the cross roads; and we plunge from the calm of the country into the turmoil of a regular Bank Holiday crowd. Here come the breaks and gigs and shandyrans, with coaches and four, and phaetons and two, and chaises and one. All of them stop at the village, and everybody alights, while all the village is at its doors, gazing with calm amazement at the gambols of "they Londoners." Horns are blowing, accordions sounding, mouth organs and Jews' harps fill up the gaps in the din, song and chaff and strident calls from Harry to Jemima and back again add to the general braying. Here are laundresses and work-girls; Liz and Sal and Emma are in full force, they waltz round in the vacant spaces, and put the forefathers of the hamlet out of countenance by their vivacious enquiries.

"There ain't as much talk in the village not the whole year through as one of them gals gets out in five minutes," remarks a village Hampden. But the boys and girls look on admiringly.

"Hey for London town to sing and dance, and come out for a jolly Bank Holiday."

Then the blast of horns and the wavering notes of key-bugles summon the throng to their seats, with the cries of the coachmen and threats of being left behind, and the jolly crews drive off with cordial adieux to the gaping rustics, and still the cry is, they come.

But is there no quieter passage than this crowded road? Why, yes; follow the main road to a pond, a very dirty pond just now, and here a road bears to the right past Farnham Cottage, where a tall machine, worked by the wind, is pumping up water with fitful clank and clatter; and on the left beyond the cottage there is a homely, country stile. These winding lanes and stiles are features of the country as much now as in Gray's time:

Thro' lanes unknown o'er stiles they ventured,

and here again we are in the quiet of the country, but babel circles round.

Still is the toiling hand of care;
The panting herds repose;
Yet hark! how thro' the peopled air
The busy murmur glows.

It is the buzz of the crowd in the distant road—the songs, the shouts, the horns, the concertinas, softened and blended into one general and not unpleasing hum. Pleasant are the fields; the hedges festooned with honeysuckle, and the stiles shaded by tall elms. This is the very country of the elm, which grows to a great size and flourishes without sign of decay or of dying away at the top, as do the elms in London parks and suburbs, to a very advanced and green old age. But there is not a beech-tree to be seen anywhere, so that, if originally Buckinghamshire was the country of the beeches, it must have changed a good deal in the course of ages. But, then, we have not yet reached Burnham Beeches.

Nor is there any distinct upstanding of any wooded crest to act as a landmark in that direction; but after passing a pleasant-looking white house which is associated with memories of Richard Brinsley Sheridan, and George Grote the historian, the road turns into a wooded dell where there is a little wooden bridge and a quick, sparkling stream, that makes a track of brighter verdure as it goes. And beyond are the giant trunks of sundry beeches, wreathed into all kinds of fantastic shapes. Monster beeches both in size and growth, hollow and decayed below, but still carrying a vigorous growth of leaves atop, and rising proudly among a tangle of bracken, wild-flower, and underwood. It is just the spot which the poet describes as his own peculiar haunt:

There at the foot of yonder nodding beech,
That wreathes its old fantastic roots so high,
His listless length at noontide would he stretch
And pore upon the brook that babbles by.

That the spot we now know as Burnham Beeches was a favourite resort of Thomas Gray the poet, we may infer from his having resided so long at his mother's house at Stoke Pogis, and spending the long summers there, even when residing the rest of the year at Cambridge. And it is from this old Burnham wood that he gets his general idea of a beech-tree, which to us others is, of all British trees, the most "genteel," like a graceful nymph with fair and rounded limbs; but to Gray always old and gnarled, and everything that, to our mind, a beech should not be.

Where'er the oak's thick branches stretch
A broader, browner shade,
Where'er the rude and moss-grown beech
O'er canopies the glade.
Beside some water's rushy brink,
With me the muse should sit, and think.

There you have Burnham Beeches to a leaf, only if you want to sit and think, choose some other day than a Bank Holiday.

As you advance into the recesses of the wood its strange and elfin character grows upon you. In the shade the grey gnarled stems of the old giants put on a goblin-like grotesqueness. They seem to make faces at you, to grin and leer and loll out forked tongues, and the deep dark hollows of their boles suggest vampires, and thoughts of murdered corpses hidden there and never yet discovered. It is better to be here in broad daylight, with a thousand cheerful voices chirping around, than when the shadows are creeping up at the end of a short winter's day. Flags, too, are pleasant, booths and refreshment tents, the glitter of the regalia of the brotherhood of Lincoln green, who are feasting royally from long tables spread under the greenwood tree. There are open spaces too, cheerful enough with the sights and sounds of a great bivouac—horses picketed under the trees; vans and carriages parked here and there; picnics of every kind going on, some with plated dishes and wines, and a manservant to draw the corks; others eaten from a basket on the knees, or from a humble brown paper parcel produced from the pocket.

Games, too, are going on in the clearings. Here and there a dancing party is improvised with a concertina or an organ. Children dart about everywhere, blowing whistles and beating drums, for a booth for the sale of toys is one of the attractions of the day. But either the influence of the scene has exerted a sobering influence on the noisier spirits, or they have gravitated to the circle beyond the wood where "drinks" are to be had. Anyhow, there is no rowdiness as far as one can see, and nothing like the noise that there was on the road.

And it is all wild wood wherever you go. Every kind of tree, except the beech, seems to take kindly to the soil; for there are no young beeches growing up to represent the heary old monsters that are fast passing away. "Ye might ca' the place the birks o' Birnham mair than the beeches," says a canny Scot; and the groves of birches are in truth becoming a feature of the place. But anything like this for a wilderness it would be hard to find. Here are hollows, slopes, and swamps, old gravel-pits and half-filled ponds, ferny brakes almost impassable for brambles, old entrenchments overgrown with brushwood.

But it strikes one that while there must be some thousands of people scattered through the wood, yet that the London contingent, although a large one, is outnumbered by the influx of people from all the country round. As the day goes on, the country majority increases. Vans, carts, carriages arrive from every direction, some are singing hymns as they drive along, others indulge in glees and songs of a more musical cast than the strident chorus of the laundresses. In fact, the Corporation of London by purchasing Burnham Beeches and devoting it to the use of the public, has bestowed a great benefit on all the country round, even more than upon Londoners. For, after all, the place is not too accessible, although during the summer there is a service of omnibuses between Slough and the Beeches, and the inclusive fare from London, three shillings and sixpence, third-class, is not high considering the distance traversed, yet it is high enough to prevent its becoming a place of very popular resort just at present, except on the one summer Bank Holiday of the year.

Our way back is by the omnibus route, which is, naturally, by the high road from Farnham to Slough. And this way, on the crest of the hill, you have a noble view over the valley of the Thames. And what a noble sky it is that stretches above us, noble but threatening, with dark thunder, clouds and bright white masses shutting out the blue! And how nobly stands out Windsor Castle, clearly obscure in the shadows of a great threatening storm-cloud, with the deep purple belt of Windsor Forest in the horizon!

> Whose turf, whose shade, whose flowers among
> Wanders the hoary Thames along,
> His silver winding way.

And the sharp showers rattle and the deep thunders bellow, as we gallop through and over Salt Hill, where Eton Montem used to be held, and the boys stopped all the carriages that passed, and demanded blackmail, called salt, after the fashion of highwaymen, but sanctioned by old and venerated custom. A fragment of the old entrenched crest of the hill still remains with a seat at the top; and here, no doubt, we might have a distant prospect of Eton College, but for the rain and the thunder that drives us on, happy to catch a train for home before the general homeward rush and stampede of holiday makers begin.

TIME WITH THE BRAKE ON.

Of all the proverbs that were ever put together for the edification and guidance of mankind, that one which refers to the flight of time is the most obvious, not to say commonplace. "Time flies," in all languages, means simply that we draw breath and consume our lives, and no moral teacher ever thought it worth while to frame a proverb with regard to our respiratory functions. In order to be, one must breathe; and the negative position to this having been found unthinkable, moralists have put the necessity of respiration aside as a truth too palpable to stand in need of proverbial exposition. Arrived at this point, and comparing this treatment with the abundant supply of proverbs framed anent the flight of time, one is tempted to wonder whether there must not have been, in the combined experience of the wise men who make aphorisms, certain periods when Time appears at any rate to slacken the speed of his chariot wheels. Further reflection tells us that there must have been certain apparent retardations, or even haltings, in that pitiless headlong process of the sun's, which, like a falling stone, increases its velocity in exact measure to the shortness of the flight before it, or it would not, any more than the function of breathing, have been counted a fit subject for proverbial exposition. The existence of these seeming exceptions to a law hitherto deemed universal having been established, the proverb became possible, and hence our old friend, "Tempus fugit," on sun-dials and clock faces innumerable.

Most men will be able to supply, without much trouble, instances from their own experience when a sharp turn of the brake has been put on Time's chariot wheel. I open my eyes again to resume reading the article which first set my fancy off upon this track, and lo, before me is an apparent example of my theory which I should not beat in a day's journey. Six years, minus a few weeks, have passed since I last sat in the moderately comfortable arm-chair which I now occupy in the club smoking-room. If I mistake not, it is the very same one in which I settled myself when I first entered the house, with all the freshness and pride of my election still upon me; for, in the days I am speaking of, election to the "Addison" meant something—much more than it means now, if all be true that I have heard from certain members of the same standing as myself whom I have come across during my long absence. Six years, according to the almanacks, have flown—years of rushing to and fro in distant parts of the earth. Change and decay have been all around me, and I am painfully conscious that they have not spared me in their assaults; but somehow I am likewise conscious that in my present surroundings I am an exception. Some one or other has evidently been playing tricks with the hands of the great clock which mark off the moments for all of us; the process of the sun's must have been turned backward for a season. Surely the men I see before me have not borne the brunt of six years of time—six London winters therein included, which I have evaded? Poets, and romancers, and travelling M.P.'s talk and write glibly enough about "The Changeless East," to which, thank goodness, I have just bidden an eternal farewell; but I doubt whether I could have found in the whole of the Orient a more striking illustration of immutability than the one I am now contemplating.

In spite of the fact that my election to the club dates back for ten years, I am still, at least in sentiment, a junior member; that is, I should no more dare to occupy one of those commodious, well-placed arm-chairs round the fire, than to intercept that special edition of the "Recorder" which Frederic is now bearing to Jarley, who has just come in and subsided into the best-placed and softest-seated of the "fauteuils" in question. Stilling, and Jenkins, and Smith are seated in the other three, each one deeply absorbed in a book, and, as Jarley tears open the paper with no other remark than a word of greeting, I notice on the faces of the others a sign of inward relief that the voice of their companion will at least be hushed while he collects fresh material for conversation from his favourite print. I now remember that these four occupied exactly the same places at the same hour of the afternoon the last time I was here. I have not yet made myself known to any of them; indeed, with a true Englishman's shyness, I have screened my face with the magazine I am reading against any inquisitive glances from the fireside coterie; but as I peep furtively at them I remark that, but for a little more flesh and a little less hair, they are almost exactly the same men they were six years ago. I begin to hope that time may have dealt as mercifully with myself; that when I recall my existence to Jenkins, he will grasp me by the hand with effusion, and declare by way of banter that I cannot possibly be the man I proclaim myself to be; because, forsooth, I am looking exactly the same, or perhaps even some years younger than I looked when we last met and parted. These constant interviews with my reflection in the looking-glass have, indeed, told me another, and a more painful tale—and India is always supposed to wear a man up faster than London; but then one is often mistaken in judgements about oneself; so, with a nascent hope, I determine to cross the room and accost Jenkins, as soon as he may put down his paper, and learn how Time, in his opinion, has dealt with me.

In the meantime I take up another magazine to wile away the time, "The Anglo-Continental." I remember this as a smartly-written print, and always full of interesting matter. I find, however, that though the cover professes to hold the "Anglo-Continental," it really contains "The Ratiocinator," a thing I detest. Frederic, an excellent servant in most respects, was always given to mixing magazines and covers at hazards, and here I find him still at his old tricks, and, like the portion of humanity now before me, unchanged. But on reflection I wonder whether there may not perhaps be a certain design lurking in Frederic's eccentricity. He may have remarked the progressive deterioration of confirmed specialists through the exclusive perusal of journals reflecting merely their own tastes and prejudices, and have taken in hand to arrest this decay by placing in their hands journals of a tendency diametrically opposite, to give them, at least, the chance of imbibing an antidote, or at least a corrective. "Mr. Jarley," he may have reasoned, "ought to read about something else besides them obscure diseases of the mucous membrane, so I'll just slip that French comic 'lustrated into the 'Scalpel' cover, that'll make him laugh, you bet; and Mr. Smith, he always catch up the 'Polemical' as soon as he come into the club, and sit addlin' of his brains all the afternoon over a lot of stuff as don't seem to me to have no meanin' at all. I'll just give him a chance for once of havin' a look at the pictures in ''Arper's.'"

I wonder whether this explanation of Frederic's mixing tendencies is at all near the mark. Certainly if Jarley has gone on all this time reading up that favourite subject of his—a subject upon which he will enlarge at any time, in any company, and at any length—he must have completely exhausted it, and probably several sets of auditors likewise, before this. Six years, after all, is a long period to give to one subject, even one as wide in its bearings as that of Mr. Jarley's choice; and if Smith has perused all the "Symposiums," and "Replies," and "Rejoinders," and "Last Words," and "More Last Words," with which the "Polemical" undertakes periodically to settle some world-convulsing question, his brain most certainly requires a change; if, indeed, it be not already got beyond that stage when a change would be of any benefit, and reduced to a state of spongy degeneration, and no more capable of appreciating the beauties of American wood-cutting, or of taking interest in the details of the manufacture of hooks and eyes, than of assimilating the arguments set forth in the "Polemical."

Jenkins yawns and puts down his paper, and I prepare to rise and renew our acquaintance; but at the same moment Jarley also throws the "Recorder" aside, and immediately I mark a look of consternation and despair overspreading the faces of the other three. Jenkins makes a feeble grab at his paper, but ultimately drops it. Stilling closes his French novel, and leans back in his chair, and closes his eyes with the air of a martyr. Smith looks nervously at his watch as if with a design to fly; but he cannot, for the eye of Jarley is upon him. They all remain motionless, like so many replicas of the "wedding guest." After a slight preliminary clearing of the throat, Jarley advances to the hearthrug and takes the floor, and, for the next quarter of an hour, gives to all assembled a full analysis of the contents of this evening's "Recorder." He displays to us the latest aspect of that terrible question of questions which must be in all mixed assemblages strictly forbidden ground. He settles all the difficulties which beset us with regard to seals and lobsters, colonial loyalty and adverse tariffs. He glances lightly at the partition of Africa, and winds up over the City article, chiding his auditors for their want of courage in not following his advice about those Colorado bonds, and making a thousand apiece, as he himself had done.

By this time it is quite clear to me that Time cannot be the devourer of things that he is reputed to be; for if he were, these luckless three must have been worn to thread-paper under their six years' penance. During those awful May days in the plains, when the fields, waving green a few weeks ago, were lying blistering in the eye of the cruel sun; when the sandstorms were blotting out the face of Nature, and the sulphurous blast sending its fiery breath through the thickest matting screens; I used to curse at the fate which sent me out to India, and vow that a very few years of this sort of thing would make a total wreck of me, and sigh for the cool quiet of the smoking-room at the "Addison." Now, I find, in this fancied home of rest, three men who have lived through an ordeal far more terrible than mine with scarce a sign of the fire upon them. Had I been fated to sit alongside them and complete the quartette, I am confident that Jarley's voice and conversation — very scorpions compared with the whips which I endured in exile—would have reduced me long ago to a state of imbecility. I recently likened the luckless three to the wedding guest; but now it appears as if Rip van Winkle would be a more fitting figure. If our smoking-room be not verily and indeed that famous gorge in the Catskill mountains, it must, at least, be endowed with very similar properties.

There is silence once more. Jarley, having blown off his steam, stalks out of the room peradventure in search of another and less jaded auditory, and I, with some trepidation, walk across the floor and timidly seat myself in his vacant chair, and am at once recognised by my whilom acquaintances.

"Is it two years or three since you went away?" Jenkins enquires. (With Jenkins, at any rate, time still flies.) "Six! Dear me, how fast they run off the reel; and the older one gets, the faster they fly; and you are looking very well, though I'm not sure I should have known you if I had met you in the street. Hot climates, of course, do tell on one."

"Let's see, you've been out at the Cape, or India, or China, haven't you?" observed Smith. "Ah, India, of course; I remember now. India offers a wonderful career to a man; but, as the 'Polemical' is always showing, we are incurring moral responsibilities there which are appalling—simply appalling. I suppose you didn't come across a cousin of mine of the name of Carter? He's in Bengal, or Bombay, or Burmah, I forget which."

"I think I remember that you used to take an interest in bi-metallism," Stilling interposed. "I've been giving a good deal of attention to it myself lately—a most wonderful subject when you have fully grasped it—and have brought out a little pamphlet, which perhaps you may like to look at;" and here comes a dive into the breast-pocket, and the production of the brochure in question, which I accept with apparent gratitude, and spoken anticipations of the pleasure to be derived from the perusal thereof.

It now strikes me that before I went to India, when I was in a way an habitué of the "Addison," I used to rate Jenkins, and Stilling, and Smith as well-read, intelligent men, and pleasant companions. What am I to say now? Was I wrong in this estimate, or have I become more critical and exacting through added experience, or has the tooth of time, after all, been stealthily at work on their intellects while sparing the fleshly tabernacle? These are questions which I will not investigate. I will take it for granted that my companions are just as brilliant conversationalists and pleasant fellows as ever, and well-nigh untouched, mentally or physically, by the lapse of years; for if I should discover that their immutableness is only superficial, a strong buttress to my theory as to the occasional haltings of Time's chariot would fall. But whether I decide or not to go into the matter, it may not be undertaken now in the "Addison" smoking-room, for I hear the returning voice and footsteps of Jarley in the passage outside. Possibly he has been baulked in his search of a new victim in the morning-room or library, and if he were to find me here, one to whom his most venerable histories would be novelties, I have an idea that he would fasten upon me with the same avidity that the Indian mosquito shows when he penetrates the curtain under which is sleeping some fresh-blooded Englishman, newly arrived from over the sea.

SOME DINERS-OUT.

In a preceding article I had something to say about Georgian Dinners. I propose now to say something about the hosts who gave and the guests who partook of them.

In his essay entitled "Grace Before Meat," our Elia writes: "The severest satire upon full tables and surfeits is the banquet which Satan, in the 'Paradise Regained,' provides for a temptation in the wilderness:

> A table richly spread in regal mode,
> With dishes piled, and meats of noblest sort
> And savour; beasts of chase, or fowl of game,
> In pastry built, or from the spit, or boiled,
> Gris-amber steamed; all fish from sea or shore,
> Freshet or purling brook, for which was drained
> Pontus, and Lucrine bay, and Afric coasts.

"The tempter, I warrant you, thought these cates would go down without the recommendatory preface of a benediction. They are like to be short graces where the devil plays the host. I am afraid the poet wants his usual decorum in this place. Was he thinking of the old Roman luxury, or of a gaudy day at Cambridge? This was a temptation fitter for a Heliogabalus. The whole banquet is too civic and culinary, and the accompaniments altogether a profanation of that deep, abstracted, holy scene."

Now Lamb was an accomplished diner-out, and with quips and quiddities would make the table roar. Barry Cornwall—Proctor—told J. T. Fields, the American, that when he and Lamb were once making up a dinner-party together, Lamb asked him not to invite a certain lugubrious friend of theirs, "because," said Lamb, "he would cast a damper even over a funeral."

He was sitting next some chattering woman at dinner. Observing that he did not attend to her, "You don't seem," said she, "to be at all the better for what I have been saying to you."

"No, ma'am," he answered; "but this gentleman on the other side of me must, for it all came in at one ear and went out at the other."

Whatever aid we may get from the wits, the poets will not help us much in the way of dinners. No one supposes that Wordsworth condescended to gastronomic tastes; and while in Southey's book, "The Doctor," there are indications of culinary knowledge, it is certain that his table was always equipped very simply. Keats had a relish for good company, and though never in a position to play the part of Amphitryon, he was ready enough to accept the hospitality of those who could appreciate the charm of his conversation and enter into his poetic sympathies. The young men of his own circle held frequent convivial gatherings which all felt to be incomplete without his presence; but against these it must be objected that they involved him in a certain amount of "card-playing, drinking, and dissipation." He dined not seldom with his publishers, Messrs. Taylor and Hessey, men of culture, who had gathered around them a small literary coterie. He dined also with Horace Smith and some fashionable wits, but their company was not to his liking. "They only served to convince me," he says, "how superior humour is to wit in respect of enjoyment. These men say things which make one start without making one feel. They are all alike; their manners are alike; they all know fashionables; they have all a mannerism in their very eating and drinking, in their mere handling a decanter." Keats was present, I may remind the reader, at that "immortal dinner" of Haydon's, which Charles Lamb made the occasion for some of his merriest jibes.

That the young poet had a poet's idea of an ideal feast one sees in the appurtenances of the banquet in his "Lamia"; and where can one read of a daintier collation than that which, in his "Eve of St. Agnes," Porphyro prepares for his lady love?

> A heap
> Of candied apple, quince, and plum, and gourd;
> With jellies soother than the creamy curd,
> And lucent syrups, tinct with cinnamon;
> Manna and dates, in argosy transferred
> From Fez; and spicèd dainties, every one,
> From silken Samarcand to cedared Lebanon.

Shelley, living almost always in a world of phantasy, gave none of his thought to the subjects discussed in the "Almanach des Gourmands"; and in his exceeding abstemiousness, which was more real and less ostentatious than that of Byron, showed a general indifference to what he ate or drank. But either as host or guest he was amiable and attractive; and what Parnassian revels ever transcended in enjoyment the dinners he shared with such men as Keats and Reynolds, with Leigh Hunt and Lord Byron—with Medwin, and Peacock, and Trelawny? The last-named gives an interesting account of the poet's daily life at Pisa, where he was residing in the last months of his too brief career. "He was up at six or seven, reading Plato, Sophocles, and Spinoza, with the accompaniment of a hunch of dry bread; then he joined Williams in a sail on the Arno, in a flat-bottomed skiff, book in hand, and thence he went to the pine-forest or some out-of-the-way place. When the birds went to roost, he turned home, and talked and read till midnight." Evidently such a mode of living allowed no time for the grosser indulgences of the table, and the simplicities that satisfied his taste may be inferred from the "bill of fare" he sets forth in his charming "Letter to Mrs. Maria Gisborne":

> Though we eat little flesh, and drink no wine,
> Yet let's be merry; we'll have tea and toast;
> Custards for supper, and an endless host
> Of syllabubs, and jellies, and mince pies,
> And other such lady-like luxuries;
> Feasting on which we will philosophise.

But here let me intercalate to comment on the general standard of the English cuisine in the reign of George the Third, and on the causes which led to its refined improvement, until it became equal, if not superior, to that of France in its higher developements. It is matter of fact that English cookery as a whole could not at that time vie with French cookery.

No, our currant jelly and melted butter, our underdone joints and overdone poultry, tasteless vegetables, and limited salads, would cry out against such an illusion. But I believe that now the best English cookery is better than the best French cookery, and that we surpass our neighbours in the matter of service, and in the general equipment of our tables. One often reads in French books and newspapers satirical descriptions of English dinners; but then they are descriptions of dinners given by inefficient hosts or at common and even vulgar tables. Such dinners are, perhaps, to be found in French households of a similar character. What is wanted in England is not the creation of a higher standard in the cuisine—the English standard is as high as any in the world—but its recognition by the mass of people who dine. At present, the majority of English housekeepers cannot with any regard to veracity set up above their door-posts the significant legend, "Ici On Dine." All they dare—if truthful—to assert is, "Ici On Mange."

One of the most refined and intellectual of the social circles of the Georgian era found its centre at Norbury Park, Mickleham—the seat of Mr. William Lock, an artist and an art critic who was highly esteemed by his contemporaries. In the house which he built in this charming neighbourhood—the Happy Valley, as Mackintosh called it—the dining-room, or saloon, was (and is) distinguished by the novelty and grace of its decoration. "It is a room twenty feet by twenty-three, and was intended to represent a bower enclosed by vine-covered trellis-work. The sides of the room are divided by pilasters which appear to support the trellised roof, through an opening in the centre of which is seen the evening sky. The windows of the south side of the room frame the real scenery of the Vale looking towards Box Hill and over Dorking. On the other side are landscapes—compositions from the Cumberland lakes—reaching the whole height of the room. The idea has been carried out with great care and thoroughness. Intended for a dining-room, the artificial landscapes are all lit by the same early evening sun, as in the summer or early autumn the natural landscape will be at the dinner-hour. To assist the effect, the lawns and slopes before the window are planted and arranged to form a pictorial foreground to the natural scene. The landscapes were painted by Barrett—Wilson's more prosperous rival—but Cipriani painted the groups of men in them, and Gilpin the cattle; while the ceiling, sky, and treillage, with the climbing vines and clustering grapes and honeysuckles, were painted by Pastorini." In this charming saloon Lock often entertained Sir Joshua Reynolds, Fuseli, Dr. Moore—the author of "Zeluco"—Sir Thomas Lawrence, and Fanny Burney, who met at Lock's table her future husband, M. d'Arblay; also the French emigrés, who, in the days of the French Revolution, formed a little colony at Mickleham—Talleyrand, Count Lally Tollendal, M. de Narbonne, Duc de Montmorence, the Princesse d'Hinén, Madame de Broglie and Madame de Staël. These exiles found a home under the liberal roof of Mr. David Jenkinson, of Juniper Hall, in the same neighbourhood.

Then at Fredley Farm lived Richard Sharpe, the author of "Letters and Essays in Prose and Verse," but better known, in allusion to his powers as a talker, as "Conversation Sharpe." He formed a link between the Georgian period and our own time, for he did not die until 1853. Round his table at Fredley often sat Henry Grattan, Mackintosh, Sir Samuel Romilly, Leonard Horner, James Mill, and the poet Rogers.

The efforts of Lord Chesterfield and other great nobles—to which I have referred—to overcome the insular prejudice against "foreign kickshaws" at first met with little success, and "the Roast Beef of Old England" continued to rank in the popular esteem with "Church and State," our "Glorious Constitution," "Rotten Boroughs," and other proud inheritances of the free-born Englishman. In Bickerstaff's "Love in a Village," even the cookmaid is inspired to sing its praises:

Who wants a good cook, my hand they must cross;
For plain wholesome dishes I'm ne'er at a loss;
And what are your soups, your ragouts, and your sauce
Compared to Old English Roast Beef?

It is no exaggeration to assert that the horror excited in England by the terrible events of the French Revolution intensified—at all events for a time—the national sentiment against French cookery, so that it became a recognised trade-mark of true patriotism to patronise only "good substantial food, sir—beef and mutton, sir—none of your made dishes or French slip-slops, sir!"

In Coffey's "The Devil to Pay," the

cook, it is true, says to Mistress Nell: "If you please, madam, I'd toss you up a white fricassee of chickens in a trice; or what does your ladyship think of a veal sweetbread?" But chickens and veal were home grown, and your patriot, therefore, could partake of them without a conscientious twinge, though he never allowed them the place in his affections conceded to the historic sirloin of beef or the succulent leg of mutton. The popularity of George the Third was due in no small measure to his preference for old English fare. His sins against popular liberties were forgotten in the admiration excited by his homely dinner—a joint and a plum-pudding.

Out of evil comes good. The compulsory immigration of the French noblesse led to a sure and regular amendment in the ways of our cooks, and their example popularised a lighter and more digestible class of dishes than had hitherto figured on our dinner-tables. Our grands seigneurs hastened to offer an asylum to the French princes—to the Comte de Lille (afterwards Louis the Eighteenth), and the Comte d'Artois (Charles the Tenth), with the Ducs de Condé and Bourbon — "dismounted cavalry," as Curran wittily called them. Lord Moira at Donnington, and the Marquis of Buckingham at Stowe, rivalled each other in sumptuous hospitality, and of course accommodated their cuisine to the tastes of their honoured guests.

The Comte de Lille, and some of his family, occupied, in 1807, Gossfield House, near High Garret, in Essex, a seat belonging to the Marquis of Buckingham; and in 1808 these princes were received with the most splendid marks of hospitality at the princely mansion of Stowe, where their residence was commemorated by a Latin inscription. For several months there was a dinner prepared daily for Louis the Eighteenth, the Count d'Artois, the Duc d'Angoulême, the Duc de Berri, the Duc d'Orléans, the Comte de Beaujolais, the Prince de Condé (father of the unfortunate Duc d'Enghien), and the Duc de Bourbon. But Stowe was a scene of even greater festivity, in 1805, when the Heir Apparent (afterwards George the Fourth), the Duke of Clarence (afterwards William the Fourth), with Mr. Fox, and all the members of the new Coalition, were invited. Grand entertainments were given during several successive days. Illuminations took place in the evening, and the grotto in which their Royal Highnesses supped was lighted up with from ten thousand to eighteen thousand lamps. The immense expenditure necessitated by this profuse hospitality was the beginning of the pecuniary misfortunes which eventually wrecked the Buckingham family, and led to the sale of the treasures and heirlooms collected at Stowe.

The character and conduct of the Marquis of Londonderry—better known as Lord Castlereagh—are now receiving fairer treatment at the hands of the historian than was possible when the minds of men were still inflamed with political passion. Here, however, I have to deal with him only as a diner and a giver of good dinners. He was a man of splendid tastes, and his table was always magnificently served. Carême was in his service, both in London and at Vienna, when Castlereagh went there as Ambassador in 1814. At North Cray Place, in Kent, he gathered around him a brilliant circle, of which we shall get some glimpses when I come to speak of the poet Moore.

The Marquis of Lansdowne (Lord Henry Petty) was also a liberal host, and his table was one of the best in London. The two great rivals, Pitt and Fox, were excellent judges of the results of the cook's art, loved a good dinner, and a bottle, or two, of good wine after it. Wilberforce, the philanthropist, was not so wholly occupied in his anti-slavery crusade as not to find leisure for a refined hospitality, of which Pitt was a frequent participator. Pitt's high spirits when he visited his old friend at Wimbledon, riding thither from London or his own house at Putney Heath, were remarkable. One morning, after an enjoyable dinner, he rose early, and cutting up a dress hat with which Ryder (afterwards Lord Harrowby) had come down from the opera, sowed the pieces carefully among the garden beds. His love of wine, much exaggerated by party slander, was a favourite theme with the caricaturists. When in 1796 his Government imposed a tax upon wine, Gillray came out with a caricature in which Pitt was represented as Bacchus, and his friend and colleague, Dunbar (Lord Melville), as Silenus, to whom John Bull, with a long face and purse and bottle both empty, saith: "Pray, Mr. Bacchus, have a bit of consideration for old John; you know as how I've emptied my purse already for you, and it's woundedly hard to raise the price of a drop of comfort, now that one's got no money left to pay for it!" Bacchus, from his pipe of wine, which rests upon the Treasury Bench, stammers forth: "Twenty pounds a t-tun additional duty, i-i-if you d-d-don't like it at that, why t-t-t-then dad and I will keep it all for o-o-our own drinking, so here g-g-goes, old bu-bu-bull mouth!" The old jest about seeing two Mr. Speakers need not be repeated. Pitt's indulgence in stimulants seems, however, to have had its origin in physical causes. He was, at all events, a capital host and an admirable guest. His conversation was bright, easy, and various, always good-humoured, and frequently flavoured with a pleasant, unaffected humour. Lord Guildford, his political opponent, meeting him at the Duke of Rutland's country-seat, wrote to a friend that he was sorry to find that "so bad a politician was so very pleasant a man." Of his playful humour the Hon. Edmund Phipps preserves an example, related to him by Mr. Croker, who heard it from Mr. Ward himself. Pitt had come to dine with Mr. Ward in his retreat at West Molesey. Summer was closing fast, and damp and cold had robbed gloomy firs, a shady lawn, and small rooms level with the ground, of their chief attractions. "What could persuade you," enquired Mr. Pitt, as he looked around him, "what could persuade you, Ward, to come to such a dismal place?" "That which is the grand motive to a poor man—money," replied Ward. "Indeed! and pray how much do they give you?" enquired Pitt. This Mr. Ward was R. Plumer Ward, the author of "Tremaine," and other semi-philosophical works, the centre of a snug little literary coterie, and an exceedingly accomplished gastronome.

Fox had not the means of keeping up a "grand table," or dispensing hospitality on a large scale; but at St. Anne's, near Chertsey, his delightful riverside retreat, he loved in his later years to receive his friends, who were charmed not less by the freshness of his conversation than by his kindly nature and warm affections. Everybody knows the inscription on the gravestone of the accomplished Elizabethan, "Here lies Fulke Greville, servant to Queen Elizabeth, counsellor to King James, and 'friend to Sir Philip Sidney'; but everybody does not know that a similar memorial of an honourable friendship may be read on the monument of Lord John Townshend, who is described as "the friend and companion of Mr. Fox, a distinction which was the pride of his life and the only one he wished to have recorded after his death." The man who could inspire such devotion must have had great qualities to be worthy of it. There is a very interesting entry in the Greville Memoirs, in which that caustically inclined "Clerk of the Council" refers to his dining with Talleyrand (in 1833), and the latter's talk about his first residence in England and his acquaintance with Fox and Pitt. "He always talks in a kind of affectionate tone about the former, and is now meditating a visit to Mrs. Fox at St. Anne's Hill, where he may see her surrounded with the busts, pictures, and recollections of her husband. He delighted to dwell on the simplicity, gaiety, childishness, and profoundness of Fox."

Fox loved St. Anne's Hill with "a passionate fondness." Among its budding thorns and elms, its blossoming garden alleys, with its bright views of the shining river, he seemed to recover the buoyancy and mirthfulness of boyhood. Lord Albemarle speaks of a visit which he and his brother, then in their teens, paid to the statesman in the spring of 1806. No sooner was dinner over than the Prime Minister and his youthful guests adjourned to the lawn in front of the house, and devoted the rest of the evening to trap-ball, Mr. Fox having always the innings and the boys the bowling and the fagging-out. Dinner was not an object of much thought with Fox; but his table was always decently furnished, for, like Hume, he had learned in Paris to appreciate the refinement of French cookery, and as a host he was not easily surpassed.

Fox, of course, reminds one of Holland House, that suburban palace and paradise, which, with its lofty avenues, its trim gardens, its broad stretches of deep grass, its fantastic gables, its endles vista of boudoirs, libraries, and drawing-rooms, still happily exists—an oasis in the wilderness of the streets and squares, terraces and crescents, of Tyburnia. It was first rented by Fox's father, Henry Fox, the first Lord Holland, in 1747, and purchased by him in 1767. For nearly a century it was the social centre and headquarters of the Whig party, more particularly so under the régime of Henry Richard, third Lord Holland, most amiable of men, and his clever, fascinating, but imperious-minded wife. Talleyrand, by the way, has characterised the two with happy terseness. Of Lord Holland, he said:

"C'est la bienveillance même, mais la bienveillance la plus perturbative que j'ai jamais connu."

Of Lady Holland: "Elle est toute

assertion, mais quand on demande la preuve, c'est là son secret."

H. F. Chorley, in his diary, records an anecdote told by Count D'Orsay, of his dining at Holland House when he first visited England, young, handsome, and impudent. He sat next to his hostess, who happened to be in one of her most aggressive moods. She dropped her napkin, the Count gallantly picked it up; her spoon, her eye-glass; each was restored by her attentive guest. At length, however, his patience gave way, and when she again dropped her napkin, he turned and called to one of the footmen behind him:

"Put my couvert on the floor," said he, "and I will finish my dinner there; it will be so much more convenient for Lady Holland."

She was rather fond of crowding her dinner-table. Once when the company was already tightly packed, an unexpected guest arrived, and she instantly gave her imperative order:

"Luttrell, make room!"

"It must certainly be made," he answered, "for it does not exist."

This was Henry Luttrell, author of "Advice to Julia," and other poems, an elegant wit, and an accomplished diner-out—he who so graphically calumniated our English climate:

"On a fine day, like looking up a chimney; on a rainy day, like looking down it."

One day, receiving a verbal invitation to dinner, he asked:

"Who is going to dine there?"

"I really don't know; but I believe the Bishop of ——, for one."

"The Bishop of ——!" exclaimed Luttrell. "Mercy upon me! I don't mix well with the Dean, and I shall positively effervesce with the Bishop."

Hopeless were the task of enumerating here all the repartees which have been handed down to us from Lady Holland's table. Probably, for the greater portion, we are indebted to Sydney Smith, who, always ready with his jests and humorous exaggerations, kept even the servants in fits of laughter. Once, however, at Holland House, he was silenced by the Prince Regent. The conversation having turned upon the wickedest man who ever lived, Sydney, addressing himself to the Regent, said:

"The Regent Orleans, and he was a Prince."

"No, no, Mr. Sydney," coolly replied the Regent, "I shall give the preference to his tutor, the Abbé Dubois, and he was a priest."

But it was seldom indeed that Sydney Smith came off second best in these wordy battles.

A man who had for some time been boasting that he believed in nothing, suddenly expressed enthusiasm at a particular dish, and asked for another helping of it.

"Ah!" said Sydney, "I am glad to see that Mr. ——, at all events, believes in the cook."

Talleyrand said a good thing in reference to Lady Holland's dinner-hour, which I believe was six or half-past six. Without preventing her table from being overcrowded, it seems to have given universal dissatisfaction. Somebody once trying to learn the cause of this inconvenience, applied to Talleyrand for enlightenment:

"I wonder why Lady Holland dines at such an hour?"

Talleyrand, with his usual twang, drawled out: "Pour gêner tout le monde!"

But in spite of her defects of temper, she contrived to draw round her table the most distinguished of her contemporaries. Every foreign celebrity gravitated towards Holland House as surely as Mohammedans incline towards Mecca. As for Whig statesmen and Whig men of letters, it was their sacred place, their sanctuary, their Delphos. Ah, what wit and wisdom flowed in lucid streams at its memorable dinners! What good things were said—as well as eaten! How sparkling the conversation—and the wines! Not to have dined at Holland House in its palmy days was to have missed the crowning enjoyment and most felicitous distinction of life.

There was a time when Carlton House was scarcely less attractive; but that was before the Prince Regent executed his political "volte-face," and threw over his Whig friends, to whom he owed so much and whose services he repaid with such startling ingratitude. The friends of his later years—the Jerseys and Conynghams, and their "clientèle"—were indifferent substitutes for the wits, statesmen, orators, and men of letters who formerly cheered his vacant hours. His cuisine, however, was always first-rate, and Carême, who at one time was its chef, pronounced him "a perfect connoisseur in all that related to the table." And what more can a people expect in their sovereign? Both at Carlton House, and at the Pavilion in Brighton, the Royal dinners were admirably designed and faultlessly executed. Here is one of the menus, drawn up by Carême, for a dinner at the Pavilion, on January 8th, 1817:

"Quatre potages: Le potage de lièvre au chasseur; le potage de santé au consommé de volaille; le potage aux laitues; le macaroni lié à l'Italienne.

"Quatre relevés de poissons: Les perches au vin de Champagne; l'anguille à la régence; le turbot grillé, sauce aux homards; le cabillaud à la Hollandaise.

"Quatre grosses pièces: Le dindon braisé aux huîtres; le filet de bœuf piqué glacé; les poulets à la financière; le quartier de sanglier, gelée de grosseilles.

"Quatre contre-flans: Le pain de gibier sur un socle; la poularde sur un socle; le turban sur un socle; la galantine sur un socle.

"Quatre plats rôts: Le chapon au cresson; le lièvre à l'Anglaise; le dindonneau au cresson; le pluviers bardés.

"Huits entremets: Les pommes de terre frites; les asperges; les huîtres au gratin; la salade de volaille; les salsifis au beurre; les epinards à la Française; les truffes à la serviette; les écrevisses au Madère."

"At first," says Thackeray, "the Prince made a pretence of having Burke, and Fox, and Sheridan for his friends. Fox might talk dice with him, and Sheridan wine; but what else had these men of genius in common with their tawdry young host of Carlton House? . . . His natural companions were dandies and parasites. He could talk to a tailor or a cook; but as the equal of great statesmen to set up a creature, lazy, weak, indolent, besotted, of monstrous vanity, and levity incurable—it is absurd. . . . His next set of friends were mere table companions, of whom he grew tired too; then we hear of him with a very few select toadies, mere boys from school or the Guards, whose sprightliness tickled the fancy of the worn-out voluptuary."

He betrayed or cast off his friends—as witness Brummell—and deceived those who loved him—as witness poor "Perdita" Robinson—but he could drink six bottles of claret after dinner without being perceptibly "flustered." He cheated all who trusted him; was mean, selfish, and a braggart; but in his better days he was a model host—could lead the conversation so as to bring out the best qualities of his guests—told a story remarkably well—was not inapt at a repartee—and Nature having endowed him with a charming voice, he sang a capital song. Thackeray admits that his table was a tempting one, and it is certain that he knew how to assemble around it the finest talent of the age. "The wits came and did their utmost to amuse him. Scott, the loyal cavalier, the king's true liegeman, the very best raconteur of his time, poured out with an endless generosity his store of old-world learning, kindness, and humour. Grattan contributed to it his wondrous eloquence, fancy, feeling. Tom Moore perched upon it for a while and piped his most exquisite little love-tunes upon it, flying away in a twitter of indignation afterwards, and attacking the Prince with bill and claw." Then there were Talleyrand, Metternich, Nesselrode, Canning, Castlereagh, Peel, Wellington, Lyndhurst—the man had the best of company, if he had only known how to profit by it.

After the abdication of Napoleon, in 1814, half the crowned heads in Europe visited England, and were entertained by the Prince Regent. The Emperor Alexander, the King of Prussia, great soldiers, great diplomatists, famous courtiers, and beautiful women—all sat at his table, and, it must be owned, were royally feasted.

MRS. DAWE'S LADY-HELP.

BY BARBARA DEMPSTER.

Author of "Through Gates of Gold," "A Dead Hand," "A Spring Moon," "His Guardian's Wife," "Those People," etc., etc.

CHAPTER V.

"BUT—I must speak plainly—you have no right to put yourself in such a position as this. It quite shocks me, Miss——"

"Smith," quickly. "Don't forget that that is my name for the present, Mr. Bellamy," with a half-mocking laugh. "But I think you are right. It isn't fair to the Dawes. I feel afraid at the very thought of their finding out. But I have tried to do my duty faithfully."

"Do your duty faithfully!" indignantly. "But it isn't right. It——"

"Don't you think we have heard enough—for the present?" whispered Mr. James Brown, gently, but peremptorily drawing back his cousin Minnie from the thick hedge, which divided them from the other speakers.

The speakers were Miss Smith and Mr. Bellamy, who were strolling, a little before luncheon, along the path on the other side of the hedge.

As Mr. James Brown and his cousin had reached the hedge, they had caught the sound of the voices on the other side.

Their own steps had not been heard as they came up over the turf. The speakers were evidently engaged in a most earnest conversation. And Minnie, who recognised Miss Smith's voice, had made a sharp sign to her cousin to stand still while she crept swiftly forward to catch what she was saying.

Mr. James Brown had stopped involuntarily, not listening to the words, but to one of the voices which to him was the most musical that he had ever heard. But as the meaning of the words suddenly struck him, and it dawned on him that it was a confidential conversation he was overhearing, he strode forward, and drew back Minnie. She turned on him angrily, as the two on the other side moved away up the path.

"What did you do that for?" she whispered, furiously. "It was quite right to listen! I knew there was something wrong about her. She is an adventuress——"

"And we're eavesdroppers," coolly, but with something troubled in his face. "I would as soon be one as the other."

"Oh, you!"—all her anger and spite kindling into fire under the mortification of his sneer. "Of course, you take her part! You're nothing better than an adventurer yourself! I wonder mother lets you stay in the house. We don't want pauper scapegrace relations about, to disgrace us!"

His face grew more set.

"Is that how you speak to your cousin?" he asked. "Remember, you are the only relations I have in the world!"

"The advantage is all on your side, then!" she retorted, all womanly courtesy and feeling lost in passion. "I am sure Gwen and I wish to goodness you had gone anywhere than come here. Why don't you go now and sponge on the Bishop? You've been doing your best to curry favour with him."

His face had grown very pale.

"I don't know what I have ever done to you to make you so hard to me," he said, in a low voice. "Surely if a man has been unlucky, his relations should show some little kindness and pity. I have waited for it in vain. I shall not trouble you much longer. I shall go away—soon."

"You are careful not to specify the day," with an angry laugh. "I am quite sure that you will take the time that suits your convenience best!" and she turned away.

For a moment his eyes glowed like fire as he looked after her. Then he laughed a hard, bitter laugh.

"Yes, my fair cousin, you are right! I shall not leave till it suits me, and your parents will not turn me out for family reasons. I shall not go and leave Miss Smith to your tender mercies." Then the anger changed into troubled perplexity again. "I wonder what it means. What made that parson chap speak to her like that!" The more he thought of it, the more unpleasant the matter seemed.

He could only come to one conclusion. She could have done nothing to deserve the scornful epithets cast at her by Minnie.

The luncheon was a rather informal meal, as the confirmation was to be held early in the afternoon, to allow the Bishop to catch a particular train which was to take him to his next destination. He was not to return to the Vicarage from the church. Everybody at the Vicarage was going to the church. Miss Smith, who knew how intensely Martha longed to see the ceremony, offered to let her go in her place. Under these circumstances Mrs. Dawe graciously allowed the household drudge to go, knowing that the work would be far better done by Miss Smith. By three o'clock Miss Smith had the house to herself.

It was four o'clock when, coming downstairs from folding up the counterpanes and hangings in the rooms that the Bishop and his chaplain had occupied, she started violently. For there in the hall, seated in his favourite chair by the open door, was Mr. James Brown. For a wonder, he was not smoking.

After that first violent start, she subsided into a severe determination to glide gently down the staircase, not to let him hear, and so retreat unperceived to the kitchen, to make some pastry for dinner. He did not turn his head, so he had not seen her. Her grey linen gown made no rustle, her little slippered feet fell lightly on the carpeted staircase, which, not put in by a London jerry-builder, did not creak at the fairy tread.

She crept down with as much caution as a Red Indian on the war-trail, and as she reached the last stair, he turned his head and looked at her! And then she knew, by that curious light in his face which could hardly be called a smile, and yet which was a hundred times more expressive than most persons' smiles, that he had known all along, and appreciated intensely, her superhuman efforts to descend the staircase without being seen.

"You are horrid!" burst involuntarily from her lips in the humiliating annoyance of the discovery. She felt that she would like to slap him. No man in the world had ever yet roused such a feminine passion of desire in her. Generally if they displeased her, which was fairly often, she froze into the haughty coldness of contempt.

He rose cheerfully, and came towards her.

"Why did you take all that trouble?" he asked with an appearance of most innocent interest.

"Because—I thought you didn't see me," feeling, instinctively, that she was going to get the worst of it, and experiencing more strongly than ever that feminine desire of indignation.

"But I did see you. I saw you at the top of the staircase."

"You never looked up!" involuntarily, spitefully, and filled the next instant with shame and anger at having said it, and thus giving him an opening for what came.

"Perhaps I didn't, but I knew you were there all the same," he said, reflectively, seizing that opening, as he seized every one that came to him. "I don't know how it is, but I always see you even if I don't look."

"What ridiculous nonsense!" still speaking very angrily, but blushing so violently, that she would have cried for very humiliation of doing so at all.

"It isn't," he repeated, with cheerful calmness. "It is the truth."

"I thought you went to the church," she said, rapidly taking up a new grievance, perhaps because she found it difficult to carry on the other.

"So I did—only I came back and—sat down there to rest."

"Without your faithful companion?" with a fine disdain.

He drew out his pipe and looked at it thoughtfully.

"I was going to have one, only I thought you might object. You said the other night that I was ruining the hangings. I overheard you, so you can't deny it."

This was worse and worse; to make her the cause of this unusual abstinence!

"I am sure I don't object," she said, haughtily. "You can smoke as many pipes as you like. I suppose you are the chief person concerned, and if you don't mind making yourself ill——"

He stuffed the pipe back in his pocket.

"That sounds nicer than only thinking of the hangings," he said, meekly. "I won't smoke for a week."

She looked at him with growing disdain.

"As if you would be capable of such a sacrifice."

"I'll do my best," he said, humbly. Then with a queer expression on his face, "Don't you understand that a pipe is sometimes a safety-valve? Would you rather I went outside and—swore? I'll do that if you prefer it."

She flashed one scornful, indignant look at him, and then, as somehow it always happened, she yielded to his mood. Perhaps it was the sharp consciousness she always had herself of the insults heaped upon him.

"I think I would rather you smoked," she said, the slightest of smiles on her lips.

"All right," he said coolly, but something grateful leaped into his eyes and made her flush again.

"I wish you would come out and have a look at the rockery I am making," he said. "I don't think it is quite the shape Minnie wanted."

She hesitated. He asked her again, and she went out obediently with him into the garden.

The rockery seemed to take some time to consider, for quite half an hour passed before Miss Smith returned to the house. In the meantime, the front door stood wide open and the house was unguarded. The rockery was some way from the house, and the lawn and a shrubbery came between it and the drive.

It was past six when Mrs. Dawe and the two girls returned home. They had stopped to have tea with a friend in the village. Mr. Dawe had gone to see the Bishop off at the station. Mrs. Dawe and the girls were not in the best of tempers. Gwen was tired with the heat and the confirmation ceremony, and her head ached. Minnie told her mother on the way home about what she had overheard in the morning between Miss Smith and Mr. Bellamy. It disturbed Mrs. Dawe considerably, and she was very angry with

Minnie for not having spoken sooner in the day.

"It would only have upset you," said Minnie, sulkily. She rather dreaded her mother's temper, though she had one of her own. "And you would have spoken to Miss Smith and there would have been a quarrel, and perhaps she would have gone off before luncheon."

"Better if she had, if she is only an adventuress. And all the silver out for the Bishop! And I left her to put it away. And the house empty too! Goodness only knows what she mightn't have taken by this time!"

They hurried on home, filled with all kinds of fears and surmises.

"Perhaps we shall find her gone—silver and all!" exclaimed Mrs. Dawe, in almost piteous anxiety, for she was really convinced of the notion that everyone who took her wages was in league to rob and pillage her.

They found Mr. James Brown in the Vicarage dining-room, laying the cloth for dinner; and Mrs. Dawe went white with apprehension.

"Where is Miss Smith gone?" she gasped.

"I don't know," his head a little on one side, as he contemplated rather doubtfully the aspect of the table. Somehow it did not look quite right. The knives and forks seemed eccentric in their positions, and he could not remember where the salt-cellars were placed.

"Don't know!" almost screamed Mrs. Dawe. "You don't mean to say that she has gone!"

"Gone! I don't know. She hasn't come back yet, if that's what you mean, so I just offered to help; but I think I had better go and ask Miss Smith how to do it," retreating with rather suspicious eagerness to the door.

"Don't you understand, mother!" exclaimed Gwen, as her mother stared in speechless bewilderment. "It's that wretched little Martha that hasn't come back yet, and James has seized the opportunity of having a little flirtation with Miss Smith over laying the table." She laughed, not disagreeably. The situation amused her. "She suits him, and he's happiest in the kitchen," turning to go upstairs.

"I do hope the silver is all right," exclaimed her mother. "I shall go and look it over, and you girls had better see to your things. Goodness knows what places she may not have been ransacking this afternoon!"

It would have been difficult for even an experienced burglar to ransack the Dawes' habitation, so carefully was everything locked away.

But they hurried upstairs all the same to search for possible losses.

A few minutes later came a scream of dismay from Gwen's room, and, with a very pale face, she dashed out on to the landing to meet her mother and sister hurrying out of theirs at her cry.

"My pearl and diamond ring—and all my lovely black lace. Oh! don't you remember what a lot she seemed to know about lace one day when we were speaking about it? Oh! I couldn't have believed it of her—I couldn't!" breaking into scared, excited crying. "Oh! if only I could remember to be more careful; but they're gone!" following her mother and sister, who rushed into the room to search. "They were in that drawer," pointing to one that stood open, half its contents on the floor as she had tossed them out, and Gwen sobbed out how she had had the lace out to look at, through a suggestion of Miss Smith's that she should use it for a dinner-dress, and how she had not locked it away again, but put it into the drawer in question, and Miss Smith had seen her doing so. And the pearl and diamond ring she had worn the previous night, and that, too, she had put in there on going to bed, feeling too tired to unlock her jewel-case. She had forgotten to lock the drawer before going to church that afternoon, and had even left the key in it. Sobbing and lamenting she told her story, while Mrs. Dawe and Minnie searched energetically for the missing property.

Minnie was quite quiet, literally appalled at the magnitude of the loss. They had been a legacy, left by an aunt to Gwen, and were valued at over a hundred pounds. Mrs. Dawe's consternation waxed into a fury.

"This must be seen into at once," she said. "I wish your father were here! I'll have the police in, and every corner of the house searched. She can't have got rid of them yet."

"Unless James has helped her," suggested Minnie. "He wasn't in church this afternoon, and they're such friends."

Laughing voices in the dining-room, as they hastened downstairs to confront Miss Smith, seemed to confirm this statement.

When they reached the door, they saw Miss Smith standing by the oddly-arranged table, giving directions to Mr. James Brown, who was doing his best to rectify his errors.

Mrs. Dawe, her face aflame, swept up to Miss Smith.

"What have you done with that ring and the lace?" she asked, hoarsely.

CHAPTER VI.

MISS SMITH, tumbler in hand, stared at her as if she were mad. But Mr. James Brown, holding a large carving-fork, took a stride nearer, as if to put himself between her and his infuriated aunt.

"You needn't attempt to brazen it out! You've taken them, and I'll have your box searched and you too. Where are they?" with a threatening gesture, which brought Mr. James Brown another step nearer.

"Taken what—where——?" Miss Smith, her face white as snow, stammered, and stared with widening eyes.

"Don't pretend ignorance. My daughter's diamond and pearl ring and her black lace. You saw where she put them yesterday. We have just found them gone, and you were here alone all the afternoon—and——"

"Good Heavens!" Miss Smith swept a step forward and Mrs. Dawe retreated. "Do you mean to accuse me of stealing——" the rest choked in her throat.

"Who else could have taken them?" sobbed Gwen. "You knew where they were and thought so much of the lace! Oh!" with a sharp scream, catching hold of her mother as Mr. James Brown stepped suddenly up to her, the large carving-fork in his hand, "he will murder me. Oh! I don't care a bit," clutching at her mother to draw her away. "She may keep them—only don't murder me!"

Afterwards Mr. James Brown laughed—somewhat grimly, it is true—at the scene, and at the scared faces of the Dawes as he flourished the big fork at them. But for the moment, if he did not feel like murder, his fury was so terrible that, if they had been men, he would have fought them.

"Of course you take her part," sneered Minnie, who was anything but a coward. "I don't suppose you are very particular yourself. You——"

"Mr. Brown!" Miss Smith, pale and trembling, stepped between them, unconsciously guided by some instinct to spare him, even at this supreme moment for herself, "let me hear what they have to say—I—I don't understand." The charge was repeated.

"It's an infernal lie!" said Mr. James Brown, to the front again, while Gwen screamed anew and retreated behind her mother.

"Is it!" exclaimed Mrs. Dawe in a greater fury than ever. "We shall see—I'll send for the policeman."

A faint exclamation broke from Miss Smith's pale lips. All—with the exception of Mr. James Brown—thought it was of fear. He heard its sharpness of shame and distress, and he glared at his relations as if he would have shaken them to pieces.

"Oh, please confess!" cried Gwen, in helpless tears. "It will be so unpleasant for us all. Give them back, and we'll say——"

"How dare you!" exclaimed Miss Smith, in such a blaze of indignation, that Gwen, with a gasping scream, shrank into the background again.

"Oh! you'll see what we 'dare,'" exclaimed Mrs. Dawe, "I'll write to Lady Meriton, who gave me your character, and tell her what you are, and how you are here under a false name. I'll have the police here, if I go myself," turning to the door.

"No, you will not." Mr. James Brown stepped between her and it. "At least I have something to say in the matter first."

What was it in his blazing, steady gaze that sent every drop of colour from Mrs. Dawe's face, and made her tremble with abject fear? She tried to rally.

"And pray what have you to say in the matter?" insolently.

"A great deal—if any unpleasantness is done Miss Smith. Perhaps you will let me speak to you alone for a few moments. Miss Smith—would not you prefer to leave us?"

She passed out of the room, no one attempting to stop her. The girls stared in amazement at their cowed mother.

"Had not they better go too," asked their cousin quietly.

With a gesture, their mother dismissed them, and, for the next half-hour, she and her nephew were shut up in the dining-room together. When she came out of it, she looked white and haggard—aged by years.

The result of that interview left Mr. James Brown outwardly very quiet and stern, but inwardly as contented as if he had gained an inheritance, instead of having yielded up all claim to one which had been treacherously filched from him.

At his instance, and as part of the agreement, Mrs. Dawe spoke to her husband and daughters, making the latter solemnly swear never to mention the lost ring and lace to any one.

The real facts of the agreement between their mother and cousin always remained a secret to the girls. Mr. Dawe, who understood it well, looked as pale and haggard as his wife. There was no need for him to give a promise.

There was more still to come. An hour later, in the presence of all the family, Mrs. Dawe apologised humbly to Miss Smith, and retracted her accusations, assuring her that only the excitement of the moment had made her speak as she did. She even made Gwen and Minnie apologise too.

"That's right," said Mr. James Brown, cheerfully, when it was all over. "Now we must try and find the thief."

His aunt darted a look at him that would have annihilated him if it could. She still believed Miss Smith to be the thief. But abject fear kept her silent.

An hour or two later, Mr. James Brown, strolling down the pathway where he had found Miss Smith gathering beans in the morning, caught sight of a slender figure standing motionless in the moonlight which flooded the end of the path. It did not stir till he reached it. Then it turned slowly round and he saw that Miss Smith had been crying. She was still crying. Her eyes were wet, and her mouth quivering.

Mr. James Brown muttered silently something that it was as well the Bishop did not hear. It was comprehensive and took in all his relations.

"I don't know how to thank you," said Miss Smith. "If it had not been for you," with a shiver, "I should have been in the hands of the police now."

"Let us forget it," he said, smiling, though he paled as he thought how true it was. He would never cease to be thankful that he had been able to spare her this ignominy, and that he had kept silence through all the past years, so that he had been able to speak so effectu last.

"And I am not really clear yet," exclaimed, in a passion of shame indignation.

"Do not trouble so much," he s little break in his voice. "I am goi catch the thief. It was all my Some one must have come into the while I was bothering you to giv your advice about that con——rocke

"No; it was all my fault. I ough to have left the house," and then blushed scarlet, and shrank back a looking up at him with half-defiant ap "There are other things, too—perh deserve it — you heard what she about——"

"Any name you choose to take is go me," he said.

"Oh!" she said. And then she into a little laugh that ended in a "How good you are to me!" under breath.

"Good!" and now the steady trembled, "good! I would die to you. Will you be my wife?— hastily, "I'll find the thief even if say—no," the last word was very low, his breath had caught in a spasm of boding pain.

Was it possible, that at that mo when he was showing such perfect splendid trust in her, a vision of position, of scoffing friends, of a world's coldness, rose before her dimmed eyes? If it did, it vanished al before she knew that its baseness shadowed her, and she felt that the was well lost for the sake of this who served in an American store. moonlight shone in her eyes as she lo up into his face, and he caught her to heart.

"But my name must be cleared f she said, after half an hour's talk, concerned not a soul in the world themselves. "I will not come to with a shadow on it, sir; and—and— quickly, with a queer little laugh, would be dreadfully awkward for m the story got about before the thief found!"

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CHAPTER XXIV.

Miss Tyrrell had given it to be understood from the first that her wedding was to be a "quiet little affair"; she should allow her brother to give no party, she declared; but she hoped that all her friends would come and say good-bye to her. She had hoped this on two or three hundred printed cards of invitation, and on the afternoon after the garden party, the "quiet little affair" was lining with carriages the street in which the Tyrrells lived, crowding the drawing-room to the verge of suffocation, and filling the staircase with a confused mass of human beings, struggling up to the drawing-room door, where "Lady Ellingham," in a wedding-dress which was to be a revelation of the beautiful to the conventional herd, was receiving her numerous friends.

Lady Ellingham's smile was sweetness itself; Lady Ellingham's affectionate cordiality to all comers was unvarying; but there was the faintest shadow of annoyance about her nevertheless. To the heroine of an occasion it is distinctly annoying to hear another woman's name incessantly on the lips of the crowd assembled to do honour to herself; to know that another woman is the centre of much talk and conjecture, when public attention should be by rights concentrated on the said heroine. And every one of Miss Tyrrell's guests was asking the same question in slightly varied forms. "Where is Miss Malet?" "What an extraordinary thing that Miss Malet is not here!" "Is it true that Miss Malet is not coming?" Selma was not there.

Lady Ellingham had given utterance over and over again, with the utmost suavity, to the explanation she had decided to offer, of what was to her quite as extraordinary and inexplicable a proceeding as any of her guests found it. And when the question was put to her for about the fiftieth time, she was still smilingly regretful.

"I am sorry to say she is not well enough to be here," she said. "I had a little note from her this morning. Dear girl, I am so grieved."

Lady Ellingham did not think it for the public good that she should mention that the little note she had indeed received from Selma that morning had contained no information whatever as to the writer's health, but had said simply, in the fewest possible words, that she could not come to the wedding. Nor did she think it necessary to publish it abroad that the note in question had so astonished and disconcerted her that she had taken it straight to her brother in his study, and had watched his face curiously as he read it.

Tyrrell had glanced through it, and then sat silent for a moment frowning thoughtfully.

"Better say she is ill," he had said, finally, giving the note back to his sister and returning to his work, and Miss Tyrrell had discreetly retired, burning with mixed curiosity and indignation.

The "little affair" went off brilliantly, in spite of Miss Malet's absence. At about half-past four it was hardly possible to move in the drawing-room, on the stairs, or in the tea-room, and Tyrrell at the foot of the staircase, and desirous of putting in an appearance in his drawing-room above, was wondering how he was to do it, when he became aware of Julian Heriot standing against the wall close to him.

"I'm afraid you're wedged in there," said Tyrrell, pleasantly. "How are you?"

"How are you?" returned the other, answering the conventional greeting with its equally conventional response. "Are you proposing to go up those stairs?" glancing up at them with a slight smile as he spoke.

"Well, on the whole, I think not; not this minute at least!" returned Tyrrell, laughing. "Have you been in this corner ever since you arrived, Heriot?"

It was a kind of tiny recess in the hall, into which Heriot had stepped back out of the crowd, and as Tyrrell stood in front of him, letting the clatter of many tongues round them dominate his voice, they were inaudible to every one but each other, and were practically alone in the midst of the crush about them. Heriot did not answer Tyrrell's question. There was a moment's pause between them, and then he said, looking straight before him at the crowded staircase with no alteration of his usual expression:

"Miss Malet is not here to-day, they say!"

"No!" answered Tyrrell. "She has knocked herself up, I'm sorry to say."

"I made a fool of myself yesterday," pursued Heriot, in the same unmoved voice, drowned for all but Tyrrell by the noise of other voices. "I proposed to Miss Malet, and — she refused me, of course." He paused an instant, as though something in the crowd had caught his eye. Tyrrell, completely taken by surprise, waited in silence, eyeing him with eyes that had suddenly grown very hard and cold. "I don't argue from that very natural circumstance that there must inevitably be some one else," Heriot went on; "unless I misunderstood her altogether, she is not—engaged." He had spoken the last words very slowly and deliberately, and he paused and looked Tyrrell straight in the face as he finished. "Don't you think it is time she was?" he said, quietly.

The two men faced one another for a moment, and Tyrrell tried in vain to read the cynical, impassive face before him. Then he said, carelessly, taking the other's words intentionally in the simple sense in which he knew they were not meant:

"Perhaps! But she is younger than she looks, you know. Well, I suppose I must try to get upstairs. See you again!"

He turned away, dismissing Heriot and his words from his mind, until it should be convenient to him to reflect upon them.

He did not understand them, but the present was by no means the time for explanations. He had his duties, as host, to attend to, and he attended to them accordingly with the delightful manner which was one of his greatest social charms. Julian Heriot watched him for a little while moving to and fro in the crowd—he himself best knew how—and then he went away.

That same afternoon Humphrey Cornish, oppressed with a sense that the day was coming when he must take his holiday, which he hated prospectively, and during which he revelled undemonstratively in country sights and sounds, had settled down to follow up a hard morning's work, with two or three hours more of the same kind. He had been alone in the quiet studio for more than an hour, working with concentrated, thoughtful face, so absorbed that he did not even look round when the door opened and shut again softly. He was vaguely conscious that Helen had come in and was sitting now with her needlework in her accustomed place at the other end of the room. As he had been vaguely conscious before of missing her presence, and he had no idea that half an hour had passed since her entrance, when he said, absently, without pausing in his work:

"How is she?"

Helen held her needle suspended in her hand as she lifted her head to answer. She was quite accustomed to Humphrey's ways, and accepted them simply as part of the man she loved when she could not understand them.

"She says her head is better. She didn't open the door, and I hope she was lying down," she answered, softly. "The sun must have been too hot for her yesterday," she added, meditatively, and then there was silence again in the studio as Humphrey continued his work, and Helen bent her head over the little soft white frock she was making for the little Helen. Another half hour passed, and then the silence was broken a second time. There was a man's quick step on the stair, a step which caused Helen to lay down her work with a low exclamation of surprise, as Roger Cornish came into the room.

"Why, Roger!" said Helen, holding out her hand to him, while Humphrey was reconciling himself to the conviction that he was interrupted, "what a surprising time of day to see you!"

Roger was rather flushed, and he shook hands with Helen absently and awkwardly, making no apology, as he usually did, for interrupting his brother's work when Humphrey collected his ideas with an effort and received him with a cordial "Hullo, Roger!" He seemed hardly to hear Helen's words; he replied to her question as to Mervyn's health vaguely and as though his thoughts were preoccupied, and after a few minutes he said, abruptly:

"Helen, don't think me the roughest fellow you know if I ask Humphrey to come downstairs with me. I—I've got some business to talk to him about."

Helen rose, laughing at him pleasantly as she did so.

"Of course, Roger!" she answered. "But you shan't go downstairs. I'm going to see whether Selma is asleep." She left the room as she spoke, and Roger turned sharply to his brother.

"Is she ill?" he said, in a low, quick tone.

"Selma?" answered Humphrey, looking at him. "No—only overtired. What's wrong, Roger? Sit down."

"I can't sit down," returned Roger, vehemently, turning and beginning to pace restlessly up and down the room. "I've come to you, because I've turned over everything, and I can't think of any other way. You're her brother, or the next thing to it, and the only man, I suppose, who has a right to interfere. Humphrey, do you know that she's—talked about?"

The last words came from him hurried and almost muffled, and there was that about them which no man could misunderstand. Humphrey moved suddenly, with a short, sharp exclamation, and then there was a moment's dead silence. It was broken by Humphrey.

"Are you speaking of—Selma?" he said.

Roger had come to a sudden stop as he spoke his last words, and was standing facing his brother, his breath coming very quick and short, his face flushed darkly.

"Yes!" he said, hoarsely. "You know how I felt for her once, Humphrey. You know that she's nothing to me now but an ideal; but, by Heaven, I'd give all I've got—except my wife—for your right to bring that fellow to book!"

The first moment of fierce indignation over, his brother's passion had the effect of bringing Humphrey to a quieter estimate of the case. Dreamer and recluse as he was by temperament, he had far more knowledge of the London world than Roger; and the idea, though it was no less intolerable, was less inconceivable to him than to his brother.

"Who is it?" he said, shortly and sternly.

Roger broke into a fierce, harsh laugh.

"The man she looked upon as a kind of guardian," he said. "The man, of all others, who ought to have kept every breath of scandal from her name. Scandal, good Heavens, and Selma! John Tyrrell!"

Then he told his brother, in short, sharp sentences, of the words he had heard the night before at his club—the words which had been cut short, and turned into a sullen apology, by such a fierce outburst from himself as had reduced the whole roomful to silence.

"Perhaps I made the thing worse by making such a row," he finished, ruefully. "Every one heard, and they'll talk more, confound them! If she should hear, Humphrey! Good Heavens, if she should hear!"

There was no answer, and he turned and began to pace fiercely up and down the room again. Humphrey was sitting with a clenched hand resting on the arm of his chair, and a set, roused expression on his face. He was thinking of the headache which Helen had found so perplexing in her sister that day; and he was thinking that if such shameful gossip had come to Selma's ears, a horsewhip would be a mild instrument with which to approach the man who had been so careless as to render such a catastrophe even remotely possible.

"What's to be done?" demanded Roger, abruptly, pulling up suddenly and facing his brother. Humphrey rose, and his voice, as he spoke, was very stern and resonant.

"I shall see Tyrrell to-night," he said; and Roger, who had wished from the bottom of his heart that it was he and not the impractical Humphrey who stood to Selma in the place of a brother, was reassured by the expression of his brother's face.

Helen was somewhat surprised when she came back to the studio an hour later, thinking that any amount of business might have been discussed in that time, to find Humphrey alone, walking slowly up and down the room with a grave, preoccupied face. She was a little surprised again later in the evening when he told her after dinner that he was going out.

He had determined to go to Tyrrell at the theatre — the only place where he could be sure of finding him—and he sent in a note, asking courteously, but in words which hardly allowed of a refusal, for a few minutes after the performance, and requesting Tyrrell to say nothing to his sister-in-law on the subject. He received in return an equally courteous reply, and accordingly, at a little before eleven o'clock, he was shown into the room where Tyrrell transacted his business, and left there with the information, "Mr. Tyrrell will be off in a minute, if you'll sit down, sir!"

Humphrey did not sit down, however. He stood on the hearth-rug with that instinct that leads a man to take up a position near the fire-place, whether the season is summer or winter, and contemplated the room with stern, unseeing eyes. It was a comfortable-looking room, with a curious, indefinable similarity of character to Tyrrell's study in his own house, though it was very simply furnished. Everything in it was in the same perfect taste. The pictures, all connected in one way or another with Tyrrell's profession, were old and valuable engravings, the writing-table here was only larger than the table which gave the other room its character. But even the engravings did not attract Humphrey's attention, and he was standing very much in the position he had originally taken up, when, a few minutes later, Tyrrell came into the room.

"I hope you've not been waiting," he said, courteously. "We are a few minutes later than usual to-night. Won't you sit down?" Tyrrell was looking remarkably handsome; he was still wearing his stage dress, a dark, picturesque costume, which suited him admirably, and made him look ten years younger than he really was. He waited while Humphrey, with a quiet "Thanks!" took the chair he indicated, and then seated himself, saying with a smile, as he did so:

"I am sorry to say I have had no opportunity of transgressing your injunction as to not letting Miss Malet know of your being here, even if I had wished it. She has overtired herself, I am afraid. I have hardly spoken to her to-night until a few minutes ago. She has been looking so ill all the evening. I hope I shall find her better to-morrow."

"You are coming to see her to-morrow?" said Humphrey.

"She has just asked me to come up to your house to-morrow afternoon," returned Tyrrell, with another smile.

There was a moment's silence. Humphrey was thinking that if Selma had heard of the gossip about, she would hardly have asked Tyrrell to come and see her, and it made his present business simpler in his eyes that it should be between himself and Tyrrell, two men, alone. Tyrrell, considering that quite enough had been said in the way of polite preliminary, was waiting for Humphrey to come to the point of the interview, and his face was quietly attentive and business-like when Humphrey began, sternly:

"It is as Miss Malet's brother that I am here to-night, and my business is not pleasant. I have to ask you, Mr. Tyrrell, whether you are aware of the reports abroad?"

Tyrrell's face changed slightly. He was surprised, but not, on the whole, displeased.

"Reports?" he said, easily. "London is a splendid hot-bed for reports. May I ask you to explain?"

Humphrey looked at him for a moment without speaking. With the words he had heard from Roger in his ears there was something about the careless attitude and manner of the other as he sat, leaning slightly forward, that stirred his indignation to white heat.

"I will explain," he said, his voice ringing with the same strong feeling with which his usually quiet eyes were alight and glowing. And in a few short unsparing sentences he told Tyrrell what Roger had told him.

The words had hardly passed his lips before Tyrrell rose abruptly with a low, fierce exclamation.

"Good Heavens!" he said. "Good Heavens, Cornish!"

Humphrey made no response. The spoken words and their effect upon Tyrrell had brought the situation into vivid relief in his mind, and his force was concentrated in rigid self-control. He sat quite motionless with his clenched hand resting heavily on the table, his face set and his lips compressed. Tyrrell stood with one arm resting on the mantelpiece, half turned away from him, and there was a moment of dead silence.

With all his foresight and knowledge of the world, such a contingency as that with which he was now brought face to face had never occurred to John Tyrrell. Unconsciously to himself, the relationship as master and pupil, which had existed so long between himself and Selma; the semi-guardianship which he had exercised over her; perhaps even to some extent the perfect innocence in Selma herself, which rendered the idea of "talk" in connection with her name absolutely inconceivable, had coloured all his theories and all his schemes. His first instinct as he realised the whole significance of the position, was the natural manly one of burning resentment and indignation, so deep as to hold him absolutely speechless. Julian Heriot's words of that very afternoon flashed into his mind; they were only too comprehensible to him now, and the thought that he and many others had heard the words which Humphrey Cornish had just repeated to him made him clench his teeth fiercely.

Humphrey was the first to master himself. The tide of intolerable anger retreated and left him stern and dignified to the consideration of the present pressing necessity.

"I won't insult my sister," he said, "by saying that I am not here to ask for any explanation from you. We have all been more or less to blame. We should have remembered the possibility of the world's forgetting what we, of course, never forget—that Selma has no older friend than you." Humphrey paused a moment as he realised afresh how unpardonable it was that it should indeed be Selma's oldest friend who had been so careless of her. "The mistake has been made," he resumed; "the present point is to retrieve it as far as may be. The contradiction of the reports lies with you, of course. It must be done effectually and quietly, and it must be done at once. How do you propose to set about it?"

Tyrrell lifted his head slowly, and turned. During the short interval that had elapsed since his first exclamation, his anger had been succeeded by a swift realisation of all the advantages and disadvantages involved in this new turn of events. In his indomitable determination to possess, sooner or later, that for which he had waited so long, and with such relentless self-restraint, there was no instrument which fate could have placed in his hand which he would long have hesitated to use. Things had gone much further than he had intended; his foresight had been less perfect than he imagined; and whether the present circumstances were or were not in his favour was a question he could not decide. But, at least, they brought the crisis. He had heard every word Humphrey had spoken; but his brain had been at work without a second's intermission, and when the moment arrived for him to speak he was prepared.

"Mr. Cornish," he said, slowly, "I am going to tell you what I know will surprise you. This comes more heavily on me than you have any idea of, because I love your sister. I should have asked her long ago to be my wife if I had thought I had a chance with her."

No course of action on Tyrrell's part, no words he could have spoken could have been more electrifying to Humphrey Cornish. Too completely taken by surprise for the moment to find words, he rose to his feet, and as he stood confronting the handsome, resolute face before him, Tyrrell continued and his manner was very dignified and very good:

"I need not tell you how inexpressibly I regret it if any carelessness of mine has given rise to these reports. I need not tell you that I was in complete ignorance of them. Under the circumstances, of course, I shall delay no longer. I shall take my chance with your sister when I see her to-morrow. If she accepts me——" he stopped and then finished quietly; "whether she accepts me or not, you may rely on there being no more reports!"

They looked one another in the face for a moment more, and then with a sense that the ground was cut away from under his feet, that nothing could ever surprise him again, and that there was nothing left for him to do or say, Humphrey held out his hand.

"Thank you," he said, simply; "I should have relied on you in any case. Under the circumstances there is nothing more for me to say, except that I shall hope to congratulate you to-morrow. Good night!"

"Good night!" returned Tyrrell, courteously, "and thank you for your good wishes! To-morrow afternoon!"

COUSIN SARAH.[*]

A COMPLETE STORY.

THE steamship "Sirius" lay off Tilbury ready to start on her long voyage to Australia. Her cargo was all aboard, her crew complete, her steam up. On deck there reigned the calm which precedes the storm caused by the arrival of a crowd of noisy, clamorous, or weeping passengers. But that these were not far off was shown by the appearance of a tiny black speck within the furthest visible reach of the sullen Thames water—a speck which grew rapidly larger and larger, until it resolved itself into a fussy little steam tender, puffing and snorting against the side of the larger vessel as though in haste to be off again. A gangway was thrown out between the two, and over this flowed a stream of human beings, all, apparently, in a great hurry. Fathers, mothers, and their children passed along; then travellers in parties of twos and threes, attended by excited friends; finally, towards the last, a solitary woman, tall and thin, from whose black hat dropped a heavy veil, which partly hid the pallor of her complexion, and the large, dark circles round her eyes. She came on board quite alone, with no one to accompany her on her journey, no one even to bid her God-speed. A forlorn, dismal figure, towards which many pitying eyes were turned as she stood for a moment on the deck, evidently uncertain what to do next.

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[*] See "Mr. Carruthers," ALL THE YEAR ROUND, Third Series, Vol. V., No. 126.

Colonel Markart was one of those who watched her. He turned to his wife, standing beside him.

"My dear, do you see that poor soul yonder in mourning? She looks very careworn and desolate. Could you not say something to comfort her?"

Mrs. Markart's eyes followed the direction of her husband's.

"She has not a very flourishing appearance, certainly, but as for speaking to her, Rowland! Well, she is quite a stranger to me, and—and—does it not seem a little curious that she should have no friends to see her off on such a long voyage? I think it would really be wiser to wait a while. We shall find out more about her in a day or two. No doubt the first thing she will want to do will be to take possession of her berth. Ha! I am right. She has caught a steward, and he is showing her the way downstairs."

And, indeed, the lady was rapidly disappearing inside the deck-house, whence a staircase led to the cabins. Mrs. Markart found plenty of interesting matters to engage her attention, and thought no more about Miss Sarah Gardiner until a week later, when she crawled languidly on deck, where the vast majority of the passengers were now beginning to be able to enjoy themselves. Colonel Markart and his wife, both good sailors, were seated side by side in two comfortable deck-chairs, when the invalid, having tottered as far as her strength would permit, fetched up against the rail close by where they were sitting. Colonel Markart, always chivalrous and impulsive, jumped up directly he noticed her.

"You have been overtasking your strength, I fear," he said, kindly; and indeed Miss Gardiner's ashen face bore testimony to its owner's extreme weakness. "Take my chair, while I go in search of your own. Where shall I find it?"

"I have no deck-chair," replied a weary voice; "I thought they were provided on board; I——"

"They provide camp-stools on board, certainly. But you are not fit to occupy one of those luxurious resting-places. Why, they have neither backs nor arms. Do oblige me by using my chair."

"Oh! I could not deprive you of it," said Sarah, shrinking close up against the rail.

But Colonel Markart had recognised her now for the lady he had already asked his wife to befriend, and would take no refusal. Once in the chair, Sarah Gardiner—Cousin Sarah, as she was always called by her few surviving relatives—sank back with a little contented sigh.

"This is comfortable," she whispered, closing her eyes.

"Of course it is," assented the Colonel, going off himself in search of one of the despised camp-stools.

Mrs. Markart looked on, in not very well-pleased silence, while this little scene was proceeding. But she was really a kind-hearted woman, and the stranger's evident languor soon excited her compassion.

"You do not seem strong," she said, when Sarah opened her eyes and made an attempt to sit up.

"No. I have had so many troubles and anxieties lately. They seem to have undermined my health. One by one I have lost all those dearest to me in the world." Here she gave a sigh of considerable vigour. "I am quite alone now; if you knew what that means, you would pity me."

"I do pity you," declared Mrs. Markart, readily—all the more readily because she had not the least notion of what such a state might be. Colonel Markart, who had returned with his camp-stool, overheard the last words, and looked his sympathy—a look which his wife surprised on its way to Cousin Sarah, and which had the effect of freezing up her compassionate impulses immediately.

When she was once more alone with her husband, she took him to task.

"You seem mightily interested in our fellow-passenger, Rowland," she began. "Now I know much more about the female sex than you do, and I am always suspicious of these women who represent themselves as being left alone in the world. I ask myself whether such isolation is their misfortune or their fault. Generally I find it is the latter."

"You are very severe, Honora," cried her husband. "This poor soul seems to me so utterly inoffensive. What can she have done to offend you?"

"She has not offended me. If I were a man, I should probably think of her as you do. Being a woman—well, I think of her as a woman would think; that is all."

"I hope, my dear, that my sympathies may always be with suffering humanity," retorted the Colonel, grandiloquently.

"With suffering humanity in feminine form! Yes, I dare say they will," remarked Mrs. Markart, some sharpness in her tone. Then she laid her hand on her husband's arm and smiled up into his face. "Meanwhile we won't quarrel over a total stranger," she said.

"You are a better woman than you make yourself out to be, Honora," replied the mollified Colonel.

Now it was one peculiarity of Cousin Sarah's to be guilelessly confiding. Before the journey was half over, her new acquaintances had heard a great deal of her family history, including, of course, the episode of Mr. Carruthers from Miss Gardiner's point of view.

"He was so good, and kind, and noble," she explained, "and so devoted to me. Never had woman a more chivalrous lover. Long, long ago, when we were both young, he asked me to marry him; but his prospects were uncertain, and my father, who was alive then, would not let his only daughter leave him for India with an almost penniless young man. So Fred—that is Mr. Carruthers, you know—sailed alone, and he was away for years, until his wretched health obliged him to return home again. But he had never forgotten me. He sought me out and renewed his offer. Our positions were changed now; for my father had died in debt, and I was a poor, penniless governess, while he was a wealthy man. You can imagine how bright my prospects seemed. The doctors assured me Fred would soon grow strong again, and we waited and waited, patiently at first, then more anxiously, for what never came. The painful suspense told upon me also; but I was able to keep up, and be a comfort to him, until—until——" here her voice quavered, broke, and died away in a little half-strangled sob.

This fragment of autobiography did, at last, rouse Mrs. Markart's interest and sympathy. The Colonel, blowing his nose loudly, muttered something about going to see the log, and marched away out of sight. His wife laid a caressing hand on Sarah's arm.

"Don't tell me any more," she said; "it must be so terribly painful to you. I understand now what you meant when you said you were alone in the world."

Sarah nodded assent.

"These dispensations are very mysterious," continued Mrs. Markart, piously.

Sarah nodded again.

"I do feel for you very much. When one has a good husband oneself, one can comprehend better what you have lost."

Sarah nodded a third time, and then the ladies sat on for a while in silence, taking more pleasure in each other's company than they had ever done before. Henceforth the relations between them grew much less strained, and by the time Melbourne Harbour was reached, Mrs. Markart had so far forgotten her first impressions as to suggest that Cousin Sarah should accompany them ashore, and have the Colonel's assistance with her luggage.

"I have not much of that," said Sarah, with a plaintive little smile. "My doctor ordered me off in such a hurry, that I had no time to buy an outfit—even if I had had the means," she added, softly.

"My dear young lady, you will find all you require in Melbourne," the Colonel assured her. "You told us you had a brother here, and in that you are fortunate. We are only tourists, come to spy out the land, and expect no one to meet us. Tell me what your brother is like, so that I may look out for him."

"I—I—hardly know," stammered Sarah.

Mrs. Markart and her husband exchanged glances at this unexpected announcement, and Cousin Sarah, observing their looks, hastened to explain.

"My brother is much older than I am,

and has been out here so many years. There is a great difference between a lad of twenty and a man of fifty-five."

"To be sure, to be sure," assented the Colonel. "And, if I may be permitted to say so, you will be equally a stranger to him. But you will recognise one another sooner or later, and meanwhile the wife and I will look after you."

"Thank you," murmured Sarah; and after that she sat quite still and passive, while the necessary preparations were made for the passengers to disembark.

But although Colonel Markart waited until nearly all had gone ashore, he could see no one who appeared anxious to make acquaintance with Cousin Sarah. She, on her part, seemed to grow more and more uneasy while stranger after stranger passed her by. At last her discomposure found vent in words.

"He cannot have received my telegram," she said. "I could not write, for my letter would have come by this very steamer. But I have his address. I am sure it will be all right directly."

She drew from the inside of her glove—that most convenient receptacle for odds and ends to flurried women—a crumpled bit of paper, and held it towards the Colonel. He took it, and read the address it bore: "Mr. James Gardiner, 28, Dash Street, Melbourne."

"Why, this is the street where our hotel is," he cried. "You must come with us, my dear lady, and we will set you down as we pass."

Mrs. Markart, who felt really sorry for the forlorn plight of her new acquaintance, cordially seconded the invitation. Sarah, listless and apathetic as usual, quietly accepted it. Mrs. Markart, an alert, energetic little woman, marvelled how she could maintain her equanimity under such trying circumstances. Under no burden of anxiety, she thought, could her spirit have been so entirely subdued. This impression of utter crushedness was indeed the one Cousin Sarah's appearance and manner generally produced. It had served her well before now, and it was to continue to serve her well amid her new surroundings. The cultivation of a cheerful spirit may be commended, but does not always prove so profitable as a dejected demeanour. On men especially does meek helplessness act with great effect; but in Cousin Sarah's case Mrs. Markart also felt moved to sympathy, while the Colonel bustled about with exceeding zeal and many encouraging words. It appeared that in the drive from the quay to the hotel they would have to pass 28, Dash Street, so the cabman was given that address, and told to stop there on his way. When the vehicle drew up, however, it was seen that the house was empty and its windows shutterless, while a huge placard, hanging across the lower ones, announced "This desirable family residence to be let or sold."

"Hey! hey! What's this?" cried the Colonel, when the true state of the case dawned upon him.

Cousin Sarah's face assumed a ghastly pallor. Her indifference entirely forsook her. She looked as though she were about to faint.

"This—this—certainly was his address," she stammered. "Oh! what shall I do, what shall I do?" She buried her face in her hands, and sobbed aloud.

The Colonel was, for the moment, quite nonplussed, but his practical wife came to the rescue.

"Rowland! we must ask Miss Gardiner to be our guest at the hotel for this one night. They will have a directory there, and you will easily find her brother's address. Most likely he has removed to another house, and that would account for his not receiving the telegram. If he was dead, you would have been sure to hear of it." This to Cousin Sarah.

Cousin Sarah stayed her tears, and gratefully accepted the kind offer. One night thus provided for, more might follow. Nothing is more uncertain than apparent certainty, and she knew very well, that it was so long since she had had any tidings of her brother, that he might have left Melbourne for some other place, or even have departed to a better world without her being any the wiser. For it was more than thirty years since the young man had quitted his home, after a violent quarrel with his father, and, excepting the fact that he had married an Australian lady, no one in England knew anything about him. Of all this, however, Cousin Sarah had not informed her new friends, and such plausible explanation as she had hitherto given of her brother's non-appearance had quite satisfied them. Now, both husband and wife began to feel just a little anxious. They had not lived to their time of life without becoming aware that adventurers and adventuresses abound in the world, and that the latter especially are to be dreaded. Once in their own room at the hotel, Mrs. Markart suggested that it would be desirable to institute immediate enquiries after the missing brother, and at the earliest possible moment her husband, who quite agreed with her, went off in search of a directory. He returned to his ladies in the drawing-room with the book open in his hand, and an expression of extreme perplexity on his face.

"I fear I bring you bad news, Miss Gardiner," he began, "but I cannot find your brother's name anywhere in this work. There are two ladies, Miss Sophia and Miss Anna Gardiner, living at 12, Belle Vue, wherever that may be, and as there seems no one else more likely to be your relatives, perhaps we had better seek them out."

Sarah shook her head decidedly.

"They cannot belong to me," she said.

"But, if you remember, you told us your brother was married," observed Mrs. Markart. "If—if—as seems probable, anything has happened to him, may not these be his daughters? At any rate it is our duty to enquire."

Cousin Sarah began another feeble protest. She was exhausted by her long journey. She needed a few days' rest before undergoing any fresh anxiety. By-and-by she would feel stronger, and better able to face strangers. The soft-hearted Colonel, looking at her pallid face, felt inclined to let the matter drop for a few days, and allow the stranger to live in peace as his guest. But Mrs. Markart negatived this at once.

"If you suggest any such thing, Rowland, we shall never get rid of her. I believe I am growing suspicious again. Besides," observing her husband about to protest, "I really want you all to myself, you dear old fellow. Now promise me you will find out where Belle Vue is, from the people here, and let us deposit Miss Gardiner there before lunch-time to-morrow."

"But suppose these ladies turn out to be no relatives of hers?"

"In that case we shall go up the country to-morrow afternoon," said the little lady, decidedly.

So then the Colonel knew there was no help for it, and next morning it was intimated to Miss Gardiner that he would be ready to escort her at half-past eleven. It was Mrs. Markart who explained the arrangement, and Cousin Sarah was acute enough to perceive that any further objections would be raised in vain. So she put on her most depressed and submissive air, until the Colonel really began to feel as though he were a wicked tyrant ordering a poor captive off to execution. His wife saw the softening in his face, and thereupon announced her intention of accompanying them—for a drive.

"I can sit in the carriage, and look about me, Rowland, while you deliver Miss Gardiner," she remarked, with a bright little laugh. But her husband knew what this meant, and felt that under no circumstances whatever was Cousin Sarah to be allowed to re-enter the vehicle.

No. 12, Belle Vue, was one of a row of small houses, just like dozens of the same kind in England. The front windows all looked on to a narrow street, the back ones on to dull little yards, so that the name appeared somewhat of a misnomer, unless the tenants preferred the study of mankind to that of nature. Colonel Markart rang the bell, and disappeared within the narrow doorway. He came back presently, looking as though relieved from a great anxiety.

"It seems all right, Miss Gardiner," he said. "The ladies must be your nieces. At any rate their father bore the same name as your brother, and hailed from the same part of England, too. And they remember him talking about a sister, much younger than himself. You had better go in; they will be pleased to see you."

Mrs. Markart shook hands upon that with a few pleasant words of good-bye. The Colonel helped Cousin Sarah to alight, and carried her bundle of rugs up the path for her. At the door, he thrust his hand into his pocket and pulled out a piece of paper, which, when he shook hands with her, he pressed into her palm.

"You — you — perhaps you will allow me," he stammered. "You—you—told me—that is——"

There words failed him, but Cousin Sarah was evidently not going to take offence, as the poor gentleman seemed to fear. Her fingers closed over the bank-note.

"You are very, very kind," she said. "I mentioned long ago that I was not a wealthy woman, and I am not ashamed to accept help in my poverty. Thank you."

Then she vanished through the door, and Colonel Markart returned alone to the cab.

"All's well that ends well," he said, with a sigh of relief.

"We will make sure it ends well by leaving Melbourne this afternoon. We can see the city when we return here to catch the steamer home," replied Mrs. Markart, in happy ignorance of the parting present of that ten-pound note.

While Cousin Sarah was walking up the narrow path leading to the door of No. 12, Belle Vue, she made up her mind what she must do. Nothing more was evidently to be expected from Colonel and Mrs. Markart. It was therefore her manifest duty to cultivate her newly found relations. The exterior of their establishment did not promise great riches, but to a woman with but a few shillings in her purse, beside the ten-pound note just given her, very little in the way of accommodation was better than none at all. Her travelling companions would have been amazed, therefore, could they have beheld the effusive way in which Cousin Sarah embraced her nieces, and enquired into their family history. That their father had been her brother was speedily established, and she sat between them, holding a hand of each in her deep sympathy, while they gave the details of his last illness, and told how his death had obliged them to seek a less expensive home, and forced the younger sister to eke out their income by an engagement as daily governess.

"You poor, dear things!" cried Cousin Sarah, who until half an hour ago had not been aware that she possessed any nieces. "How glad I am I have found you! Now your struggles are over, for I shall soon have enough and to spare for all of us."

And then she proceeded to give an account of Mr. Carruthers, just as she had done to Colonel Markart, only she now added a little to her tale.

"When dear Fred's papers were examined, it was found that he had left a will, leaving me the greater part of his fortune. Naturally, his relations were somewhat annoyed, though, if they had only reflected for a moment, they would have seen that it was entirely my consideration which had prevented me having a right to all Mr. Carruthers possessed. Indeed, by his own wish, I should have married him directly he returned from India. But my health was delicate, and I did not think it right to inflict upon him an invalid wife. So here I am, left alone in the world, with only you girls belonging to me."

The three women pressed closer together, and indulged in a little sympathetic weeping. Then Sarah took up her tale again.

"Of course, what with one anxiety and another, my health did not improve, and the doctors at last advised me to try a long sea voyage. I thought immediately of your father, who had certainly the first claim to share my good fortune. I have come too late to cheer him"—here a little half-stifled sob—"but I feel that you, dear Sophia and Anna, will console and sustain me. I was not wanted in England for the present; indeed, as my lawyers assured me, so many cruel things are being said about me, I am better away. By-and-by we may return there together—when matters are settled."

"But—but—won't that cost a great deal?" ventured the elder of the sisters, who had always had more experience of the want of money than of its possession.

"Oh! there will be plenty for all of us," said Cousin Sarah, loftily. And her nieces were only too thankful to take her at her word.

So the younger one gave up her daily engagement, in order to devote herself to waiting upon the rich relative, who was shortly to make life so easy to the struggling sisters. A servant was hired, and empty houses inspected. But it was difficult to find one exactly suitable, and meanwhile Sarah's health visibly failed, until it became necessary to call in a doctor.

"Why, she is in the last stage of consumption," he said, after he had examined his patient. "I am sorry to tell you so abruptly, Miss Gardiner; but if your aunt has any affairs to settle, she should do so at once."

"I believe her affairs are all settled. My aunt is a lady of considerable fortune, which we inherit from her."

"I am very glad to hear that," remarked the doctor kindly, for he had long known and been sorry for the improvident Englishman's daughters. "Then you can get her all necessary luxuries. I was not quite sure about ordering them."

"We should certainly wish my aunt to have everything suitable," said Miss Anna, quite with an air of possession. But though it was easy to say so, it speedily became rather difficult to find the wherewithal to pay for the wine and delicacies which the doctor now felt himself at liberty to prescribe. The sisters received plenty of kind words and promises from their aunt, and spent many pleasant hours assisting her to build splendid castles in the air about their future. But the present went unprovided for, until clamorous tradespeople made it imperative to find some ready money. After many consultations, it was resolved to lay the state of things before the invalid, who could certainly have had no idea of her nieces' pecuniary anxieties, or she would have come to their rescue, as their visitor and future benefactor; they felt it was a delicate step they were about to take, but necessity knows no law, and capricious Fortune herself seemed to favour them.

One morning the postman brought a letter to No. 12, Belle Vue, addressed to Miss Gardiner, Post Office, Melbourne, and asked whether it was for any one there. The letter manifestly came from England, where Sophia and Anna had no correspondents, and where even their father seemed to have had none during the last years of his life. But Cousin Sarah was, they knew, expecting to hear from her lawyers, and to receive remittances from them. Might not this seared and smeared envelope contain the cheque which should deliver them from all their anxieties? Eager and excited, they carried it up to her room, for the invalid, who suffered much from bad nights, never left her bed until midday. She said at once that the letter was for her, she knew the handwriting; and Sophia and Anna propped her comfortably up with pillows, and discreetly retired to the window while she read it. They did not wish her to think them curious. But most curious they were, nevertheless, and as soon as the rustle of paper told them the sheets were being folded up once more, they came forward to the side of the bed, and began to explain their pressing necessities.

Sarah listened quietly to all they had to say. The hectic flush on her cheek grew a little more vivid, her eyes a little brighter, that was all.

"I am so sorry, so very sorry," she said. "But courage, my dears, courage. I have news here from England," laying her thin hand upon the newly arrived letter. "The will is proved, and by the next mail I expect to receive my remittances. Have you no friends who would help you until then?"

Her nieces looked at one another.

"If you are quite sure," Sophia began, hesitatingly.

"Sure! Of course I am sure!" cried the invalid, with more vigour than her evident state of prostration could have led any one to expect.

"Then, my sister and I have been thinking we might venture to use our small savings to meet present liabilities. They are not large—just enough to pay our funeral expenses, you know, and——"

Cousin Sarah interrupted the speaker by a ghastly laugh.

"Funeral expenses!" she cried, in a shrill, strained voice. "Those certainly never need providing for. They may be safely left to our friends. Some one is sure to bury us. Ha! ha! ha!"

Then, seeing the horror depicted on the listeners' countenances at her unseemly levity, she added quite calmly, and in her ordinary tone:

"My dears, it will be all right. You may safely use your reserve fund. But I did not dream I was such a burden upon you. You should have told me sooner. Now let me go elsewhere. I dare say Providence will raise up some good Samaritan to care for me until I hear again from England."

To this, however, the nieces would by no means consent. They were certainly not going to commit the mistake of killing the goose which was to lay them such golden eggs. By the time their own funerals arrived, no doubt hearses, and plumes, and flowers could be amply provided. The few pounds they had scraped together with such difficulty, would suffice to keep the wolf from the door until the next mail arrived. So a more luxurious little repast than usual was prepared for Cousin Sarah's midday meal, and the sisters felt they were acting wisely. When they went into the invalid's room later in the afternoon, they found her writing a letter.

"I have been thinking over what you told me, dears," she said. "And lest there should be any unforeseen delay about legal matters, I am sending for your grandfather's plate, which was left to me, and saved from the wreck of his affairs, to be despatched at once. It is stored now in London. But if the worst comes to the worst, it will be easy to turn it into money, and, anyway, you inherit it after me, and may as well have it in your possession. If I had known I should find two such dear nieces here, I would have brought it out with me."

"Oh, aunt, you are too good—too kind," sobbed the grateful and gratified nieces in chorus.

"No, no, children," said Sarah, who frequently stood upon the dignity of her age. "You are the only members of my own family left to me. It is my duty and my pleasure to do what I can for you."

For she knew now that not many weeks of life remained to her; yet, as the days passed by, even these seemed likely to lengthen out too long. The little hoard was spent, and still neither remittances nor plate arrived, while the invalid grew weaker and weaker, and needed ever increasing care. It became a question at last whether the patient or the pence would hold out longest. One day, when she appeared a little stronger than usual, some hint of the extremity was given to Cousin Sarah.

"Take my purse—all—all—I have," she gasped, in a faint, broken voice.

In the purse were five golden sovereigns. The day that the last of these was broken into she died.

Time went on. No box of plate arrived, or was ever heard of; but a letter addressed to Miss Sarah Gardiner did. Her nieces opened and read it.

"87, Connaught Square,
"London.

"MADAM,—I cannot imagine what you mean by forwarding me a paltry five-pound note in satisfaction, as you say, of my just claims. You assured me that, if I would wait until you reached your wealthy relatives in Australia, I should be paid in full. I have waited with most disappointing results. Unless I hear from you by the next mail, I shall take steps to inform your friends of my claims upon you, and shall also bring them into the law courts.

"Yours obediently,
"THOMAS BROWN."

"Whatever does this mean?" cried Sophia Gardiner, in much dismay.

"Some villain is trying to threaten our poor dear aunt. Most likely he is an emissary of Mr. Carruthers's family. She said they were furiously angry at her inheriting under his will. It is a cruel shame; but we can only be thankful the letter did not come to trouble her last hours. It must be answered at once."

Thus Miss Anna, who in these funereal days was giving herself all the airs of an heiress. Her elder sister was more prudent.

"Perhaps the best way will be to send it to our aunt's lawyers. Do you know their address?" she asked.

"N-o," said Anna, and then it suddenly occurred to both sisters that, as Miss Gardiner's nearest relatives and representatives, they were entitled to look over her papers. Among them the lawyers' address was certain to be found. They failed to discover it, however, but they came upon something else, even more important, a letter directed to Miss Sarah Gardiner, Post Office, Melbourne, presumably the one she had declared to come from her lawyers, for no other had she been known to receive, and no other was found among her few belongings. It ran thus:

"87, Connaught Square,
"London.

"DEAR MADAM,—You told me I should hear from you as soon as you reached Australia. Your ship was duly telegraphed, and I have allowed time for two return mails to arrive, as I was loth unduly to press you. Neither of these mails has brought me any tidings. I should be glad to hear without further delay, as it is entirely owing to my assistance and pecuniary help that you are in your present satisfactory position. You will remember that when first I promised to assist you in palming an imaginary Mr. Carruthers off upon your Yorkshire relatives, you agreed to give me half of all the money the fiction gained you. I was aware of your own slender circumstances, and feared there might be some risk attending our proceedings. But you were already owing me money which I saw no chance of having repaid without making an extraordinary effort. Your health was also failing, and unless some fresh means of stimulating your friends' affection could be devised, you were not likely to receive much more help from them. In fact, you had tired them out as you had tired me. But the prospect of such a brilliant match as that with Mr. Carruthers was, you assured me, quite enough to open their purse-strings, for you were well aware of their liberality in the matter of wedding presents, which, under your circumstances, would be likely to take the form of cheques. I allowed myself to be persuaded, I agreed to personate Mr. Carruthers, to write you letters in his name, to send presents purporting to come from him, to arrange with a florist to supply you with flowers during your Yorkshire visit. All this I faithfully performed. Suddenly you return to London and announce that your fraud is on the point of being discovered, and you must leave England at once. Again I present my little account. You implore me to grant you time, and again I allow myself to be persuaded. I do more. I permit you to occupy your old rooms in my house, and I help you to make arrangements for your hurried journey. You leave me, protesting that my kindness shall not go without its reward. But no reward comes, and I apply to the florist to know how he has fared. He, wise man, has sent his little bill to the address given him in Yorkshire, and has had it paid without a single question being asked. For reasons you can understand, I am debarred from taking a similar course. You seem to have forgotten our bargain, but I have not, and I must request a remittance at once. Kindly forward it by the next mail.

"Yours obediently,
"THOMAS BROWN."

Thus it was made manifest that Mr. Carruthers, the expected fortune, and the family plate were alike mythical. Cousin Sarah, simple as she looked, had taken in all her relatives.

About this time, Colonel and Mrs. Markart found themselves once more in Melbourne with a few days to spare before their steamer sailed. These they employed in seeing the city, and in the course of their peregrinations they came past 28, Dash Street.

"See, my dear," said the Colonel, pausing before the neglected-looking habitation, "this house is still to let, and it has grown none the cleaner during our absence."

"I wonder what became of Miss Sarah Gardiner," observed Mrs. Markart. "Did she ever find her brother, and where is she now? I should rather like to find out."

They were soon to know, for in the local evening paper, Colonel Markart pointed out the following announcement among the deaths, to his wife:

"September 30th, at No. 12, Belle Vue, Sarah Gardiner, only daughter of the late James Gardiner, Esq., of Highfield, Clapham, near London, aged forty-five. Deeply regretted."

It is almost needless to say that her nieces had inserted the paragraph before they found Mr. Brown's letter.

SKETCHES IN THE SCILLIES.

AT Penzance the other day I asked casually about the Scilly Islands, as if they were a sort of St. Kilda, inhabited by people absurdly superstitious in the matter of influenza, and dependent rather upon the courtesy of passing ships than upon trade and their own fertility. I could not more lamentably have displayed my ignorance.

"Why, sir, they be as nice and kind a folk as you'd like to see," exclaimed the Newlyn fisherman whom I accosted on the subject.

"And are there hotels?"

"Indeed and there be. But don't you go to any such ridiculous places as them. I've heard say they make you pay one-and-six just for the waiting—every day, you mind. And the rest in the same way. Tell me, sir, have you a mind to go to they?"

"To they?"

"To them there islands, sir?"

"Well, I really don't know; it is quite possible."

"Very good. Then I'll just write down the name of an honest man whose house you shall go to, and he and his missus will be as proud of you as can be, and stuff you with clotted cream."

"Oh, as for that, I do not care so much for clotted cream."

"And the best fish in the market, sir."

"Well, well——"

To cut our talk short, I accepted the old fellow's scrap of paper, and went on my way.

The next day at three o'clock I went aboard the "Lady of the Isles," and in four hours I was set ashore at St. Mary's, the chief town of the Scillies, in a gale of wind so strong that I had to clutch my hat to keep it from careering in front of me.

It had not been at all a nice passage. The boat is a little one, with insufficient accommodation for passengers. Most of what space was at our disposal was equally at the disposal of a number of fish-buyers, with hundreds of stale fish-baskets. From these proceeded a perfume which was not sweet.

Then the sea was distinctly choppy, and the little steamer pitched desperately. In fact, nearly every one was ill, and we did not feel much affection towards the low, black rocks which at about seven o'clock began to declare themselves before us, behind, and in the midst of the uproarious south-western sea.

For the first night I did not heed my Newlyn friend's introduction, especially as it was addressed to a native of one of the other islands. Not for a considerable bribe would I have crossed the three miles of waterway which kept me aloof from his house; nor would the St. Mary's boatmen have undertaken the task with such weather in their teeth—or at least not without an expensive stipulation.

A crowd of blue-jerseyed Scillonian fisherfolk and two or three visitors met us on the pier, with critical expressions in their eyes. It is so charming to stand on firm land and behold the sallow faces of the seasick. That, at any rate, is what they seemed to be saying within them. And a man must be philosophic to the crown of his head if he can endure this sort of thing without a feeling of irritation.

In two minutes, however, I was in a little avenue of diminutive palm-trees beyond a high iron gate, and with the cheerful lights of an hotel in front. It is a cosy house, this of Tregarthen's; and none the worse for its low rooms and cramped passages. For a good many years it was the property of one Captain Tregarthen, who for long had charge of the steamer plying between Penzance and the isles. But now he has retired to the churchyard, and his daughters reign in his stead. Tregarthen's is a byword in Scilly. It calls up in Scillonian mind a picture of a hale, genial old seaman, in whom sociability was strongly developed.

There were four guests here, all as red as turkey-cocks. They were delighted with the island; everything, from the garden to the clotted cream, was admirable. They had had the most charming weather, and now their holiday was at an end.

The next day saw the last of them in Scilly. They travelled back in the storm, which still held, and if the captain of the "Lady of the Isles" may be credited, they are not likely soon to forget their passage.

This first day also I stayed in St. Mary's, and also another day. It was furious weather. I could not move out without being pelted by rain-storms; and on the southern coast the sea ran scores of feet high. For a while I enjoyed the spectacle of Pellinius Head and Porthellick Bay — sometimes called Hell Bay — with their squadrons of waves roaring upon the rocks; but it grew tiresome after a while.

The little harbour of the town was thick with luggers, all huddled together out of the way of the wind. Now and again another would come into sight, between the Isle of Samson or Tresco and St. Mary's, and, after much jostling, creep into smooth water, and drop her anchor rejoicing.

In the streets of the little town fishermen from Cornwall lolled about with the Scilly fishermen at the street corners, or looked forth periodically from the door of the "Atlantic" public-house to see if the breeze was abating. But it did not abate for about sixty hours, until, in fact, I among others had grown out of patience with it. I wanted to see the islands across the water, and wanted also to set foot on them. But the storm haze was so thick that it hid them wholly; and the satisfaction I could get upon the gorsy downs of St. Mary's was not enough to content me.

During this time of detention I walked round and across the large island more than once. It is but about eight miles in circumference. The surface is broken, though not excessively. Nowhere does the land reach two hundred feet in elevation. Here and there farmsteads nestle in the depressions, with such shelter of orchards and hedges as fifty or a hundred years' growth affords them. Until I saw these trees, I might have fancied myself in the bleak, treeless isles of the Faroes. But in Faroe they cannot rear anything of the kind to a greater height than two or three feet. Nor do they dream of the acres of daffodils and narcissi, not to mention arum lilies, which here add considerably to the profit of island farming.

The island has only twelve or thirteen hundred inhabitants. Most of these live in the little capital, and their neat, whitewashed houses, with gardens in front of them, tell of the civilised spirit within them. But the remotest farms are fully as interesting as the town. These are generally in the possession of families established here many a day, hard-working, keen-witted people, with a good deal of originality about them.

The stranger who does not mind facing the farm dogs may almost be sure of a rough sort of welcome in these houses. One day I ate bread and cream with the lady of the house and drank milk, at her invitation, while she told me of the storms of the past winter, and the snow of March which had come to startle the children, so unused to such a visitation. There was a dense hedge of esculonia macrantha close to the window outside, and short, sturdy apple-trees also in hearty bloom. But spite of this buttress the gale bellowed into the old farm and made dolorous music in the passages. My hostess, however, gabbled on about the weather and the crops, unheeding the riot. She had done well with flowers that spring. Covent

Garden and the manufacturing towns of the Midlands and the North seem to have an inexhaustible appetite for the narcissi and lilies of these little islands.

Spite of the storm, too, the "Lady of the Isles" went to and fro with fish and fish baskets, and also took a good cargo of flowers to the mainland. Thursday is the great day of export for the daffodils and narcissi. The growers arrive early in the morning, from the country and the other islands, with their various boxes and postal parçels. In the window of the bookseller's shop in the first square of the town there is a telegram from Birmingham or Covent Garden, with the market quotations for the flowers. Here the men collect, and reckon up the worth of their merchandise. Not infrequently from a single homestead ten pounds' value of narcissi goes off in a single day. They reach the markets fresh on Friday afternoon, in readiness for the Saturday sale.

On the second day of the storm there was a festival in St. Mary's. Children dressed in daffodils and girdled with lilies assembled in the town; and the fishermen and their long-limbed boys formed a loose circle round about them. The children went from house to house, singing old-time songs, and blushing strenuously from their conspicuousness. They came also to the hotel, where they beautified the little palm avenue, and enjoyed the refreshment with which we regaled them.

I think I got the most lusty impressions of the Scillies during this time by periodically climbing the hill behind the hotel, and looking north and south from its summit. It is not much of a climb: one hundred and twenty-eight feet above the sea-level only. But the wind tore over the hill as if it were in the very course of a hurricane. Hereon too is the old fort of Scilly, which was built in the reign of Queen Elizabeth. It does one good to see such a stout little bit of work; and no doubt it was well able to give an account of itself to any Spanish ship which came within range of its guns. The lower headlands also are fortified; though truly the tongues of granite which run from them are as terrible to ships as many guns.

On this hill is a signal tower, set in the heart of the rabbit-haunted gorse. The wind shrieked about it, as if it longed to tear it away, root and crop. But there is little jerry-built work in Scilly, and it will weather many a worse storm than this.

Twice or thrice there was a break in the haze, when I was fighting my way amid the fortifications of Garrison Hill. I saw as far as Agnes in one direction, and Samson, Bryher, and Tresco in another direction. But the spectacle was not soothing. Under the murky sky the faint outlines of the islands took strange shape, and I could have fancied they were so many fabulous krakens speeding towards the devoted town of St. Mary's.

At night, however, ever and anon the glare of the lamp of the Agnes lighthouse shone through the gloom. There was also a slip of a moon, which the clouds alternately hid and exposed. A wild sea for them both to illumine provided me with a sufficiently strong picture to take to my bed.

Although it was mid May, I sat by a fire of coals in my hotel room in the evening, when, having dined, I was alone with my reflections and such literature as I could find. It seemed unnatural for Scilly, seeing that here the winter temperature is not so very much below that of Nice, with much less violent mutations. But the Misses Tregarthen did not pretend to apologise for their native climate. The snow of March last had broken local faith in the weather. It was possible that the islands might run out of coal, seeing that they do not usually reckon to have more than a steamer load or two in the autumn, direct from Cardiff. This suffices for ordinary winters. I expected to find the stuff as dear here as in London. But it was only about twenty-four shillings a ton, all told, though of somewhat indifferent quality. When I mentioned the peat on their hills as a possible resource of fuel, the idea was received with due honour as a welcome novelty.

But all things and events come to an end with time; and so, on the third day, I awoke to find the sea from my bedroom window only just throbbing under the effects of its late perturbation. It was a lovely morning, with more blue sky than cloud above, and yet enough of the latter to enamel the island shapes with their fleeting purple shadows.

Straightway went I to my boatman, and bade him get ready to take me to Agnes. But he met me, poor fellow, with a long face.

He had been requisitioned by the coroner to carry him across in state to "sit upon a corpse," which had come ashore in the night. It was not a piece of work he cared about, especially as it entailed the duties of undertaker and sexton also. But there was no help for it. These are the kinds of unexpected "jobs" which are constantly exacting attention in the Scillies. One day it is a wreck; there will be rocket play, some heroic efforts made, and a week later the Crown authorities are busy with their salvage accounts. This is excellent for the Crown. But when the dead drift up from the sea, the Crown does not think of paying for the expense of their interment. Oh dear, no! It is concerned with the living, not the dead. The islanders themselves must bear the expense. And so they do, though they feel under no compulsion not to grumble mightily when they pay the levies for the purpose. The Crown takes the ha'pence, and the islanders get the kicks of the fickle Atlantic.

Nevertheless, I reached Agnes easily enough. Another boatman, with his boys, Charlie and Tom, carried me across the Sound deftly in the teeth of a strong tide. It is only a couple of miles, but they are sometimes difficult miles to get through. There are also snags in the way, which at low water are dangerous to small boats as well as great ships.

Agnes, or Hagness, as it was called in the reign of Richard the First, is about four miles in circumference, with a rugged coast, which on its southern side is more than rugged. Its population is under a hundred and fifty. The people grow potatoes and flowers, and keep cows and poultry. These, with the fish of the sea, are, I suppose, a sufficiency of the raw material for a livelihood.

This is the worst island of the five inhabited ones of the Scillies for wrecks. The black reefs south and west of it have been the death of hundreds of ships. Seen from the gorse of Agnes, they are mere jagged points in the Atlantic. On a calm day they do not appear so very ferocious, though even then there is like to be a girdle of surf round them. But one may imagine how different it is in a tearing south-wester, and in a mist which hides the light of Agnes, as well as the more distant lamps of the Bishop.

I was much impressed by the ship fragments which lay about the granite rocks of the Bay of St. Warna, here in Agnes. They told me their history, which was, of course, mere disaster, with details more or less appalling. The lighthouse keeper also sighed as he talked of the terrors of the Archipelago.

In the old days, it is said the Hagness islanders prayed by a certain well in the strand of this bay. They besought St. Warna—a holy personage of whom I know nothing more—that she would send them plenty of wrecks. I imagine she has never been loth to humour them. The well still exists, though it has been filled up by the more virtuous moderns of Agnes. I sat by it and looked out upon the blue hearty sea, when I had dispossessed some sheep of the adjacent turf. But though I conjured St. Warna to tell me a little about herself, she declined to oblige me. The blue waves broke upon the blackened boulders, and cast their spray inland, and the gulls shrieked as if they yearned for another storm.

Hence, from the higher ground, I gazed, too, at the Bishop lighthouse, about four miles distant. This is a wonderful construction, about thirty years old. The four men who have it in charge cannot stretch their legs, except on a narrow balcony, over which the sea often breaks with mighty force. It is no joke to journey to the rock upon which it stands, and it is perilous to attempt to land inside the lighthouse. Provisions and men go up by pulley, and, as may be supposed, accidents frequently happen.

For three months at a time, the Bishop lighthousemen keep on duty. Then they get four weeks' leave, and well they must appreciate it. I regret I did not accept an offer of escort to this lighthouse; a relief boat happened to be going thither the day I was on Agnes. I should then have been able to say whether the four lightmen were whist-players. But even if they were, the succession of day and night duty would necessarily interfere with the propriety of the game.

Grim needle rocks seem to me the chief feature of the most significant part of Agnes.

There is no hotel on this island. I ate a painful luncheon of bread and cream, with a glass of skimmed milk, in the house of one of the oldest inhabitants. Unfortunately the master was away, and his poor wife, whom I petitioned, was so very deaf that it cost me all my appetite to give her a hint of my wishes. Naturally she was flustered by a visitor; and yet it was not altogether my fault, for I had been recommended to her.

This same house keeps a supply of brandy, to be administered only in case of strict need. There is no license to sell strong drink here. One can fancy that now and then, after a more than common wrestle with the sea, an Agnes man may be excused if he pleads a masterful colic as a pretext for a thimbleful of cognac.

In the main, though, no doubt, the restriction works well in the lesser isles. The people are sober, hardworking, and well-to-do. They have a surprising number of pounds in the banks, and every year, thanks to the flower industry, they add to their savings.

In the evening we returned to St. Mary's again, with the tide against us. The sun set rosily in the west, and ere I went to bed, there was an enchanting streak of moonlight on the placid water between St. Mary's and Tresco, where I hoped to be ere another twenty-four hours had sped.

I was not this night, as heretofore, heedful to keep my candle from glimmering upon an ill-done picture of a wreck on the wall above my chest of drawers. It seemed to me I had got into the midst of the brighter moods of the Scillies, and I meant to make the most of them.

With a wind three-quarters astern, we had nothing to grumble about the next morning when we set out for Tresco—the island upon which Colonel Smith, the Lord of the Isles, has his residence. It was rather a light breeze than a wind; but it served our purpose famously. The little boat made but one tack, and we ran into the green shallows in the middle bend of Samson, and I was able to leap ashore.

Samson is the nearest large island to St. Mary's, though large may only be applied relatively to an island but one hundred and fifty acres in area. From St. Mary's it looks quite pretty, being shaped rather like an egg-boiler, if you can imagine it laid on its side. Its waist is pinched so tightly that were the land here not several feet above the sea-level, one may be sure the Atlantic would soon cut through it and turn the island into two. Each of the extremities is a hill, granite rocks one upon another, with ferns, and gorse, and heather, and grass among the rocks. A few sheep and cows are the sole residents in Samson.

Fifty years ago this island had thirty inhabitants. Their houses still stand to witness for them: stout little buildings of granite, well sheltered against the wind. But when the Archipelago was leased by the first of the family who still hold it, this gentleman made divers radical changes in the social and other conditions of the islands; and among other changes was the depopulation of Samson. The residents were transferred to one of the other larger islands, where their children might more readily be taught their letters, and they might be within easy reach of a church.

It cannot have been a heart-breaking business, this compulsory migration from Samson. We do not hear that the people revolted against the decree. Probably they were as ready to leave the forlorn little island as the Governor could wish.

Yet in the old times Samson must have been thought worth human notice. Its northern extremity has a group of fine barrows or ancient tombs, not matched for their condition by any others in the isles. Certain human remains found in 1862 in one of the barrows prove that they had been subjected to partial cremation. One can only conjecture about the origin of these early inhabitants. They may have been many centuries antecedent to the Cornish Celts of the period of the Roman conquest.

Passing from Samson, we caught a breeze which soon took us across to Bryher, the next island. Luckily the tide was high, or we might have stranded fast in the passage. During exceptional tides, the water is so shallow between several of the isles that it may be forded about knee deep.

Bryher is a much more lively island than Samson. It is about three miles round, with a very diversified coast-line. In places, as at Shipman Head, in the north, it is as cold and repellent for vessels as Pellinius itself. Elsewhere its shores are flat and winding, and so double upon each other that from above they look like the boundaries of two or three petty lagoons. The little white-faced cottages studded about the green meadows by the waterside look very tranquil and charming.

Not so, however, are the islets to the north-west of this pleasant little cove. Some of these are very bold, especially Maiden Bower, upon which the crags are piled in the form of a castle. Even on this comparatively quiet day, the Atlantic heaved into surf against the granite bases of these rocks; and small assurance was requisite to make one realise their terrors for ships during a night of storm and fog.

It was in this part of the Archipelago that in December, 1885, an American steamer got ashore in the night. Fortunately her crew were all saved. But of her cargo no fewer than one hundred and thirty-three dead bullocks were washed up on to the islands to distress the Scillonians. It would not have mattered so much if they had been in eatable condition. As it was, they were only fit to be buried out of sight with all speed; and this had to be done at the cost of about a sovereign apiece, which the islanders themselves had to bear.

Since then some slight improvement has been made in the management of such matters. When the islanders can ascertain the name of the owners of the vessel which thus—though involuntarily—puts them to so much inconvenience, they make a claim upon them. One may suppose that it is a claim that will be resisted in many cases; but when salvage is at hand as a sort of pledge, with the aid of the Crown they may, to a certain extent, if not altogether, enforce their claim.

About a hundred people get a livelihood on Bryher. They do not, I fancy, work very hard, except when they are out at sea. I found most of them idling in their little crafts, with their hands in their pockets. A visitor was something to be stared at. One little boy who was flying a kite—apparently as much for the diversion of his elders as himself—was so startled that he forgot his toy, which suddenly turned tail upwards and shot down at his feet.

Bryher has a little church of its own, which dates from 1742. It is a thick-walled, square-towered little building, to the eye quite devoid of sentiment. But its nearness to the sea must at times make service a difficulty in it. There is a sounding-board over its pulpit, which is no doubt necessary during a winter's gale. Of ornament there is here hardly any. The floor is slated, and the simple pews are slate-coloured. A surplice hanging in the little vestry was the sole relic of humanity present. There is no resident clergyman, the minister of Tresco crossing for one service on Sundays.

I like to mark the local tone of the epitaphs upon the tombstones in churchyards like this of All Saints', Bryher. The allusions to the sea and the storms are homely, eloquent touches, which appeal as much to the stranger as to the residents themselves. Take this, for example, over a man of ninety-six.

Though I've been where billows roar,
Still, by God's help, I'm safe on shore;
And now I'm here among the fleet,
Waiting for Jesus Christ to meet.

One might be disposed to cavil at the word "fleet," as applied to this old gentleman of Bryher. He, at any rate, seems to have been in no hurry to quit this mortal sphere. But there is no knowing exactly how he meant it to be taken. As a marine rhyme only may it have attracted him.

Here is another on the same subject, which, somewhat varied, I found in the other churchyards of the islands also:

Our brother the haven hath gain'd,
Outflying the tempest and wind.

Is there not a brevity and pictorial force here that is almost remarkable? To me it seems so.

It must not, however, be supposed that all the islanders live to anything like the age of the above-mentioned native of Bryher. Many of them are drowned at sea—not necessarily in their own waters, but as sailors in the world's craft. And very many die young, unable to take kindly to the wind and the salt sea. Here, as in other places to which invalids are advised to go for their health, the number of deaths "from decline" seems solidly to discountenance the idea that there is as much benefit in mild air as doctors affirm. But it is possible change of air might have saved them, even as it saves others.

I walked all over Bryher, and found Hell Bay at the north, almost worthy of its name. Nothing can be more formidable to ships than these needle-pointed rocks running into the Atlantic like rows of teeth, half hid. The wonder is that when a ship strikes on the Scillies she does not invariably get torn to pieces long ere there is a chance of safety for the men on board. It was near Hell Bay that, during the night of July the twenty-seventh, 1879, a ship was caught by the rocks; and, almost in the same hour, another vessel came to grief by the island of Agnes.

If ever a land ought to inspire an elegy, these rocks of the Scillies ought. For my part, I do not think I would live on them for the offer of a considerable income without any exertion. I should be prone to feel like a live man in a charnel-house, to which new corpses were being brought every day.

Ten minutes was enough time to bring me across from Bryher to Tresco, in the port of New Grimsby, midway in the length of the island. It is a bright little channel this, between Bryher and Tresco, with an old castle-tower on one side of it, and a bold rock, with a romantic name—Hangman's Isle—midway in it.

The strong colour of the gorse on Tresco, and the cluster of its houses, made me expect great things from this island, both in beauty and human animation; nor do I think I can say that I was disappointed.

First it behoved me to get domicile for the nights and days. My Cornish friend's introduction was at length likely to be of some service. Shouldering my little knapsack, I climbed the ridge which, here at the waist of the island as usual, separates the one shore from the other; and in a quarter of an hour, I was upon the other side of Tresco in Old Grimsby, with an entirely novel outlook.

It was soon settled. The house was not yet in its summer trim, but if I did not mind that, I should be received. Of luxuries, too, I was given to understand that I must expect none. But I had not come to Tresco for high feeding, and so that obstacle also fell away.

I was received as a guest by a certain fisherman, whose boat, the "Black Jane," lay high and dry by the roadside against the house. The "Black Jane"—I don't know why she was black, poor thing—had hurt her ribs badly, and the carpenter was inspecting her with his hand to his chin. He thought her constitution was so much affected that a long rest alone could put her to rights, with doses of tar, and new caulking, and patches here and there in the meantime. If I wished to visit the eastern island so well in view from the house, I should have to hire another boat. It would probably be the death of the "Black Jane" and me if I put her to the task.

My hostess was kind, and with all speed gave me a luncheon of tea and fried fish. I left the matter to her, and that is what she thought I should like. It was not what I should have chosen, but I laughed over the tea and fish, and said I would be content to live on tea and fish for a year. Whereupon I was promised something better in the evening, after which I went out to inspect the fair isle of Tresco, and notably its famous gardens.

Tresco is barely half as large as St. Mary's, and with only about a quarter as many inhabitants. A hundred years ago it was as densely peopled as the large island. That, however, was ere the expiry of the old leases, which had for long been granted, with periodical renewals, to the Duke of Leeds. The Scillies were not then looked after in the paternal way to which from 1831 they have got accustomed. The Duke left affairs in the hands of stewards, who were not always regardful of the well-being of the islanders. One of the most radical steps taken by Mr. Smith, the lessee, in 1831, was a partial depopulation of the isles in the interest of the isles. Hence, in great measure, the decline of the population of Tresco from four hundred and seventy in 1831 to a little over three hundred in 1891.

From Old Grimsby I climbed on to the central down of Tresco until I was almost neck-deep in gorse. In front was a massive granite obelisk on the highest part of the ridge, and the gardens of the Abbey were seen beyond and below—a dark mass of cool greenery between the hill and the sea.

The obelisk is erected to the memory of the late Mr. Smith. Hence the view of the isles is very comprehensive and almost beautiful. The Bishop lighthouse, some six miles south-west, looks dreadfully remote, and one is led to pity the poor fellows cooped up in it. If the day is calm, the scoring of black lines over the glistening surface of the Atlantic channels has a strange fascinating appearance. You may then, and especially at low tide, count islets until you are confused by the number, or their involved proximity to each other.

A wicket led me into the Abbey gardens, and I was soon in sympathy with the praises which have been offered so freely to the skill of the various gardeners who have had this space at their disposal. I could have fancied myself in Florida or in Tenerife. The aloes and shapely palms ran in long avenues, and many a tropical flower burned like a flame in the shaded precincts. Tree-ferns, too, worthy of New Zealand, were here in nooks higher than one's head, and more than anything else might have made one doubtful of one's latitude.

But the gardener made no inordinate brag of his success. The luxuriance of our surroundings was due, of course, chiefly to the mild climate of the Scillies in general, and especially to the protected southern aspect of this part of Tresco.

To my mind even more impressive than these exotic plants, with their formidable battalions of thorns, was the dense cypress hedge to the carriage-road on the other side of the gardens. A little gloomy it certainly is, but of its kind probably unique in the British Isles; and as I walked along the road, cuckoo after cuckoo was heard calling from the midst of the brake.

Beyond, on the farther side of the fresh-water lake which helps to beautify the Governor's residence, could be seen the methodical rows of daffodils and narcissi, fenced in with rushes and palings, which must, in Covent Garden and elsewhere, confer another kind of fame upon the Lord of the Isles. The Governor is quick to profit with his tenants by the prevalent passion for flowers; and floriculture is now, after fish, the most important of the island industries.

As the day was still young, from the one end of Tresco I walked to the other, where the Atlantic throbbed unbrokenly from the north. Here the granite rocks, though not a hundred and fifty feet high, are very bold. The great waves of the great sea have worn long, deep gullies into the mass, and one may get a very passable thrill by peeping into them from the precipitous, almost overhanging edges.

This part of Tresco is primitive. In time to come it may be cultivated, but at present it is all rock and unbroken heath. Atlantic wreckage lies in a cumber among its shore boulders, and the imaginative man may conjure up grim visions of disaster in the winter nights of fog and strong north-east or north-west winds.

Thence I dropped towards the side of the island bordering upon Bryher, and so came to Cromwell's castle, with Hangman's Isle, a gunshot into the water. Cromwell himself never set foot in Scilly; but of course there was an echo of the great Rebellion here as elsewhere in the realm. His castle is, in truth, a strong little round tower, which might still be turned to good account. Its summit is battlemented, and its walls would stand the shock of the explosion of a big gun. But in all probability no enemies will ever try to make their way up this pretty little channel for the purpose of despoiling the isles. Such ships as do find themselves here soon wish they were elsewhere. On the beach of New Grimsby is one such. No lives were lost in this case; but the vessel is a wreck, and the Tresco lads amuse themselves by climbing its anchor chains to the deck, and thence descending into the hold, never more destined to carry merchandise through the Atlantic.

When the sun was near setting I returned to my cottage, and feasted soberly to the ticking of several clocks. The tide was very low, and the strait between Tresco and St. Martin's, the most easterly of the large islands, was almost expunged. To this island of St. Martin's I determined to cross on the morrow. My landlady busied herself in securing for me a boatman and a boat that should be a good substitute for her own husband and the invalided "Black Jane."

Another bright day rose with the lark, and confirmed me in my new belief that the Scillies are an enchanting little spot, with Elysian weather all the year round.

We set out betimes in a dead calm. Sails were not a bit of use. Going by Tean, and St. Helen's, I landed on each of these islands—formerly inhabited, but now destitute like Samson. For my part, I should like very much to have a summer villa on one of them, between their granite humps. An artist would certainly find much food for his pencil here, what with the bright hues of the shallow sea, the bold crags, the old ruins on St. Helen's, the white bays, and the prospect of the other islands on all sides. But, of course, it could only be a fine weather residence, and even at that it might now and then be dull.

St. Martin's is a long island, with a more bulky waist than the other chief islands. It has an area of five hundred and fourteen acres, and about one hundred and seventy inhabitants. Time was when it had nearly three hundred people; but was not as prosperous as it now is.

This little land sports three towns: Lower, Middle, and Higher. Middle Town consists of but three or four houses; and Lower Town is hardly larger. About the houses are the trim flower-beds, which tell of the island's wealth; and the bronzed men and lads may be seen attending to them early and late. Nor do they alone take charge of the exports of the island; the girls of the houses cut and trim and pack the flowers, and sweet is the perfume of the kitchen or out-house in which such gentle work is done.

Here on St. Martin's I was nearly beginning an excavation which might have resulted in something archæologically great. The kindly farmer to whom I went for my stereotyped—and somewhat tiresome—luncheon of bread and clotted cream, with milk to drink, acted as cicerone over the island. We came to a ring of stones on the down above the house, and he told how he had it from his father that this was an ancient sepulchre. I was sceptical, and he proposed fetching pick and shovel there and then. Nothing could have gratified me more. But alas! the more discreet voice of his wife put a stop to the business. Without the sanction of the Lord of the Isles, she reminded us, we had no right to dig for—minerals or corpses. But, indeed, there are barrows enough in the Scillies apart from this ring of stones.

For the rest, St. Martin's is like the other islands of the group. Its people are simple and kind, but far from fools. Of old they were great hands at smuggling; now they live at peace with all the world, and, I judge, their consciences also. If only the Governor would let them have their farms on longer leases, I imagine they would be perfectly happy.

And so in the evening I returned to Tresco, and my ticking clocks.

The succeeding days were but repetitions, more or less, of those that preceded them. When I wanted strong exercise and strong air, I went on to the north downs of Tresco, or took a boat and rowed into the Sound. On the other hand, when I merely desired sweet communion with Nature, I strolled on to the gorse-ridge by the monument, and, with larks above me, looked my fill at the Archipelago mapped out beneath me. The Abbey gardens were a convenient compromise when my mood was neither one thing nor the other.

So the time sped, until one day I crossed back to St. Mary's, and that same morning went aboard the homeward-bound steamer in company with many mackerel and some flowers.

By this time the Scillies had become so endeared to me, that if I had been half as sentimental as Sterne I should have dropped a tear of regret at leaving them.

To tell the truth, however, there was a brisk south-wester blowing which did not allow me any moments for the exercise of such licensed hypocrisy.

Nevertheless, I am free to say that I hope to return to the Scillies some day—either as Governor or simple tourist.

MRS. DAWE'S LADY-HELP.

By BARBARA DEMPSTER.

Author of "Through Gates of Gold," "A Dead Hand," "A Spring Moon," "His Guardian's Wife," "Those People," etc., etc.

CHAPTER VII.

The Dawes were not told of the engagement. But it did not need that, to fill up the cup of bitterness and mortification they were drinking. They were hardly civil to Miss Smith when she left them the next day—she, naturally, declining to stay any longer under their roof. Martha wept loud and long, and was scarcely consoled by the promise that Miss Smith gave her, of sending for her should she ever need a servant of her own. Even Thomas felt melancholy; but was cheered up by the very handsome tip he received from that young lady, whose generosity made him wonder for many days afterwards.

Greatly to his disappointment, and a little to his surprise, it must be confessed, Mr. James Brown was not allowed to accompany Miss Smith to London. She begged him so earnestly to stay and look for the thief, who, she was convinced, had not reached London yet, that he yielded. An uncomfortable suspicion that that was not her real reason vanished, however, before the look she gave him, as she leant forward from the carriage window to say good-bye. It thrilled him long after the train had disappeared from view.

"I'll find the thief at once," he said, "and then I can go to her."

But the search was not so easy as he fancied, and as the days went on, and he saw the scoffing sneer on his relations' faces, he was more thankful than ever that he had had the means of silencing their tongues. Whatever they might think now, they dare not say it. If it had not been for that, his love's dear name would have been coupled with crime through all the county.

A fortnight went by, during which long weary time Miss Smith would not allow him to visit her in London till the thief was found. Then, one day, the London detective who had been engaged by Mr. James Brown, and whose life had been a burden to him for the unreasonable impetuosity and impatience of that young man, laid his hands on the thief. She was a woman who went about the county posing as a lady in distress. She had come up to the Vicarage that afternoon, while Miss Smith was in the garden, looking like a shabbily dressed visitor. She had soon found out the emptiness of the house, and had had the audacity to walk upstairs. Gwen's room was the first she came to, and quickly discovering the key in the drawer, had opened it, seized the lace and ring, and decamped as quietly as she had come.

The next day following on the discovery, Mr. James Brown took the train to London to carry the news. He felt that not even Miss Smith had any right to keep him from her now.

It was seven o'clock when he reached London. He went to an hotel, dined, and then, jumping into a hansom, drove off as fast as it would take him to the address she had given.

The hansom drew up before a large house in one of the most fashionable streets in London.

A man in livery opened the door. James Brown caught a glimpse of another in the distance of the great handsome hall. He wondered if she were happier in this new situation, and thought, with a glow of intensest exultation, how soon now he could come between her and the toil and weariness of waiting on other people.

A portly, elderly butler came forward and took him over from the footman, leading the way up the broad, handsome staircase, to a landing on which stood flowering shrubs and palms.

The soft carpets, the rich hangings, the costly Oriental lamps, all gave an impression of great wealth and luxury. Mr. James Brown took it in vaguely; but he was occupied, rather, with the pleased thought that, judging from the servants' respectful manner, Miss Smith, whatever her position, was treated with the deference due to her as a lady. His fingers tingled to slip a handsome tip into the portly butler's hand.

But, a moment later, every thought, save one, vanished from his brain.

Passing through heavy silken curtains, they came to a door which the butler opened.

"Mr. James Brown."

Mr. James Brown, stepping into the room as the butler drew aside, had a vague impression of a great, beautiful room, full of flowers, and soft shaded light, and exquisite colouring; and then everything seemed to merge into a slight, graceful figure which stood for one second, startled and still, gazing at him across the great room.

"James!"

Then the figure, recovering from its stillness of gladness and surprise, came swiftly across to him, and he forgot all else but that he held her in his arms once more.

It was some moments before she could extricate herself, and laughing and blushing she retreated from him, while he, able now to take in something else than the mere fact of her presence, gazed at her with a kind of wondering awe and amazement in his eyes.

Was this the neat, quietly robed little lady-help he had wooed and won in the country vicarage—this daintily dressed, graceful young lady, with diamonds holding the costly lace ruffle of her dinner-dress, with her silken draperies and her unmistakeable air of the great society world? What did it mean? He glanced from her round the room, and back again to her.

"What does it mean?" he asked, in a bewildered tone, but with something in his eyes that darkened their gladness.

She saw the shadow, and her own face paled, and she ran to him for the first time of her own accord.

"I love you!" her face, dyed crimson, hid itself on his breast, "and I don't want to stay in England. I'll go out West with you, and leave all my money behind, if you like; and serve in the store, too, if you will teach me how to add up the bills."

Slowly into the pale disappointment of his face dawned a very curious smile. It was grim; it was ashamed; it was intensely amused.

"And what is your name, pray?" he asked, severely. But his arms closed round her, and she lifted her head, and saw the smile, and knew that she was forgiven.

"Muriel Carr," she said, meekly.

It was the name of one who for the last two seasons had been one of Society's richest and most popular beauties. He had heard of her.

"Well, Miss Muriel Carr," after a slight pause during which he digested the discovery, "and will you tell me how you came masquerading as a lady-help, and leading me into the presumption——"

"Presumption! As if I am good enough—— No, no, I won't say that, then!" hiding her face, that he should not silence her after a fashion of his own. "But it was in this way: you know that I have had so much, and my life has been so happy, that I have always been interested in those poor girls who had none of the advantages and blessings that I have had. I tried to help them a little, but it seemed always as if my life were so easy that I could never really understand what they suffered; so at the end of this season I thought I would try it myself; and one day I heard of some lady who wanted a lady-help—some one who had the reputation of being a very hard mistress. I met one of the governesses she had had, and I asked a friend to give me a character. I had learned cooking at South Kensington," with a laugh, "and I went to the place just to see what other poor girls have sometimes to bear; and there — I met you."

She saw the black cloud gathering on his face, and at this moment of her own happiness she would not let him be angry even with those who had treated her so shamelessly. Her woman's wit had guided her. The cloud passed away and left only a mist before his eyes. It soon cleared away as he looked down into her upturned face, and told her about the ring and lace.

"I am glad I am cleared," she said. And then the absurdity of the shameful accusation struck them and they both laughed.

"All my friends, at least the few who knew what I was doing, were very angry with me for trying such an experiment. My uncle and aunt with whom I live would say that it served me right if they knew! But they are very good to me, and always let me have my own way. They are only staying in town now because I wanted to wait for you. They are dining out to-night, but you can see them to-morrow."

A sudden suspicion, confirmed when he noticed more keenly a certain pale weariness in her face, struck Mr. James Brown that she had had rather a difficult time of it since she had announced her engagement to her relations. After all, they would be quite justified in refusing their consent to her marrying an assistant in an American store. Her caprices must have their limits.

"I am twenty-two, and entirely my own mistress," she said, with apparent irrelevance, toying with the button of his coat.

Again that queer expression came into his face, and now he looked doubtfully at her.

"I have something to tell you," with a most unusual nervousness, but plunging, after his fashion, straight to the point. "I—I am afraid I have deceived you. I am not a poor man. I did serve in that store once, but I went on till I became master. I put by money and sold the store, and bought land which turned out a splendid speculation; and now I am," he grew actually crimson, his voice faltered, "a kind of chap they call a millionaire."

Slowly she drew herself from his arms, looking him straight in the eyes, her face paling and freezing as the walls of a delightful romance raised by all that was best and truest in her heart, fell about her. Then he too was inspired.

"I did it to find out what my own people were worth. I found them dross—but I met you."

And as her face quivered and flushed and dimpled back once more into loving life, he too saw that he was forgiven!

The rage, the mortification of the Dawes, when they heard the true histories of their relation and lady-help, may be better described than imagined. Not even the handsome presents of jewellery sent them by both Mr. and Mrs. James Brown as a token of forgiveness, before they sailed for America, could do much more than soften their bitterness and disappointment. That rankled in their hearts for years afterwards. Almost every season the James Browns came to England, and the accounts of their doings in London and New York society, in both of which Mrs. James Brown reigned as a leader of fashion, filled them with envy and melancholy. The breach was never healed between them.

Mrs. James Brown, usually the noblest and most forgiving of women, had by dint of persistent questioning found out from her husband the fact of his lost inheritance. How Mr. Dawe, in a moment of temptation, had abstracted a second will made by a dying kinsman which left his property entirely to James Brown, then a little lad, and left only a former will which divided the property between him—Mr. J. Dawe—and another relation. By one of those curious cranks of the human mind, which leads to the detection of most criminals, Mr. Dawe did not at first destroy the stolen will. Perhaps some vague idea of a possible future restitution eased his always troubled conscience. Mrs. Dawe, who heard of the theft after it was committed, always urged him to destroy it. But it was kept among other papers in the strong safe. James Brown, left to Mr. Dawe's guardianship, was brought up harshly and tyrannically, continually flouted for being a drag and expense on them. As he grew older, through things he heard from other persons, a certain suspicion came to him. His uncle's strange nervousness about the safe impressed him. One day, by accident, he came into possession of his uncle's keys. He searched the safe, and found the will. He took it out, and had a copy made of it. It was in his possession for a few days, during which he gave no sign of the fraud that had been committed on him. He had taken an impression in wax of the key, and had another made. He finally returned the copy of the will to the safe, keeping the original, and not yet deciding what he should do. It was not so much the loss of the money that enraged him, as the cowardly treachery, supplemented by all the hardness and insults which had been heaped on him—the injured one—since.

But as his rage cooled down, two considerations began to move him. Perhaps the first was his own conduct. The manner in which he had gained possession of the will seemed less and less creditable to him, the more he thought it over.

Secondly, he felt such unutterable contempt for his uncle and aunt, that the very thought of disputing with them over the money was abhorrent.

Let them keep their ill-gotten goods. He had the will. If ever they proved unpleasant in any way, he would use it against them.

But to stay any longer under their roof was impossible. The very day that he came to the conclusion of keeping silence, he started off without saying a word to any one.

From that day, to the day eight years later, when he returned to the Vicarage, no one in England had had a word from him.

It was a week after his abrupt departure that Mr. Dawe, always a prey to weak remorse and guilty fears, destroyed what he believed was the will. The sight of it was so abhorrent to him that he did not open it to see if it were the original one. Afterwards, he and Mrs. Dawe bitterly regretted the oversight. For, a little later, on turning out the room James Brown had used at the Vicarage, they found, in a corner of a cupboard in it, the second key. From that time, for many a long day, they knew no peace. Had he gone to the safe, and what had he found there?

The servant, who had found the key, whispered her suspicions to one or two intimate friends; and at first the Dawes, in desperation clinging to the thought that, if he should turn against them, they might in this key hold a weapon against him, did not hush up the story. But as time went on, and James Brown showed no sign of executing judgement on them, they grew less afraid. They saw, too, that their weapon was a very poor one against the accusation he could bring against them.

But their peace was to have a rude awakening. Lonely in the midst of his great wealth, a longing came over James Brown to speak once more to some of his own kith and kin. From his uncle and aunt he expected nothing; but there were his cousins, Minnie and Gwen. He would see of what stuff they were made. He had long ago decided on never making any use of the will in his possession. He had even resolved to bury its story in the past, and try and meet his uncle and aunt, as if it had never been.

Even their heartless and insulting conduct to him did not change the former resolution; but their treatment of Muriel altered the case. In that short conversation with his aunt, he told her first that the will was in his possession, and then made his conditions.

When he had brought her to a state of miserable fear and obedience, he promised her that their ill-gotten gains should still be theirs.

Probably he, too, in the great happiness that is now his, would have shown less coldness and severity to his unlucky relations, had not it been for their conduct to Muriel. That he could not forget. So the Dawes have to be contented with only hearing of their millionaire relations from afar; and, to the end of their days, the girls will think with regret of the magnificent possibilities they lost in the way of a rich husband, by their discourtesy to their cousin. Their lady-help had been wiser.

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BY MARY ANGELA DICKENS.

Author of "A Mist of Error," "Her Inheritance," "A Social Success," "Kitty's Victim," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE light was perfect, and his picture was in an extremely interesting stage; but at three o'clock the next afternoon, Humphrey Cornish gave up the attempt at work, which had been more or less unsuccessful all the day, and determined to go out for a walk. His thoughts were running on Selma, unconnectedly but incessantly, and they all turned eventually to one end—his disappointment in her.

He had been thinking of her as she had been when she was looking forward to that first appearance which Roger's coming had prevented—a young girl full of enthusiasm and devotion to her work. Perhaps no one in those days had better appreciated than Humphrey the genius that was in her, no one had certainly so sympathised with the genuine artist spirit which had been hers. He had watched her and understood her as only a kindred spirit could have done, and his sympathy had had in it always a touch of pity for the pain life was so likely to bring, when the depths of her nature should be stirred, to so passionate and sensitive a creature. He had told himself often in those days that she would probably suffer, but he had thought of the suffering that perfects.

He had watched her during the terrible struggle which had preceded the breaking of her engagement with Roger; watched her, understanding the resistless impulse under which she struggled, with little doubt as to what the end must be, and with a sad conviction that it was better she should reach that end unaided. He had believed that a collision between her heart and her artist nature was inevitable, not knowing of the prompting she had received, and he had looked to her after life to justify her choice. And now for the past two years he had known that she was deteriorating—deteriorating day by day as artist and as woman, until his old belief in her was utterly destroyed, his hope for her was shattered.

As Tyrrell had believed that she had grasped at society life in wounded pride and disappointment, Humphrey had believed that she was looking for forgetfulness. That she should apparently find it in admiration, in popularity, in the noise and rush of fashionable life, was what he had not expected; it had destroyed his faith in her as nothing else could have done. Would she marry Tyrrell? he asked himself, sadly. Marry him, perhaps, for his position, perhaps for old friendship's sake. He had little doubt that she would.

He put aside his palette and brushes and went out of the room and down to the hall, and, as he took his hat, Helen came downstairs to him. She had the little Helen in her arms, a dainty baby figure in its cool white sun-bonnet, with the fair little face all smiles, and dimples, and brown eyes, and she was laughing and talking to her as she came.

"Are you going out, dear?" she said, happily. "Baby is going out too; I'm waiting for nurse to take her. We thought it was very hot in the nursery, didn't we, my precious?" pressing her cheek against the soft baby face, which was so like it. "No, sweetheart, father doesn't want you now," she added, hugging the little thing with a delighted laugh, as the little plump arms made demonstrations towards Humphrey. "Shall you be long, dear?"

"Not very, Nell!" he answered, smiling at her and at the laughing face under the white sun-bonnet.

"It's a lovely day," she responded. "I wish Selma could go out. Humphrey, I'm not satisfied about her, dear; she looks so dreadfully ill."

"She has been going out too much," said Humphrey, as he opened the door. "Good-bye, Nell." He kissed both the Helens—the little one as well as the big one—and went out.

Helen stood on the threshold in the sunshine smiling after him as he went, and as she went back into the hall with the baby in her arms, laughing and conversing after her present undeveloped fashion, she started and smiled; Selma was standing at the foot of the stairs.

"How quietly you came down, dear!" she exclaimed. "Are you rested? You look like a ghost, you are so pale!"

But it was not pallor alone that had so changed the beautiful face. The forty-eight hours which had passed since the garden-party had taken every trace of colour from Selma's cheeks—from her very lips—and her eyes were sunken and hollow; but, however they had been passed, those hours had left deeper traces yet. There was a still stricken look in the white face—a look which changed it as no passion of anguish could have done. She did not move as Helen spoke to her, taking no notice of the little Helen's eager, inarticulate calls to her, and she stood in the same position, with one hand resting on the balusters, as she said in a low, toneless voice:

"I came to tell you that I have business with Mr. Tyrrell when he comes this afternoon. You will not let any one be shown in?"

"Of course not, dear!" returned Helen, cheerily. "Go into the drawing-room, and wait there for him quietly. You shan't be disturbed!" She opened the drawing-room door, close to which she was standing, as she spoke, and looked in. "It is nice and cool," she said. "Let me see you comfortably settled before I go upstairs."

Selma took her hand from the balusters and moved slowly to the door, and on the threshold Helen put her arm round her to draw her on.

"Why, you are quite cold, Selma!" she exclaimed.

"Am I?" said Selma, in the same toneless voice. "I will sit here, in the sun."

She sat down as she spoke, and Helen drew up a blind that the sun might fall more freely upon her.

"There!" she said, "now you can't be cold long. Good-bye, dear!" She bent down as she spoke to kiss her sister, and as she did so the baby in her arms stretched out two little soft hands and stroked the white face with a soft murmur. "Kiss poor auntie, then!" said Helen, merrily. "Selma, how fond she is of you!"

Selma did not answer. For an instant, as the warm, dimpled cheek touched hers, she pressed her face closely against it, and then the two Helens went away together, turning two happy, smiling faces towards her from the door, that the little one might blow her a parting kiss.

Selma did not move. She made no change in her attitude, though the chair she had taken was one in which she never sat, and in which she looked curiously rigid and unnatural. She sat there for nearly twenty minutes, looking straight before her, with her dark eyes absolutely expressionless; but the July sun in which she sat apparently did not warm her, for when the door-bell rang at last, she shivered again painfully. She moved for the first time a minute later, when John Tyrrell was shown into the room.

"What a delicious day!" he said, as he came towards her. "I hope you are better for it?" And then he stopped suddenly, shocked and startled for the moment at the sight of her face. "I am sorry to see that you look very ill!" he said, gravely.

He held out his hand as he spoke, and before Selma took it there was a hardly perceptible pause. As he came into the room she had flushed crimson, and the flush had been succeeded by the deadly whiteness which had called forth his last words. The same deep, painful colour came to her cheeks again as she placed her hand in his, and to his astonishment, though she was standing in a flood of afternoon sunshine, her hand as he touched it was cold as ice.

"I am not ill," she said, quietly. "Thank you for coming."

Short as it was, Tyrrell had noticed the interval which had elapsed before she took his hand, and had noticed her change of colour, and an idea had flashed across his mind, which was strengthened as she spoke by something new and indefinable in her manner to him — something cold and distant, which seemed to make their old familiar intercourse a thing of the past. Was it possible, he asked himself, that she had heard what Humphrey Cornish had repeated to him last night? The thought was an eminently disagreeable one; and as Selma sat down again, and he followed her example, he took advantage of her silence to review the position of affairs, and rapidly readjust his plan of campaign to provide for this unexpected contingency.

The silence was broken by Selma. She had reseated herself in the same constrained, uncharacteristic attitude, as though some painful mental tension affected her whole personality. Her voice as she spoke was thin and hard.

"I asked you to come and see me," she began, "because it seemed to me that I should owe you an explanation."

"An explanation!" repeated Tyrrell. He had put away his thoughts the instant she spoke, and was leaning forward with quiet solicitude, every sense keenly alert and ready to turn anything that might occur to his own ends. "I have told you very often that you never owe me anything," he said, with a smile. He was looking straight into her face, and, as she met his eyes, she drew back suddenly and shivered again slightly. She seemed to put something away from her mental consciousness with an effort before she went on:

"I want to say first that I have been thinking only for myself; one can never see for other people." She paused a moment and then continued: "But one sees things for oneself sometimes, and then one must act. I have been waked up."

She stopped, catching her breath for an instant. She was looking, not at him, but straight beyond him, and if, as she said, she had been waked, her face was as the face of a woman who has waked face to face with death. Tyrrell watched her, wondering and waiting until her words should give him some clue on which to speak.

"I saw it all at once," she went on, in the same subdued tone. "And I have thought it all out since. I have let myself be dazzled and carried away by excitement, and admiration, and popularity. I have lost sight of truth and reality. I have forgotten the end."

She paused again—her eyes very large and dark—and then on Tyrrell's consciousness there dawned for the first time a slight glimmer of a bare possibility that there might be something in the girl before him of which he had never, as yet, had any conception. Before he could recover himself sufficiently to speak, Selma had resumed in a quiet, unemotional way.

"I thought it right to tell you," she said, "that I am going to work again. I shall not go out any more. If I have thrown it all away—if it is too late—I can work all my life at least."

"Will you tell me what you mean?" said Tyrrell, quietly.

"Haven't I told you?" she answered, in the same unmoved way, turning her white, still face towards him. "I have seen the truth about the life I have been leading. I know now that it is all false and a mistake; that work and art have nothing to do with it; that nothing true or strong can ever come of it. I did not know—at least, I did not think—I let myself believe it was all in the day's work. But now I know."

Tyrrell experienced the sensation of a man who has worked his way with infinite care and thought through numberless devious lanes and alleys to find himself, when he thought himself absolutely at his goal, face to face with a blank wall. For all possible contingencies he thought he had prepared, and now he found himself face to face with something he had never dreamed of. She was not thinking of him; she had passed out of the world in which he lived and schemed into a sphere where none of his plans could help him.

He leant back in his chair, looked at Selma for a moment without speaking; then he said, gently:

"What has suggested all this to you, Selma?" He spoke partly with a desire to gain time, partly with the idea of getting some more extended idea of her state of mind, and neither in tone nor manner was there the faintest trace of the irritation he was feeling.

She smiled faintly.

"A voice!" she said. "I heard it all put into words, Mr. Tyrrell, and I knew that they were true. It was at the garden-party — not a likely place to hear the truth about oneself." The voice died away, and she looked as though she were listening again to the words she had heard; and then, for the first time, her white face quivered and trembled, and she covered it suddenly with her hands. "I did not know," she cried, low and brokenly. "I never thought! I never thought! Oh! if it should be too late!"

She stopped, and there was a silence. Tyrrell was thinking that, after all, the fate that had nullified all his plans might be his best friend. His eyes were very bright and keen, as they rested on the dark, bowed head before him; he calculated the chances for and against him swiftly and resolutely, and he determined to make his move.

He rose quietly and stood beside her, resting one hand on the back of her chair.

"It is not too late, Selma," he said. "Your life is all before you still, and you will not throw it away. What you have heard to give you this pain I do not know, but I do know that it cannot have been the truth." He waited, half expecting that she would protest; but she did not speak or look up at him, though her hands had fallen from her face. They were tightly clasped in her lap, and she seemed to shrink a little as he stood over her, and rather to suffer than to listen to his words.

"The truth is this," he went on, very gently. "You are young, Selma, and the admiration and popularity you are so hard upon came to you very suddenly. You have been over-excited and over-tired, and perhaps you have, as you say, thought less than you will do for the future about your work. Selma, you want some one to help you and take care of you."

Suddenly and abruptly, as though some intolerable and incredible possibility were taking definite shape, for the first time Selma rose from her chair. It was not surprise in her face, rather the shock of unendurable conviction, of realisation, which seemed more than she could bear.

A strangled gasp broke from her, and she stretched out one hand, that trembled all at once like a leaf, as though to keep off the something that had broken on her in that instant.

Tyrrell took the hand firmly into both his own, and at his touch, as suddenly as her strange emotion had shaken her, it seemed to leave her—to leave her turned to stone, she stood so white and motionless.

"Selma," he said, softly, "don't let me startle you. What I am going to say has been part of my life for so long that I cannot bear to think of its coming upon you as a shock. You have thought of me —when you have thought of me at all— always as your friend alone, I know. Selma, I love you!" A strong shudder ran through her frame, but she did not speak. Her face was like a marble mask, and as he looked at it Tyrrell changed colour slightly. "I won't ask you," he said, "to give me love, as yet. Give me the right to help you, Selma. Be my wife!"

"I am sorry, Mr. Tyrrell. It is quite impossible."

She spoke the few words coldly and quietly, drawing away her hand from his astonished hold, and moving to the other side of the room, leaving Tyrrell absolutely rooted to the ground in his amazement—not so much at the refusal itself as at the manner of it. A moment passed, at least, before he could recover himself sufficiently to find any words, and then he said, speaking almost as quietly as she had done:

"Impossible, Selma! That is a hard word. At least you will tell me why it is impossible?"

There was a moment's pause, and then Selma responded in the same unnatural, unmoved tone:

"I do not love you, Mr. Tyrrell."

"That is no reason," he returned, quickly, crossing the room towards her. "I do not ask you to love me yet. Marry me, and it will come with time."

"I cannot."

"But give me a reason. Tell me why you cannot. Selma, is that so much for your old friend to ask? Tell me why."

"I have told you."

She drew back from his outstretched hands as she spoke; and, as he realised the determination in her tone, as he realised that he was failing, that she was slipping from his grasp, a passion such as he had never felt for her before seized him and carried him beyond his own self-control.

"You have not!" he cried. "It is no reason. If I am willing to wait for your love, why should you not give me all I ask? I love you, Selma, I love you, and I would win your love in time."

"Never!"

The word came from her in a low, vibrating tone which yet seemed to fill the room, and Tyrrell took a rapid step towards her.

"It is given, then, to another man!" he said, and he caught her hand in his.

Even as he touched her, Selma wrenched herself from his hold, and turned upon him at last, her eyes blazing, her whole face alight and aglow with passion.

"Given!" she cried. "Oh, have we

known nothing, absolutely nothing, of each other all these years? Is there no sympathy, no comprehension in the world? Given! Oh, Roger, Roger! It was his when I sent him out of my life, though I was a child, and I didn't know what it meant. Ah, I have known since! I loved him then, I love him now, and I shall love him till I die. Given! You think lightly of a woman's love, Mr. Tyrrell. You believe that she can give it, and recall it, and give it again, as though it were a plaything. You are wrong, you are wrong! Women are not all——"

She stopped abruptly, looking at him for a moment with something like horror in her eyes, and then the colour rushed over her face again, and she clasped her hands over it.

There was no answer. Speechless and motionless, Tyrrell stood before her self-convicted and helpless. He had misunderstood. His premises were false, his calculations were false, and for the moment his brain-power availed him nothing. The doubt as to whether he had really fathomed her, which had touched Tyrrell earlier in their interview, had risen suddenly into irresistible conviction to strike him dumb. The contrast between the petty sentiments of wounded pride and girlish disappointment which he had attributed to her, and the strong, enduring force of the woman's love with which he was now face to face, utterly overwhelmed him. It seemed to him that many moments passed—though he made no effort to speak—before Selma slowly lifted her face, quite white now.

"You have made a mistake, Mr. Tyrrell!" she said, bitterly. "You have held love cheap, as you have held art cheap—as I have held art cheap. Oh!" she cried, suddenly, clasping her hands passionately, "have I broken my own heart for nothing—for nothing? Have I lost it all—work and art as well as love? Is there nothing before me but the mockery I have now? I trusted you, Mr. Tyrrell; I trusted you in this as I trusted you in everything, and every way——" She broke off again, and again there was the same horror in her eyes. "You told me it was the way," she went on, and the words were a cry of despairing reproach. "You told me, and I believed you! What did I care for society and excitement? What did I care for anything when I knew that I had lost him for ever? Success was nothing to me—it never had been anything. Shall I ever forget that first success when I realised that nothing could ever take his place? And afterwards there was no hope for me—none—but to do what I had thrown away my happiness that I might do. I had sacrificed my love in the service of art. What did it matter to me how I worked? All I hoped for was forgetfulness!"

The words broke away into a wailing cry, and the face of the man before her—as white now as her own—twitched painfully.

"And now I have lost everything," she cried. "I sacrificed my love to art, and I sacrificed art to its counterfeit. I have lost you too! I trusted you, and I respected you, and it is all over. I have nothing, and I am nothing, and I have wronged and degraded the two things I held most sacred. But my faith in them remains! It shall remain! It shall! And I will hold to that. It can't be that I have spoilt my life for a delusion after all! There must be—I know there is—a truth and a reality in art, and I will find it and stand on it! It is lowering to love to let its suffering spoil one's life. I will not lower it, for it shall make me strong."

She lifted her face as she spoke, agonised and quivering with her passionate struggle to grasp and hold to the truth she had asserted with such desperate insistance. As he looked at her, all Tyrrell's better nature rose within him and he loved her. The next moment her eyes fell upon his face, she dropped her hands with a gesture of despair, as though her strength were gone.

"It's all gone at once!" she cried, brokenly. "Everything is gone together—everything!"

And then there was a long silence.

There was no sound of any kind in the room. Selma had sunk into a chair, her face hidden, and Tyrrell had turned mechanically and walked to the window. The soft summer air floated into the room, the summer sunlight moved along the wall, and by-and-by, from the hall, came the voice of little Helen, brought in again from her walk. How long the stillness lasted Tyrrell never knew. He only knew that he was face to face with what he had not seen for many years—himself as he really was. He only knew that he was not worthy to touch the hand of the girl who had shown him the truth, and that he loved her.

"If she knew all of me," he said to himself. "If she knew all!"

At last, with a face so grey and drawn

as to be hardly recognisable, he turned and looked at her. He had made no calculation, no plans; he had no thought left for effect. He waited a moment more, not to consider, but to control himself, and then he crossed the room and stood beside her.

"You have shown me the truth," he said, in a voice so low and broken that it hardly sounded like John Tyrrell's voice at all. "I cannot defend myself, even if I wished it. Selma, I cannot help you—help me. Don't send me away for ever from the purity and truth I see in you. Give me some hope that some day in the future, when your love grows, not less, but less intensely present with you, you will think of me—you will let me ask you once again to be my wife. Selma, have pity on me!"

She was half lying, half sitting, her hands clasped against the low back of her chair, her face hidden on them; as he spoke, her head had fallen lower and lower, and her whole form had seemed to collapse and shrink as if in an agony of distress. He finished, and she lifted her head and turned to him suddenly; her eyes were large and beautiful with pity and anguish, and her tears were falling fast.

"Ah!" she cried, "Mr. Tyrrell, don't speak to me like that! I cannot bear it. Oh, I have looked up to you all my life, I have thought you everything that is good, and strong, and true! I cannot bear to see you—lowered! Oh, Mr. Tyrrell!" She stretched out her hands as she spoke his name with a cry in which all the love and reverence of her girlhood were blended with a great pity and grief; but as he stretched out his own hands to take hers, she shrank back suddenly and dropped her face again upon the cushions of her chair.

He came a step nearer.

"Selma," he said again, hoarsely. "Selma, have pity on me!"

"Pity!" she cried. "Oh, have I not pity? Everything is more bitter because of this; everything is harder and more hopeless to me because this has come to me too—the loss of you, the loss of my faith in my friend. Is not my heart almost breaking with pity and shame? But I can never be your wife, Mr. Tyrrell! Never, never, never!"

As she said the word shame, a ghastly change had come over Tyrrell's face. He did not move, but he stood gazing down upon her as she lay with her face hidden from him with something rigid and strained about every line of him. As she finished, one word came from him in a harsh, hoarse voice—the voice of a man who meant to be answered. "Why?"

"I have had—a letter."

Her face was pressed so closely to the cushion, that the words were hardly audible, and she shrank further and further into the depth of the chair.

"From——?"

"Lady Latter!"

The two words came from her in a choked, hardly articulate whisper, and having uttered them she lay crushed tightly against the cushions, her face pressed down on them, her fingers driven into them and clinging to them as though she would never raise herself again.

There was a moment during which John Tyrrell seemed to collapse and lose his presence and his stature as he stood, and then he turned and left the room.

SOMETHING ABOUT RELICS.

WHEN Erasmus and Dean Colet went on their famous pilgrimage to Canterbury, they were shown a large number of relics of "Saint" Thomas à Becket, but failed to regard them with the awe and admiration they usually excited in the minds of devout pilgrims. There was the point of the sword with which the Archbishop's brain was pierced; the pierced skull; the hair shirt, the girdle, and the bandages with which he was wont to mortify his flesh and subdue all carnal appetites. There was also the staff on which he leaned, and the napkin with which he wiped his face; besides some linen rags which had done duty as pocket-handkerchiefs. The Prior offered one of these to Colet; but the Reformer, touching it fastidiously with his finger-tips, contemptuously put it down, uttering at the same time a low whistle, as was his custom, says Erasmus, when anything displeased him. Other relics were exhibited: "an enormous quantity of bones, skulls, chins, hands, teeth, fingers, and entire arms," which they were expected to kiss. An arm was produced, the flesh of which was still bloody. Colet shrank back from kissing it, and his feelings of disgust were very plainly expressed on his countenance. After leaving the Cathedral, the two travellers proceeded towards London, and at Harbledown, just outside the City, a mendicant approached them, sprinkling them with holy water, and offering the upper leather of a shoe, which it was the custom of pilgrims to salute, at the same time giving the man a small piece of money. Dean Colet, says Erasmus, bore tolerably well the sprinkling with water, but when the shoe was held out, asked the man what he meant by it. He replied, "it was the shoe of Saint Thomas." Colet thereupon waxed wroth, and turning to Erasmus, expressed his views on the situation in no measured terms.

With his accustomed discretion, Erasmus, in commenting upon this incident, observes: "To speak the truth, I think it would be better if these things were left alone; but it is always my habit to find what sort of goodness I can in evils which cannot suddenly be corrected." And, unquestionably, notwithstanding their ridiculous and painful sides, notwithstanding the extravagances and superstitious follies of which they were the cause, a "sort of goodness" might, at first, have been discovered in the sanctity which mediæval Christianity attached to the real or pretended relics of the saints and martyrs. It sprang out of a very natural and proper feeling; out of the desire we almost all of us cherish, to obtain and preserve something which has belonged to those we have known and loved; out of the almost universal craving for some memorial, however slight, of the warrior or statesman, the poet or patriot, who has made his mark on the world's history or literature by great deeds or thoughts. It was in this feeling—legitimate enough in itself—that the reverential attitude of the early Church towards the relics of its saints, martyrs, confessors, and divines originated. Unhappily, it too soon degenerated into a paltry superstition, a degrading credulity, which the priesthood encouraged for the sake of the gains it brought them in money and influence.

It was inevitable that this exaggerated importance should conduce to fraud and imposture. The demand created the supply; relics were suddenly discovered at critical moments, and a brisk trade sprang up in manufactured shams. In 487, when Peter the Fuller, Patriarch of Antioch, claimed jurisdiction over Cyprus, and Anthimus, Metropolitan of the island, was summoned to Constantinople to answer the claim, the Bishop, on the eve of his departure, was visited in a dream by Saint Barnabas, who made known to him the place of his interment. The Apostle's body was accordingly found, and, along with it, a copy of Saint Matthew's Gospel, written by Saint Barnabas himself. With this treasure in his possession, Anthimus started for Constantinople, where he refuted the Patriarch's pretensions by showing that the Church of Cyprus, like that of Antioch, had an Apostolic origin. What could be more opportune than the dream and the discovery?

We get an edifying glimpse, in the Itinerary of Saint Antonius, of the manner in which the new idolatry was spreading. At Cæsarea his attention was directed to the seat occupied by the Virgin Mary, when the archangel Gabriel announced to her the great destiny for which she was reserved, as well as to a basket which had once belonged to her. At Cana he slept on the couch which had been assigned to our Lord at the marriage feast, and, according to the custom of travellers in all ages, he and a fellow-traveller carved their names upon it. At Sarepta he saw the Prophet Elijah's bed; and at Nazareth he admired in the synagogue a beam on which the Child Jesus had been used to seat himself with his comrades; it enjoyed, he says, the singular property of moving at the slightest touch from a Christian, but of remaining fixed and firm when a Jew endeavoured to uplift it.

At every step the pilgrim came upon some memorial of sacred events and things. As, for instance, the tree which Zacchæus climbed to see the Saviour pass by; the fig-tree on which Judas Iscariot hung himself; the altar where Abraham made ready to sacrifice Isaac; the stones with which Saint Stephen was murdered; and, more astonishing than any of these, the "corner-stone" so often mentioned metaphorically in Holy Writ!

I am not sure whether Fleury is right in his assertion that the relics, or supposed relics of Saint Stephen, were the first which came into Europe; but it is said that the historian Orosius, who in 415 visited Jerusalem, carried them back with him to Spain. Thenceforward the East incessantly met the demands of Western Christendom. Its treasures seemed inexhaustible. There was not a pilgrim who, on his return from the Holy Land, did not bring with his scallop-shell and staff some precious relic as a souvenir of his voyage, just as the modern traveller comes home loaded with memorials of the places he has visited — with bric-à-brac from the Italian cities or wood-carvings from Swiss chalets.

Even so strong-minded a man as Pope Gregory the First fell into the prevailing error. He was accustomed to send, as a mark of his special favour, presents of keys in which had been worked up—it was said—some filings of Saint Peter's chains, accompanying the gift with a prayer that what had bound the Apostle for martyrdom might release the recipient from his sins. You will find in Baronius some extraordinary tales of the miracles which those keys were supposed to have effected. The Empress Constantine solicited the Pope to send her the head or some part of the body of Saint Paul, to consecrate, in a peculiar manner, the church which she was building in honour of the great Apostle. Gregory, of course, replied that it was not the custom at Rome to lay violent hands on the remains of the martyrs. He added that many persons, who had presumed to handle the bodies of Saint Peter and Saint Paul, had been struck dead in consequence; and that he could send her only a cloth which had touched the Apostle's body; but such cloths, he reminded her, possessed the same miraculous power as the relics themselves. The practice of removing relics, he said in conclusion, gave occasion to fraud, as in the case of some Greek monks who, when detected in digging up dead bodies by night at Rome, had confessed to an intention of passing them off in Greece as relics of martyrs.

As the appetite grows by what it feeds upon, the relic-mania continued its increasing course. The second Nicæan Council ordered that no church should be consecrated unless it enshrined some relics, and imputes a disregard for them to the opponents of images, which, however, they strenuously denied. Those held in the highest esteem—the relics of our Lord and His Virgin Mother—multiplied rapidly. More than one locality contended for the honour of possessing the "seamless coat" and the napkin which had bound the head of Christ in the sepulchre. Among the riches of the monastery of Centulles, under Abbot Angilbert, who died in 801, were fragments of the manger in which was laid the Holy Child; of the candle lighted at His birth; of His vesture and sandals; of the rock on which He sat when He fed the five thousand; of the bread which He gave to His disciples; of the cross; of the sponge; with portions of the Blessed Virgin's milk, her hair, her dress, and her cloak. There was much jealousy between monasteries and minsters as to the relative value of their relics; and the translation of a relic from one place to another was made the occasion of special solemnities. It was believed that sometimes, in answer to earnest prayer, relics were sent down from heaven; and the saints still continued to appear to favoured disciples and point out where their remains were deposited. Pope Paschal the First had fallen asleep one day during the psalmody—which must have been painfully soporific—before Saint Peter's tomb, when Saint Cecilia flashed upon him, and assured him that though the Lombards had sought for her body they had failed to find it, and the discovery was reserved for him. Accordingly, it was found among the graves of the Popes in the cemetery of Saint Callistus, and was translated to the Church of Cecilia in the Trastevere.

When Saladin seized upon Jerusalem, in 1187, the inhabitants collected in four large ivory coffers all the relics which the Holy City could boast of; but the Khalif would not allow of their removal until the Prince of Antioch had pledged himself to ransom them for a sum of fifty-two thousand besants. At the expiration of the time agreed upon, the Prince could not find the money, which was advanced, however, by our Richard Cœur de Lion, in order to save the honour of Christians. When the Latins carried Constantinople by assault, in 1204, the ecclesiastics who had taken part in the Crusade swept it nearly clean of its sacred memorials, employing sometimes stratagem, and sometimes actual violence. Gunther, in his "Historia Constantinopolitana," tells us how Martin, abbot of a monastery near Basil, deprived a Greek monk, under a menace of death, of a fragment of the true Cross, the bones of Saint John Baptist, and an arm of Saint James.

Gibbon relates with, as might be expected, a good deal of unction, the negotiations between Baldwin the Second, Emperor of Constantinople, and Louis the Ninth, of France, for the sale and purchase of the Holy Crown of Thorns, which was preserved at Constantinople in the Imperial chapel. In the absence of the Emperor, his barons, to meet the necessities of the State, had mortgaged it for a sum of thirteen thousand one hundred and thirty-four pieces of gold. They had failed to pay up their debt when demanded, and a wealthy Venetian, Nicholas Querini, undertook to satisfy their creditors on condition that the relic should be lodged at Venice, to become his absolute property if not redeemed within a stipulated time. In these circumstances, the Emperor endeavoured to make better terms with Saint Louis. "Yet the negotiation was attended with some delicacy. In the purchase of relics, the saint would have started at the guilt of simony; but if the mode of expression were changed, he might lawfully repay the debt, accept the gift, and acknowledge the obligation. His ambassadors, the Dominicans, were despatched to Venice to redeem and receive the holy crown. . . . The reluctant Venetians yielded to justice and power; the Emperor Frederick granted a free and honourable passage; the Court of France advanced as far as Troyes in Champagne, to meet with devotion this inestimable relic; it was borne in triumph through Paris by the King himself, barefoot, and in his shirt; and a free gift of ten thousand marks of silver reconciled Baldwin to his loss." Indeed, he was so elated by the commercial success of the transaction as eagerly to enter upon another of the same kind; and for a satisfactory solatium he disposed of a large portion of the true Cross, of the baby-linen of the infant Jesus, of the lance, the chain, and the sponge of His passion, of the rod of Moses, and part of the skull of Saint John the Baptist. To receive these inestimable treasures Saint Louis built the Sainte Chapelle of Paris, at a cost of twenty thousand marks.

It is impossible not to admire, while we smile at, the simple faith of Saint Louis in accepting as authentic these diversified relics. There was no proof, for instance, of the genuineness of the Crown of Thorns, nor was any reasonable proof forthcoming. The Roman Church endeavoured to silence scepticism by pointing to the miracles it wrought; and as late as 1656 a sacred prickle from it touched and healed, it was said, an inveterate ulcer on the person of the niece of the justly celebrated Pascal, in the presence of Arnauld, Nicole, and Pascal himself. But what was then accepted as a miracle we now understand to have been nothing more than the action of the imagination—the impression produced on a nervous temperament—and are able to explain on physiological grounds. More satisfactory evidence of authenticity would now be required by a generation which reserves its credulity for the statements of speculators and the promises of politicians.

Mahomet the Second, after the capture of Constantinople, collected with great care all the relics then existing in the city, and deposited them with his private treasure. Many of the Latin princes offered him large sums for those they most affected; and this new species of traffic proved very profitable to the Sultan; though, as Lebrun says, it may reasonably be assumed that it gave rise to colossal frauds, and led to the wholesale diffusion through Christendom of manufactured articles. He did not dispose of all, however; for when the proscribed brother of Bajazet the Second sought an asylum in France, he endeavoured to secure the good will of Charles the Eighth by offering to deposit with him "all the relics of God, our Creator, the Apostles, and the male and female saints, which his late father, Mahomet, had found at Constantinople and in other cities which he had conquered from Christendom." In 1488, the unfortunate Prince having been transferred to the custody of Innocent the Eighth, the Sultan sought to bribe the Pope into delivering him up by various presents, including "the iron head of the lance which pierced our Lord's side."

In the tenth century the "invention," that is, the discovery of remarkable relics assumed astounding proportions. The superstitious were gratified by the exhumation of one of our Lord's sandals at Saint Julien in Anjou, part of the rod of Moses at Sens, and a head of Saint John the Baptist at Saint Jean d'Angely. I say "a" head, because the church of Saint Sylvester in Capite at Rome boasted of the same treasure. At Vendôme the astonished pilgrim was shown one of the tears shed by the Saviour over Lazarus, which an angel had caught and bottled and given to Saint Mary Magdalene! The discoveries went far back into the Old Testament history, including hairs of Noah's beard and relics of Abraham; and as they drew vast crowds of pilgrims to the churches or monasteries possessing them, and became sources of continuous income, the Church did nothing to discourage the superstition.

The "invention" of the Holy Lance at Antioch (1098) is one of the grossest impostures recorded in history. The Crusaders, in their defence of the great Syrian seaport, had undergone a series of severe disasters; their hearts had failed them, and retreat and ruin were impending, when a Marseillais priest, named Barthelemy, presented himself before the Latin chiefs and announced that Saint

Andrew had thrice appeared to him in his sleep, and threatened him with a dreadful punishment if he did not make known the commands of Heaven. "At Antioch," said the Apostle, "near the high altar, in the church of my brother Saint Peter, is concealed the iron head of the lance which pierced our Redeemer's side. In three days that instrument of eternal, and even temporal salvation will be revealed to His disciples. Search and ye shall find; bear it aloft in battle; and that mystic weapon shall penetrate the souls of the unbelievers." Whether the monk acted in concert with the Latin chiefs, or on his own motion, is uncertain; but his revelation was eagerly accepted, and on the third day, after due preparation by prayer and fasting, search was made for the sacred memorial. The appointed place was found, the ground was opened, and the workmen dug to the depth of twelve feet, but in vain. At eventide, however, Barthelemy, barefooted, and in his shirt, descended into the excavation, when, in the darkness, he contrived to secrete and deposit the head of a Saracen spear. Next day, amid exclamations of rapture, the Holy Lance was drawn from its recess, wrapped in a veil of silk and gold, and exposed to the adoration of the Crusaders, who, fired with a strenuous enthusiasm by so miraculous a pledge of victory, attacked the Saracens with a vehemence that carried all before it. When men's minds grew cooler, and they examined into the particulars of Barthelemy's bold procedure, its fraudulent character was generally acknowledged. The too ingenious priest attempted to vindicate his innocence by undergoing the ordeal by fire, but was so badly burned that he died on the following day, and the Holy Lance vanished in contempt and oblivion. Yet the revelation of Antioch was revived by succeeding historians; and such is the progress of credulity "that miracles, most doubtful on the spot and at the moment, will be received with implicit faith at a convenient distance of time and space."

Frequent and bitter were the disputes which arose as to the authenticity of relics. Thus, six places contended for the honour of possessing the real "seamless coat"—Moscow, Saint John Lateran, the Church of Sainte-Martinelle, Rome, Trèves, and Argenteuil. The two last are the most celebrated. To the "Holy Coat of Trèves," which just now is an object of interest to thousands, a curious history attaches. In the time of the Empress Helena, the mother of Constantine the Great, Trèves was the capital of Belgic Gaul. The Empress converted her palace into a cathedral, which she endowed with this precious relic. It was regarded with such jealous care that its exhibition took place only at rare intervals and on special occasions; and by degrees a belief grew up that it had disappeared. In 1844, however, the Archbishop Arnoldi announced a centenary jubilee, at which the Holy Coat was to be shown. The announcement drew immense crowds of pilgrims, so that Trèves was the scene of an excitement which recalled the excesses of mediæval fanaticism. The cathedral was thronged throughout the day with worshippers, who gazed reverently at the relic, made an oblation, and passed on their way. This revival of a superstitious practice drew a vigorous protest from Johann Ronge, the leader of the reforming clergy of Germany, or Old Catholics, as they were afterwards called; but the German Governments took alarm at the movement and Ronge was obliged to seek refuge in England. The events of the recent pilgrimage will be fresh in the minds of my readers, and need not be dwelt on here.

The so-called seamless coat is a loose garment, with short wide sleeves, of coarse material, and dark brown in colour. It measures from the extremity of each sleeve, five feet five inches, and from the collar to the lowermost edge five feet two inches. The stains upon it are reported to be those of the Saviour's blood.

The Holy Lance was another relic of which there were several copies: one at the Sainte Chapelle, in Paris; one at Nuremberg; another at the Abbey of Montdieu, in Champagne; a fourth at the Abbey of La Tenaille, in Saintonge; a fifth at Moscow, and so on.

The monks of Saint Emmeran, at Ratisbon, disputed with the famous French Abbey of Saint Denys the possession of its patron's body, but in the eleventh century the dispute was decided in favour of the latter. The body of Saint Gregory the Great was believed once to be in Saint Peter's at Rome, and to have been secretly removed to Saint Médard's at Soissons; while three places displayed his head—Sens, Constance, and Torres Novas. The monks of Monte Cassino would not allow that the remains translated to Fleury were those of Saint Benedict, and were supported by Pope Urban the Second; Glastonbury contended with Canterbury for the real Saint Dunstan, and the contention was not settled until Archbishop Warham's time, when he gave his decision in favour of his archiepiscopal city; and both Gresen and Prague claimed to possess the body of Saint Adalbert, the apostle of Prussia.

There is a lively story of a feud between two cities which broke out on the death of Saint Martin, Bishop of Tours, the good Bishop who shared his cloak with a poor naked mendicant whom he found half dead with cold at the gate of Amiens. This cloak, miraculously preserved, became one of the most valued relics of France, and when borne before the French Kings in battle was a pledge of certain victory. The Canons of Saint Martin of Tours and Saint Gratian carried on a lawsuit for sixty years about a sleeve of this cloak (chape, in French, hence chapelle, chapel, chaplain), both parties claiming it as their property. The Count de Larochefoucauld terminated the strife by sacrilegiously committing the relic to the flames.

Now it so happened that Saint Martin drew his last breath in the village of Candes, at the meeting of the waters of the Vienne and the Loire. Wherefore a bitter altercation arose between the men of Poitiers and the men of Tours. The Poitevins said: "He is a monk of ours, he has been our Abbé; we therefore demand that his body shall be handed over to us. It must suffice for you that while he was a living bishop you enjoyed his utterances, his benedictions, and his miracles." The Tourangeaux replied: "If you contend that his miracles should satisfy us, remember that while he was among you he worked more than he did while here. For in your city he restored two dead men to life, while here he resuscitated only one; and as he himself said, his power was greater before than it was after he became a Bishop. It is therefore only just that what he failed to do for us during his lifetime he should do after his death."

While they were thus discoursing, night came on. The saint's body lay in his own house, guarded by the two antagonistic forces. The gates having been barred and bolted, the Poitevins determined on carrying it off by force on the following morning; but Providence would not allow the city of Tours to be deprived of its patron saint. At midnight, the Poitevins were overwhelmed with sleep; not one of all their number could lift his heavy eyelids. The Tourangeaux thereupon seized the saint's body. Some lowered it from the window, others received it outside. It was placed on board a boat, and all rowed down the Vienne. When they passed into the Loire they steered towards Tours, chanting psalms. The sound of their voices awakened the Poitevins, who, ashamed to have been so easily tricked by the men of Tours, returned home in haste.

Among relics of a painfully grotesque character I may mention: a morsel of the grilled flesh of Saint Lawrence, who, as everybody knows, was roasted to death upon a gridiron over a slow fire; the bones of Moses; the sigh which Saint Joseph heaved when he was splitting wood; the tears of our Lord, his letters, his different footprints; feathers from the wings of the archangels Gabriel and Saint Michael. When the Crusaders returned from the Holy Land in 1099, they were loaded with relics of holy personages who had previously been unknown in the West. Bohemond, one of their leaders, divided between Anselm and certain churches a dozen hairs, which the patriarch of Antioch had given him with the assurance that the blessed Virgin plucked them from her head as she stood—Mater Dolorosa—by the Cross.

But the most curious are those which come down direct from above; for in this respect the Christian Paradise seems to have been as lavish as the ancient Olympus. In several of the chroniclers, and particularly in Matthew Paris, one finds tolerably frequent allusion to the correspondence which the Almighty, His Divine Son, the Virgin, or the Saints deigned to carry on with men. "In 1109," writes the monk of St. Albans, "much was said about a famous letter reported to have fallen from the sky into the hands of a prelate while celebrating mass, and the object of which was to appease the always increasing disquietudes of the Romans." This letter, which contained nothing but a prophecy in the style of Merlin, simple-minded Matthew reproduces under the year 1226, with the information that it was found in a hermit's psalter, at the place of the psalm "Exurgat Deus."

Again, in 1230, he writes: "There might be seen at Jerusalem a letter which descended from Heaven over the altar of Saint Simeon at Golgotha. It was suspended in the air, and they who saw it prostrated themselves and prayed, for three days and three nights, the Lord of Mercy to manifest to them His will. The third day, at the third hour, Archbishop Zacharias and the patriarch rose from their knees, and stretched over the holy altar a cloth in which they received the sacred missive."

In this letter, the design of which was to prescribe anew the observation of holy days, and especially of Sunday, the Almighty thus expressed Himself: "I, your God, if you do not obey My commandments, swear to you, by My holy seat and by My throne, and by the knights who guard it, I will send you no other letter, but I will open the heavens, and instead of rain will pour down upon you stones, and pieces of wood, and boiling water. . . . I will send against you beasts with the head of a lion, the hair of a woman, and a camel's tail, and they shall devour your flesh." The remainder of the letter is in the same style of grotesque profanity.

Sometimes a miraculous origin has been attributed to relics through an accidental mistake. After the return of Saint David, the patron saint of Wales, from a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, the patriarch of Jerusalem sent him, "per angelos suas"—his own angels or messengers—a horse, a staff, and a tunic of cloth of gold, which David dedicated on the altar of his cathedral church. The twofold meaning of the word "angelos" led, at a later date, to a belief that these gifts were of celestial origin. We meet in history with a host of legends which, like this, are founded upon equivocal words or phrases.

It was very generally believed that genuine relics could not be destroyed by fire; and this belief explains the second canon adopted by the Council of Saragossa, that all relics found among the Arians should be carried to the Bishops, and subjected to the ordeal of fire. As this test, however, was hazardous for good as well as bad relics, it was very seldom adopted.

In all generations persons of an incredulous turn of mind have existed; and as such persons might have had a fancy for personally investigating the authenticity of some of the memorials held up to their veneration, the monks put into circulation various stories calculated to terrify even the most daring unbelievers. "The body of the blessed martyr, Saint Edmund," says Guibert de Nogent, "permitted no one to approach it. An Abbé of the monastery where this relic was preserved, who was recently living, desired to verify the report that the head of this saint, who was martyred by decapitation, had been miraculously joined to his body. He and his chaplain fasted for several days, and then, having uncovered the body, one dragged it by the head, and the other by the heels, to see if the former would come away from the trunk ('si le chef se détacherait du tronc'). Their efforts were useless; but their hands remained stricken with permanent paralysis."

In course of time the saints were preferred by the superstitious to God Himself, and received more homage than the three Persons of the Trinity. It is recorded that one year, when no offering was made at the high altar, and only four pounds one shilling and eightpence at the Virgin's, the oblations at the shrine of Saint Thomas à Becket amounted to nine hundred and fifty pounds six shillings and threepence. As Canon Jenkins remarks, the relics of Becket made Canterbury "a centre of the religious life of the day, second to no other place of pilgrimage and devotion;" and gifts and offerings of whose value the splendour of the shrine itself, as Erasmus has described it, was a very significant symbol, gave proof of the hold which the Becket cultus had upon every class, from Royalty downwards.

At different dates relics of recent discovery—or "invention"—came into vogue. For instance, the "Veronica" (verum icon), a cloth or handkerchief on which our Lord miraculously impressed His countenance when on His way to Calvary, was first exhibited at Rome about 1011. The legend was that a Saint Veronica had handed the cloth to the Saviour; and it was reported to have been brought into Italy for the cure of the Emperor Tiberius, when suffering from leprosy! One of the stories respecting it is, that it warned Innocent the Third of his approaching death by turning upside down in a procession. The "Holy Dish" (sacro catino), "vas coloris viridissimi," was brought by the Genoese from Cæsarea in 1101, and is still preserved in the Duomo at Genoa. It was venerated as having been used at the Last Supper, and the credulous believed it to be of emerald, though it was really of green glass.

Cologne boasted of possessing the bodies of the Three Kings of the East, which were supposed to have been presented by the Empress Helen to Eustorgius, Archbishop of Milan, and were transferred from Milan to his own cathedral by Reginald, Archbishop of Cologne, in 1162; and those of

Saint Ursula and the eleven thousand virgins, who were martyred by the Huns at Cologne, according to one of the ecclesiastical fabulists in 453. In 1156, when affairs were not prospering for the Church at Cologne, and some miraculous event was very much needed, a number of bodies were opportunely discovered and sent to Saint Elizabeth of Schönea, who fixed the martyrdom of the virgin company in 238, and had visions of their celestial glory. The extravagant number, "eleven thousand," is now generally referred to a misreading of an old inscription, "XI. M. V." (xi. martyres virgines), as "undecim millia virginum."

Late in the eleventh century, Guibert de Nogent-sans-Couci wrote a tractate "De Pignoribus Sanctorum" (On the Relics of Saints), provoked thereto by the audacity with which the monks of Saint Médard's, at Soissons, displayed a pretended tooth of our Lord. With refreshing good sense, he denies the genuineness of such relics of the Saviour; strongly censures the practice of profaning the graves of the saints, and enshrining their remains in gold and silver receptacles; and frankly exposes the disgraceful artifices of the relic-mongers. As an instance of their effrontery, he mentions that, on one occasion, while he stood listening to a sermon, the preacher pointed to him as being able to confirm the genuineness of some crusts of bread, brought, it was pretended, from our Lord's own table. He confesses, however, that though he was shocked at its utterance, he allowed the falsehood to pass uncontradicted. Guibert also tells a story which shows that the sanctity of relics was sometimes disregarded. It was then the custom to hawk about those of special value from place to place, in order to stimulate the gifts of the faithful. Certain priests of the Church of Laon ventured to cross to England with their treasures, consisting of pieces of the Blessed Virgin's petticoat, of the sponge used by our Lord at Calvary, and of the True Cross. In one town they were particularly successful, collecting numerous and costly offerings. An Englishman, who was standing in front of the church where they were "on view," said to a companion:

"Come! let us have a drink."

"I have no money," rejoined the other.

"I will make sure of some," exclaimed the first speaker.

"How so?"

"I have observed," said the other, "that these priests, by dint of their lies and inventions, have extracted large sums of money from the credulous. I intend that, in one way or another, they shall pay for our good cheer."

Thus speaking, he passed into the church, and while affecting to kiss the relics most reverently, contrived to press his lips on the coins heaped up in front of them, and to take into his mouth a good haul. Then, retiring, he joined his companion.

"Now for a drink! I have more cash than would suffice to make both of us drunk."

"How on earth did you manage it, when, only a few minutes ago, you hadn't a penny to your name?"

"I had the pluck," replied the rascal, "to take up a mouthful of the large sums given to yonder impostors."

"It was wrong of you," said his comrade, "to rob the saints."

"Hush, hold your tongue," whispered the offender, "and let us be off to the nearest inn."

As late, however, as the fifteenth century the rule of relic-worship prevailed. At the Council of Basle, in 1439, the Cardinal of Arles, in order to invest the proceedings with exceptional solemnity, caused all the most famous relics in the city to be collected, and after they had been carried in procession through the streets, to be placed on the vacant seats; and so great was the effect of this peculiar device, that when the invocation of the Holy Spirit was pronounced, the whole assembly burst into tears.

When Louis the Eleventh of France—the strange compound of crime, craft, cowardice, daring, superstition and devotion, so vividly portrayed by Scott in "Quentin Durward"—was seized with his last illness and tortured by remorse, he gathered around him all the holiest relics procurable, including the holy vial, which had never before been removed from Reims since the time (as was believed) of Clovis. Pope Sextus sent him a numerous collection from Rome; so numerous that the Roman ecclesiastics complained of the extent to which he was denuding the city of its treasures. The Pope replied, however, that he had given away but little, and that the King of France had deserved well of the Church.

Almost the last relic of which we hear as imported into Europe was that which the Sultan Bajazet, in May, 1492, sent as a present to Pope Innocent the Eighth—the head of the lance which had pierced the

Saviour's side. We have already heard of this relic as existing at Paris, Nuremberg, and other places; but this was not a fact which troubled the minds of the Pope and his Consistory. To this day the Sultanic gift is revered as one of the four chief relics of Saint Peter's Church.

What has become of all those relics, and of the jewel-incrusted caskets, reliquaries, and shrines in which they were preserved? It is certain that only a limited number are now extant. Well, the greater portion were swept away in the wars which at various epochs have devastated the face of Christendom, and more particularly, in the great wars of the Revolution. In England very few survived the iconoclasticism of the Reformation. Rome, of course, still retains several famous memorials; Cologne has its own peculiar property; and Holy Coats still exist both at Trèves and Argenteuil. Naples still boasts of the blood of Saint Januarius; Loretto of its Santa Casa or Holy House, carried by angels into Dalmatia from Galilee, in 1291, and brought to Loretto a few years afterwards; and fragments of the True Cross are exhibited in many places. It may safely be asserted, however, that Relic-Worship has seen its palmy days and will never again impose, to any considerable extent, on the conscience of mankind.

THE FIRST HOT WORD.

THE first hot word; ah! shun it, dear;
Dread it with full and wholesome fear.
Close quivering lips, veil flashing eyes,
Force faltering tongue to soft replies,
Hushed, as if subtle foes were near.

Since neither the repentant tear,
Or earnest vow, or hope sincere,
Can ever fully exorcise
The first hot word.

The storm that sweeps the evening skies
May pass, and morning's sun arise
In the blue heavens serene and clear;
But the sweet bud we sought to rear,
Crushed in the verdant grass it lies;
So hardly life's best hope it tries,
The first hot word.

THE STRANGE EXPERIENCE OF MR. LUKE VENABLES.

[Note by Henry Keene-Adams, Esq., M.B., M.R.C.S. The manuscript of which the following pages are a faithful transcript, was found by me under circumstances which will become apparent during the progress of the narrative. I found the record an interesting one; but then I looked at it chiefly from a professional point of view. The reader may be all the more likely to agree with me if I refrain from further preface. The statement has no formal heading.]

MY physician has requested me to put in writing a short and simple account of my experience. This he has desired me to do, partly to satisfy his own curiosity, which, like that of a good many other people, was considerably exercised on the subject, and partly to find some occupation for me. I have no objection to do what he asks. I shall neither add any theories or opinions of my own, nor conceal any part of what actually occurred. If I devote a few lines to describing my manner of life, it is only that the strange facts which I have to set down may be more readily understood.

I wish to say at the outset, that I am not, and never have been a spiritualist; nor a believer in mesmerism, animal magnetism, odic force, or anything of that sort. My experience has no relation to delusions of that kind. Nor am I in any way superstitious. Some of the phenomena which have come under my notice would probably have excited in most people superstitious terrors. It was not so with me. I remained throughout completely master of myself, for the simple reason that I knew perfectly well that these phenomena were due to natural causes, and were capable of explanation according to undiscovered but simple natural laws.

I admit, however, that I have all my life been something of a recluse. Left an orphan at a very early age, I was brought up by an uncle; or rather he permitted me to occupy one or two rooms in the great dreary house in which he lived. As soon as I left the nursery, my education was entrusted to the curate of the parish, an excellent man, a scholar, and a gentleman, but one who was emphatically not a man of the world, and therefore, perhaps, not the best person to be the sole companion of a shy and sensitive creature like myself. I have since thought that it would have been better had I been sent to school. However, I lived at Garston Hall until I was five-and-twenty years of age; and then, some tiresome legal formalities (including sundry interviews with high functionaries) having been concluded, my uncle put me in possession of my house at St. Aidan's (to which I intend returning as soon as this manuscript is finished); handed me a bundle of bonds, vouchers, and the like, together with a banker's pass-book and a cheque-book; requested me to sign my name at the foot of a deed called a Release; shook hands with me, and wished me good-day, exactly as if I had been a visitor who had come down to the Hall on business and had stayed overnight.

My pride, more than my affections, was hurt at this cool conduct; but I said nothing, and betook myself at once to my new home.

St. Aidan's, as everybody knows, is a watering-place on the coast of the East Riding of Yorkshire, which is beginning to be fashionable. My house, absurdly called The Dingle, lay a mile and a half to the north of the town, not far from the seashore. It was small, old, and gloomy, being closely surrounded by trees. I soon got used to it, however; and I refused to listen to those who said that I ought to have the woods thinned, so as to admit more light and air to my dwelling.

The sombre appearance of the place suited my idiosyncrasy, and accorded with my habit of mind, which always had a tendency to melancholy. I loved, too, to wander under the dark shade of the trees on a summer noon, or, better still, to sit by my parlour fire and hear them moaning and shrieking like creatures in pain, through a long winter's evening.

At The Dingle, my sole companion was an old woman, who acted as housekeeper and factotum. A gardener came now and then. The stables were shut up and deserted. My time was occupied in reading, chiefly books on psychology and physiology, and in the dangerous but delightful amusement of day-dream or reverie. Many a time have I spent hours in my little study, or in summer sitting on a bench in my old-fashioned garden, in a state of semi-unconsciousness, while my fancy led me by the hand and took me beyond the rocky barrier which separates this dull world of ours from "faery land forlorn."

Among a number of miscellaneous volumes I had sent to me, I lighted upon a copy of a book, famous, I believe, in its day, though now but little esteemed—Abercromby on The Intellectual Powers. The good old doctor there discusses some cases of the curious nervous disease which produces spectral illusions. In one case, I remember, the patient was haunted by the apparition of a little old woman in a red cloak; in another the imaginary ghost took the form of a dog which so closely resembled a real animal, that the gentleman to whom it belonged was sometimes obliged to touch it with his stick, in order to satisfy himself that it was not a living and breathing animal.

About this time I also came upon a curious tale of a portrait-painter, who possessed the faculty of imagination in so strong a degree, that he did not need to trouble his sitters to remain in his studio more than half an hour. After gazing at the face and form of his visitor for that length of time, putting a line or two on the canvas as he did so, he could conjure up that person's appearance at will, and complete the portrait at his ease, working from the imaginary form which his memory supplied.

I well remember the time when it first occurred to me to try whether such a power could not be cultivated. It was the night after a sultry August day. The moonlight streamed on the tangled shrubs and grass-grown walks of the garden, as I sat there enjoying the cool night air. I was in a curiously excited, restless state of mind. I had been paying a necessary visit that day to the neighbouring town of St. Aidan's—a thing I always hated doing, especially in the summer, when the streets were swarming with visitors. I hurried through these crowds of well-dressed, self-sufficient, foolish, staring people; and did not think myself safe from them till I had reached the stile leading to my own fields. I generally felt restless and ill at ease after one of these visits to the town; but on that evening of which I speak, I had a special cause for excitement.

Among other places, I had called at a bookseller's, and on leaving the shop I met face to face in the doorway a girl—a girl of surpassing grace and beauty. A commonplace incident, truly; but it was not commonplace to me. I stood aside to let her pass, and she thanked me with a smile—ah! what sunlight on an April morning could seem so bright? Her hair and eyebrows were dark, but her complexion was pure white. She was rather thin. The colour of her eyes—I do not know.

After leaving the shop I felt that I must see her once more. Yielding to the impulse, I went back to the shop. She was still there, and to my inward disgust the tradesman, recognising in me a regular customer, left her and came over to the other side of the shop to know what I wanted. I did not dare to do more than steal a hasty glance at the lady's face; but in that instant I had engraved her features on my memory. After I left the shop for the second time her face haunted me. I had never seen it before, and I was quite aware that there was but a small probability that I would ever see it again;

yet I knew I had it for a possession as long as I should live. I felt that this girl belonged to me, in a sense, in virtue of the homage I paid her.

As I sat in the moonlit garden, it occurred to me to try whether I could not imitate the artist of whom I had read, and coax my eyes to recall the form and lineaments of the girl whose image filled my mind. I summoned up all my powers, fixed my gaze on the vacant space at the end of the bench on which I was sitting, and tried to imagine that she was actually seated there. I set myself to picture the pale face, the dusky hair, the pose of the head and neck. There, I said to myself, her arm would rest on the elbow of the garden-seat, there her dress——

It came!

Suddenly, unexpectedly, as if my efforts at recalling and picturing the image had nothing to do with it, the sweet vision was before my eyes!

For some minutes I sat silent, revelling in the possession of my treasure, afraid to speak or move, lest the phantom should fade away for ever. I was well aware that what I saw was purely the creation of my own fancy, a spectral illusion like those mentioned by Dr. Abercromby. But it was delightful to have it by me. The likeness to the original was perfect. The image almost seemed as if it would move and speak, and I liked to fancy that it actually did, but for the most part it remained perfectly still.

As I sat there entranced, I heard on the gravel the footsteps of my housekeeper, who was bringing me my second supply of tea—a beverage of which I am very fond.

I allowed her to approach in silence, marking, in the meantime, the wonderful solidity and lifelikeness, as well as the grace, of the apparition I had conjured up for my companion. When the old dame drew near, I placed my elbows on my knees, and dropped my head in my hands, as if I were half asleep.

"Tea, Morrison?" I said, without looking up; "offer some to the lady."

"The lady, sir? What lady?"

"Why, here—oh, I suppose I must have been dreaming."

Mrs. Morrison was used to my little eccentricities, and did not trouble herself to reply. But I knew now that my new companion was invisible to all but myself, that it was no ghost that haunted me, but a simple natural illusion. To my chagrin, however, when I looked for it once more it had vanished. One could have fancied that my gentle visitant had taken offence at hearing herself thus spoken of—doubted, put to the test as it were—and had chosen voluntarily to withdraw herself.

But many times after this the vision of this pale, sweet-faced girl came to cheer my loneliness; I grew to expect her appearance, and even began to hold conversation with her.

It was towards the end of the month that I met this lady in the flesh for the second time. I was walking along the cliff, as I often did at an hour when the bustling noisy population of St. Aidan's were otherwise engaged, when I heard a faint cry from the beach below. Looking over the edge, I saw that the tide had swept over what was a bank of dry gravel an hour before, and had now drawn near the foot of the cliff, and in the narrow space between the water and the rocks a girl was sitting with a folded easel and artist's umbrella beside her. Even at that distance I knew her.

I found a way down the cliffs; a way which she managed to climb, with my help. During those precious minutes she was mine, not in fancy alone, but in flesh and blood. When we reached St. Aidan's we were already friends. Her name, she told me, was Ida. I forget the surname—it is of no consequence.

From that time I lived only in the expectation of meeting her again, and I did meet her often. I supposed that her friends did not object, but I never troubled myself about them.

All those happy weeks that came to us ere the summer ended, I wooed Ida for my bride. During our long conversations I opened my mind and my heart to her—told her, even, that I could conjure up her image at will.

"Nay, more," I said to her one day, "I can imagine that I see an image of myself."

"Of yourself!" she echoed. "How perfectly horrible!"

"Not at all," I replied, "I think it most interesting."

"Interesting?—yes, in a way. But so eerie, so uncanny. I should die of fright if such a thing should happen to me."

"Nonsense!" I cried. "Don't you see a phantom of yourself every time you look into a mirror? The apparitions I am telling you of are purely creations of the brain, produced by the imagination acting as a stimulus to the optic nerves. They are as far removed from 'the supernatural,' to use the ordinary foolish term, as your own image reflected in a looking-glass."

"I know—of course," said Ida; "but it seems very odd, very. I don't want to think of such things;" adding, a moment afterwards: "How did you manage to produce such a spectre? Were you not afraid?"

"Well, to tell the truth, I did feel rather like Frankenstein for a moment or two," I replied; "but that feeling soon wore off. You see I have long been accustomed to argue and dispute with myself as with a separate being. I often talk to myself."

"A very bad habit," interrupted Ida.

"A very innocent one," I replied. "I like to amuse myself by pitting the lower part of my being against the higher, to see which will win."

"Which does win?" she asked.

"Oh, sometimes one, sometimes the other. Sometimes I subdue my inclinations; sometimes my inclination—my inferior will as the schoolmen call it—masters me. Well, it occurred to me one day while I was holding an argument with myself, that I might try to project an image of myself into the air so that I might seem to be disputing with a real person. I got a mirror and persisted in thinking that I saw the reflection transferred from it——"

"Oh, Luke," she cried, "stop! It seems so strange; almost wicked!"

I laughed.

"You don't seem to comprehend that it is all a trick, a weakness, probably, of one of the nerves leading to the eye, or perhaps of that part of the brain through which we see. In my case, an unusual excitement of the nerve may produce this result. It may be an unusual phenomenon, but it is a perfectly natural one."

"I'm glad I cannot see myself except in a looking-glass!" cried Ida.

"It was some time," I continued, "before I succeeded in getting a spectral illusion of the kind I wanted; but at length one night, after taking a large quantity of strong tea, I did find that I could see a dim and shadowy figure resembling myself seated opposite to me. Now I can call it up whenever I will; and sometimes—sometimes it visits me even when I do not really desire its presence."

"Perhaps you really do desire it in spite of yourself," said Ida; and I was startled by the truth of the remark.

"I dare say you are right," I replied. "So you have a dual self?"

"It almost seems so; for in all our discussions and contests I take, of course, the better part—the side of my superior nature. This spectral illusion—this nothing, this figment of my brain and nerves, is the shadowy impersonation of my lower nature."

"Does it ever seem to speak?" asked my companion, in an awestruck whisper.

"I speak for it," I replied. I did not care to add that I had sometimes fancied—it was the purest fancy, of course—that I heard a word or two, or a laugh, in a tone that seemed an echo of my own.

"And—does it move?"

"I am not sure that it cannot move. Of course it altogether depends on whether I wish to imagine it moving or at rest; but generally, like the image of yourself, when I see it, it is at rest."

At this point, Ida called for my judgement upon a blue and brown section of paint on her canvas, which, from the surroundings, I thought was intended to represent either a fragment of jelly-fish or a sunset; and our conversation took another direction.

For some reason, which I never fully understood, Ida did not seem to care that I should present myself at the house of her aunt (a wealthy widow, I believe) with whom she lived. We continued, after our engagement, to meet either on the cliffs or on some retired spot on the beach; regularly, at every interview, appointing a time and place for our next meeting.

One Tuesday evening—it was a wintry night towards the end of November—I received a note from Ida. I knew it must be from her, though I had never seen her handwriting before. Who else was there to write to me? We had not met for two days; and I was looking forward, with the keenest delight, to seeing her on the morrow. My disappointment, therefore, was bitter, when, eagerly opening her letter, I found that it contained nothing but a trivial excuse for not keeping our tryst on the following day. I had carried my letter into the garden, so that I might read it in perfect seclusion; and I paced the sombre walk between the garden and the plantation in a mood of jealous irritation for some minutes. When I had at length reasoned myself out of this temper, I fell into a state of deep dejection. It was in vain that I told myself that the incident meant nothing; a foreboding of evil filled my heart.

I thought of the proverbial fickleness of the sex; and for the time I gave myself up to believe the worst of them.

"But Ida—she is different," whispered my good angel in my ear.

My only answer to the appeal was a low mocking laugh—a laugh which was immediately echoed from the wood beside which I was walking. For the moment I was thrilled with superstitious dread. The sound was a facsimile, a replica of my own laugh. But I soon recovered myself. Surely, I said to myself, it would be odd if there were such a thing as an aural as well as an optical illusion! Could one imagine sounds till one actually heard them? The thing was evidently possible. I had been deceived by a figment of my own morbid fancy in the world of sound, as I habitually allowed or compelled my fancy to deceive me in the realm of sight. Yet I peered among the trees to see whether I could discover any one who might have been laughing at or with me; and—doubtless it was purely a trick of the imagination—it seemed to me that I could catch sight of a dim, unsubstantial form, strangely resembling my own outward appearance, gliding from shadow to shadow among the trees.

On the following day my humour led me to go as usual to the place where I had been in the habit of meeting Ida. It was a melancholy visit. Every rock, every bush, spoke to me of her. I fled from the spot, not caring which direction I took. I had reached a lonely part of the sea-shore, when sharply turning a rocky promontory, I came upon Ida face to face.

She was not alone. A man was with her—a man tall, and strong, and handsome—but I did not waste a second look upon him. My eyes were fixed on the girl, who clung with both hands to her companion's arm. There must have been something strange and wild in my looks, for Ida neither smiled nor bowed. She only gazed at me with staring, frightened eyes, and I did not accost her.

With feverish impatience I waited for our next meeting. It came; and the first moments I spent with Ida told me that I had lost her. Even now I do not dare to recall the anguish that pierced my heart, as she told me, with an affectation of carelessness, that she wished to break off our engagement. She had acted hastily, she said, and inconsiderately. We were not well suited for each other—I would soon find some one more worthy of me than she was—and so forth.

"Who was that man I met walking with you two days ago?" I asked, sternly.

She turned pale, and made no reply.

"Your new sweetheart? Or perhaps an old one?"

Her pallor gave way to an indignant blush. I did not listen to what she said in answer. I saw that I was right. I had been fooled—taken up as one takes up a novel to while away an idle hour with it, and then throw it away. Now that she had no more occasion for me I was dropped, like a thing of no value. What did this girl, happy in her new conquest, care for my broken heart?

When I left her I felt like a soul that had been turned away from the gate of Paradise. I could not rest. I continually haunted the shore and the cliffs, that I might catch a passing glimpse of her, to assuage the thirst that raged within me. Often I saw her—the same man always by her side.

Weeks passed; and winter succeeded to summer almost at a bound. Some change must have occurred in the arrangements of the household of which Ida was a member. I saw her no more openly on the sands; but constant watching made me aware that she still met her new lover in secret—met him, good heavens! in the very spot which had been sacred to our love.

It was at this time that the idea of revenging myself on my faithless love first entered my brain. It had not occurred to me before. Then I could only suffer; now I longed to make her suffer too.

I knew it; and I hated myself, hated and despised myself, for entertaining the wish; yet I cherished it.

One night, after waiting long in the chill November mist that I might see the flutter of her dress as she passed swiftly homeward from the trysting-place, the black thought came into my mind—suppose I were to watch for her as she passes the corner of the cliffs, clasp her in my arms, and leap over the precipice? That would be sweet—sweet to know that we died together, that she should never live to be another's bride!

I revelled in the thought for a few moments. Then I put it from me. It returned. I rejected it again. It came back once more.

Three days, I knew, must pass before the lovers would meet again. I dreaded the coming of the day. The time would be two hours after dusk. What if I should feel impelled to carry out my revenge? I determined to go to sleep until the fatal hour should be past. And to make the matter sure, I would take a dose of opium.

Going upstairs in the dim and ghostly moonlight, I threw open my bedroom window and leaned out. A silence like the silence of a sepulchre lay around me. Not a whisper of wind stirred the dark branches of the pines.

And then, suddenly, the temptation fell on me again, like a bolt from the infernal pit. I trembled, withdrew from the window, and covered my face with my hands. I tried to pray—the words would not come. I tried to sink into the attitude of prayer—my knees would not bend.

Then, springing to my feet, I resolved to master the demon that was shaking my soul. I rushed to the door, locked it, and threw the key out of the window. It *fell*, with a sharp clang; and I knew that it had struck against an iron garden-seat which stood in the avenue, at some little distance.

Then a new expedient occurred to me—suppose I dropped out of the window, alighted on the top of a tool-house that stood beneath, and made my way to the sea-shore? I remembered that I had clambered into the house by that way on one occasion, when I had come home unexpectedly, and had found my housekeeper gone and the house shut up. If I had come in by that way, it would be easy to go out by it.

Shutting the window with a bang, I went to my medicine cupboard, poured out a dose of laudanum, drank it off, and threw myself on the bed.

There I lay, unable to sleep. Perhaps I had taken too little of the drug. At any rate, I felt as one benumbed; and yet my fancy was morbidly alive. I began to wonder whether I was alone. I turned, and in a half-dazed state looked across toward the window. And there—merciful Heaven!—I saw sitting on the window-seat, distinct in the moonlight, the very image and figure of myself!

It was I—my second self—or rather the spectre, the optical illusion which I had often amused myself by creating. It sat with its head between its hands, just as I myself had sat, an hour before. And as I watched it, I trembled.

There was nothing surprising in the fact that my optic nerves and the delicate organs of the eyes, excited, and not soothed to sleep, by the opium, should be capable of presenting me with an image of myself. The thing had often happened to me before; but never had I shrunk from the phantom as I shrank now. What if it should lift its head and look at me? What if it should renew the temptation I dreaded? Was that I myself, sitting with hidden face? Did I merely imagine that I was lying in bed?

When I awoke the wintry sun was sending a cold radiance through my room. I sprang up, dressed myself, and then, leaping from the window, I picked up the key of my door, with a smile at the weakness I had exhibited the night before. I felt stronger, better than I had done for some time.

The morning passed as usual. In the afternoon my housekeeper brought me my tea; and as she placed the teapot on the table I noticed that her face was big with news.

"Such a terrible thing, sir, has happened on the West Cliff! A young lady was missing from her home last night, and in the morning they found her lying at the foot of the rocks quite dead. She must have gone out alone and fallen over; but"—in a terrified whisper—"some do say the police think some one pushed her over the edge."

"Ha, ha, ha!" My laughter sounded dreadful to the old woman, I dare say; but I was only yielding to the uncontrollable impulse we all have to smile at moments when levity would be indecent, and thinking, at the same moment, how odd was the coincidence in point of time between the struggle I had undergone on the preceding evening and the accident itself.

I could see, however, that my housekeeper was shocked, and I hastened to say: "Don't look so grave, Mrs. Morrison. It is very dreadful for the poor young lady, no doubt, and for her friends; but I could not help laughing at the folly of the police in imagining that some one had pushed the girl over. Who could have wished to injure her? Why, it would have been murder!"

"True enough, sir," answered Mrs. Morrison; "and to my mind any one as did it must be a devil in the shape of a man." With these words, and a rather impertinent look at me, the old woman left the room.

I felt that I must go and see the spot where she had fallen, not to see the——

I could not bear that. That must have been removed long ago. I went down at once to the sea-shore, but a crowd of people had gathered round the place, and after a hurried glance down the cliff I retired, determining to return when night had driven those idle busybodies indoors.

Having returned home, I went upstairs, and happening to go into my bedroom, I noticed that the suit of tweeds which I had worn the day before were marked all over with greenish mould. It was another curious coincidence. Had I been, by some absurd freak of fortune, accused of having caused poor Ida's death, would not some say that I had soiled my clothes by leaving my room by the window at night? They might call it, in their legal jargon, "circumstantial evidence." Ha, ha! I got a brush and made short work of the circumstantial evidence.

Night came, the moon arose, and I went down to the cliffs. I was alone. How softly the water lapped upon the stones far below! And it was here—yes, it was here. There were the marks of a struggle on that spot of ground fenced off by the police. How brightly the moon's rays lit up the dark water out there! When had I seen it shining just in that way? Not so long ago. I was waiting for some one. It was like a dream; but I could not recall it.

I went home, and slept as usual.

In the morning, when I went downstairs, a policeman met me in the hall. He followed me into the sitting-room. I sat down, and he stood opposite me, speaking of the accident which they said had happened to Ida. He seemed to think I was mixed up in it.

"What's that you have in your hand, sir?" he asked, suddenly; and darting forward, he took from me something which I had drawn from my pocket, and had been absently twining round my fingers. I looked at it without much interest, but he seemed to think it of great importance. It was only a fragment of stuff, such as women's dresses are made of. I remember Ida used to wear dresses of that sort of material; but of course it could not possibly have belonged to her or I should not have let him have it.

That very day he took me to see the magistrates, and they actually sent me to prison.

My trial has not come off yet—or rather it did come off and was postponed. I have come here to wait until the assizes come round again. It seems a long, long time. I believe they have forgotten me, or else they have bribed the superintendent to detain me. Sometimes I think they mean to keep me here always—always—always.

But I know now who pushed my darling over the cliff, down among the cruel stones—it was that fiend in my own shape that I saw sitting by the window in the moonlight.

CATHERINE MAIDMENT'S BURDEN.

A STORY IN TWELVE CHAPTERS.

By MARGARET MOULE.

◆

CHAPTER I.

It was a hot afternoon in July, and Catherine Maidment had walked nearly two miles, but she did not look hot. She was standing under a large spreading yew-tree which grew outside a farm-house. There were two of them in the farm-house garden, and they were cut into fantastic shapes resembling enormous birds. That is to say, a hundred years before they had, perhaps, to the designer's fancy, resembled birds; but now, with the cutting and trimming of many generations of tenants of the farm, the resemblance had nearly ceased, and only grotesqueness remained. But they gave a thick, impenetrable shade, and this was the reason why Catherine Maidment had chosen the large one under which to take her stand.

Facing her, in his shirt-sleeves, with his hat off and lying on a bench which ran round the thick trunk of the tree, stood the tenant of the farm. He was a man of about fifty, with a face which at the moment expressed nothing so clearly as perplexity—the perplexity of a slow mind which is struggling to be diplomatic. He held his spud in his right hand and applied it erratically to the few weeds in the gravel path, as if to assist his thoughts, while he said, slowly:

"Well, Miss Maidment, I did say something of that sort, now I come to think of it. But I don't remember anything so clear as a fortnight bein' named between me and your brother."

"A fortnight from the thirtieth of June, he told you, Mr. Roberts," Catherine Maidment answered.

Mr. Roberts moved his spud more meditatively instead of speaking, and Miss Maidment looked at him, resting her hand on the handle of her sunshade meanwhile. It was a small hand, but it held the carved wooden ring in a firm grasp, and though she was wearing loose soft gloves it was easy to see that its shape was firm and decided. The same decision expressed itself in her upright pose—she did not move or alter her position in the most trifling manner as she looked at Mr. Roberts and waited for him to speak again. Either something in her eyes compelled him to try, or his mind was struck with an idea which he hoped might prove useful and gain him his point, for he suddenly left off the contest he had waged with a struggling dandelion plant, and said, abruptly:

"But look at my losses, Miss Maidment! You know I lost two heifers only last month. Young and promisin', both. And this very week as we are in, I've had to sell half my long corn-rick at a loss. And I've had a considerable outlay this spring with extra hands I've took on. More claims than I can say, there is"

"This is doubtless very reasonable, Mr. Roberts, but it does not affect the fact that the rent is the first and most important claim, and must be met."

The curious contrast between the last words themselves and the womanly voice that spoke them, increased, instead of detracting from, their insistant emphasis. Mr. Roberts seemed to feel the emphasis, for he said, in a tone less aggressively injured and more accommodating:

"Mr. Maidment will give me time yet, perhaps?"

"He will give you until the end of this week, Mr. Roberts."

"The end of this week? It's Tuesday now, and how am I to raise that money in five days?"

"That is your own affair, Mr. Roberts. All I say is that it must be paid."

"Surely—another fortnight—or even a month, Miss Maidment? If Mr. Maidment would give me till harvest, now?"

"My brother has Mr. Stewart-Carr's interests to consider, Mr. Roberts; surely you understand this? He cannot extend the time."

Miss Maidment raised her head a little more. She had been facing the man before her steadily, all the time she spoke, but there was a little added air of firmness about this small movement which had an unconscious effect on Mr. Roberts's will. He gave up the struggle all at once, planted his spud firmly into the gravel, and said, with the air of a man who, because he is conquered, is determined to look as if victory were his own:

"Very well, Miss Maidment. Business is business, of course. You can tell Mr. Maidment he shall have the money by Saturday. Though how I am to find it——" he added, relapsing into his former tone quickly.

But Catherine Maidment took not the smallest notice of the last words.

"By Saturday," she said. "You will not mind, Mr. Roberts, giving me a written memorandum to that effect?"

Mr. Roberts gazed at her for a moment, then, feeling confusedly both that he had not arranged things so well as he intended, and that Fate was especially hard on him in giving him Miss Maidment to cope with, turned with a gesture he intended to be taken for acquiescence, and said, brusquely:

"Will you come in the house and see my wife while I see to it, or stay out here, Miss Maidment?"

"I'd wait here, please. I must get back at once," she answered. "Another day I shall hope to come and see Mrs. Roberts."

Mr. Roberts turned, and went down the box-bordered path that led to the farmhouse. The summer afternoon sun was shining on the windows, and the bees were hard at work in the carnations and mignonette that grew on each side of the box, and in the large orange lilies which grew in a little cluster on Catherine Maidment's right hand.

There was no sound as she waited there but the low humming of the bees, and the note of a bird, which came, softened by distance, from a spinney near.

Miss Maidment listened to it for a minute, and a little smile began to break over her face—a smile of remembrance. It was the curious, monotonous note of a greenfinch, and she remembered how, as a child, she had always called it and thought of it as "a lonely bird," because its note was so much more plaintive than any other. And the thought brought back for a moment her childish days and feelings.

But the smile faded, and she gave one short, quick sigh as Mr. Roberts came out of the house and up the gravel walk towards her again.

"Here it is, Miss Maidment," he said, as he reached her, holding out a sheet of paper. "It'll be all right, tell Mr. Maidment. Not but what my word's as good, if I'd once given it. However, there's no doubt he's right to be particular. But Mr. Stewart-Carr himself couldn't be more so.

However, that's as it should be, you're thinking."

Miss Maidment took the paper, and held out her hand.

"Good day, Mr. Roberts," she said. "I must be getting back at once."

"Good day, Miss Maidment," he answered.

And however aggrieved he might have felt at having had his will thwarted by a woman, he gave no outward sign of it, and opened the garden gate for her, if awkwardly, yet as courteously as any gentleman could have done; and she passed out of it into the white, dusty road.

Catherine Maidment was very pretty. Though the word pretty is always more or less inadequate when used to describe any personality possessing character, yet the word beautiful would have been less fitting still. She was not beautiful. Women, in speaking of her, were often wont to call her unusual, and perhaps the vague term conveyed the clearest definition possible of her. She was neither short nor tall; her figure, however, was so slight that she was generally spoken of and thought of as a small woman. She was very dark, with a broad, white forehead, and clear, delicate features, the character of which seemed to be all accentuated and defined by her small, pointed chin. She had dark, well-marked, straight eyebrows, and eyes that were always a surprise when she lifted them; for, instead of the brown or black eyes which ought to have gone with her dark colouring, she had grey ones. They were large and wide-opened, and in some moods of hers their soft grey colour looked almost blue. Her hair was a curious dark brown, nearly black, with lighter shades here and there of a reddish colour. It was very wavy and abundant, and was not hidden even by the large shady black hat she wore.

She had glanced at her watch as she left the farm-house, and walked away now very quickly, with rapid, even steps. She sighed very sharply, once or twice, and her face did not alter at all, nor lose the firm, decided expression it had worn in Mr. Roberts' garden. Suddenly she turned aside from the road towards a stile which led into a field. She got over the stile quickly, and was preparing to cross the field at the same rapid pace when a small stifled sound arrested her attention. It was the sound of a little frightened sob. On the grass at the corner of the stile was a little heap, which resolved itself into a small boy, with a miserable, tear-stained little face. Catherine Maidment's face changed quickly and entirely as she looked at him. All the decision and firmness left it, and it grew suddenly soft, with a sympathetic look of interest.

"What in the world is the matter, Tommy?" she said, cheerily. "Why aren't you at home at tea?"

"Me and another boy's been playing cricket," said the small boy, sobbing, "and I've fell off the stile and hurted my foot. I can't get home and I can't walk no more."

Tommy's sobs redoubled as he reached the crisis of his short tale, but they were not so hopeless, and a wonderful look of relief had come to the small face at the sight of Miss Maidment.

"Can't walk!" she said. "Why, Tommy, you little goose, what have you done?" She knelt down beside him, and very tenderly touched and felt the small swollen ankle presented for inspection. Seeing at once that the child had sprained it, she rose again quickly. "Come along, Tommy," she said. "It will soon be well again, but you'd better not walk on it now. You hold my sunshade; I'm going to carry you home." Following up her words with a quick gesture, she stooped and picked up the small boy, whose woebegone little face now wore a faint smile at this unexpected and delightful way out of his trouble.

She walked almost as quickly with this burden in her arms as she had done before, and in less than ten minutes Tommy was handed to his mother, who, with a group of neighbours round her, cheerfully foreboding the worst possible end to Tommy, was watching for him from a cottage door.

"Lor', Miss Maidment," she said, as she took him from Miss Maidment's arms, "you've never carried him from the Elms stile! He'll have made your arms ache dreadful. But I do take it kind of you. Excuse my bein' so free as to say it, but it's like you to do it. There isn't many as would."

Catherine Maidment only smiled, and with a promise to his mother to come and see Tommy, and a few words of counsel about the sprain, she said good-night, and walked away up the village street.

The street in question was very short, consisting principally of scattered cottages; and Catherine Maidment soon reached its limits, and turned in at a large entrance-gate on her left hand. It was an imposing looking entrance with a pretty lodge just within it, and beyond were the spreading trees of a large park.

There were children playing in the pretty garden at the lodge. Catherine Maidment nodded to them with a smile as she passed, and walked still quicker on the soft turf till she came to a narrow gravel drive branching off the main road to the right. She turned down this and reached, almost directly, a narrow white house. It was picturesque, architecturally, being built in the fashion of two hundred years ago. Its windows were mullioned, and its door had a heavy stone door-frame. If all the grey stone front had been carefully painted white by some unappreciative tenant, climbing roses, clematis, and ivy had done their best to destroy the effect of that outrage on good taste.

Catherine Maidment opened the door and went through a small neat passage, into a room on the left hand. The room was oak-wainscoted; and furnished, though scantily, very carefully. Every bit of furniture, worn and shabby as it was, bore the unmistakeable imprint of constant care and good keeping. There was a large arm-chair in the window, with a leathern covering very worn, but carefully mended, and a mahogany frame that shone with polishing. Opposite to this was a low wicker chair with bright cushions. Catherine Maidment put her hat and gloves and sunshade into this last, and proceeded to make the tea, which stood waiting on the table. While she did this, she looked round her with a quick look of surprise on her face. She had not expected to find the dining-room empty, and scanned every corner for some indication of the reason of its emptiness. She covered up the teapot when she had finished, and went to the door. "Margaret," she called; "Margaret!" For answer, another door at the end of the little passage opened, and a woman came out—a woman with a curious nondescript cap, something between the orthodox servant's cap and an old woman's. She had a very plain, hard-featured face, only redeemed by a pair of keen, sympathetic dark eyes.

"Yes, Miss Catherine," she said.

"When did Mr. Frank go out? I suppose he is gone out, as he is not in the dining-room?"

"Yes, miss, he's out. He went out about a quarter of an hour since. He said he was going for a stroll in the grounds; he wanted some air, he said."

"Very well, Margaret; thank you."

The woman disappeared, and Catherine Maidment went back into the room, shutting the door, and sat down in her place at the head of the table. But she did not attempt to begin tea. She turned herself half round, so that she could see out of the window, which looked out over the park, and her face grew anxious, thoughtful, and careworn as she looked.

Suddenly the door-handle was turned with a jerk that made her start and turn hastily; it opened and a man entered.

"Hullo, Kit!" he said. "I wanted a mouthful of fresh air, and I didn't think you'd be back from old Roberts yet."

"How is your head?" Catherine asked, looking up with the anxious look on her face deepened.

"Oh, it's all right now. Come, Kit, let's have something to drink." And with these words, Frank Maidment threw himself into a chair opposite his sister; and folding his arms on the table, looked across at her.

Frank and Catherine Maidment were brother and sister, and it was very difficult to say whether the likeness or the unlikeness between them was the stronger. At first sight the likeness was most apparent. The general outline of the features, of course, bore a strong natural resemblance to hers, and Frank Maidment's eyes were, like his sister's, grey-blue. He was dark, like her; and his hair, like hers, was dark brown.

But there it ended. There was nothing in the expression of his grey-blue eyes that was like hers; hers were steady, his were restless and moved incessantly. His chin was square, not pointed; his mouth—though like hers, well cut—was, unlike hers, irresolute and wanting in strength. It was, however, completely hidden by a heavy moustache. He had a tall, broad figure, and his movements and pose, allowing for the difference in physique between a man and a woman, were also curiously like his sister's.

He stretched out one arm, and lazily took the teacup she handed him.

Catherine Maidment filled her own cup in silence, and then she said:

"Mr. Roberts will pay up on Saturday. I got a written promise."

"That's all right!" responded her brother, carelessly. "I never thought you'd get it out of him. But I never knew you were going."

"Yes, Frank, you did," she answered, gently, in a lower tone. "Why, you told me just now you did not expect me back yet."

Frank Maidment coloured slightly.

"Oh, Kit, yes, of course—I forgot; you

said you'd go at dinner. It's this confounded headache that's been making me such a fool all day." He held out his cup to his sister to be refilled. "Is the post in?" he said, quickly, and rather as if he wished to change the subject. "It must be. It's half-past six. Ah, yes," as the servant who had spoken to Catherine Maidment before tea, came in with a packet of letters.

"Thank you, Margaret," Catherine Maidment said, as the woman went out again. "Any for me?" she added, looking at her brother while he turned them over.

He shook his head, and began to open his own. Catherine relapsed into silence, and there was no sound in the room but the faint hissing of the tea-urn, and the slight crackling Frank Maidment made in handling his letters. He flung the two first down unopened, with a frown and a look of annoyance.

"Carters' bill for the seeds again," he said, "and that other fellow's, I believe, too. You'd better look at them," he added, to his sister.

She stretched out her hand for them, took them, and opened them silently, while he went on with the others. He read them, and laid them beside him one by one with various comments, articulate and inarticulate.

"Reynolds wants to see me to-morrow," he said to Catherine. "He'd better come here, I suppose?"

"Yes; or I could go to him," she said, abstractedly, being still occupied in studying the two bills. "It's those school subscriptions at Stoneleigh, is it?"

"Yes," he said. "Stewart-Carr!" he went on, taking up the last letter of the pile. "I saw his large fist; but I thought he'd keep. It's sure to be money. He's always wanting money. He can't have it this time, though, if what you said yesterday is true, Kit; he must wait till some more comes in at Midsummer. It won't hurt him to wait," he said, musingly, running his eyes over the letter. The next moment he threw it down excitedly. "Good gracious!" he exclaimed.

"What is the matter?" his sister asked.

"Matter! He's coming down here. Coming down here to stay!"

"Mr. Stewart-Carr is coming to live here for good?"

"I don't know. He says: 'Take up my residence in my house for a time.' I suppose that means just what he likes to make it. But who would have thought of his coming here? I couldn't have imagined anything less likely if I'd had a bet on it!"

"When?"

"On the seventeenth. Yes, and he's got a lot of people, he says, coming on the eighteenth into the bargain. That means plenty of work to be got through first, somehow. He wants all the necessary orders given, and everything seen to. He's not been here for more than three years. Wasn't it before you came, Kit?"

"Yes. Just before I came."

"What on earth has induced him to come now? He must be going to be married, or something. He's the very last sort of man to settle down till he was obliged."

Frank Maidment got up and began to gather up his letters. "I'll go and tell them up at the Castle, I think," he said; "Mavors and Shepherd and the rest."

Catherine, who had risen too, laid her hand on her brother's arm. "Don't mind about them to-night," she said. "It'll be quite time enough if you let them know to-morrow. Stay here, and, when tea's cleared away, we can go through the things that must be seen to, and I'll make a list——"

"All that'll do to-morrow, Catherine, perfectly. I shall walk up to the house. I—my head isn't—I should like the turn in the air." He took her hand from his arm quickly but not angrily, and turned to go out of the room. "Who would have thought it?" he said again, as he shut the door.

Catherine Maidment rang for the tea to be cleared away. When this was done, she went to a large cupboard in the wainscot, and took down two large business-like looking books, filled with blue ruled paper, and containing entries that were nearly all in her own clear handwriting. She laid them on the table, and, seating herself before them, opened one of them, and began to make notes from it on a sheet of paper. She worked for an hour with intent energy. Then she closed it again; but, instead of opening the other, laid her hands on it, and her face down on them, with a heavy sigh

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BY MARY ANGELA DICKENS.

Author of "A Mist of Error," "Her Inheritance," "A Social Success," "Kitty's Victim," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXVI.

IT was a lovely summer morning, with a soft haze resting over everything, and enhancing the beauty which seemed to lie behind it.

On one of the upper reaches of the Thames stood a little inn, with an external air of having established itself in its present position more for the sake of quiet than with a view to custom, so lonely and sylvan were its surroundings, and here, through the haze, the sun was shining gloriously. It shone upon the green woods and gently rising hills between which the little thatched house nestled; it shone on the quaint casement windows and on the roses and honeysuckle climbing round them; it shone on the fresh green grass which sloped down to the river; and it shone on the sparkling water, moving softly along, blue and beautiful with the reflection of the unclouded sky above.

A hundred yards or more below the garden, fragrant with its stocks and mignonette, the river was crossed by a bridge, and on the bridge, with his arms resting on the low stone parapet, gazing straight before him, far beyond the point where the river took a sudden turn, stood John Tyrrell.

He was quite alone in the morning stillness, and he had been standing alone since six o'clock—nearly an hour ago. He was as unconscious of the passing of time as he was of the gradually increasing beauty about him—as he was of everything but the thoughts which had kept him now for the third night almost without sleep.

"You have made a mistake!"

Had the words been really spoken to him, he was wondering heavily now as he stared at the bright blue waters, or had they come from his own inner consciousness? They were part of his life now; he seemed to have lived with them for longer than he could remember. Selma had said them to him, had she not? "'You have made a mistake, Mr. Tyrrell!'" No, he had said them to himself. "You have made a mistake, John Tyrrell; a mistake! It is all——"

"Hullo, Tyrrell! Breakfast?"

The quiet of the morning was broken by a cheery man's voice. Two men had come to the porch of the little inn, and the elder of the two had shouted his announcement to Tyrrell in jolly, stentorian tones. Tyrrell took his arms mechanically from the parapet. "Coming," he said, and, as he moved, the second man, a tall, sunburnt young fellow, said in a low voice to his companion:

"He looks most awfully ill, Roberts. How rummy his voice is! What made him come? I shouldn't have thought this kind of thing was much in his line."

"I met him yesterday in Bond Street," returned the other. "He looked so ghastly that I thought it would do him good, and I told him he could moon about and do just as he liked. I believe he said 'Yes' because he didn't care enough to say 'No.' He's a good sort at the bottom. He pulled me out of a bad hole once upon a time, young fellow, before he was such a swell. Well, old man," he went on, raising his voice, as Tyrrell came up to them, "neat thing in mornings, isn't it?"

"Lovely," responded Tyrrell. He was strangely haggard, and his eyes had a curious, set expression as if, as Dick Clayton said wonderingly to himself, he were listening to something. But his manner, if it was a shade mechanical, was easy and courteous.

"I won't say breakfast is waiting!" said Miles Roberts, with a cheery laugh. "The other fellows are at it! But our breakfast is waiting. I brought this fellow out with me to look you up that we might have a look in eventually."

To this reference to his appetite, a standing joke with the party, Dick Clayton replied with a playful punch, and more or less fell into the room where breakfast was going on.

There were some half-dozen men there—it being a joint-stock affair in which Tyrrell was the guest of Miles Roberts, who was a friend of Tyrrell's early manhood, and of whom he never lost sight, though they met seldom enough. They were all more or less well known in literary or artistic lines, and they belonged to a set with which Tyrrell had never quite lost touch, though it was remote enough from the fashionable cliques of which he was one of the centres. The breakfast was jovial and noisy, if Tyrrell's words were few; but it was natural, the other men thought, that he should not be familiar with the jokes and allusions current in a party who had spent six weeks off and on in "chaffing" one another. Such a "swell" as Tyrrell was felt by some of them to be rather an incongruous element in the party, and Miles Roberts had been a good deal reviled for the eccentric impulse of old friendliness which had moved him to introduce the said "swell." "He looked so awfully played out, poor beggar," Roberts had explained apologetically, and though his words had been received with derision, the other men, having expressed themselves freely beforehand, were cordiality itself to Tyrrell when he appeared in person, and it was with a genial desire to dispel his ignorance that Dick Clayton called out to him when breakfast was nearly over:

"Don't be deluded by that fellow, Mr. Tyrrell. The truth is——" And there Tyrrell's attention wandered from the hilarious young voice—wandered completely and uncontrollably from the easy, noisy party.

"'I can never be your wife, Mr. Tyrrell! Never! never! never!'"

He had lost her utterly, just at the moment when he understood her worth! He had lost her for ever! Nothing—no years, no effort, no repentance—could help him! There was that between them which could never be bridged, which she could never forget. And she might have married him, he told himself calmly—she had pitied him, and she had once respected him. She might have married him if it had not been for—that.

The laughter and talk about him seemed to have withdrawn to a great distance, and to make a mocking background to his busy thoughts. He was not conscious that he answered Dick Clayton, mechanically and at random, though not perceptibly so; he was not conscious that he rose with the other men from the table, and stood about with them on the grass in front of the house; he was not conscious of wandering away from them presently along the bank of the river.

The other men smoked their pipes and cigars and chatted among themselves, and they hardly noticed his departure until Miles Roberts said, looking round carelessly:

"Any one see where Tyrrell went off to? He'll turn up for lunch, I suppose."

He was out of sight by that time, walking slowly with heavy, regular movements like a man who is hardly conscious of bodily motion in the active working of his mind. Everything was quite clear to him, there was nothing left for him to think out; but never for a single instant were the truths which had become so distinct otherwise than present to him.

Over and over again with a heavy, monotonous recapitulation, he went through the story of his life as he read it now in the light with which Selma's passionate words had flooded it. He saw himself as he had been at five-and-twenty, with all his life before him, in the first glow of success; full of artistic enthusiasm, ambitious; with good principles, high faiths and impulses. He saw himself a little later with easy success following easy success, popular and admired, with a slight dulness over his artistic ideal, a slight slackening of his artistic effort. He saw himself a society lion, appraising the adulation he received at its true worth, despising his admirers, despising the whole system at the bottom of his heart, but valuing the power and prosperity it brought him. He saw his artistic faiths and aims dead within him, slain by the bitter cynicism of the artist who had sold himself to society; slain so completely that only now and then did he remember that he had ever believed in that of which he now saw only the burlesque and travesty—art not as a means to a material end, but with a living soul. He had spent his life for a delusion and a lie, he had wasted his power, wasted his strength and his manhood, and all that he had valued was—nothing!

"'You have made a mistake, Mr. Tyrrell!'"

He stood still as unconsciously as he had moved forward, and he saw, not the fair summer landscape before him, but a beautiful white face with dark flashing eyes, which seemed to look into his across an impassable barrier of shame and wrong. More than once during the two days that had passed since his interview with Selma he had had the same sensation—as though that visionary face were burning into his brain and shutting out everything tangible and real. It passed again, and he resumed his mechanical walk and his monotonous thoughts.

He had lost her! He had read her by his own false, clouded lights; he had dragged her down to his own level, had schemed, and planned, and waited, and in the very intricacy of his calculations had defeated his own ends. If he had been capable of understanding a nature so much higher than his own, if he had been capable of loving her four years ago as he loved her now, it might have been! She might have guided him by the light that was in her to some redemption of his past.

"'Never! never! never!'"

He ground his teeth fiercely together, and his breath came short and quick. Never! He had put himself beyond the pale. She might forgive him, she might pity him, she might come in time to think of him tenderly as of her oldest friend whom she had once respected, but she would never let him take her in his arms, she would hardly let him touch her hand ever again. He knew it! The light had been long in coming to Tyrrell, but it was relentless in its brightness now that it had come. He realised that there is one thing that such a woman as Selma never forgets, never condones, and he knew that there was no hope for him. A dark, insolent woman's face rose before his eyes, and he ground his teeth afresh with impotent self-contempt and fury, and then the beautiful white face was there again with the horror-filled, shamed eyes, and he reeled for a moment heavily against a tree.

It passed again suddenly as a boat came swiftly down the river, the quick rhythmic dip of the oars, the laughter and talk of the men in it—Miles Roberts, and two more—breaking the stillness.

"Come aboard, Tyrrell," called out Roberts, as the rowers rested on their oars and backed gently, as the tide would have drifted them on; "there's a splendid stream on, and it's lunch-time. Come on!"

"Thanks," answered Tyrrell. "Bring her in a little more." He swung himself off the bank into the boat, saying, as the oars flashed in the sunlight again, "Have you been far?"

He took his share in the talk that followed, entering easily and naturally into all that passed, and though Miles Roberts thought once or twice that his eyes looked "odd," their expression told him nothing. He did not dream—not one of the men who laughed and talked to Tyrrell during lunch imagined—that his interest and amusement were the surface of depths of incessantly moving, hopeless thought, that he moved and talked through it, as it were, with the mechanical action of habit.

"Who is going to do what this afternoon?" enquired Dick Clayton, as they rose from lunch. "I am going to lie on my back in a punt under the bank."

"I will come and help you, Dick!" said Miles Roberts. "Lazy young beggar! Tyrrell, will a punt be about your form? It's very hot!"

Tyrrell was standing looking absently at the ground. He had dropped out of the conversation during the last few moments, and his consciousness had drifted away. He started as Miles Roberts turned to him, and said, lightly:

"It is hot, but I think I'll go for a row."

Twenty minutes more passed during which he heard and answered words and jests with the same curious double consciousness, and then he found himself seated alone in a boat, being cast off by Dick Clayton, under the superintendence of Miles Roberts.

"You'll find us under the trees higher up when you come down," called Miles Roberts after him. "We moor opposite the weir, that Dick may be lulled to sleep."

They stood a moment watching as he

got the boat out of the stream—he was going up the river—with a few strong, easy strokes, and then Dick Clayton exclaimed, with a whistle, "Great Scott! he'll be hot. How he's going it!"

Tyrrell had bent to his sculls suddenly, and he was rowing with all the strength and science of which he was a master. The boat shot on and on, and he rowed always harder and harder, as though some mental relief were to be hoped from the intense physical exertion, until every nerve and muscle were strained to the utmost, and he was rowing desperately. Mile after mile flew by—one, two, three—and then as suddenly as he had begun, he stopped.

It was useless! Not for a single instant had his mental consciousness been lessened; and now that beautiful white face was before him again, and he held the sculls suspended over the water, and sat gazing into the dark eyes. The boat drifted slowly into the stream, was turned gradually, and began to float gently down the river, and still the eyes held him, and he sat there motionless. Then the face faded, he unshipped the sculls mechanically, and let the boat drift with the current as he sat with idle hands, gazing before him with unseeing, hopeless eyes. What was the use of fighting or struggling? There was not a chance for him anywhere. His life lay all behind him, wasted. The future—there was no future in his thoughts, nothing but vain regret! The boat slipped softly down the stream, the green banks glided by, the river murmured gently, and he was quite unconscious of any of these things—of anything but the dreariness of utter hopelessness. Presently a boat passed him, and he met another coming up; but he never heard the energetic adjurations showered on him. Two hours passed, and his position was unchanged. His very thoughts were stationary. There was no hope for him—he had no other consciousness than that.

"You have made a mistake, a mistake, mistake!"

The river had been singing the words in a soft, monotonous chant. What made it suddenly rise and shout them with a confused rush of sound? The boat had been moving smoothly to the monotonous chant. Why did she suddenly stop and shiver? Why?

He lifted his head suddenly. Straight ahead of him, leaping and dancing in tumultuous confusion in the afternoon sunshine, were the waters of the weir above the bridge on which he had stood that morning. The boat was already caught in the current, and he was drifting swiftly and more swiftly with every instant to his death. With a desperate impulse—the impulse to cling to life which is in every man—he seized the sculls and tried to stem the stream. It was useless, and he saw it instantly. The scull snapped like a twig in his hand, and then he smiled.

"'You have made a mistake, Mr. Tyrrell. You have made a mistake.'"

The words were in his ears louder than the roar of the weir waters, getting nearer and nearer with a terrible rush. He heard a wild shout from under the opposite bank, and with the swift perception of such a moment he knew that it was Miles Roberts.

"Hold to the post, man! For Heaven's sake, hold to the post!"

The voices seemed to come from a far-off world, and he smiled again as he heard them. The danger-post flashed past him, the roar of the waters rose suddenly around him, and he saw nothing but a beautiful white face, heard nothing but a woman's voice:

"A mistake, a mistake!"

But the waters of death had closed over John Tyrrell, and all his mistakes were ended!

CHAPTER XXVII.

THROUGHOUT the remainder of that summer and throughout the early part of the autumn that followed it Selma was very ill, not dangerously ill after the first, but seeming to regain little strength and to care to regain it less. The news of Tyrrell's death told to her gently by Helen, who was very anxious about her even then, seemed to break her down utterly, and she grieved for him with a grief that could find few words, and expressed itself only in the slow, heavily-dropping tears which stole down her thin white cheeks so constantly as she lay still hour after hour with weary, hopeless eyes—tears which fell for her dead trust in her friend and for the pitiful story of his life as she saw it now.

Five years had passed since then, and it was a bright afternoon early in November. Helen's drawing-room looked very dainty and pretty—not the less dainty for the fact that little Helen, growing quite a "large girl" now, as she said of herself, and two small brothers, were quite as happy there as in their nursery. Helen was sitting near the fire, talking to a lady, and nearer the window, talking to Mrs. Cornish and Humphrey, with little Helen sitting on her knee, was Selma.

She had been a beautiful girl, and she was now a most beautiful woman. Her features, always grave and quiet now, except when she was acting, were a little worn and thin, as though with past suffering or deep thought—perhaps with both.

The large, dark eyes looked larger and lovelier than ever from the slight hollowing of the setting and the faint shadows about them, and their expression was quiet and steady. There were lines about the mouth, and its girlish curves were gone for ever; but the lovely lips had acquired a dignity and sweetness which they had never worn in her youth, and as they smiled down at the child on her knee, it was no wonder that a little hand stole softly up to stroke her cheek. No child ever turned away from Selma now.

"Nothing could please me more than to hear that," she was saying, quietly, and to her voice as to her face time had brought only maturity of beauty.

"I'm not given to crying, my dear," responded Mrs. Cornish, energetically. "I'm too old to cry about nothing; but I couldn't get over it at all. My dear, you are wonderful—it's late in the day to tell you that, I know; everybody knows all about you. But I never realised it myself before."

Mrs. Cornish rose as she spoke, and the other lady who had come with her to call on Helen followed her example.

"There is nothing left for any one to say about Miss Malet," she said, turning to Selma with a smile. "We owe her a great deal. May I thank you, at least, for your performance the other night?"

"Thank you," said Selma, courteously, with the same grave smile.

Mrs. Cornish took her into her arms, with a curious touch of respect mingled with her cordiality; and then the two ladies took leave, and departed with Helen to visit the nursery.

"You have made a conquest, Selma," said Humphrey, smiling, as the door closed upon them.

"Auntie?" said Selma, crossing to the fireplace as she spoke. "I am very pleased. Humphrey, don't you think that there is a great deal in criticism like that? I feel as though one's work must ring true to touch any one like auntie. She never reasons as to how a thing is done."

She was looking thoughtfully into the fire as she spoke, and Humphrey watched her for a moment before he answered her. He had watched her a great deal during the past five years, and all he knew now was that there were depths in her of which he had known nothing when he thought that her artist life was over, and that she might marry John Tyrrell for his money and position; depths that he should never quite fathom; strength, and nobility, and constancy that he could only guess at. She was such an artist now as he had known long ago that she might be. She had devoted herself to her work with a curious, steady, unexpressed reverence for it which differed strangely from her old enthusiasm; her genius had developed with every year; and every year there strengthened about her a certain atmosphere, as of a woman whose every thought and aspiration centres round an ideal which has, she knows, no realisation on earth; who looks through, and beyond, the art to which her life is given, to the perfect beauty and completeness of which all human art is as the faintest shadowing forth.

Her quiet life was very full, as the life of such an artist cannot fail to be—she stood at the head of her profession with an artistic position which was unassailable—but Humphrey wondered often, as he looked at her face in repose, whether she was happy. He knew that a certain amount of unsatisfied longing was inevitable to the artist nature in her. But was she as happy as she might have been? Was she happy as a woman? He had known the truth about her heart that day, long ago, in the studio, when Mervyn and Roger were there together; he had known then that she loved Roger still; but he was conscious of having been entirely mistaken in his after judgement of her. Now he was conscious of a certain vague pity and sympathy as he looked at her or talked to her. Was she content? he wondered often. He was wondering now rather sadly as he answered:

"I quite agree with you. Intellectual criticism is fascinating, but it is not an infallible test." He paused a moment, and then said gently, almost in spite of himself: "Your work stands both tests, Selma—intellectual and emotional. You should be satisfied."

She lifted her eyes to him with a slight smile.

"Satisfied with my work, Humphrey?"

"Hardly that," he responded, answering her smile. "I don't wish you stagnation! Satisfied with life!"

She did not answer him at once. He thought she sighed, but the sound was very low. She had not raised her head, and was standing in the same quiet, graceful attitude, looking steadily into the fire, when there was a sudden sound of voices in the hall. Humphrey, turning quickly, did not see that Selma turned a little paler; and the next moment he had crossed the room, opened the door, and was shaking his brother Roger by both hands.

"Old boy!" he exclaimed. "When did you get back?"

"Only last night," exclaimed Helen, who was following—as Roger returned the clasp of his brother's hands with a hearty, "How are you, old fellow?"—"Isn't it nice of him to come to us to-day? And how is Mervyn? Tell us all about her," she added, delightedly, while Roger shook hands with Selma, who had come quietly forward to meet him.

Roger and Mervyn had been abroad for more than a year. Mervyn had never seemed to get over the loss of her baby, and year after year had left her more fragile and delicate, until at last—eighteen months before—the death of her father had given her a shock which led to a long illness. Her father had left her money, and when she was advised to live abroad for a year at least, Roger was able to arrange his business affairs and take her away. For many months there had been little hope of his ever bringing her back again, and his few short letters home had been almost heart-broken. Then there had come a change; she had begun to gain a little strength. And now she had come home again, as Roger assured Helen with exuberant happiness, "The strongest little woman in London."

"She would have come with me this afternoon," he said, "but there's some bother with the servants. Come back with me, Helen, and see her. She'll be so awfully pleased. I want to show her off to you. You won't know her."

Roger himself was altered almost as much as Mervyn could be. He was much bronzed, and his face was firmer and stronger for the five years of anxiety about his little wife. There were lines in it, and a touch of grey in the hair about his temples which aged him and at the same time improved him greatly, with the touch of dignity and maturer, more thoughtful, manhood they brought him. His blue eyes were radiant with an almost triumphant happiness now, however, as he turned them upon Helen, and she answered:

"I'll come with pleasure, Roger. I'm longing to see her. Oh, I'm so glad!"

"When did you cross?" asked Humphrey.

"By the midday boat, yesterday," answered Roger. "Mervyn hates night journeys."

"You had a lovely day," commented Selma, quietly. And then a servant came and spoke to Humphrey.

"A lady in the studio, sir, to see you about a picture."

"Very well," he responded. "What a nuisance, Roger! She may keep me half an hour. You're not off in a hurry?"

"I am, worse luck!" returned Roger, ruefully. "We must say good-bye, old man."

They stood a moment arranging a future meeting that should not be interrupted by commissions, and then, after another tremendous handshake, Humphrey departed, and Roger said to Helen:

"Is it a good thing?"

"It's splendid!" said Helen, proudly. "He doesn't often take commissions; he says they are a tie; but he couldn't refuse this."

She told him all about it; and they talked for a little while of Humphrey and his success, coming back again to Mervyn and their travels, until Roger said, finally:

"If you really will come back with me, Helen, I think we ought to be off. She will be expecting me."

Helen rose at once. "I'll go and get ready," she said. "Selma, dear, tell me the time, if you can see the clock?" and as Selma answered her she left the room.

There was a moment's silence as she shut the door—a silence which was broken by Selma.

"Did you come straight through? It is a long journey," she said.

"We spent twenty-four hours in Paris," he answered. "Mervyn is very fond of it, and she shopped furiously all day."

He was looking at the quiet, graceful figure opposite him as he spoke, thinking how beautiful she was, and how greatly she had altered. It was a long time since he had felt as though the Selma of the day and the Selma of old were really one and the same, and now the time that had elapsed since he had seen her seemed to make him realise the difference more distinctly than he had ever done before. He could not feel as though this grave, sweet woman was the girl he had loved and lost. That girl had been the ideal of his youth, this woman was something far away from him, to be respected and admired from a distance. The two had two points in common in his mind, and only two; they were both beautiful and incomprehensible, and they were both far above him. They had another point in common, of which he was not conscious. They existed side by side in the dim background of his thoughts, while all the foreground was filled with the wife he loved.

"She was always enthusiastic over shopping," said Selma, smiling at his description of Mervyn's proceedings in Paris. "It is delightful to hear that she is strong enough for such a hard day's work."

"It is delightful," rejoined Roger, fervently, his whole face glowing with satisfaction.

The November afternoon was drawing in, and the room was growing dark. The flickering fire lighted Roger's features as he stood near it, and Selma's eyes, as she sat in shadow, were fixed upon him steadily.

"You are quite satisfied about her? She is quite strong again?" she said. Her voice was very low and sweet, and there was something in its tone which seemed to stir the depths of Roger's thankfulness and joy. He looked down into the beautiful woman's face lifted to his, seeing nothing but the sympathy he read in it, remembering nothing but his own great happiness.

"She is quite strong again," he said, softly. "I can't tell you what it is to me to know it."

Selma rose, still with her eyes on his, and held out her hand gently to him.

"You are very happy?" she said.

"I am very, very happy," he answered.

"I am glad!" The three words came from her very softly, and an instant later Helen's voice called him from the hall; he wrung the slender hand he held, and was gone.

"Take care of yourself, Selma!" called Helen's voice, cheerily, as the street-door opened. Then it closed again.

Selma walked slowly across the room to the window. She could not see from it the street along which Helen and Roger were walking. She stood there, quietly looking out into the fast darkening evening—alone.

THE "DIVINE WEED."

IN TWO PARTS. PART I.

"A PIPE," it is said, "is a poor man's friend, an old soldier's darling, and a parson's joy. In its little clouds the curate reads his sermons, which tell the way to heaven." Few who have experienced the pleasures of smoking will be inclined to quarrel with this dictum, for when the user of tobacco feels down-hearted, when it seems as though all the world were against him, does he not fly to his pipe or cigar, and, as the blue fragrant smoke wreathes itself about him, does he not for the moment forget his cares and anxieties, and live not in the black-looking future, but in the bright, real present? To him tobacco is a solace, it is his friend, his companion; and as its soothing influence makes itself felt, he looks around him, sets his wits to work, and as often as not sees a way out of those difficulties which before seemed insurmountable. And when the stream of life flows on smoothly and calmly, how delightful it is when the day's labours are over to sit by the fireside, his feet encased in that comfortable pair of slippers cunningly wrought by loving fingers, and contemplate the joys of home through the curling smoke as it rises slowly upwards! Again, what is there like a pipe or a cigar to relieve the tedium of a long journey, or to calm the troubled mind, and find a solution to some difficulty—some wearying set of figures that have puzzled and baffled one the whole day through?

Smoking is one of the most nearly universal habits under the sun; it commends itself because it is clean, pleasant, and, except in a few highly sensitive natures, favoured by the ladies. "Pa," said a daughter, one day, "I don't know how it is, but you always give me anything I want, and you are always in a good humour, when you are smoking." And it is so in nine cases out of ten; a man who is smoking is invariably in a good humour, and consequently more easily approached. Simple though the acquirement of the habit is, there is a proper way to smoke, and "Punch," noted for its good advice, once said:

> Learn to smoke slow. The other grace is,
> To keep your smoke from people's faces.

But there is another piece of advice which may well be added to this: "Do not abuse tobacco; the best friend is spoiled in abuse."

It is in the abuse of tobacco that so much of the pleasure is sacrificed, whence we hear such expressions as, "It's a beastly habit." Smoking properly indulged in has, as I have before observed, a soothing influence, and as a very old poet says:

> It helpeth digestion,
> Of that there's no question,
> The gout and the tooth-ache it easeth;
> Be it early or late,
> 'Tis ne'er out of date,
> He may safely take it that pleaseth.
>
> Tobacco prevents
> Infection by scents
> That hurt the brain, and are heady;
> An antidote is
> Before you're amiss,
> As well as an after remedy.
>
> The cold it doth heat,
> Cools them that do sweat,
> And them that are fat maketh lean;
> The hungry doth feed,
> And, if there be need,
> Spent spirits restoreth again.

These verses were written as long ago as 1650, and for every single individual who could support the statements made at that time, at least a score will do so to-day when the weed and its effects are so much better known and so much more highly appreciated.

But tobacco has other recommendations. "Academicus," writing to "The Gentleman's Magazine" for September, 1814, page 219, states that "Many writers have mentioned the power of tobacco in suspending hunger. This is not unknown to people who are in the habit of chewing it. Monardes says the Indian chew pills made of tobacco, so that their languor and thirst are so allayed thereby, that they can travel many days without food. Magnenus records that a soldier at the siege of Valencia, in 1636, lived without food for a week, and underwent the greatest fatigue, by chewing tobacco only. Every person knows what violent contentions and partisans tobacco gave rise to, on its first introduction into England; King James entered the lists furiously against it, and others as furiously defended it. Perhaps Ben Jonson had these combatants in view in Bobadil's extravagant eulogium on tobacco. 'I have been,' says the admirable braggadocio, 'in the Indies, where this herb grows, where neither myself nor a dozen gentlemen more, of my knowledge, have received the taste of any other nutriment in the world for the space of one-and-twenty weeks, but the fume of this simple only.'"

An English epigrammatist, who held similar opinions about the power of tobacco to appease hunger, wrote:

> All dainty meats I do defy,
> Which feed men fat as swine;
> He is a frugal man, indeed,
> That on a leaf can dine!
> He needs no napkin for his hands,
> His fingers' ends to wipe,
> That keeps his kitchen in a box,
> And roast meat in his pipe.

In "Westward Ho!" Canon Kingsley has the following piece of testimony on this point:

"Sir, the Indians always carry it with them on their war-parties: and no wonder; for when all things were made none was made better than this; to be a lone man's companion, a bachelor's friend, a hungry man's food, a sad man's cordial, a wakeful man's sleep, and a chilly man's fire, sir, while for stanching of wounds, purging of rheum, and settling of the stomach, there's no herb like unto it under the canopy of heaven."

Now I come to the more historical part of this "cloudy" subject. There is a conflict of opinion as to whence we derive the name tobacco—"Nicotiana Tabacum." Some say it derived its name from Tabacco, a province of Yucatan, New Spain, while others derive it from the Island of Tobago, one of the Caribbees. Others again, perhaps equally correct, assert that it is derived from Tobasco, in the Gulf of Florida. Be that as it may, it is said to have been first discovered at San Domingo, in Cuba, in 1492, and to have been used freely by the Spaniards in Yucatan in 1520. The custom of smoking was certainly prevalent in the time of Jacques Cartier, the French traveller. In the narrative of his second voyage to Canada in 1535, the following quaint record will be found:

"The Indians have an herb of which, during the summer, they gather a great quantity for the winter, and which they prize very highly, and use—the men only—in the following manner. They dry in the sun, and suspend it from their neck, tied up in a little skin instead of in a bag, together with a horn of stone or wood. Then at all hours they make a powder of the said herb, and put it in one end of the horn, and through the thin end they blow so hard that their body is filled with smoke, so much that it comes out of their mouth and nostrils as out of a chimney. They say that this keeps them healthy and warm, and they never go about without these things. We have tried the said smoke, and having had it in our mouth, it seemed to contain pepper, so great was the heat of it."

But there is evidence even of a much more ancient use of tobacco by the American aborigines than the testimony of Cartier. In the mounds of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and Iowa, so ancient that even the tradition as to their object is lost, are found pipes, curiously carved in porphyry and other hard stones. Some of these pipes are chiselled into the shape of remarkable birds and strange animals, and constitute ethnological relics of the utmost interest. Others are simply bowls, rising from a platform pierced from end to end, the whole made out of the same piece of stone. Clay pipes are also not uncommon, the shape assimilating very closely with that of the European models. Of course these pipes could not have been used for any other purpose than that of smoking tobacco.

It is much to be regretted that there are no means at hand to decide the antiquity of these mounds, and the uses to which the pipes were put. Inferentially, they could only have been made and used for the purpose of smoking tobacco or some other herb which, in the dark ages served as a substitute for the tobacco of to-day. We can only speculate, but we have a right to claim that their existence is primâ facie evidence of an extremely ancient custom of smoking.

But we need not go so far away as the American Continent for evidence of this kind; we can have it in our own country. Thus, an "Occasional Correspondent" to "The Gentleman's Magazine," June, 1792, page 500, states that, "I find in the third volume, page 543, of Mr. Gough's edition of Camden's 'Britannia,' that a rude tobacco pipe, of coarse brown earth, was found, a few years ago, sticking between the teeth of a skull, which was dug up, with a vast number of other skulls and bones, in an old entrenchment at Brannockstown, in the County of Kildare, in Ireland, where a great battle was fought in the ninth century. Permit me to enquire, through the channel of your widely circulating repository of useful information, whether pipes of that sort were used, and for what purpose, before the introduction of tobacco by Sir Walter Raleigh in the sixteenth century?"

I have searched through my file of the magazine, but cannot find any answer, and conclude therefrom that the question permits of no positive answer. But the Abbé Cochet, in his work on Subterranean Normandy, mentions the discovery of the same class of clay pipes in the Roman necropolis near Dieppe. He at first considered them to belong to the seventeenth century, or perhaps the time of Henry the Third. Subsequently he changed his mind, and came to the conclusion that these pipes were in use for the purpose of smoking before the days of Columbus, if not, indeed, before those of Julius Cæsar.

Professor J. Beckmann, in "An Introduction to Technology," 1800, says: "To me it appears probable, that even before the discovery of the fourth quarter of the globe, a sort of tobacco was smoked in Asia. This conjecture being mentioned to the celebrated traveller, M. Pallas, he gave the following answer: 'That in Asia, and especially in China, the use of tobacco for smoking is more ancient than the discovery of the New World, I, too, scarcely entertain a doubt. Among the Chinese, and among the Mongol tribes who had the most intercourse with them, the custom of smoking is so general, so frequent, and become so indispensable a luxury; the tobacco-purse affixed to their belt so necessary an article of dress; the form of the pipes—from which the Dutch seem to have taken the model of theirs—so original; and, lastly, the preparation of the yellow leaves, which are merely rubbed to pieces, and then put into the pipe, so peculiar; that we cannot possibly derive all this from America by way of Europe, especially as India, where the habit of smoking tobacco is not so general, intervenes between Persia and China. May we not expect to find traces of this custom in the first account of the voyages of the Portuguese and Dutch to China?' To investigate this subject I have indeed the inclination, but at present, at least, not sufficient leisure, and must therefore leave it to others. However, I can now adduce one important confirmation of my conjecture from 'Ulloa's Voyage to America.' 'It is not probable,' says he, 'that the Europeans learned the use of tobacco from America; for, as it is very ancient in the Eastern countries, it is natural to suppose that the knowledge of it came to Europe from those regions, by means of the intercourse carried on with them by the commercial States on the Mediterranean Sea. Nowhere, not even in those parts of America where the tobacco-plant grows wild, is the use of it—and that only for smoking—either general or very frequent.'"

There is a pretty Indian tradition regarding the origin of tobacco, that is worth recording. These unsophisticated children of Nature say that, in the beginning, their sole food was flesh, and starvation threatened them when animals were scarce. One day a couple of hunters killed a deer, and had just cooked a portion of it, when they saw a beautiful spirit descend from the sky, and sit down on an adjacent hill. One of the hunters said:

"This spirit has, perhaps, seen that we have meat; let us offer her the tongue."

The spirit was pleased with the dainty, and, in return, said:

"Your kindness is great; thirteen moons hence you will find your reward on this spot."

On the appointed day the hunters repaired to the same place, and discovered three new sources of sustenance: where the right hand of the spirit had touched, maize was just ripening; upon the left some beans appeared; and on the top of the hill, where the spirit had sat, tobacco was growing in full vigour.

Longfellow has given a beautiful origin of the calumet of peace in "The Song of Hiawatha," a portion of which will not be out of place here:

On the mountains of the prairie,
On the Great Red Pipe Stone Quarry,
Gitche Manito, the mighty,
He the Master of Life, descending
On the red crags of the quarry,
Stood erect, and called the nations,
Called the tribes of men together.

From the red stone of the quarry,
With his hand he broke a fragment,
Moulded it into a pipe-head,
Shaped and fashioned it with figures;
From the margin of the river
Took a long reed for a pipe-stem,
With its dark-green leaves upon it;
Filled the pipe with bark of willow—
With the bark of the red willow.
Breathed upon the neighbouring forest,
Made its green boughs chafe together,
Till in flame they burst and kindled.
And, erect, upon the mountains,
Gitche Manito, the mighty,
Smoked the Calumet—the Peace Pipe—
As a signal to the nations.

There is also a very curious legend told in the "Athenian Oracle" as to the origin of the use of tobacco amongst Europeans: "When the Christians first discovered America, the devil was afraid of losing his hold of the people there by the appearance of Christianity. He is reported to have told some Indians of his acquaintance that he had found a way to be revenged upon the Christians for beating up his quarters, for he would teach them to take tobacco, to which, when they had once tasted it, they should become perpetual slaves."

To return for a few moments to the "Song of Hiawatha," the following legend is told of the origin of the Great Red Pipe Stone Quarry, from which the first pipe was fashioned. In the time of a great freshet, which took place many centuries ago, and destroyed all the nations of the earth, all the tribes of the red-men assembled on the Côteau des Prairies to get out of the way of the waters. After they had all gathered here from every part, the water continued to rise until, at length, it covered them all in a mass, and their flesh was converted into red pipe stone. Therefore, it has always been considered neutral ground; it belongs to all tribes alike, and all were allowed to get it and smoke it together. While they were all drowning in a mass, a young woman, Kwaptahu, a virgin, caught hold of the foot of a very large bird that was flying over, and was carried to the top of a high cliff not far off, that was above the water. Here she had twins, and their father was the war-eagle, and her children have since peopled the earth.

The first introduction of tobacco into Europe appears to have been through the medium of Jean Nicot, from whom the plant undoubtedly owes its name of Nicotiana. Nicot, who was one of the French Ambassadors to the Spanish Court, sent some of the seed from Lisbon to France in 1559 or 1560. The use of tobacco speedily became popular, in spite of the strenuous opposition from those sitting in high places, who did not scruple to direct severe persecution against its votaries.

Curiously enough, Jean Nicot sent the weed, not for the purpose of smoking, but to the Queen, Catherine de' Medici, as a sovereign remedy against the pangs of toothache.

Who brought tobacco first into England is a disputed point, and is likely, from lack of documentary evidence, to remain so. It was first introduced between the years 1584-6, some authorities say, by Sir Walter Raleigh; others assert that the first specimen was brought by Sir John Hawkins, in 1565; while others are of opinion that Sir Francis Drake and Sir Walter Raleigh did not bring any of the "article of consumption;" into England until about 1586. However this may be, he who first brought it in was a national benefactor, for, besides soothing our minds, tobacco goes a considerable way towards paying our taxes.

The use of tobacco in England met with quite as much opposition as it had previously received in France. Both priests and rulers combined to suppress it. Popes Urban the Thirteenth and Innocent the Ninth issued bulls excommunicating it. But all was in vain: priestly and regal edicts were ignored, and tobacco grew in popularity.

The priests with awe,
As such freaks they saw,
Said the devil must be in that plant tobacco.

In or out, the love for a "puff" has grown until it has become the most extensively used luxury on the face of the globe. Tobacco is to-day just what Maginn tells us it was in his time, that:

"Smoking is and always has been a healthful and fashionable English custom. There were schools and professors established here for the purpose of teaching the mystery of smoking on the first introduction of the Indian weed; and the mode of exspifflicating the smoke out of one's mouth is at present, as it were, a shibboleth demonstrative of an English gentleman."

It appears from some passages in several old plays that the critics and wits of the time usually sat upon the stage, attended by pages, who furnished them with pipes of tobacco, which, it is said, "Was commonly smoked in the theatres, as well by women as men, and which was conceived a grievous nuisance." In "Dyer's Dry Dinner," the author wrote an epigram on the wanton and excessive use of that herb in the following terms:

It chaunced me gazing at the Theatre
To spie a Dock-Tobacco Chevalier,
Clouding the loathing ayr with foggy fume
Of Dock-Tobacco.
I wish't the Roman lawes severity:
Who smoke selleth, with smoke be done to dy.

This practice at length became such an intolerable nuisance that, first tobacco was banished from the stage, and subsequently from the body of the theatre itself.

At one period of its history, smoking was so common that it was actually practised in church. Previous to the visit of James the First to the University of Cambridge, in 1615, the Vice-Chancellor issued a notice to the students, which enjoined that "Noe graduate, scholler, or student of this Universitie presume to take tobacco in Saint Marie's Church, uppon payne of finall expellinge the Universitie."

The Rev. Dr. Parr, when perpetual curate of Hatton, Warwickshire, which living he held from 1783 to 1790, regularly smoked in the vestry whilst the congregation were singing long hymns, chosen for the purpose, immediately before the sermon. The doctor was wont to exclaim: "My people like long hymns, but I prefer a long pipe."

The Rev. Robert Hall, of Leicester, the well-known Baptist minister, regularly indulged in smoking during the intervals of divine worship.

Sir Walter Scott, in his "Heart of Midlothian," refers to one Duncan, of Knockdunder, an important personage, who smoked during the whole of the sermon, from an iron pipe, tobacco borrowed from other worshippers. We are told that "at the end of the discourse he knocked the ashes out of his pipe, replaced it in his sporran, returned the tobacco-pouch to its owner, and joined in the prayer with decency and attention."

The Puritan Fathers were greatly addicted to smoking; indeed, the practice became so common that even these strait-laced observers of times and seasons actually smoked in church. This custom soon caused very considerable annoyance, as the religious exercises were greatly disturbed by the clicking of flints and steels to light their pipes, and the clouds of smoke in church. Hence, in the year 1669, the colony passed this law: "It is enacted that any person or persons that shall be found smoking of tobacco on the Lord's Day, going to or coming from the meetings, within two miles of meeting-house, shall pay twelve pence for every such default." Under this law several persons were actually fined; but the punishment failed to secure the carrying out of the arbitrary second portion of the enactment.

The custom of smoking during church service was not confined to the laity and minor clergy, for it is recorded that an Archbishop of York was once reproved by the Vicar of Saint Mary's, Nottingham, for attempting to smoke in the church vestry.

The Rev. John Disney of Swinderley, in Lincolnshire, writing on the thirteenth of December, 1773, to James Grainger, says: "The affair happened in Saint Mary's Church, in Nottingham, when Archbishop Blackbourn was there on a visitation. The Archbishop had ordered some of the apparitors or other attendants to bring him pipes and tobacco, and some liquor, into the vestry for his refreshment, after the fatigue of confirmation. And this coming to Mr. Disney's ears, he forbade their being brought thither; and, with a becoming spirit, remonstrated with the Archbishop upon the impropriety of his conduct, at the same time telling his grace that his vestry should not be converted into a smoking-room." The Mr. Disney referred to was the writer's grandfather, who was Vicar of Nottingham.

In contradistinction to this, it is curious to find the stipends of clergymen paid in tobacco. Thus, a vestry-book, extending from 1723 to 1771, of Saint John's Church, Hampton, Virginia, is still carefully preserved, having been rescued from some old county records. From this chronicle one can get a glimpse of the state of society, and its economic condition. The ecclesiastical currency was tobacco, and for the service of the church each "tithable" was assessed every year at so many pounds. We find such entries as these:

"To Mr. Barlow, for 17 sermons at 350 lbs. of tobacco—5950 lbs.; To Rev. John Reid salary, 16,000 lbs.; To ditto for board, 1500 lbs.; To ditto for clerk, 1000 lbs.; To Mary Cleark, sexton, 400 lbs."

"Agreed with James Briggs to keep Eliza Impet for one year, and to find her in cloathes for 1260 lbs. of tobacco."

"To widow Lawrence, being pore, 500 lbs. of tobacco."

From an entry before the book closes, it appears that 16,000 lbs. of tobacco sold for £101 11s. 11d. The church expenses averaged about 70,000 lbs. of tobacco per year, or somewhere about £450. The price of tobacco varied; but that there should not be an unlimited currency, as it were, the parish was divided into districts, and each year there appeared such records as "Samuel Davis and William Bridger are appointed viewers of tobacco from the river to Blackwater." It was the business of these viewers, or tellers, as they were called sometimes, to estimate and restrict the number of young plants, that there might not be over-production, lest the church income should suffer from too low prices.

In addition to this there is a quaint old law still extant in Virginia, that a fine of fifty pounds of leaf tobacco may be inflicted upon a man if he absents himself from church for a month without a valid excuse, which must be endorsed by three persons.

In England, formerly, smoking was forbidden amongst schoolmasters, and in the rules of Chigwell School, founded in 1629, it was ordered "That the Head Master must be a man of sound religion, neither Papist nor Puritan, of a grave behaviour, and sober and honest conversation; no tippler or haunter of ale-houses, and no puffer of tobacco."

What some of our narrow-minded forefathers thought of the new-formed habit of smoking may be gathered from the following extract, taken from the Proceedings and Debates of the House of Commons:

"Wednesday, April 16, 1621. Sir William Stroud moved 'That he would have tobacco banished wholly out of the kingdom, and that it may not be brought in from any port, nor used amongst us.' And Sir Guy Palmer said, 'If tobacco be not banished, it will overthrow one hundred thousand men in England, for now it is so common that I have seen ploughmen take it as they are at plough.'"

This notwithstanding, we have Burton, in his "Anatomie of Melancholy," describing it as "Tobacco, divine, rare, super-excellent tobacco, which goes farre beyond all their panaceas, potable gold, and philosopher's stones; a sovereign remedy to all diseases. A good vomit, I confesse, a vertuose herbe, if it be well qualified, opportunely taken, and medicinally used; but as it is commonly used by most men, which take it as tinkers doe ale, 'tis a plague, a mischiefe, a violent purger of goods, lands, health, hellish, devilish, and damned tobacco, the ruine and overthrow of bodie and soule."

At a later period of the same century, so inveterate had become the practice, that an order was placed on the journals of the House of Commons as follows:

"That no Member of the House do presume to smoke tobacco in the gallery, or at the table of the House, sitting at Committee."

Soon after its introduction into England, tobacco taverns began to make their appearance, and to multiply. The first of these houses was the "Pied Bull Inn," Islington; but in the crusade against its use, ale-houses were forbidden to supply it to any one. In the possession of the Society of Antiquaries, London, is a license to an ale-house, granted by six justices of the peace for Kent, at the foot of which there is this note:

"Item. You shall not utter nor wilingly suffer to be utter'd, drunke, or taken, any tobacco within your house, cellar, or other place thereunto belonging."

No doubt similar restrictions were imposed by magistrates generally about that time.

In 1584 Queen Elizabeth had grown so much opposed to the Indian weed as to issue a strong proclamation against its use.

In 1614 the Star Chamber ordered that tobacco should pay a duty of six shillings and tenpence per pound; yet soon after this it appears to have been profitably grown in Worcestershire and neighbourhood. It was first cultivated at Winchcombe, on the borders of Gloucestershire, and quickly became so profitable a crop as to lead to its speedy introduction to Worcester, Freckenham, Eckington, Pershore, Upton Sudesbury, Pensham, Kempsey, and other places. It was not, however, until the century was forty-three years old that any mention of it occurs in the Worcester City records, and then we find in the Chamberlain's accounts:

"Item. For one ounce of bacca which Mr. Maior sent for to spend upon Colonel Sandys, and for bacca pipe, eighteenpence."

Then came an edict prohibiting the cultivation of tobacco; but so profitable an industry was it, that farmers defied the orders of the Lords of the Council and of Parliament as well.

In 1659, William George, of Eckington, was indicted at the Worcester County Sessions for "planting, setting, growing, making, and curing tobacco there on four hundred poles of land." He was duly convicted, and fined four hundred pounds, or one pound per pole. This was followed by an order of Parliament "That no person plant tobacco after January 1st, 1660, according to the Act of Parliament, within England, to sell, upon forfeiture of the same or value thereof, or 40s. for every roode or pole so planted, set, or sown; one moiety to the King, and the other to the informer. Not to extend to physick gardens in the University."

Mr. Jorevin, who visited Worcester in the time of Charles the Second, and put up at the "Stag Inn," states that women there smoked as well as men. Complaints were made of this imitation of the manners of a savage people, as it was feared that by this practice Englishmen would degenerate into a barbarous state.

In a previous reign we find attempts made to abolish smoking, all of which proved futile, and, to go further back still, we have the British Solomon—James the First—trying to do that which the thunders of the Vatican and terrors of excommunication had failed to accomplish, namely, to stamp out tobacco from the country. The sapient monarch would, no doubt, had he dared, have used harsh measures; but the people were too strong for him. Still, if he could not do this, he did what he could, by writing that superb monument of folly — the famous "Counterblaste to Tobacco." In concluding this precious effusion, he asks:

"Have you not reason, then, to be ashamed and to forbear this filthy novelty, so basely grounded, so foolishly received, and so grossly mistaken in the right use thereof. In your abuse thereof sinning against God, harming yourselves both in persons and goods, and taking also thereby (look to it ye that use snuff in profusion) the marks and notes of vanity upon you; by the custom thereof making yourselves to be wondered at by all foreign civil nations, and by all strangers that come among you, to be scorned and contemned; a custom loathsome to the eye, hateful to the nose, harmful to the brain, dangerous to the lungs, and in the black stinking fumes thereof, nearest resembling the horrible stygian smoke of the pit that is bottomless."

In the plenitude of his superlative wisdom James imposed a heavy import duty on tobacco, and prohibited its cultivation in England. Later on in his Apothegms, published in 1658, James the First is alleged to have professed "that were he to invite the devil to a dinner, he should have these three dishes,—(1) a pig; (2) a poll and ling of mustard; (3) a pipe of tobacco for digesture."

Seven years before this was published—in 1651—one of the most vigorous attacks on tobacco that has ever appeared was published. It appeared in "Hymnus Tabaci," by Raphael Thorius, and translated into English by Peter Hausted, M.A.

Let it be damned to hell, and called from thence
Proserpine's wine, the Furies' frankincence,
The devil's addle eggs, or else to these
A sacrifice grim Pluto to appease;
A deadly weed, which its beginning had
From the foam of Cerberus, when the cur was mad.

Counterblasts, damnings, and punishments were, however, all of no avail, and it is just probable that the very persecution of smokers led to the universal adoption of the practice of smoking.

Perhaps the soothing influence of the weed proved its greatest recommendation; certain it is that no one philosophises like the smoker.

Of the smoking philosopher, Captain Marryat, in "Jacob Faithful," says: "His whole amusement was his pipe, and as there is a certain indefinable link between smoking and philosophy, my father, by dint of smoking, had become a perfect philosopher. It is no less strange than true, that we can puff away our cares with tobacco, when, without it, they remain an oppressive burden to existence. There is no composing draught like the draught through the tube of a pipe. The savage warriors of North America enjoyed the blessing before we did, and to the pipe is to be ascribed the wisdom of their councils, and the laconic delivery of their sentiments. It would be well introduced into our legislative assembly. Ladies, indeed, would no longer peep down through the ventilator; but we should have more sense and fewer words. It is also to tobacco that is to be ascribed the stoical firmness of those American warriors, who, satisfied with the pipe in their mouths, submitted with perfect indifference to the torture of their enemies. From the well-known virtues of this weed arose that peculiar expression when you irritate another, that you 'put his pipe out.'"

But Marryat is not alone in laying great stress on the virtues of tobacco in calming the mind and setting man thinking. Other authors bear evidence to the same effect.

Sam Slick says in "The Clock Maker": "The fact is, Squire, the moment a man takes to a pipe he becomes a philosopher; it's the poor man's friend; it calms the mind, soothes the temper, and makes a man patient under difficulties. It has made more good men, good husbands, kind masters, indulgent fathers, than any other blessed thing on this universal earth."

It is curious to note the different views taken of tobacco in the seventeenth century and to-day as well, on tobacco as a disinfectant. In the "Reliquiæ Hearminæ," edited by Dr. Bliss, and published in 1721, this curiously suggestive passage occurs: "I have been told that in the last great plague in London—1665—none that kept tobacconists shops had the plague. It is certain that smoaking was looked upon as a most excellent preservative. Insomuch that even children were obliged to smoak. And I remember that I heard formerly Tom Rogers, who was a yoeman beadle, say that when he was that year, when the plague raged, a schoolboy at Eton, all the boys of that school were obliged to smoak in the school every morning; and that he never was whipped so much in his life as he was one morning for not smoaking."

It has long been a popular opinion that tobacco is an antiseptic, and this belief seems to have some solid basis of fact. Professor Vincenzo Tassinari, of the Hygienic Institute of the University of Pisa, recently made some very interesting experiments on the supposed germicidal virtues of tobacco-smoke, which seemed to show that it really had a destructive action upon the growth of bacilli, those minute organisms which are said to be the cause of a vast number of bodily ills that flesh is heir to. Professor Tassinari observed the action of the fumes upon seven different kinds of bacteria—the so-called cholera bacillus, the cattle distemper bacillus, the pus coccus, the Finkler-Prior bacterium, the typhus and pleuro-pneumonia bacillus, and the blue pus bacillus.

Wishing to imitate as closely as possible the processes going on in a smoker's mouth, the professor passed tobacco fumes through a horizontal tube into a receptacle kept moist by damp cotton-wool, which contained also a colony of bacilli. The result showed that the smoke retards the growth of some kind of bacilli, and absolutely prevents the growth of others. The tobacco experimented with was that which is used in making the large Cavour cigar, much favoured in Italy, and it was proved that its fumes retard the growth of pus bacilli by seventy-two hours, and of cattle distemper bacilli by one hundred hours, while they absolutely arrest the growth of the so-called cholera and typhus bacilli. If Professor Tassinari's results may be relied upon, it is evident that not only is tobacco not the deadly enemy of man—and it is singular with what eagerness man takes to so many of his deadly enemies—but in many instances it is his great friend, not only by way of solace, but as a warder off and destroyer of deadly germs that insist on colonising his body, and turning it to their own uses.

RAM SURRUN MALI.

Ram Surrun Mali was my gardener in Upper Bengal. He was tall, lean, but very wiry, and with a clear, strong eye that betokened power of penetration and more than average intellect. By caste he was a Hindoo, the term "Mali" denoting both the caste and the trade which belongs to it. He was rather over middle age; indeed, he had a grown-up son, who could not be much under thirty, with a young family of his own, father and son living alongside each other in the same block of mud-and-thatch houses, about two stone-casts from my bungalow. They cultivated a little bit of ground, part of a broad extent which was in lease to the "Factory," or indigo plantation, of which I had charge. But they had other ways of eking out a living. The father was my gardener, as already said, on a monthly pay, and the son used to take up odd jobs in gardening from the native magnates of the humbler scale in the way of trimming up their so-called gardens. For a time I had the son in my employment, but found him so lacking in energy and brain-power that, on being strongly advised, I engaged the father, of whose capacities I had had no previous experience. The result fully justified the advice. He had energy, ability, and a power of getting through work which left his son at half his age nowhere; and added to that was a quick eye for discerning how to make the best of a situation in point of design or neatness. Besides the gardening, both father and son had yet another "string to their bow." They were chief operators with the scimitar at a neighbouring sacrificial tree, where multitudes of kids "without spot or blemish" were offered up by the Hindoos to the presiding deity who had made the tree his or her haunt, and for this they got some perquisites in the shape of a few pice, or the head of the animal, which they sold for as much. I have watched old Ram Surrun perform this sacrificial function. One man took hold of the goat—which is always a male—by the hind legs, the other took hold of its head, and between them they kept it stretched at the full length of their arms, while Ram Surrun stood by brandishing his scimitar. After one or two feints he brought it down with a sweeping stroke, and instantly head and body of the animal were sundered, and the holder of the trunk ran up with it to the foot of the tree, to drop there, on the little mounds of paint-bedaubed earth, the precious blood-offering—all, by the way, the tree was to get, for the offerer wisely took home with him the carcase for a family feast in honour of his deity, and as chief part of the "sacrifice." And, while on the subject, it may be added that this so-called "offering" is but the Hindoo's way of practising the butcher's art, and at the same time sanctifying his meat, even as the Moslem never kills an animal for food but in the orthodox way with the steel while pronouncing over the process the Khorân formula.

Ram Surrun was a confirmed ganja (Cannabis Indica) eater—or drinker, or smoker, for it is used in all three ways—but, unlike many if not most of its devotees, he used it not too well but wisely. He seemed able to keep his proclivity within bounds, and thus it seemed to do him little, if any, harm. Indeed he used to assert that it did him great good; that it was it gave vigour and energy to him to go about his work, and force to his eye, and that without it he would have been nothing but a feeble old man. And in truth, as said, his movements were active, and his eye had even in it more of the fire of youth than his son's. But, though keen, it was not attractive. It had too much of what did not suggest good, too much of the basilisk. This keenness of eye was the more remarkable, as one of the first ways in which excessive ganja-eating shows itself is in its effects on the eye, which gradually loses its lustre and becomes bleared, as if a film were drawn over it, while the voice becomes cracked and broken, and the movements languid and nerveless. On the other hand, there are some if not many people who seem, like Ram Surrun, to use it all their life in moderation and suffer little or no harm from its use. Not the less, however, the term "ganja-eater" is always a term of reproach among natives, significant of much, even as the term "drunkard" is with us. The remark that is usually associated with it is, "what can you expect from a ganja-eater?"

The way I first came to know that Ram Surrun was given to ganja was through a peculiar plant, like a carraway plant, I found growing in a favoured spot in my garden, that is to say, in the midst of some rearing-beds. I saw it was carefully tended, but could discover neither its name nor object. Repeated enquiries only elicited the information that it was just a flowering plant that had sprung up there by accident, and he, Ram Surrun, had allowed it to grow as its flower was pretty, but it was of no other use, and would be taken up shortly and thrown away. I had some faint suspicions, however, caused by the indifference with which it was spoken of as compared with the evident care with which it was treated, but did not quite know what to make of the matter. At length a slight "difference" between Ram Surrun and some of his colleagues, due to his too copious disposal of the garden produce in the bazaar for his own advantage, without duly considering them, let in the needed light. It was a ganja plant, they said, which Ram Surrun was thus carefully rearing with which to feed his own particular habit. Ram Surrun vehemently repudiated the soft impeachment. However, as the plant was a Government monopoly, allowed to be cultivated only under stringent conditions, special sanction, and high duty, the growing of it was an illegal act for which I, as owner of the garden, was chiefly responsible—which perhaps did not distress me much—yet I could not do other than order it to be uprooted and thrown away. Then some one suggested that the plant was valuable even as it was, and was sure to be turned to good account by Ram Surrun, despite his contemptuous protests that it was valueless because not yet mature. So to test these I had it placed outside on the chibootur, or evening seat, in the sun to dry, right in front of the bungalow, where it could not be easily approached by any one unseen. Day by day, though almost forgetting about the matter, I seemed to notice a rapid diminution or shrinking up of leaf, till at length my attention was arrested. But when I came to examine, not a leaf was to be found! The stems were threadbare! Every leaf had vanished, absorbed by the sun I was left to understand, as no other explanation could be given of the mystery. When that explanation was found not quite to suffice, then suspicion was gently hinted in the direction of Ram Surrun, as a likely quarter, or, indeed, as the only likely quarter. But he quickly retorted on the insinuators that if any one was to be blamed there were more than he that might justly be blamed. And so it turned out, to my great surprise; the "cross purposes" and cross-examination eliciting the further fact that, among my small establishment, there were one or two besides Ram Surrun who had a hankering weakness for the weed; a fact, too, I thought, which suggests a larger consumption of it in the country than ever would be imagined from what appears on the surface. Be that as it may, Ram Surrun had great faith in the ganja. It made him happy, he said; it made him strong. Without it his life would not be worth living.

Though Ram Surrun favoured ganja, he did not confine himself to that, but varied it with tobacco in the customary forms, either by smoking the spiced compound from the hubble-bubble, or by swallowing from the palm of his hand the pinch of powdered leaf along with the speck of moist lime, which natives exchange with each other as our ancestors did the "sneeshun mull." Both these "vanities" he used to vary with an occasional drop of tari, or fermented juice of the toddy-palm, some half-dozen quarts of which, no doubt, each weekly bazaar or market-day he got comfortably outside of at a sitting while squatted, monkey-fashion, on a mat along with a few genial chums. Such were some of Ram Surrun's ways and means of beguiling life and time, and in that respect perhaps he did not differ much from many another Hindoo. But presently he was to figure in a new and less reputable light.

One day, a woman, old and wrinkled, came to the bungalow to prefer a complaint against him. She announced herself as Ram Surrun's wife. Her husband, she said, had introduced a young woman into their house in the position of rival to her, who was very rude to her, seemed devoid of self-respect, and whose mere presence in the house was a continued insult to her, and made it impossible for her to remain longer there; and in all this the intruder, who took the upper hand in everything, was supported by Ram Surrun, against his own wife. Accordingly, she had moved to her son and daughter-in-law's house, right opposite; but even their presence failed to act as any check on his proceedings. Having called Ram Surrun, I remonstrated with him on his impropriety and cruelty, and he promised amendment and that the stranger would be duly dismissed. Not long afterwards, however, the same complaint was repeated, and Ram Surrun then vowed that he had ordered the intruder to go away, but she would not, and what could he do? At last a sort of compromise was arranged between the three, seemingly to their mutual satisfaction, by which the stranger was to pay respect and deference to Mrs. Ram Surrun, and was to assist in field and household work; and so, by-and-by, she came to be a recognised part of the household. On being herself interrogated, however, she is reported to have said that she did not want to come, and did not want to stay, but she could not help herself. She felt impelled, she did not know why or how, to stay against her will.

After the aforesaid arrangement had continued some time, suddenly the neighbourhood was startled and even scandalised by another change in Ram Surrun's domestic establishment. A young woman, respectable, pretty, and married, who had come to the bazaar as usual to make purchases, had, thereafter, instead of returning to her own house, come straight on to that of Ram Surrun, as if with the intention of adding yet another to his domestic circle. The matter created quite an outcry, and vengeance was expected from the husband. And, sure enough, after a couple of days' vain searching for his wife, and wondering where she had gone to, on at length ascertaining her whereabouts, he came posting on to Ram Surrun, breathing flames and fury. But that gentleman was quite prepared for the eventuality. He professed utter innocence in the matter. The lady, he said, had come of her own free will; he had not asked her, did not even know her; and she had solicited house room, could they refuse her that? Everybody knew that what he said was true. Then the husband demanded back his wife; whereupon Ram Surrun vowed that not only was she free to go, as she had always been, but even urged her to go, and for that reason to come outside and accompany her husband. This with seeming reluctance she was at length induced to do, and the two went away together. He had, however, to use slight force at first to make her accompany him, and his wrath was now turned from Ram Surrun by the seeming fair treatment he had met, and was directed towards his wife instead, whose conduct seemed to him inexplicable. For a little all went well till they had got a quarter of a mile or so distant, when the wife began to linger, and at last point-blank refused to go further. She must go back, she said; she could not help it; she hated the man, and did not want to go, but he had cast a spell over her, had bewitched her. The husband, hardly hearing this in his rage, or seeing in it only fresh contumacy, began to treat her roughly, even to beat her, and dragged her along with him. She struggled so violently, however, that his efforts might have been vain but for the assistance of a friend who had accompanied him, whom he now called to his aid, and between them, each taking an arm, they conducted her forcibly home. But by the time they reached home some faint suspicion began to dawn on the husband's mind that things might not be quite as they seemed. He recalled his wife's words. Witchcraft was a familiar institution of the country. Nothing was more likely than that some such means had been practised upon her. Her previous even life, her present conduct, all seemed to point to that. He hardly recognised in her now the woman of a day or two ago. She might not be so much to blame after all, and he had heard some rumour of Ram Surrun having some slight skill in witchcraft. That must be seen to. Further enquiry of his wife seemed further to confirm his suspicions. Ram Surrum must lift the spells or take the consequences. In the good old times, he thought, as his forefathers used to say, it would have been quick work with witch or wizard. But what can be done under these English, and their obtuseness to the most palpable facts which witchcraft works?

Next day, just as he was beginning to be lulled again into security, his wife disappeared for the second time, as he discovered on returning from his field-work to his house. Guessing well where she had gone, he hurried straight off to Ram Surrun's house, where, as expected, on arrival he found her. He now charged Ram Surrun point-blank with the working of spells, and demanded their removal under penalties. Ram Surrun, as before, professed complete innocence and a clear conscience, but nevertheless promised to do what he could to rectify matters, little though that might be. Indeed, in a few minutes so successfully did he use tongue or eye, that the storm, or something worse, that was prepared for him, melted down into comparative quietness. But the husband was not yet appeased, and as his wife did not show the willingness to accompany him that he might have expected, the matter was brought before the "bungalow."

I had my own fairly clear ideas by this time as to the merits of the case, and spoke in pretty strong terms to Ram Surrun regarding his conduct, pointing out the probable results to him of exposure in a law-court. This remonstrance I saw he did not relish; indeed, I guessed that he resented it strongly, as making more or less public his methods, and placing a probable check upon these which he had not anticipated. But he said nothing beyond reiterating his innocence, while keeping fixed upon me a basilisk sort of stare of his large, but anything but pleasing eyes. Then it suddenly struck me there was a meaning in that stare. The impression was irresistible. The elderly spell-worker meant to transfix me with his spells, and thus to avenge himself. Still his eyes were riveted upon my face. Seemingly, however, I must not have been of the requisite material, as they effected nothing beyond a courteous request that he would politely transfer their glare to some other interesting object; a request he complied with with an appearance of haste and confusion that fully confirmed my impression. I could now partly realise his means and methods. These, putting all together, obviously consisted in that power of fascinating called "mesmerism," which the snake practises on the bird, and the weasel on the rabbit; though up to that time I had never seen or heard of such a thing as among natives, and the discovery threw a new light on much that had hitherto been dark. It was said in regard to the woman just alluded to, that she had declared she had been impelled to go to his, Ram Surrun's, house, simply because he looked at her while she moved to and fro through the bazaar. After the "bungalow" remonstrance, however, she walked quietly and demurely home with her husband, as if a weight had been lifted off her, nor did I hear of further similar misadventure as far as she was concerned. But Ram Surrun's career in the same line did not stop here. Not long after I heard of his being in a somewhat similar pickle more than once, though he had proceeded more cautiously and with less risk to himself. Then, by-and-by, probably he found the air grow so threatening around him that he deemed it prudent to desist for a time, as there occurred a lull in his "record." I could not help wondering, though, at the man with his years, his ganja-eating, tari-drinking, and tobacco-smoking, still possessing such bent of mind and force of eye; and when I lately saw him, he was just as energetic as ever. He had still as a female companion the first-named arrival at his house, who still continued the same patient and submissive drudge, ready to labour late and early for him, alert at his slightest bidding, seemingly completely in his power, yet apparently contented with her lot.

The above incident suggested to me, for the first time, what future experience seemed fully to confirm, namely, that the witchcraft, spells, and so on of the natives, their jadû in which they are such firm believers, but which, like other Europeans, I had always laughed at, might really have something in it after all, might indeed be founded upon some basis of fact. That fact I believe to be the same that accounted for the misadventure of the woman, and that procured for Ram Surrun his present subservient companion, namely, mesmerism. The same cause, too, I have little doubt, accounts, and has accounted, for much of the so-called witchcraft and spell-working of times present and past all the world over. Among the natives of India, mesmerism, under different names and guises, and as the monopoly of a comparative few, who probably maintained its mystery and secrecy for their own ends, would seem to have been practised from time immemorial. In Upper Bengal the natives speak familiarly of it, not by name but of its effects, under the general term jadû, or witchcraft, and more especially in reference to certain mountain tribes of people from regions in Nepaul, who, they say, are to be dreaded, because if any of them but look at you, you are bound at once to set out and follow them. The exponents of this jadû, in the shape of witches and wizards, are plentiful everywhere throughout India, one or more of each being usually found in every large village, often in the garb of quiet, respectable people. As respectable the wizard is usually accounted, even by his fellow-villagers, his skill in the black art not being supposed to be used for evil purposes, and, therefore, not detracting from his reputation, but even, it may be, enhancing it; but the witch, on the other hand, is always spoken of with hostility and aversion, mingled, it may be, with fear and trembling. She is never credited with other than misdeeds; though why the two should be so differently judged it is hard to say. The spells of these different dealers in darkness are supposed not to be all equal, and are carefully weighed and balanced. One operator can counteract the spells of another, that other of a third, and so on. Thus a wizard is sometimes employed to counteract the spells of a witch, where the direction of these are known; but when not known, as is most commonly the case, for the witch works in secret, then the wizard is powerless. In this light the spells of the different operators are supposed to meet in mid-air in the clash of combat. Often have I witnessed complaints against a witch, where a series of calamities had been traced to her door, and the burden of her evil doings had become insupportable. In such a case—

and one is more or less a sample of all—the villagers came in a body to complain, for they would not dare to come in twos or threes and so be singled out for special vengeance. After they had recited their tale of woe, clamorous for redress, the witch was sent for to confront her accusers. When she came, instead of the withered, wrinkled crone of malign aspect, there appeared a quiet, respectable-like woman, with a look of intelligence far above the bulk of her accusers, and a clear penetrating eye. Her eye, indeed, seemed of that through-seeing aspect one is apt to associate with the mesmerist, and her whole expression suggested the superiority which mind yields over matter. While her accusers were again spinning out their tale for her behoof, she listened with a look of quiet contempt and seeming superior knowledge, which supplied an easy key to the situation. In the end, needless to say, they retired discomfited and disgusted that nothing effectual could be done in regard to their disasters under the blind British régime.

Among the one or two wizards of more or less repute in my neighbourhood, was one who was alleged to possess powers superior to every other member of the craft, male or female, for some distance around. He could combat their spells; he could fight the demon of snake-poison and recuperate the bitten victim—except perhaps when the unseen and escaped snake chanced to be a really poisonous one, though the natives asserted that he had often restored the patient in various specific cases of proved poisonous snake-bite. By the virtue of his enchantments, he could even single out a thief from a crowd containing the suspected persons; and in this last capacity he was often employed, and not infrequently with success. Indeed, his services used to be regularly quoted on occasions of theft as being more certain and less expensive than a law-court. The thief-evolving process, which I have sometimes witnessed, is as follows.

In the centre of a circle containing all the suspected persons, along with some others perhaps, is planted a little boy in a very uncomfortable attitude on the top of a small brass jar, monkey-fashion, with his feet resting across the mouth, while balancing himself upon the tips of his fingers against the ground. Close by stands the magician, who is rattling off a tornado of mystic jargon, in which the name of "Ram" often occurs, and alternately shouting and gesticulating at the boy, as he dashes over him a white powder, which turns out to be Ganges sand, and orders him to do his duty. This duty proves to be the turning round of the boy along with the jar, which acts like a pivot, till he becomes fixed opposite the thief; and in this he is supposed to have no will of his own, but to be, in fact, the medium. In any case which I witnessed, however, the spells failed in their effect, owing, as was alleged, to the disturbing influence of my presence. The boy did move round, but vaguely and without seeming to be impelled by his instincts towards any one in particular. On one such occasion the loser of the money under search, to the extent of some three rupees, chanced to be Ram Surrun, who, on the spells failing from the above alleged cause, refused to pay the promised one rupee to the magician as the price of his services, asserting—on the principle upon which the native pays his doctor—that as these services had failed so had the bargain. Upon this many angry words and messages passed between the two. Ram Surrun, however, clung to his rupee, and even added insult to injury by circulating and remarking, as he did to me one day, that his own spells could baffle those of the magician.

Being curious to see the wizard above alluded to, of whose occult powers I had heard so much, I had an opportunity not long after entertaining that wish of meeting him. Somewhat to my surprise he turned out to be a "Factory" tenant of the immediate neighbourhood belonging to one of the lesser Hindoo castes, called the Koormi, whose profession is cooking—that is to say, for Hindoos. But more surprised was I on meeting him to see, instead of all I might have expected, an intelligent, good-looking man of fair complexion, under middle age, with a pleasing, unassuming manner, and a particularly expressive, large dark eye. His conversation was specially intelligent. No one would have imagined, seeing him then, clothed in his right mind, that he was the mysterious magician I had seen not long before spell-scattering in a thief-evolving juggle; nor more, that he was the semi-frenzied operator I had so often seen incantation - working over snake-bitten patients. Neither would I have recognised him as the same, but for being told so just before meeting him. I could quite imagine, however, the effect of a seeming strong intelligence, backed by a strong eye, on many of the weaker intelligences and organisms I had seen around him during the thief-evolving process; and that that might even extend to his eliminating the thief, as he was repeatedly alleged to have done, in various specific cases, and before crowds of witnesses. The eager, rapt look on many of the faces, as if absorbed in the movements of the boy, and so like certain mesmeric phenomena I had seen at home, testified to that effect. Whatever influence there was, I had no doubt, had to do with mesmerism. That, too, I have as little doubt, explains much of the history of witchcraft both in India and elsewhere; and in this connection it may be noted how every witch or wizard is always credited with the "piercing, dark eye."

CATHERINE MAIDMENT'S BURDEN.

A STORY IN TWELVE CHAPTERS.

BY MARGARET MOULE.

CHAPTER II.

MOREFORD was a small village in the midst of one of the prettiest midland counties. It had originated, like many other English villages of the same sort, in a few cottages that had grouped themselves round the old Castle—just enough cottages to hold the immediate work-people of the estate. By degrees these few cottages had been added to; with the gregarious instinct of country people, the descendants of the first few work-people had intermarried and settled down close to their old homes, and gradually the village had come to possess an independent life of its own. It had grouped itself very prettily in the hollows around the Castle grounds. Seen from the distance the red roof of the school-house, the brown thatched ones of the cottages, and the short grey spire of the little church, all made harmonious details in a characteristic picture of pretty country scenery.

The Castle itself was simply a good, grey stone house, built round three sides of a quadrangle; two round battlemented towers with lancet windows standing on each side of the entrance to the quadrangle were all that gave it a right to the ambitious name. They were, however, very old; were traditionally said to be the remains of a much earlier building, and as such, held in deep respect in Moreford. The other part was Elizabethan, and possessed all the old-world character that seems to linger more strongly about houses of that period than any other—it is difficult to define the reason, unless because the Elizabethan architecture has so much distinctiveness of its own, and retains, so to speak, the atmosphere of its designers. The place has been in one family for generations, and the present owner, Mr. Martin Stewart-Carr, was the descendant of a long line of worthy, uninteresting English gentlemen, most of whom had lived and died, and acted according to their honest lights in Moreford. But he had departed from the family traditions. He had built himself a place in Normandy, and apparently preferred the modern French château to his grey stone English home. Since the Castle first came to him, he had spent very little time in it. He paid it a flying visit at rare intervals, and left the care of it, the tenants, and the estate, to his agent. For the last five years that agent had been Frank Maidment. He had lived in the house in the park built for the agent, and known in Moreford as "The White House," quite alone for three of those five years; for the last two his sister had been with him.

It was a week after the arrival of the letter announcing Mr. Stewart-Carr's intended arrival, and he was expected to arrive that very evening. At eleven o'clock in the morning the Maidments' dining-room table was covered at one end with books and papers; the largest of the books, an account-book, lay open, and across it was a pen that had just been used, for it was wet with ink. Beside the book was a long pencilled list, evidently waiting to be copied in. There was no one in the room but Catherine Maidment. She was not working or writing, but walking up and down; her arms were folded so closely that their position might more truly be said to be a clasp, a very tight clasp. Her face wore the same set, resolute expression it had worn before, but stronger than the stern decision and more perceptible, was a terrible look of anxiety. Her very attitude was anxious; her head was set continually towards the door, as if she were listening, and her eyes turned towards the door too, whenever she took them away from the open book on the table. Her steps were hasty and agitated, and she seemed to find the space between the table and the window all too narrow for her. She was very white, and her grey eyes were large and excitedly bright.

"All this time!" she said to herself, in a low voice. "Why didn't I go myself; oh, why didn't I go?" She turned and walked faster still, and twisted her arms so tightly together that the pressure hurt her. But the physical sensation seemed a relief to her, for as she felt it she twisted them still tighter. "Oh——" she said, giving the word a heavy, drawn-out intonation that made it not an exclamation, but a sigh. "Oh, if the day were over, and if he would come back!" She walked once more, quicker and more agitatedly than ever, up and down the little space, then she unclasped her arms with a sudden movement, and went to the door. She opened it and ran upstairs. At the head of the stairs she stopped and knocked at a door.

Her face was whiter than when she left the dining-room. "Frank!" she said, "Frank! are you coming back?"

"Coming!" her brother's voice answered from within. "Coming, this instant."

She moved a step or two from the door and stood on the top stair of the flight, listening as she had listened downstairs. All at once she heard her brother's steps across his room, and turning, ran down again, and took her stand by the table and the books.

She had hardly done so when his door opened, and he began to descend. Catherine's face grew paler still, and she looked divided between intense fear and anxious, trembling hope. Frank Maidment opened the dining-room door; he shut it behind him slowly and came up to Catherine. His walk was as slow as his movements; his face was white; and there was a conscious, uncertain expression in his eyes. He put out one hand and grasped the back of the chair. Catherine put out her hand, and leaned it on the table.

"Come, you see," he said, hesitatingly, and rather confusedly. "Let's go on."

"Where is the memorandum you went to get?" Catherine said, in a low voice. It would have trembled if it had not been for the intense control she held it in.

"Memorandum!" he said, vaguely. "Memorandum! Oh yes—oh yes, I forgot it. It's—it's in my blue coat pocket, left side."

Catherine turned.

"Frank!" she said. From her voice the fear, the hope, and the trembling were all gone. It was only intense. "Frank! I never really thought it."

"Thought what?" he said. "Thought what?"

"Thought you would—to-day. I was anxious, but I thought, I hoped, it was some use to trust you."

"What do you mean?" he said, sitting down suddenly, and turning his eyes to her for one moment, to take them away again the next. "It's the very day when a man wants keeping up — when he's got such an amount of things to be done. Let's begin."

He took up the pen from the book, dipped it in the ink, and looking unsteadily at the sheet of note-paper by his side, began to write.

"Your writing is shocking," he said, "shocking! A man can't—hang it all—I can't—it's absurd—but I——"

The pen fell from his hand, which trembled violently.

Catherine had knelt by his side to dictate the entries to him. She rose again suddenly, and laid her hand heavily on his shoulder.

"Let it alone!" she said. "Let it alone. And listen to me, Frank."

But he shook himself free from her hand, and getting up, walked uncertainly to the leather arm-chair in the window, and let himself fall into it. After a moment's pause, Catherine followed him, and stood in front of him looking at him. All the expression of her face was concentrated in her eyes. They were wide and fixed, their grey had changed to blue, and they were full of controlled intense feeling.

He was quite still under her gaze; but without any actual physical movement on his part, the self-consciousness in his face seemed to give the impression that he was shrinking from her, that if he could he would get away. At the same time, however, her gaze seemed to recall him to himself in some degree. He seemed to be trying to collect his scattered faculties.

She did not speak at first; through the opened window came all the summer sounds, but in the room, between the man and woman, there was perfect silence. At last Catherine said, and her voice was low and deep:

"Frank, do you mean this to go on for ever?"

"Catherine, don't be a fool!" he said, weakly. She took no notice of his words, and twisting her hands together as she had twisted her arms while waiting for him, as if she could not bear the mental strain without some physical movement to give expression to it, went on as if he had not spoken.

"I have asked you so often; I have talked to you so often; I have begged you to listen to me so often, always unavailingly; that I thought I never would ask or reason or entreat again. But—I can't help it. I do ask you once more. Do you never mean to conquer this?"

"Conquer!" he said, in a toneless voice. "Conquer! it's mockery to talk to slaves about conquest."

"Slaves!" she said, her tone altering, and her colour rising quickly. "Who spoke of slaves? No one is a slave while he has a will. And you have a will—a strong will, if you only choose to exert it."

"Exert—conquer—I'm tired of all those phrases, Catherine. I'm tired and bothered altogether; don't worry me."

"It's not worry. How can you use the word? I should never worry you, Frank. I—don't you understand, I wouldn't do it if it was only 'worrying' you. But that is not it. I must, I will, make one more effort to make you see it all for yourself."

"See what?" he asked, leaning his head back listlessly against the back of the chair, and turning his face towards the window, away from her eyes.

"See what you are doing. Oh, Frank, you are—you know you are, ruining your life. Oh, Frank, do think of it all. You've got everything before you still; life still in your reach; but do only consider, for one moment consider how you are throwing your chances all away." Catherine's voice grew stronger with her words; not in tone—it grew no higher—but it was deeper, fuller, and more intense.

Her brother seemed to feel its power slightly. He turned languidly and faced her again.

"If you go on as you are doing now," she went on, "your power, your strength, all your faculties will be gone. And then—I said it before and I say it again—all your life will be ruined, utterly ruined. And you can never, never, never alter it then." She paused for a little. He did not move again. She went on: "I appeal to your own common sense."

"You can't appeal to it," he muttered. "There is none."

"There is plenty," she said, with intense energy. "Plenty. You can—you can, indeed, see it all as plainly as I can put it to you if you only will. You can see that now is the time when you must pull yourself together and begin again. Now, if ever, you must make a new start and be master of yourself and your actions."

Catherine's hands were still now; she held one out to her brother with a quick characteristic gesture. He said nothing, nor did he attempt to touch her hand.

"Frank," she said, very gently, "I'll do all I can for you; I have tried, and you know I will again. It doesn't need saying"—Catherine smiled faintly with her words—"that I will, dear. But I can't actually take your place with Mr. Stewart-Carr, now he is coming home. You must see for yourself that this is so. Think of it—think what a hopeless disgrace it would be if you lost this appointment. There would be no new start possible then. And how are you going to keep it if you don't rally all your forces and control yourself? You can—you can if only you'll believe it, and rouse yourself, and make your life a man's life, and not——"

Catherine's voice trembled with her last words. She had spoken fast, and it trembled with intense earnestness. She broke off, and stood looking out into the bright sunny garden with eyes that saw nothing there.

Frank Maidment dragged himself slowly up from his leaning position, and sat upright in the chair. He put one elbow on the arm, and leant his head on his hand.

"Confound it!" he said, impatiently, pressing his hand hard on his forehead. "Hang it all, Catherine, I wish you'd let me alone!"

She turned at the words—turned with a quick movement.

"Let you alone," she said. "I can't—I couldn't, if I would." She broke off suddenly, took two steps forward and knelt down at his side, her small hands stretched out to him over the broad arm of the chair.

"The past is past," she said. "Frank—let's forget it together. Let's begin a life that is different. Oh, Frank, will you? I'll help you; at least, I'll try. Nothing need ever remind either of us of what has been. I don't ask you anything unreasonable; I don't want you to give me a rash, definite promise that from this very day you will never touch anything again. I don't ask that. But will you promise me that, from this day, you will resolutely turn round on yourself, and begin a life of self-control? Oh, Frank, will you? Will you? Will you, for my sake, if not for your own? Frank, I never appealed to you for my sake before, because—because I—that is of less consequence; but, if you would promise, you don't know, you never could know, what my life would be to me!"

Catherine's hands were stretched out far towards her brother now; her face was flushed a dark crimson, her lips were parted eagerly, and her eyes flashed with hope. He raised his head slowly and looked round.

"You're very pleading, Kit, and I'd do a great deal for you," he said, hesitatingly. "But you don't know what it is. You——"

He did not finish his sentence. As Catherine met her brother's eyes the flash had died out of hers; all the hope left her face again; her head fell down on her outstretched hands; and Catherine, whose grey eyes were scarcely ever dimmed with tears, broke now into uncontrollable heavy sobs. She cried with the terrible crying of a self-controlled woman, each sob shaking her from head to foot; and when she raised her head again, exhausted, she was alone. Her brother had left the room.

Catherine and Frank Maidment were quite alone in the world. Their father and mother had died in their early childhood, and Catherine had been taken away at once, and brought up by her only relation, an aunt. Frank, who was three years older than his sister, had been educated at Harrow and Cambridge, with money left for that purpose by his father's will. But no fixed idea of a career had ever been placed before him; and when his university career was over, there had been no one to come forward and say to him that he must fix upon a profession and work for it at once. So, at twenty-four, he found himself facing the world with no definite turn for anything; with no income but the trifling annuity left from his father's funds; and with no means whatever of making himself more. But though he had no special gift, Frank Maidment had the fatal gift of being "good all round." There were few things he could not do if he tried; and, therefore, though there were fewer that he cared to try to do, he met the prospect before him with unruffled equanimity. He spent the first two years after he had taken his degree in a travelling tutorship, an occupation which suited him peculiarly well, as the tutorship required was, more strictly speaking, only companionship; and in the course of it he and his charge explored almost every habitable corner of the globe.

After this he became secretary to a company in London for some time, and then, by some interest, exerted in a—to him—unexpected channel, he was offered and accepted the post of agent on Mr. Stewart-Carr's Moreford estate.

On her aunt's death two years earlier, when Catherine was twenty-five, she had come to her brother's house to him. Though she had naturally felt keenly the breaking up of the home she had had with her aunt for so many years, the sorrow at this was greatly counterbalanced by her great delight in the prospect of living with her brother. Perhaps it was because the two were alone together in the world, perhaps simply from natural affection developed; but from whatever cause, the fact remained that Catherine had for her brother that great love and close attachment which, unless they happen to be twins, is not very common between a brother and sister. Frank was her brother and her friend. It had been one of the few unhappinesses in her placid life that they could not see much of each other. She had looked forward to Frank's rare visits to her, at her aunt's house, as to the happiest times of her life; and she went to Moreford to live with him with indescribable pleasure.

She settled down there very easily and very quickly. She learnt to know the Moreford people, they learnt to love her; her brother's interests were hers, and she spent all the time she had to spare from being with him in making his house pretty and comfortable. She had brought with her as their one servant the old nurse, who had held both brother and sister in her arms as babies, and who firmly refused ever to leave "Miss Catherine," when Miss Catherine left her old home. With Margaret's help the White House was made as pretty within as it was picturesque without; her brother's housekeeping was taken into her own clever, capable hands, and his establishment was made, as he often said, "so comfortable that he hardly knew it." He was never tired of telling Catherine how lonely and how dreary he had been before she came. It seemed as if he never could tell her enough of the loneliness he had suffered from.

And at each repetition Catherine's heart was happier and more full of joy at the consciousness that she could change all that for him now. For six months Catherine was as happy as she could have wished or dreamed.

Then came the terrible day, when suddenly, and without warning, she found out what had darkened her whole life since. She found out that in the course of his lonely life, before she came to him, her brother had taken to the most fatal of companions and the most futile of consolers. Coming in late one evening, she had found him, as she thought, asleep on the floor. But there was a nearly empty brandy-bottle on the table; and in his bitter self-reproach and misery, when he came back to consciousness again, he confessed the truth to her. He confessed that it was not the first time, or the second; he told her that no one knew of it, however, but himself; he implored her to forgive him and help him.

Catherine had forgiven him, and had begun life again, half heart-broken.

Since then, her whole life had been devoted to him. She had watched him, thought for him, and when the same thing happened again, in spite of all her care, she screened him and his weakness from the knowledge of all but herself, and had never reproached him from any point of view but the terrible injustice he did to himself.

She had long done half his work for him. She cared little that the tenants considered him idle; they should never, if she could help it, she thought, have any worse thing to say. The strain of this daily burden had made her thin and careworn. It had given the resolute expression to her face, the determined set to her mouth. It had made her an anxious, unhappy woman, when her girlhood had hardly left her.

And Catherine had no one to comfort her, or to help her bear the terrible burden. It was all hers, and she had to carry it alone.

And now, it seemed to her, that Mr. Stewart-Carr's home-coming had brought everything to a crisis. As she sat at the dining-room window that same evening, waiting for her brother, her heart ached with the heavy anxiety, till the ache made her almost wish for tears again, though in the morning after her crying she had told herself that it had only made everything worse to have let her pain overmaster her like that.

It was eight o'clock, and she was expecting him every moment. Mr. Stewart-Carr was to arrive at the Castle at seven, and his agent had to be present to receive him.

Catherine had hardly exchanged a word with her brother since the morning. He had spent the afternoon with her in the dining-room, silently watching her, as she finished the entries he had left undone. And Catherine had taken his silence and his willingness to be with her, as a sufficient proof that she might trust him for the rest of the day. At six o'clock he had taken his hat, and come to Catherine and kissed her; had said a word or two to the effect that he should come back at once when Mr. Stewart-Carr had arrived; and had left her.

The difference between the self-conscious, self-convicted, incapable man of the morning and the man who went up to the Castle was indescribable. Frank Maidment was collected, grave, self-possessed, and clear-headed now. Catherine looked at his face as she gave him back his kiss, and thought, with a sharp pain, how proud she had been of him before she knew; how proud she could still be, if he would only let her.

She put her hands over her eyes as she sat in the evening stillness waiting for him to come back, and longed, with the intense longing that is so nearly a cry for help, to see him come in again; for she could by no means answer for the effect the excitement of the arrival might have had on him. He might—she thought he would—be all right in the actual interview with Mr. Stewart-Carr; but afterwards, in the reaction, what would he do?

She could never be sure that the temptation was out of his way. With the cleverness of all those who fail as he did, he eluded her watchfulness constantly. And then, if he were to meet Mr. Stewart-Carr or any of the tenants——

She rose with a sudden determination to put on her hat and go and meet him.

But she had not taken two steps before the door opened. "Here I am, Kit," said her brother, in the same steady tone as when he had left her. "He's come, and that part of the business is done with!"

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CHAPTER I. DR. SMITH.

It was a wild November evening. Great clouds swept across the sky, driven onward by a powerful north-east wind, a wind which hurled itself with relentless fury against the large clumps of fir-trees, scattered here and there over this heather country. The sound of the contact between wind and fir-trees resembled the final break upon a rocky shore of some huge Atlantic wave.

Even at the Warren, protected as it was by fir plantations, the wind made itself heard and felt in no common degree, though the house was too well built to be in danger of having its roof blown off, or of suffering from other similar accidents.

The Warren was an old-fashioned house with gables curiously distributed in unexpected places, and windows that did not match. The building covered a considerable area, but, being only one storey high, it was well fitted to resist the storms that sometimes raged with special fury over this elevated moorland country. Most of the shutters were now closed; but there were two windows that were not hidden from the outside world by shutters or blinds, and had a wanderer strayed into the grounds of the Warren this night, he would have been much cheered to see the light in one of the rooms radiating from the dark mass of the building which, except for these bright spots, looked very gloomy and weird on this stormy evening.

Had the benighted stranger entered that room, he would have seen a very pretty and picturesque sight; but, as a matter of fact, there was no chance of any outsider's eye being charmed with the scene, for strangers never entered the Warren grounds.

The room was long and rather narrow in shape; the two windows, divided by deep mullions, were glazed with small lozenge-shaped panes, adding to the old-world look which already pervaded all the furniture in the chamber, from the tall, quaint bookcases to the high cottage piano. A large fireplace, which was guarded only by a low edge of stone, made one dream of pine logs; indeed, several such were now burning between the quaint andirons, filling the room with a delicious scent, though they had burnt low and required stirring.

At present the room contained but two occupants, and they formed a strange contrast to the general desolate appearance of the surroundings. The elder was a girl who looked about seventeen years old, tall, slim, and pretty. Perhaps her beauty lay chiefly in her large grey eyes, whose expression was soft and gentle; but her mouth attracted one by its half sad, half tender curves that spoke of intense feeling and love. Her hair, neatly braided round her shapely head, seemed to have retained some of the mellow golden look of evening in it, but the fairness did not the least border on what is often called sandy. Her nose was of delicate Roman type, but not at all strong or masculine-looking. Perhaps the fault of the face was an expression too serious for its youthful appearance.

Near to this maiden and clinging round her, was her younger sister. One could see the relationship with half a glance, so strong was the likeness, but the beauty of the younger altogether eclipsed that of the elder. Everything about her was beautiful—the complexion; the radiancy of the dark blue eyes; the golden colour of the abundant hair; the perfection of her features, which were of a faultless regularity, all combined to make her a rare type of English beauty. She was well formed and as tall as she was likely to be, for she was one of those girls who rarely become a perfect woman.

Both sisters were plainly dressed, with very little attention to fashion; but the younger certainly needed nothing to enhance her beauty, whilst the elder's sad, gentle face would not have gained much by more fashionable attire.

As they clung together, seated in an enormous arm-chair which easily contained them both, there was an expression of fear and attention on their faces. They appeared as if they dreaded to hear the raging sound of the wind outside, for they now and then started as the window-frames rattled, and the old woodwork creaked in a weird, uncanny manner. Nor would any one have reproached them with cowardice, for it was a night to make even grown women nervous, and these sisters could never remember a worse hurricane on their lonely moor.

But instead of drawing the arm-chair nearer to the fire, and closing the door, the sisters had done just the contrary. The door stood wide open and they had placed themselves close to it, in spite of the rush of cold air, which now and then made them shiver in spite of themselves.

Outside the room nothing could be seen except a half-lighted passage, which looked only more gloomy from the few fitful rays that penetrated into it from the lamp that stood on a table near to the sisters. Nor were they trying to see anything in particular, but rather to hear some unusual sounds, for when they spoke it was almost in whispers, and they broke off their conversation whenever a door was opened or shut, or if a voice reached them from upstairs or downstairs.

"Oh, Grace," whispered the younger one, after a long silence, "what can be the matter?"

She had said this many times before, but each time she waited for her sister's answer, as if expecting to derive from it some feeling of comfort.

"I can't think; only he must be very ill. Mrs. Ashton would not let me in, though I begged her to do so; she said the Doctor must see him first."

"I can't bear Mrs. Ashton, I wish dear old Nan were here; why did she go away? If she had known what would have happened, I know she would have stayed. Can't we write to her, or telegraph, or——"

"Sibyl, darling, you know we cannot. Who could go to Coleham? and, besides, what a night it is! Roach has gone for the Doctor, he must be back soon; but, they ought to let me in," and Grace drew herself up in the chair half indignantly.

"Mrs. Ashton said it would only distress you, Grace; but Dr. Smith won't say that, I know; you who are so good and clever when people are ill; but, Gracie, think, it was only yesterday that we were listening, just as we are now, to the voices in the dining-room. Then everything was as usual. I remember I heard father laugh when the door was opened below. Did you hear him, Grace?"

"Don't, darling," answered the elder girl, quickly, as if the thought pained her; and then both sisters fell into another silence, as the wind gathered itself up with new strength, so that every loose board or rafter through the old house seemed to shake or creak.

"Hark, Sibyl, do you hear?"

"It is nothing but the wind," said Sibyl, turning a little pale, for she was beginning to be afraid, even though her arms were round Grace, and her golden head was on her shoulder.

"No; I heard the sound of wheels. Will you come into the hall with me?"

"They have not lighted any lamps down there to-night," answered Sibyl, not loosing her hold on her sister; "won't you wait, Gracie, till the bell rings? I am a little afraid."

"With me?"

"No, not really, of course; but it all seems so strange to-night. And—and——" here Sibyl burst into tears—tears which her long pent-up feelings could no longer keep back.

"Sibyl, dear, dear Sibyl, don't cry, I can't bear to see you cry—there, it is the Doctor; I am so glad," and the girl started up and tried to unclasp her sister's hands. But Sibyl remonstrated.

"Don't leave me here alone, Grace. Please don't, I will come with you." She, too, started up now, and linking her arm in her sister's, prepared to go down to the large hall below.

"Take the lamp, Grace. It is so dark in this passage." And Grace obeyed, and holding the light walked steadily along the passage, turned an angle, and then found herself at the head of a wide, dark staircase that led to the hall below.

Others, too, had heard the ring; there was the sound of footsteps in a passage. A side door was pushed open, and a young and somewhat scared-looking footman appeared. He, too, carried a small lamp, and, thus equipped, prepared to unbolt the front door.

"Make haste, James," cried Sibyl, in a tone of quick impatience, "it is the Doctor."

"Your lamp will blow out," said Grace, more quietly. "Wait a minute, I will come and hold the light for you."

She left Sibyl standing at the head of the stairs, and in a moment she was by the side of the footman, who, thus relieved of the light, was able to unfasten the bolts of the somewhat massive door more quickly, though evidently he was nervous and somewhat awkward during the process.

Before the bolts were fairly undone, they heard the Doctor's steps ascending the outside steps, so that as soon as the hall door swung back, the short, thick-set form of Dr. Smith hastily passed in.

"All right," he cried, cheerfully, shaking himself like a Newfoundland dog just out of the water. "I've sent my man round with the trap. By jingo! it is not a night to linger out in a moment longer than necessary." Then he suddenly became aware of the young girl's presence, for at first he had been too dazzled and out of breath to be conscious of anything but the footman's figure and his own safe arrival within the shelter of a house.

"I beg your pardon, Grace, I did not see you were here." He had known the sisters so many years that he naturally called them by their Christian names.

"Never mind me, Dr. Smith," said Grace, "do go to father, he is so very, very ill—Mrs. Ashton says so at least, and she will not let me go into his room—but I may, mayn't I? You will say yes—do—please do."

By this time Dr. Smith had unwound a comforter from his throat, and next he had been assisted by James to divest himself of a huge great-coat, so that he felt more like a human being; or, at all events, he could, now that his wraps were off, put on his usual professional manner with greater ease.

"My dear young lady, be assured that I will lay no restrictions on you that are not absolutely necessary; but at first, as Mrs. Ashton is there, I prefer seeing your father without you. This must be a sudden affair; he was all right yesterday, eh?"

"Oh, yes; in fact, he had a dinner party."

"Ah!" said the Doctor, shortly. He knew what a dinner party at the Warren meant.

He now lost no time in walking upstairs, having waved back James with an "I know my way," and then he noticed Sibyl standing half-way up the stairs with the lamp in her hand, and though he was a prosy, common-sense individual, something in her appearance made him look at her carefully. Her fair golden hair, all tumbled from having leant her head on Grace's shoulder, looked like an aureole as she stood giving him the necessary light.

"You are pale, Sibyl. Come, you must not work yourself into a fever. Why don't you go to bed, eh?"

"I couldn't leave Grace; besides, we have been listening for you ever so long," and Sibyl's tone was impatient.

"I was engaged; a very pressing case indeed. I ought to be there now, and I must go away again as soon as I can." He nodded towards the room the girls had just left, as much as to say, "Go there now," though he only said aloud, "All right, I know the way. I'll look in before I go." Then walking down a passage that led in the opposite direction from their room, the Doctor disappeared, and the sisters slowly sank once more into the arm-chair.

CHAPTER II. DEATH THE MESSENGER.

When the Doctor knocked at the door of a room situated at the end of the long passage, Mrs. Ashton, the housekeeper, opened it, peered for a second into his face, and then, with the low exclamation of "Ah! it's you, sir," allowed him to enter. "I was afraid it might be Miss Grace again. You see, sir, the poor gentleman's had a stroke, and he does look so terrible that I could not let the young lady in without your orders. We've done all we could; but it's my belief he's took for death, sir—that is, he won't be long here, he's bound to die. We've done the right thing, I think you'll say; but there is no right thing when death's at the door."

Mrs. Ashton had not been very long housekeeper at the Warren; but her voice had already acquired the correct tone of mourning, which tone, however, was quite wasted upon the rough-and-ready Doctor. He approached the large four-poster bed, round two sides of which the curtains were closely drawn. Opposite the uncurtained side of the bed there was a large fireplace, where a blazing fire was burning, and close beside it two comfortable chairs had been drawn up. Evidently Mrs. Ashton and presumably a companion of hers, who had now disappeared, had been making themselves comfortable there before the Doctor's advent.

Dr. Smith took a candle from the dressing-table, and bending over the sick man examined his face for a few moments with minute attention, at the same time feeling his pulse and gently pressing his hand. The face he beheld was drawn and disfigured; the eyes, wide open, had a vacant stare about them painful to witness; and the hand that lay on the counterpane occasionally twitched nervously or went through the form of picking off something from the sheet. The housekeeper stood respectfully behind the Doctor with folded hands and an expression of deep melancholy on her features.

"He's taken for death, sir, I'm sure of it."

"Hush," said the Doctor, sternly, "he's not dead, he will revive. Fetch me a looking-glass, and hand me that brandy."

To the two girls anxiously waiting in the dreary room the Doctor's visit appeared very, very long. The pine log smouldered on unnoticed, the wind still beat furiously against the house, whilst every now and again some large ivy-leaves rattled against the window-panes, as if skeleton fingers were tapping at the glass. At last Grace spoke:

"I think, Sibyl, darling, you ought to go to bed. I promise to wake you if father wants you. If you stay up any longer you will be so tired to-morrow," and Grace looked at her sister's pretty head, now wearily resting against her.

"But I don't like to leave you, Grace; you may be frightened. Why didn't Anne shut the shutters to-night? Do you know, Gracie, just now I thought some one was knocking at the window."

"Silly child, it's the ivy. Come, Sibyl, let me light your candle."

"And you will look in and tell me what the Doctor says."

"Yes, when I come to bed."

Grace reached down a tall candle from the chimney-piece—for no one had brought them any bedroom candles this evening; nothing had been done as usual in the big house where suddenly the master had been stricken down—whilst Sibyl took a taper and so lit it, at the same time trying to poke the fire into a blaze.

"Don't spill the wax," said Grace, even at this moment thinking of the tidy ways her dear "Nan" had taught her, and which Sibyl found so hard to learn or to remember.

The door was still open, and the draught blew the candle so that the white wax guttered down in a strange fantastic manner. Sibyl half shrank away.

"Oh, Gracie, look, what a long winding-sheet! People say that means some one is going to die; does it mean father?" The pretty face clouded over, and the girl drew back her outstretched hand.

"It means that I am standing just between the door and the fireplace, Sibyl. What would Nan say to hear you? She would call you superstitious." At this moment the elder sister's tone had a gentle, loving ring in it, devoid of any scorn or reproof, and though so little older in years, one could see plainly that the great love she bore the younger one made her take naturally almost the place of a mother.

And Sibyl accepted it as such, or perhaps she was so accustomed to find Gracie's help and sympathy always ready for her, always eager to shield and protect her, that she hardly noticed them, but simply relied on them, for as she took the candle from her sister's hand she half stooped towards her and whispered:

"Just come up to my room with me, Gracie, and then I shall feel safe; Nan isn't here to scold me."

The girls' room was situated up a small flight of stairs on the same side of the house as the room they now were in; and as the two went up arm-in-arm, now and then they paused to listen, but nothing was to be heard, save the soughing of the ceaseless wind.

"There now, Sibyl, you won't be afraid, will you? I shall be in the school-room till the Doctor comes out of father's room. Don't try to keep awake if you are sleepy, you know I shall wake you if—you are wanted."

"Of course. Good night; and I am sure to hear you come up." Then Grace closed the door, retraced her steps, and once more returned to the school-room. It was ten times more desolate, or so it seemed to her, without her sister's presence; and though before her she had pretended to be brave, yet now she, too, could not help feeling nervous and afraid.

"I will not be a coward," she said at last, resolutely, as, with her hands clasped tightly together, she sat upright in the large arm-chair. Then, in spite of herself, her mind wandered away to the first dawn of her memory; she remembered nothing beyond the Warren, always this home, and always that younger, deeply-loved sister. Her earliest recollections also centred round her father. At first she remembered frequent absences from home; but at last he, too, seemed to settle down and to remain always at the Warren. She remembered one or two nurses, and many different servants; and then, when she was about eight years old, "Nan" had come. She remembered calling her Miss Evans at first, and hearing the servants say she was a governess; but soon those words faded away, and it was "Nan," or "dear old Nan," who was nearly always with them, who rarely, very rarely, went away to visit an aged aunt, her only relative, and who was received back again with a chorus of joyous welcomes. She was away on that errand now, or she would of course have been helping them in this sad trouble. Nan was a tall, thin, sharp-faced woman, with many angles and much primness about her demeanour. But what did Grace know of all that? She did not even realise that she was plain, she knew only that her heart was true and good, and that what devotion could do to make the sisters' lives happy, that devotion Nan had given.

But of girl-friends, or lady-visitors, or children's parties, or any of the other usual remembrances of childhood Grace had none. Her father had occasional dinner parties; but the girls never saw any of the men who came to them—ladies never came—and certainly, as far as these men knew, the house might have had no one in it of the female gender. Grace did not think all this unnatural. Why should she? She had never known anything else. The Warren was far away from a town, and the nearest gentleman's house was two or three miles off. When the sisters went to church with Nan on Sundays, they sat in a very secluded corner, where nothing could be seen but the pulpit and a few poor people in the free seats.

Nan always waited till every one had gone out before she moved from her place; and though Sibyl had often grumbled about this, Nan never did otherwise. Grace was glad; she had seen so few people that the very idea of speaking to a stranger would have frightened her beyond measure. Not that she was naturally shy with Nan and her sister, or even with the servants and the few poor people she visited; but, then, habit becomes second nature, and habit had taught the sisters that the Warren, Nan, their father, and themselves, was for them the world and all it contained.

"But we have been so happy here," sighed Grace. "If only father gets well we shall be happy again. Was that his door shutting?"

She started up, for anxiety made her quick of hearing, and softly, but hastily, going down the passage she reached the landing, where from the top of the great staircase she could look down towards her father's room. She saw at once that it was Dr. Smith, who came forward quickly with a step which denoted hurry.

He noticed Grace at once, but did not speak to her till he was close beside her.

"Well, Dr. Smith," she said, "may I go to him?"

"Yes, you had better do so; but wait, Grace, where is Sibyl?"

"She has gone to bed."

"That is well. She is too young to be in a sick-room. Do not wake her."

"Is he very ill?" asked the girl, half hesitatingly. "Do tell me the truth."

"Yes, poor child." Then he added, quickly: "I would stay longer if I could be of the slightest use, but there is another case where life depends on my presence. You understand, Grace, Mrs. Ashton has my instructions; she can do all that is necessary."

"Thank you; I know you would stay if you could," repeated Grace, as if she were in a dream. "When will you come again?"

"As early as I can to-morrow morning. Is there any one I can telegraph to in case——"

"Any one?" asked Grace, looking puzzled. "Oh, Nan can't come; but I did write to her when I sent for you. Good-bye, Dr. Smith, I will go at once to my father."

The Doctor, with half a sigh and a decided shake of his head, made preparations for once more facing the storm, and, though before James he retained his professional calmness of manner, he kept saying to himself: "It's a bad job, a bad job. I don't expect to find him alive however early I come to-morrow."

Just as Grace gently opened her father's door she heard the Doctor's carriage drive away; it was as if another friend had left her to face her trouble alone. Then she closed the door and walked round the bed, where one glance at the man who had been yesterday full of life, but who was now lying there helpless and speechless, swallowed up all thoughts of self. Without noticing the housekeeper, she knelt down, and taking the hand that lay on the counterpane, she murmured:

"Father, father, you must get well."

"He's better, miss; see, I do believe he knows you," said Mrs. Ashton, consolingly. "Dr. Smith says he may be able to speak presently; but there's little we can do."

The sick man did indeed seem to have heard Grace's words, for he turned his eyes towards her very slowly, though the look she saw in them pained and shocked her, there was so much vacancy in it. Presently his lips moved, and he even tried to say something.

"Don't talk, don't think, dear father," said Grace, tenderly; "only just lie quiet. I am going to sit near you, so. Move the lamp away, Mrs. Ashton, please, and tell me exactly what the Doctor said was to be done."

Unseen by her young mistress, Mrs. Ashton made an impatient movement of her shoulders; she did not approve of Miss Grace turning her out, she had a wish to assist at the master's death, and did not mean to be deprived of this pleasure by a girl of seventeen.

So, having removed the lamp, the housekeeper returned and seated herself near to the bedside, much to Grace's annoyance; but she said no more, only remained watching intensely her father's face; that was all she could do.

In after years Grace never could remember how long she sat there; or how long her father gazed at her; or whether a change in his expression was unconscious or not, so strange and altered was the sick man's face. But all at once, it must have been far on into the night, the girl nearly uttered a little cry of astonishment when her father's lips really framed a word. She stooped down to catch the meaning, for the utterance was difficult, and the words almost past understanding.

"Grace — get — get — me——" a long pause.

"Yes, father, what shall I get you—a pillow?"

He shook his head.

"Get me—a—pen."

Grace looked round the room; there was none there, and she did not want to leave the bedside, but yet feared to ask Mrs. Ashton to fetch one. She half hoped her father would forget the request, or that he did not mean anything by it; for certainly he was not fit, indeed quite unable to write. But no, he still looked at her, and his lips again framed the word—"Pen."

She hesitated no longer.

"Mrs. Ashton, will you kindly fetch a pen? My father wants one."

"If you wish it, miss; but the Doctor ordered strict quiet. As to writing——" She tossed her head impatiently. However, she went, and Grace for a few moments was alone with her father. He seemed to realise this, for he tried again to speak.

"I—I—meant to——" He could not find the next word, even though Grace said, gently:

"Yes; meant to?"

"To—you—Sibyl——"

Had Grace been brought up differently, she might have understood, or perhaps she might have guessed, in some small degree, what he was trying to say; but her mind wandered very far away from the right point.

"Do you want Sibyl? Shall I call her?"

The sick man shook his head very, very feebly, just as Mrs. Ashton re-entered.

The housekeeper had brought pen, ink, and paper, even though she knew the master of the house could not use them.

"He can't hold a pen, miss. You had best write down what he wants to say, and he might put his mark. My last master did that to a codicil."

But Grace's instincts were truer. She placed the pen in the sick man's hand, and held the paper near to him; but it was too late. Perhaps even the wish was forgotten, anyhow the power was entirely gone. A few more minutes and there came another great change, another convulsive movement of the limbs, and then the head sank back in death.

"He's gone!" cried Mrs. Ashton, in a low tone, which implied, "I knew he would be gone soon. Poor gentleman! It's a merciful providence."

She rang a bell, and that sound startled Grace so much that she sank down on her knees and hid her face against the bed. This was the first time she had ever seen death—the first time; and oh, how terrible it was! And how alone she felt as she knelt there, sobbing softly! She did not see Mrs. Ashton making mysterious signs to some of the other servants who stole in; she did not even hear the whispered consultations about "closing his eyes and finding some coins to weight 'em" that went on, till the housekeeper touched her on the shoulder.

"Miss Grace, hadn't you better get to bed? You must go from here—indeed you must, miss."

Grace allowed herself to be helped from her knees, and then she said, quietly:

"Thank you; you can leave me now. I will go to my sister."

Quite alone the young girl walked down the long, dark passage, then up to her own room, without one idea of fear. All such feelings had disappeared, swallowed up in the great shock and the great sorrow she had just gone through.

Instead of turning into her own little chamber, she entered Sibyl's room. There was a light still burning there, for the girl had been afraid of being left alone in the dark; but she had not been able to keep awake, and now slept peacefully in her small white bed. How pretty she looked in her sleep! The soft, round, oval cheek rested on one outstretched arm, whilst over the other was flung her mass of golden hair.

"Why should I wake her?" thought Grace, seeing her sister sleeping so quietly. "She is happy now; and when she wakes—oh, if only Nan had been here, she would have told me what to do!"

But Nan was not here; there was no one but the servants and the silent form of the dead master. Once more Grace knelt down, only this time it was by Sibyl's bed; and she thought and thought of all her life—that life that was so much bound up with her father's. Apart from him, she could not imagine what her existence could be. Not that this father had ever been very much of a companion to his daughters; but still he had always arranged everything for them. His will had been their law. Beyond him, and outside him, Grace felt that she was ignorant of life, of the world, of everything.

The wind beat less fiercely now against the house; there was a lull in the fury of the storm. This, perhaps, helped to quiet the poor, tired child; and without knowing how it came to pass, she suddenly fell asleep in her kneeling position.

When she woke the candle had gone out, and it was very cold; but as she started up and went to the window, hardly knowing what she was doing, she saw that a faint light was visible. It must be morning! How stiff and weary she was! Why was she here? Then all at once she remembered everything, and, with a smothered sob, she hastily left Sibyl's room, and entering her own, lit a candle, determined to go back to her father's side.

The house was quite quiet now; no opening or shutting of doors, no stealthy steps in the passage. When she reached the door, her hand shook; she hardly dared turn the handle; but she found that the chamber had been locked. With trembling fingers she unlocked it and entered. The place was empty of human beings save for the corpse that lay on the bed, stiff and straight, under a linen sheet.

"They left him alone," thought Grace, reproachfully. "No one cared to stay here. They should have told me." She placed the candle on the table, turned back the sheet, and gazed at the features of her father. They were so calm, so quiet and peaceful, so unlike what he had been in life, that she almost started.

"He looks so gentle," she thought—"not impatient or angry with us. He must be happy now—dear, dear father! If only I could have understood what he wanted to tell me! But it does not matter now; he knows I would have done all I could for him—yes, everything." Then Grace took a chair, and sat down quietly with her hands folded, patiently waiting for the day. This morning, however, the servants were taking a holiday after the unusual events of the night. There was no one to order them about, no one to see after the household, so the household took French leave and saw after itself. Even Sibyl did not wake till quite late, so that it was a long, long time before Mrs. Ashton, opening the door of the dead master's room, saw his daughter sitting by him, pale as death herself, but watching patiently, with her hands clasped and her eyes red with crying.

"Lor, Miss Grace, what a turn you gave me! You should not be here—indeed you shouldn't!"

"I did not like father to be left alone," said Grace, simply, at which words Mrs. Ashton made a little exclamation of disapproval. Now he was dead, the master was of very little consequence; and though his people did not actually dislike him, not one could feel any real regret that he was "gone."

"There's Miss Sibyl's rung for her hot water as if nothing had happened, Miss Grace. Hadn't you better tell her?"

"Yes, yes, I must tell her; no one else must," said Grace, looking frightened. The living wanted her, and for that reason alone she must forsake her post.

As she walked out into the passage, she noticed that it was a fine, calm, frosty morning. The storm had come and gone, and sunshine was going to take its place. But to Grace it mattered very little what the weather was, now that her father was dead. "Dead!" she repeated. "What can death mean? Where is he?"

THE "DIVINE WEED."

IN TWO PARTS. PART II.

BEFORE proceeding further, it might be convenient to refer shortly to the question "Ought women to smoke?" Personally I am inclined to say, "Let women please themselves." Really it is only a matter of sentiment after all. We know that many an old dame, whose gums are destitute of teeth, takes great delight in smoking a churchwarden—curiously enough these old ladies do not fancy wood or meerschaum pipes, nor do I remember ever observing one luxuriating on an occasional cigar. In the secure seclusion of their boudoir we do know that young and beautiful ladies are addicted to puffing their cigarettes, and idly watching the fragrant smoke ascend. At least so it is said; I have never peeped behind the scenes, and do not know that I have any ambition in that direction. But seeing that "Woman, lovely woman," is doing her best to become a worker, and to oust men from the professions, why, if she wishes, should she not put on continuations and become more manly still by declaring herself to be a cigarette smoker? One thing is certain—she is never likely to smoke a dirty black dudheen.

A visitor to Cape Verde Islands states that on one occasion his hostess was smoking a cigarette, when suddenly she drew it from her lips and offered it to him. Though somewhat startled, he accepted it with the best grace that he could command, and upon subsequent inquiries found that it was considered among the islanders one of the greatest compliments a lady could pay to a gentleman.

To an old lady who was addicted to the use of tobacco, Tom Brown wrote:

"MADAM, — Though the ill-natured world censures you for smoking, yet I would advise you, madam, not to part with so innocent a diversion. In the first place, it is healthful, and, as Galen rightly observes, is a sovereign remedy for the toothache, the constant persecutor of old ladies; secondly, tobacco, though it be a heathenish weed, is a great help to Christian meditations, which is the reason, I suppose, that recommends it to your parsons, the generality of whom can no more write a sermon without a pipe in their mouths than a Concordance in their hands. Besides, every pipe you break may serve to put you in mind of mortality, and show you upon what slender accidents man's life depends. I knew a dissenting minister who, on fast days, used to mortify upon a rump of beef, because it put him, as he said, in mind that all flesh was grass; but I am sure much more is to be learnt from tobacco. It may instruct you that riches, beauty, and all the glories of the world vanish like a vapour; thirdly, it is a pretty plaything; fourthly, and lastly, it is fashionable—at least, 'tis in a fair way of becoming so. Cold tea, you know, has been a long while in reputation at Court, and the gill as naturally ushers in the pipe as the sword-bearer walks before the Lord Mayor."

The Rev. J. Townsend, M.A., in a "Journey through Spain in the years 1786 and 1787," says: "A tradesman of the place (Luanjo) had cut his little portion of tobacco, and rolled it up carefully in a strip of paper, making a cigar about the size of a goose-quill; he had doubled back, and carefully pinched the ends; then, with mature deliberation, taking up his steel and his little bit of 'amadou' ('boletus igniarius') he struck a light, kindled his cigar, began to smoke, and, finding it work well, he presented it to the Countess (Penalba). She bowed, and took it, smoked it half out, and returned it to him again. After she had done with it, and joined in the conversation, in a few minutes she opened her mouth, and sent out a cloud of smoke. She saw my surprise, and asked the cause of it. I told her; and immediately the person who was smoking drew in some hearty whiffs, then opened his mouth, to convince me that nothing continued there, and after many minutes, breathed out volumes of smoke. This is their common mode of smoking;

and, without making it pass through their lungs, they think it useless."

Leaving the ladies, it will be convenient at this stage to see how smokers have been treated in other countries in the past. In Russia, according to Dean Stanley, it was long a departure from every sound principle of Church and State to smoke tobacco. The Czars ordered that every one caught smoking should lose his nose; and if the offence were frequently repeated, his head—a drastic enough remedy in all conscience. Peter the Great, however, held different views, and he resolved, for commercial reasons, to force tobacco on the Russians, and asked whether the smoking of tobacco was more heinous than the drinking of brandy. The reply he received was: "Yes, for it is said that not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth—this defileth a man." The apt quotation made no difference; the Russians had to smoke all the same.

Amongst a set of Russian club rules, which applied to a soirée dansante, there is this curious regulation: "The man who smokes in the portion of the club set aside for ladies, shall be at once fined twenty-five kopecks, to go towards the purchase of powder and eau-de-cologne for the ladies."

The pious old souls who inhabited the canton of Berne, at one time appear to have been infected with the general detestation of tobacco and smoking. The prohibition of it there was actually put among the Ten Commandments—"Thou shalt not smoke"—by the side of the altar.

The Sultan of Turkey—a country where now smoking is almost necessary to existence—once warned his subjects against the habit; and the punishment he ordered to be inflicted on offenders was mild compared with that in favour in Russia. The offending smoker was paraded through the streets, seated backward on an ass, with a tobacco-pipe thrust through the cartilage of his nose.

The Persian monarch was more vigorous, ordering that the noses of offenders should be cut off. To-day, in Persia, dinner is always preceded by the pipe—hubble-bubble—and a man is treated in respect of smoking according to his rank.

In Morocco, persons disobeying the Sultan's decree of prohibition of smoking, were imprisoned and flogged through the streets. In Abyssinia, the smoking and chewing of tobacco were punishable with death; and even in Massachusetts there used to be very stringent laws against tobacco. Indeed, both there and in Illinois, it is to-day illegal to sell or give tobacco to minors under sixteen years of age. It is not long since that a new law was passed at Sacramento, California, which renders it unlawful for any person under seventeen years of age to smoke cigarettes within the city limits. For the first offence there is a fine, for the second a term of imprisonment.

And now a few words about pipes, in which, for gorgeousness, the Indians far excel us. The Hydah, and neighbouring tribes of the British Columbian coast, have for centuries carved fantastic pipes out of a soft black slate. The Assiniboine Indians used, as they do now, fine marble, too hard to admit of carving, but susceptible of so high a polish that, when lighted, the glowing tobacco shines through the bowl, and presents a singular appearance at night in a dark lodge. A coarse species of jasper is in use in other tribes; while the Chippeways, at the head of Lake Superior, still carve their pipes out of a dark, close-grained stone procured from Lake Huron.

In England, the first pipes used appear to have been made of clay, with narrow bowls and contracted mouths. Then, as the habit grew stronger, and tobacco became cheaper, something more capacious would be required. These are the pipes which, under the name of "fairy pipes," are sometimes dug up and preserved as interesting relics of the past. Aubrey, writing about 1680, says: 'They (the English people) first had silver pipes, but the ordinary sort made use of a walnut shell and strawe. I have heard my grandfather say that one pipe was handed from man to man round the table. Within these thirty-five years 'twas scandalous for a divine to take tobacco. It was then sold for its wayte in silver. I have heard some of our old yeomen neighbours say that when they went to market they culled out their biggest shillings to lay in the scales against tobacco; now the customers of it are the greatest his majesty hath."

It is not generally known that the word cutty, applied to a species of clay pipe very much used, is a corruption of Kutaich, a city in Asia Minor, where a species of soft white stone is found, which is exported by the Turks to Germany for the manufacture of tobacco-pipes.

Concerning the origin of meerschaum

pipes, it is said that, in 1723, there lived at Pesth, the capital of Hungary, one Carl Kowates, a shoemaker by trade, whose ingenuity in cutting and carving on wood and other substances brought him into contact with Count Andrassy, with whom he became a favourite. The Count, on his return from a mission to Turkey, brought with him a large piece of whitish clay, which had been presented to him as a curiosity, on account of its light specific gravity. The shoemaker was struck with its porous quality, and suggested that, as it would absorb the nicotine, it was well adapted for pipes. He was told to make the experiment, and manufactured one each for himself and the Count. But in the pursuit of his trade he could not keep his hands clean, and many a piece of shoemaker's wax became attached to the pipe. The clay, however, instead of assuming a dirty appearance, as was naturally to be expected, when he wiped it off, received, wherever the wax had touched it, a clear brown polish, instead of the dull white it previously had. Attributing the change in tint to the proper cause, Karl waxed the whole surface, and polishing the pipe again, noticed how admirably and beautifully it coloured, also how much more sweetly it smoked after being waxed. The news soon became the talk of the nobles, who imported considerable quantities, which the shoemaker made up into pipes for them, greatly to his advantage. The first pipe thus made is still preserved in the Pesth Museum. Until 1820, owing to the great cost of importation, meerschaum pipes were exclusively confined to the richest noblemen, and even now a genuine meerschaum is an expensive luxury. Meerschaum is, in reality, a compound of silica, magnesia, lime, water, and carbolic acid. When first dug on the seashore, where it is always found, it lathers like soap, and is used by the Tartars as such.

The Chinese use a handsome little water-pipe, made entirely of brass and silver. It is all in one piece, except the bowl and neck, which is merely a tube, with an upper chamber for the tobacco. The merest pinch of long-cut tobacco fills the bowl, and one filling is only expected to provide one or two whiffs. The body of the pipe contains a neat reservoir for tobacco. The long, claw-like nails of the Celestials are used as deftly as a pair of tweezers in feeling in this little box for a pinch of tobacco. Long strips of prepared paper are used for lighting the pipe. This paper burns slowly, and when required for lighting a pipe, it is blown into flame by a peculiar puff. Any Celestial—man, woman, or child—can produce this flame with a single puff; but a European acquires the same ability only by considerable practice. As each filling produces only a couple of whiffs, the pipe has to be refilled over and over again to obtain satisfaction. Every time a pinch is smoked the remnant is blown away by lifting the tube and blowing vigorously through it from the lower end. The rapidity with which a devotee of this pipe puffs the paper into a flame, lights the tobacco, blows the paper out again, lifts the tube, blows out the refuse, fills it again, and so on, until he has had enough, is quite a remarkable performance. The common Chinaman uses a pipe of primitive pattern—merely a slender joint of bamboo with a hole bored in the side near the closed end. A pinch of tobacco is laid on this hole, and affords one or two whiffs.

Amber, which plays such an important part in modern smoking, is a carbonaceous mineral, principally found in the northern parts of Europe. It has been of great repute in the world from the earliest time, and was esteemed as a medicine before the Christian era. Three hundred years before Christ, Theophrastus wrote about it. A writer in the "Argosy" points out that "It is mentioned by Homer, and is found introduced in the most ancient specimens of Etruscan jewellery. In the collection of the Prince Canino, was a necklace of very choice Etruscan workmanship, having pendants in the form of Scarabei of alternate sardonyx and amber. The Greeks termed amber electron, from Elector, one of the names of the sun-god. Amongst the Romans, also, the substance was greatly prized. Pliny tells us that a small figure carved in amber had been known to sell at a higher price than a slave in vigorous health. In the time of Nero, one of the Equestrian order was sent to Germany by Julianus, the manager of the Gladiatorial Exhibitions, in order to procure a supply. He succeeded so well, and brought back such vast quantities that the very nets that protected the podium against the wild beasts, the litters upon which the slain gladiators were carried away, and all other articles used were studded with amber. Sir Thomas Browne, also, in his 'Urn Burial,' mentions among the contents of the Roman urn in the procession of Cardinal Farnese, not only jewels, but an ape in agate, and a grasshopper and an elephant carved in amber."

Whenever beds of lignite occur, amber is found, so that it is generally diffused over the world. But the shores of the Baltic, between Memel and Konigsberg, is the only district that supplies it in quantities. As much as four thousand pounds weight of amber yearly is said to be the product of that country. It is mostly found on the seashore, but in Prussia there are also mines. They are thus described: "First at the surface of the earth is found a stratum of sand. Immediately under this sand is a bed of clay filled with small flints; under this clay is a stratum of black earth or turf, filled with fossil wood, half decomposed and bituminous; this stratum is extended upon minerals containing little metal, except iron, which are consequently pyrites. Lastly, under this bed the amber is found scattered about in pieces and sometimes accumulated in heaps." It is accounted for in the following manner: "The oils in the woody stratum have been impregnated by the acid contained in the clay of the upper stratum, which has descended by the filtration of water. This mixture of oil and acid has become bituminous; the most pure and liquid parts of this bitumen have descended on the mineral stratum, and in traversing it have become charged with particles of iron; and the result of this last combination is the formation of the amber which is found below."

In Shakespeare's time, amber would seem to have been fashionable as an ornament, as he more than once alludes to it. When Petruchio promises to take Katherine on a visit to her father, he mentions "amber bracelets" among the "bravery" with which she is to be adorned. Amongst the artists of the Renaissance period it was chiefly used in the formation of jewel caskets and such like elegant objects. It is still much valued in the East; but the chief market at present is China, where it is crushed into powder and burnt as incense. Mouthpieces for cigars, beads, and other ornaments in this material are, however, extensively manufactured in the workshops of Dantzig, Hamburg, and elsewhere.

Nearly all the poets and members of the literary profession have been addicted to tobacco in one form or another. Milton dearly loved his pipe; Addison, Congreve, Philips, Prior, and Steele smoked prodigiously. Sir Walter Scott smoked, and so did Campbell. Beattie, Campbell's biographer, says, "Tobacco-pipes mingled with the literary wares which filled every corner of the bard's sanctum." It has also been said of him,

> Campbell, with lengthy pipe in hand,
> Seemed like a god in clover.

Moore, Byron, Hood, and Carlyle were equally addicted to the "weed." Lord Tennyson is said to be particularly attached to a long churchwarden, a basketful of which is placed by the side of his writing-table, while on the other side is a second basket. As soon as a pipe is finished, the poet throws it into the second basket and charges a fresh one, which is treated in precisely the same way when finished with.

The philosopher, Hobbes, smoked to excess, and lived to be ninety-two; while Sir Isaac Newton, who was never without his pipe, lived to green old age, and never lost but one tooth. Samuel Parr was invariably to be discovered "half-hidden by fuliginous clouds, a yard or so behind the bowl of a large churchwarden." He smoked everywhere, even in the company of ladies. Twenty pipes of an evening was his limit; and he never wrote well without tobacco. As he lived to the ripe old age of seventy-eight years, it is pretty good proof that immoderate use of tobacco is not fatal.

Mario, the great singer, was an inveterate smoker; he smoked incessantly everywhere, and his servant always stood at the wings of the theatres in which he performed, to receive the burning cigar from his mouth at the moment when he went on to the stage.

In a sketch of Edward Lytton Bulwer, by Maclise, in the South Kensington Museum, the great novelist is represented in an easy-chair with his legs stretched out, and smoking a pipe, the straight stem of which almost reaches down to his slippers. In one of his novels, he says: "He who doth not smoke hath either known no great griefs, or refuseth himself the softest translation next to that which comes from Heaven. 'What, softer than woman?' whispers the young reader. Young reader, woman teases as well as consoles. Woman makes half the sorrows which she boasts the privilege to soothe. Woman consoles us, it is true, while we are young and handsome; when we are old and ugly, woman snubs and scolds us. On the whole, then, woman in this scale, the weed in that—Jupiter, hang out thy balance, and weigh them both, and if thou give the preference to woman, all I can say is, the next time Juno ruffles thee—O Jupiter, try the weed."

Charles Lamb, according to his own confessions, was a "fierce smoker of tobacco;" but as he advanced in years, he was compelled to relax his intimacy with the favourite weed, and describes himself as resembling a "volcano burnt out, emitting now and then only a casual puff." According to Walter Thornbury, this burnt-out volcano smoked ten pipes a night. Eventually, he took his formal leave in a "Farewell Ode to Tobacco;" and, in sending a copy of the poem to his friend Wordsworth, he writes: "I have had it in my head to do it these three years; but tobacco stood in its own light when it gave me headaches that prevented me singing its praises. In this poem, which is one of the highest tributes ever paid to tobacco, he says:

May the Babylonish curse,
Straight confound my stammering verse,
If I can a passage see
In this word—perplexity;
Or a fit expression find,
Or a language to my mind—
Still the phrase is wide or scant—
To take leave of thee, Great Plant!
Or in any terms relate
Half my love or half my hate.
For I hate, yet love thee, so
That, whichever thing I show,
The plain truth will seem to be
A constrained hyperbole,
And the passion to proceed
More from a mistress than a weed.

. . . . . .

Stinking'st of the stinking kind,
Filth of the mouth and fog of the mind,
Africa, that brags her foison,
Breeds no such prodigious poison;
Henbane, nightshade, both together,
Hemlock, aconite——
Nay, rather,
Plant divine, of rarest virtue;
Blisters on the tongue would hurt you.
'Twas but in a sport I blamed thee;
None e'er prospered who defamed thee.

. . . . . .

For thy sake, Tobacco, I,
Would do anything but die,
And but seek to extend my days
Long enough to sing thy praise.
But as she, who once hath been
A King's Consort, is a Queen
Ever after, nor will bate
Any tittle of her state,
Though a widow, or divorced,
So I, from thy converse forced,
The old name and style retain—
A right Katherine of Spain;
And a seat, too, 'mongst the joys
Of the blest Tobacco Boys,
Where, though I, by some physician,
Am debarred the fruition
Of thy favours, I may catch
Some collateral sweets, and snatch
Sidelong odours.

Lamb, on one occasion, so it is recorded, in the height of his smoking days, was puffing strong coarse weed from a long clay pipe, in company with Dr. Parr, who was careful in obtaining finer sorts. The Doctor asked him how he acquired this prodigious power. In his stuttering manner the gentle "Elia" replied: "By t-toiling after it, as some men t-t-toil after virtue."

General Grant was a devout worshipper at the Nicotian shrine. During the many arduous campaigns in which he was actively engaged, he subsisted almost entirely on tobacco. The tough Yankee sometimes smoked as many as twenty cigars in twelve hours. But he was not "in it" with Bismarck, the great German Chancellor, who consumes enormous quantities of tobacco. When any measure of importance was in course of progress through the German Parliament, the "iron Chancellor" hardly ever had a cigar out of his mouth, except when he was eating, speaking, or sleeping. In his youthful days he prided himself on being what the Germans call a "chain smoker," or, in plain English, one whose morning and night are connected by a chain of cigars, each link of which is lighted at the stump of its predecessor. Bismarck has related that he has in this way smoked all the distance from Cologne to Berlin, a railway journey of about ten hours. "Happy man!" once exclaimed Gambetta of him, "beer and smoke agree with him." On one occasion, when about to light his last cigar, he observed to a friend "That the value of a good cigar is best understood when it is the last you possess, and there is no chance of getting another."

Victor Hugo was another inveterate smoker, and whenever his friends happened to call they were invariably invited to join him by the fireside and share the honoured pipe. Of the many striking anecdotes told of the fascinating charm of smoking in France—and they are legion in number—it is related how, in the year 1843, the convicts of the prison of Epinal, who had been for some time deprived of tobacco, actually rose in revolt, their cry being "Tobacco or death."

M. Guizot, when found one evening by a lady, smoking his pipe, was asked by her in astonishment, "What, you smoke, and yet have arrived at so great an age!" "Ah, madam," replied the venerable statesman, "if I had not smoked I should have been dead ten years ago."

Lilly, in the "History of his Life and Times," mentions a Buckinghamshire parson, who ran the great German Chancellor a very close race in rage for tobacco. "In this year," says he, "William Breedon, parson or vicar of Thornton, in Bucks, was living, a profound divine, but absolutely the most polite person for nativities in that age, strictly adhering to Ptolemy, which he well understood. He had a hand in composing Sir Christopher Heydon's defence of judicial astrology, being at that time his chaplain; he was so given over to tobacco and drink that when he had no tobacco—and I suppose too much drink—he would cut the bell ropes and smoke them."

Thackeray loved a cigar, and makes Becky Sharp pretend that she "loved the smell of cigars out of doors beyond everything in the world," and she "just tasted one, too, in the prettiest way possible, and gave a little puff, and a little scream, and a little giggle, and restored the delicacy to the Captain, who twirled his moustache, and straightway puffed it into a blaze, that glowed quite red in the plantation, and swore 'Jove—aw—Gad—aw, 'tis the finest segaw I ever smoked in the world—aw.'"

According to an old Johnian it was no small pleasure "To get Paley on a cold winter's night to put up his legs, stir the fire, and fill a long Dutch pipe. He formally declined any punch, but, nevertheless, drank it up as fast as we replenished his glass. He would smoke any quantity of tobacco, and drink any given quantity of punch."

Thomas Howell, in his "Familiar Letters," makes various allusions to his great fondness for tobacco. In acknowledging a present of some tobacco, he writes: "I received that choice parcel of tobacco your servant brought me, for which I send you as many returns of gratitude as there were grains therein, which are many, but too few to express my acknowledgement." Even the very ashes he praises, adding: "'Tis well known that the medicinal virtues of the ashes are very many; but they are so common, that I spare the inserting of them here."

There is, in an old work of the last century, a simile between a man and a tobacco-pipe, which is worth preserving. It is as follows:

Of lordly man, how humbling is his type:
A fleeting shadow, a tobacco-pipe;
His mind, the fire; his frame, the tube of clay;
His breath, the smoke thus idly puffed away;
His food, the herb that fills the hollow bowl;
Death is the stopper; ashes end the whole.

THE DAY'S WORK.

Do thy day's work, my dear,
Though fast and dark the clouds are drifting near,
Though time has little left for hope and very much for fear.

Do thy day's work, though now
The hand must falter and the head must bow,
And far above the failing foot shows the bold mountain brow.

Yet there is left for us,
Who on the valley's verge stand, trembling thus,
A light that lies far in the west—soft, faint, but luminous.

We can give kindly speech,
And ready helping hands to all and each,
And patience, to the young around, by smiling silence teach.

We can give gentle thought,
And charity, by life's long lesson taught,
And wisdom, from old faults lived down, by toil and failure wrought.

We can give love, unmarred
By selfish snatch at happiness, unjarred
By the keen aims for power or joy that make youth cold and hard.

And if gay hearts reject
The gifts we hold—would fain fare on unchecked
On the bright roads that scarcely yield all that young eyes expect,

Why, do thy day's work still.
The calm deep founts of love are slow to chill;
And Heaven may yet the harvest yield, the work-worn hands to fill.

A REAL FREE HOSPITAL.

'Tis sixty years since, to quote the title-page of Waverley, or, to be quite accurate, it was in the twenty-seventh year of this the nineteenth century, when a kind young London doctor, on his way home after midnight from visiting a patient, saw by the dim light of the street lamps of the period a poor girl lying on the steps of St. Andrew's churchyard, Holborn.

Homeless, friendless, and forlorn; faint from actual famine, and sickening to death; she lay huddled there for shelter from the cruel City streets—just as some weak, wounded creature will creep into its hiding-place, there quietly to die.

It was the old, old story, which, alas! is ever new. One more Unfortunate—gone to her Saviour! For, in spite of all the care and skill of the good doctor, within two days she lay dead.

She was only seventeen! Think of that, ye happy mothers, with your happy daughters going, in all the brightness of that age, to their first ball. Think of how, in those few years, the poor lost girl had lived through what had seemed well-nigh a century of suffering and shame. But short as were her days, and mournful though their ending, she had not lived in vain. Ere she died she told the doctor the sad story of her life, and how a stranger here in London she had vainly tried to gain admittance to a hospital; but knowing no one who could "recommend" her, as the phrase was, by a letter, she was everywhere refused.

Mr. Marsden, the good doctor, was so moved by what she told him that he resolved to do his utmost forthwith to found a hospital, where letters of admission should never be needed, and where poverty and sickness should be the only "Open Sesame" required. So, with the help of a few friends, he first rented a small house in Greville Street by Hatton Garden; and this was opened as a hospital, free to poor sick people, on the last day of February in the following year.

The good seed sown soon grew into a goodly plant. Ere many months had passed Sir Robert Peel took kindly interest in its growth, and, through his influence, the Duke of Gloucester became President of the hospital, while its Patron was His Gracious Majesty the King. On the death of George the Fourth, his successor also accepted the title, his example being followed by the Princess Victoria, who, on her accession to the throne, continued to be Patron, and remains so to this day. It was by her command that the prefix of "Royal" was added to the title; and it was doubtless by her wish that, in his year of marriage, the Prince of Wales became Vice-Patron of the charity; so that the epithet of "Royal" is doubly well applied.

During the great cholera visitation of 1832, the Governors were so bold as to keep their doors wide open to cases whereto all the other hospitals were closed. More than seven hundred patients, all smitten by the scourge, were admitted to their wards; and again in 1849 and 1854, when King Death again assumed his reign of choleraic terror, above three thousand in the former year, and six thousand in the latter, were similarly received.

As the area of its work and usefulness increased, the hospital required more room for its developement; and in the year 1842 it was removed from Greville Street to the site which it still occupies in the Gray's Inn Road. But having no endowment, and not daring to indulge in lavish dreams of marble halls or less lordly bricks and mortar, the Governors were forced to be content with some old barracks, in the former occupation of the Light Horse Volunteers. The premises were not palatial, as many hospitals are now, but the site was amply spacious; and the Governors had literally good ground whereon to base their hope of ere long seeing the old barracks give place to newer buildings, more convenient to their purpose, and more worthy of their care.

Some few years elapsed before their hope was realised; but at length, perhaps attracted by the "free" name of the hospital, the Freemasons most liberally came forward to its help. The North side of the quadrangle was built by their subscription, and in memory of their Grand Master was called the Sussex Wing. The wards therein were opened in 1856; and a score of years thereafter, a further portion of the barrack buildings was demolished, and wards containing fifty beds were erected in their stead. This new structure was in loyalty named after the Patron, and continues to be known as the Victoria Wing. It was first thrown open in 1878; and in the year following, by the aid of liberal legacies, more new buildings were erected, and the wards enlarged sufficiently to hold the present number of one hundred and sixty beds.

Numerous as they are, the beds are nearly always occupied; the daily average of inmates for the last year being one hundred and thirty-three, while as many as one hundred and fifty were in the hospital in October last. Over seventeen thousand out-patients were treated in the twelve months which ended last December, and more than ten thousand casualty cases were similarly attended.

It has indeed been estimated that, since it was first started, over two millions of out-patients have been aided by the hospital; besides the many thousands who in this half-century have been received into the wards.

Who would have ever guessed that the mere sight of a young girl, near the gate of a churchyard, should have led to the relief of so many poor sick people, and to the doing of so much good work in their behalf?

Much has been done, yet more remains to do. Three parts of the quadrangle have been fittingly rebuilt; but the fourth, which is the front, is ruinously needful of complete renewal. This is the only part of the old barracks left existing; yet here the very heart of the hospital is centred. Here, where once the horses of the Volunteers were stabled, are the drug stores, the dispensary, and the casualty room, as well as the council chamber of the weekly board of Governors. Here, too, are the rooms for the steward, and the housekeeper; and here the resident officers, both medical and surgical, are not luxuriously quartered. This old front has been repeatedly patched up and re-repaired, and is in a state so parlous that to pull it down now seems to be the only safe course left. For this and its rebuilding, and for other needful work, the sum of twenty thousand pounds is in the estimate required; and all who love good works are invited to subscribe. Thanks to a good legacy, and likewise to a good dinner at which the Earl of Lathom—of high rank in Freemasonry, as well as at St. James's—very recently presided, nearly half of the amount has already been forthcoming. So, if Freemasons and free Britons will handsomely come down with half a score of thousands more, then up will go the scaffolding for the front of the Free Hospital.

The Freemasons of England are famed for their benevolence, and they are vastly influential in all charitable works. But in these, as well as in all other mundane matters, the womenfolk of England are more influential still, as the Freemasons themselves would doubtless gallantly acknowledge, were they to hear the statement made in an after-dinner speech.

And Englishwomen fairly may be asked to show their interest in this hospital, by helping hands and hearts, as well as helpful pens and purses, seeing that it is the only one in England to which there is attached a female school of medicine.

Here the students have the benefit of tracing all the progress of insidious disease, and of watching the most skilful doctors at their work. And that the skill of surgery quite equals that of medicine in the members of the Staff, may be inferred from a most striking fact recorded at the hospital; namely, that the operation of Ovariotomy has been successfully performed there, without one single failure, more than forty times. One may own that the profession may be proud of this fair record, especially when one reflects that, scarcely a score of years ago, this operation was esteemed to be so sorely dangerous, that the surgeon who essayed it was deemed to be well-nigh indictable for manslaughter if he should chance to fail.*

Whether women may be fitted for the medical profession, is a matter whereon doctors may elect to disagree, and which writers may be prudent in not trying to decide. But it can hardly be disputed that India presents an ample field of labour for our feminine practitioners, and that the holy cause of mission-work may be very sensibly assisted by their skill. It is pleasant to note, therefore, that the school which is connected with the Free Hospital is making a fair progress, and that numerous diplomas have been granted to its students. In November last nine of them went in for the M.B. Exam. of the London University, and all were successful in passing—five in the first, and four in the second division: a good proof of the excellent teaching they had received.

Likewise, connected with the hospital, though financially separate, is the Trained Nurses' Institute; which, though of still more recent origin, already shows great promise of a very marked success. Here, after careful teaching, and each bearing a certificate attesting her ability, many "ministering angels" are kept in constant readiness to fly to the relief of those whose brows are wrung with pain, or wherever suffering and sickness may be felt. If not best suited to be doctors, women are by nature well fitted to be nurses: and here their natural gifts have been most skilfully improved, and good training has developed their angelic ministering qualities. No one better than a doctor knows the value of good nursing to assist him in his cures; and none better than his patients can estimate the want of it. The firm light hand, the gentle touch, the soft and soothing tone, these are feminine endowments, most important in a nurse; but patience, watchfulness, and skill are equally essential, and can only be attained by discipline and training. The Sairey Gamps and Betsey Prigs have, happily for mankind, long since become extinct; they could not long survive exposure of their cruelty and worthlessness. But to nurse well needs good training; and this can only be attained within the wards of a good hospital. Without it, women are too apt to be fussy in the work; and to fret a fevered patient by their whisperings and questionings; by their abortive high-heeled efforts to affect a noiseless tread, or by ill-judged, ill-timed offers of sympathy and small talk. The feelings of a nervous sufferer, when nursed by such misguided ministrants as these, may be likened to the torments one can fancy that a sick fly would experience, if tended in its illness by a healthy buzzing blue-bottle.

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* This was stated by a witness before the House of Lords' Committee.

While chatting with Miss Barton, the bright and ever watchful Lady Superintendent, I hinted that her memory must be well stocked with sick-bed stories, since she held the chief command of so large a nursing army. And here are half-a-dozen she has kindly chosen from her store.

W. N., a pale, thin, ragged little boy, was admitted upon Christmas Eve, with a bad abscess in his knee. He had been very badly fed, and treated very brutally by a cruel stepmother and a drunken father; and, at last, was driven by ill-usage to run away from home. Although over twelve years old, he weighed less than fifty pounds, and looked like a little skeleton when brought to the hospital, by his "landlady," an old laundress. She had let him an old wheelbarrow in her washhouse for his bedroom at the rental of four-and-sixpence a week. He earned six shillings weekly as a shoeblack, and so was left with barely threepence daily for his food. . . . In February he was sent to a Convalescent Home.

A girl, aged fifteen, had fallen into a copper full of boiling water. She was a teetotaller, and was with the greatest difficulty persuaded to take brandy, even when told how needful it was for her recovery.

Johnnie, aged five, went downstairs in his nightgown "to help father light the fire." He was terribly burned, and nothing seemed to soothe him, until a nurse gave him a penny, when he instantly grew quiet. He sank, however, from exhaustion; and died, still tightly clutching the penny in his hand. His father's grief was terrible; but after a few days he often came to see the nurse, to talk about his Johnnie: and he never failed to bring her a big bunch of flowers for her ward.

M. L., an old woman of seventy, fell from a window and broke her leg so badly that amputation was performed. She was a nice old woman, but seemed falling into a state of "second childishness and mere oblivion," for she was continually searching for her boot to put upon her stump.

In the dark days of December, two little news-boys were crossing the line with their morning papers, and were both run over by a passing train. One died while being carried to the hospital. The other had his leg amputated in the hope to save his life; he bore the operation bravely, but the shock had been too much for the little fellow, and three days afterwards he died, holding the nurse's hand.

Arthur, aged five, was admitted with both legs broken. He was a funny little fellow, and a general favourite in the ward, and so had several pennies given him. When asked one day what he meant to do with them, he replied: "When my legs is mended, me go 'scursion to Tempton Park, to back the Winner!"

Being somewhat touched by the tale of number one, I had a little talk with Master W. N. before he started on his visit to the Home of Convalescence.

From his childishness of feature and the smallness of his stature, I should probably have guessed him to be about half his real age, and his clothes appeared to hang so loosely on his limbs, that he looked rather like a scarecrow as he limped along the ward to me. In justice to his tailor, he confessed that he had not been measured for the suit, which, indeed, he stated was a gift since his admission to the hospital, a circumstance which might account for the misfit.

No, he'd never had no real mother, as far as he remembered, and he couldn't read nor write. Why, yes, he'd been to school a bit, but his second mother wanted him at home to mind her baby. No, it wasn't father's, at least he didn't think it was. And so when the 'Spector came she used to hide him in a cupboard; and when father got summoned, he used to hide him too. Yus, pretty often with his fistes, and sometimes with a stick. Father worn't a bad sort, except when something riled him, or else when he got tight. Yus, mother used to wallop him, if he let the baby 'oller, and she'd 'it 'arder than father, though she wasn't 'arf as big. Father was a working man, but he often got a 'oliday, and then he'd go upon the spree. Father made Pie Annas (with considerable emphasis, and dignity of utterance, as though the avocation were as great as that of Bishop-making, at the very least). No, he didn't make 'em all of his own self. Yus, that was right, he worked along of a lot of other 'ands, you know, up there at 'Olloway at the Works. Father got his money mostly of a Sarrerday, and he'd come 'ome pretty merry, and sometimes with a pal or two, and send for some more drink. Yus, mother 'ud go to fetch it, she liked a drop, she did. And then father used to pull him out of bed to sing to 'em. And if he was too sleepy, father'd swear as he was shamming, and 'ud kick him till he singed. Oh, yus, he could sing "God save the Queen," but father didn't care for it. He liked something a bit spicy, father did, something come from the Music 'Alls, such as "Roarin' Sal," you know. What, don't you know it, guv'nor? Why, it starts somehow like this here:

'Er nime it is Jemimer, toffs they calls 'er Roaring Sal,
She'll daunce a wolse, or drine a glorse, like many a rompin' gal;
With a go-to-meetin' bonnet, and a pair of 'igh-'eeled shoes,
O don't she look a booty—if she ain't upon the booze!

In his childish, piping treble the little singer warbled some such vulgar stuff as this, half-whispering the words to me, as though he were afraid to awaken the shocked echoes of the silent ward. It was curious to notice that, although when he was speaking his accent had been passable, and his H's rarely dropped, yet, when he began to sing, he immediately assumed the vulgar, low-bred Cockney twang, which so-called comic vocalists now commonly adopt. Upon my offering to come and have another chat with him, he stated that he could not see me after Monday, 'cause the doctor meant to send him on that morning to a Cromwellessonome. This last formidable word he twice repeated for my benefit, for fear I might forget it, though it was clear that he had not the slightest notion what it meant.

"To sit on rocks, to muse o'er flood and fell," may be agreeable to persons of a meditative turn of mind, and may possibly afford a pleasurable pastime to busy men enjoying a well-earned week of leisure. But it is certainly more useful to the interests of humanity to sit weekly on the board of a hospital committee, and arrange the many details, and discharge the various duties connected with the management. A Byronic taste for solitude may doubtless still exist, and be coupled with the love of sombre meditation; and yet to sit on the rocks, or "slowly trace the forest's shady scene," can scarce have long attraction in this locomotive age, except, perhaps, for landscape painters. There still may be surviving some few "minions of splendour shrinking from distress," who may have been more plentiful in a less enlightened era. But people willing to be occupied with charitable works are nowadays abundant among the well-to-do; and were society now charged with any tendency towards shrinking from distress, the modern taste for slumming would negative at once the belated accusation.

In spite of the inherent selfish nature of mankind, philanthropists are happily an ever-growing race; and the busiest of busy men will weekly give to charity their stolen scraps of leisure. There is no lack of volunteers for gratuitous committee work; and the Weekly Board is now as strong as ever at the Gray's Inn Road Free Hospital. Subscribers are, however, in continual demand there, for the Governors have no endowment at their back, and are precluded by their charter from possessing real property. With an annual expenditure exceeding eleven thousand pounds, they are ever glad to welcome new and regular subscribers; and any one desirous of doing real good can hardly find a better charitable investment. Every shilling here subscribed is spent directly to the profit of the needy sick and suffering. There is nothing wasted upon sinecurish services or ornamental officering. All accounts are overhauled with the most watchful eye to wise economy of outlay. Little is expended upon flourishing of pens, or flourishes of costly advertising trumpets. With half a century to vouch for the good work it has done, this hospital needs no emotional appeals to puff it into public favour. Its merits rest securely on a solid base of facts. In brief, it is a well-tried, stable institution, and may surely be regarded as more worthy of support than crude, speculative schemes of universal slum-salvation, and wild, visionary projects of sensational philanthropy.

Charity covers a multitude of skins, and puts needful food into a myriad of bodies. It helps people in a numberless variety of ways, but in none more certainly, perhaps, than in a hospital. For there is no imposture in a broken leg, and shammers of disease have little chance of being welcomed. Moreover, hospitals not merely aid the sick, but they assist the scientific; for how could students hope to learn, or medical art make progress, without the help of hospitals?

Nor are they of advantage only to their inmates. Visitors may surely also profit by their influence. Who can walk through the wards without noticing their cleanliness and the ever watchful discipline which marks their careful management? Who but must admire the appliances and methods of relief from chronic pain, or can fail to see the flowers and pictures, newspapers and books, as well as toys and other tokens of sympathy and kindness?

Who can pass unmoved among those stricken frames, and observe those hollow eyes and drawn and pallid faces without a feeling of deep gratitude for being spared such suffering?

A visit to a hospital is the best thing to prescribe for many a morbid malady to which the human mind is subject. To salve the wounds of vanity, and to humble self-conceit, there are few cures more efficient; and I know no surer remedy for peevish discontent and querulous repining. Many a petty heartache has in this way been subdued, and much soreness of spirit has been virtually healed by the mere sight of real suffering.

At the Royal Free Hospital there are one hundred and sixty beds; and some seventy pounds a year is now the estimate for each of them. But who can estimate their value as a means of doing good, or can guess what patient care and skill, what constant energy and watchfulness, are needed for their maintenance?

Hospital Sunday yearly comes, and a hundred-preacher power is devoted to its sermons. Of all the many speakers who have pleaded in its cause, perhaps none have been more eloquent than Mr. Charles Dickens, who, in the year '63, presided at the festival of the Royal Free Hospital, and with whose final touching words I may here fittingly conclude:

"The hospital bed is a poor little frame of iron, in a great bare ward the patients never saw before—a little space not much larger than a grave, in a long perspective of unrest and pain. But to the body stretched upon that little bed come the ready hand, the soothing touch, the knowledge that can relieve pain within that suffering body; and to the softened mind within it come, at the best time, the words of the Great Friend of the sick in body, and the sick in spirit, who never raised His hand on earth except to heal."

DEDICATIONS.

NOWADAYS dedications have fallen into desuetude. They led such a fast and riotous life down to the times of Pope and Johnson, that all their vitality was expended; and men—both those who gave and those who received—grew ashamed of them, as literary labour rose in public estimation. Johnson is usually credited with having given the death-blow to the system; but Thackeray, we remember, in a charming little essay he wrote on "Prefaces and Dedications," ascribes it to Pope, who "had found a more profitable system of patronage in getting subscriptions from the great and wealthy of all parties." The point is not of much importance, however; and it is enough for all general purposes if we can fix unanimously upon the epoch. Only for our individual part, we should think the letter to Lord Chesterfield had the most direct influence in the ruin of the worn-out "abject dedication."

Every dog has its day, and the old style of patronage was in similar case, and it had the advantage of a very long day too. Who its inventor was, there is no saying, probably it was some beggar; but whether or not, it is certain that the art, during nearly the whole of its existence, served the purposes of beggary. It had for its object the tickling of every important nobody who could afford, or who chose to afford, to pay more or less handsomely for the luxury of seeing himself in the front of a book. When a man feels a strong desire for this sort of thing, he is seldom averse to seeing the colours laid on thick—in other words, he is fond of being told that he is a splendid fellow, specially favoured of heaven in the matter of genius, acquirements, and wealth; and the more profuse the fine phrases are, the more widely do his purse-strings expand.

Perhaps a patron was in some degree a necessity in the early dawn of our literature, because buyers were very few; but such a necessity can hardly excuse some of the most notorious of the cases of literary toadyism, which at this age began to grow tyrannous and strong, like the north wind in the "Ancient Mariner."

Shakespeare seems never to have abandoned his self-respect, though; and as for Spenser, it was probably only because he was poor that he addressed a commendatory sonnet to every person of eminence to whom he presented a copy of the "Faerie

Queene"; it was excusable that he should pay a big compliment to the Queen, and he addressed her as a

Goddesse heavenly brighte,
Mirrour of grace and majestie divine,
Great ladie of the greatest isle, whose light
Like Phoebus' lampe, throughout the world doth shine.

It was necessary to lay it on with a trowel, so to speak, or the bright Occidental star would not have received the least impression; and the poet earned the goodwill of all the ladies of her court, in addition to herself, by inscribing to them a very adroitly-worded sonnet. He did not go unrewarded in his day, even if he did die in poverty. He got a Government secretaryship in Ireland through the influence of Lord Grey of Wilton, "his especial patron"; though this was lost, and all his possessions with it, in the troubles which shortly afterwards ensued.

Spenser sent a sonnet with a copy of his book; and if he had received a sum of twenty or fifty pounds in return therefor, he would, to our mind, not have been too well paid for his trouble. Sonnets in the open market now only fetch half-a-guinea or so; but every one of his deserved to live, and a poem that is not for an age but for all time is a priceless acquisition. Some other men have adopted various devices in order to secure more than a due share of patronage. There was an Italian physician who not only dedicated each book of his "Commentary upon Hippocrates" to a different individual, but even contrived to please another patron by putting his name before the index; and Fuller, the Church Historian, floated his great work by buoying it with a dozen dedications and about fifty friendly inscriptions. One Rangooze, we are told, hit upon a very ingenious dodge. He wrote a series of panegyrical letters addressed to different people, and printed them without any pagination, so that they could be bound up in any order. He then contrived that every person who had paid him a subscription should see his name above in the place of distinction. He was not the only one guilty of an absolutely "shady trick." There is a somewhat similar dodge which was performed by men who were called "Falconers," and who worked in couples. They scraped together sundry parings of wit, patched up a book between them, and got it printed. Then they obtained the names of all the gentlemen of the country they proposed to visit, and printed off as many epistles dedicatory as they had names for; the epistles being exactly alike in wording, and differing only in the names. They hired a couple of hacks, and being "civilly suited that they might carry about them some badge of a scholar," they set out on their travels. At every house they came to, one of the rascals obtained access to the proprietor and addressed him thus:

"Sir, I am a poor scholar whom the report of your virtues hath drawn hither. I have been so venturesomely bold as to fix your worthy name as a patronage to a poor, short discourse, which here I dedicate, out of my love, to your noble and eternal memory."

The book, bound in vellum, with gilt fillets and streamers of fourpenny silk dangling at the four corners, is produced, takes the eye of the patron, who sees his name "just as long as a henchman's grace before meat" heading the epistle, and in nearly every instance charms four or five, or even ten guineas out of his pocket. Then would the rogue depart, and it would be his crony's turn to personate the poor scholar before the next justice of the peace whom they had on the list; and between one and another of the gulls they made a glorious and easy living. So popular was the trick, indeed, that dedication-mongers travelled up and down most of the English shires when James the First was King.

From the Restoration to the end of the seventeenth century was the golden age of dedications. Every writer adopted them; and competition being keen, they vied with one another in adulatory extravagance—extravagance which, by-the-bye, came to be quite expected by the gentlemen who paid for them. Sir George Wharton, in dedicating an almanack to Charles the Second, presents the world with this graphic pen-and-ink sketch:

Some Princes have been surnamed Red, some Black,
Some Tall, some Crooked (as well in mind as) Back,
Some for their Learning, some for Valour stand,
Admired by this Learned and Warlike Land;
Our Gracious King's both Black and Tall of Stature,
Learned, Valiant, Wise, and Liberal, too, by Nature,
But what adorns Him more than all the Rest,
Is Mercy in His most Religious Breast;
Which, mixed with Justice, makes Him thus to shine,
The increasing Glory of the Regal line!

All this of the monarch who was, both in mind and in person, one of the ugliest men that ever sat on a throne! But Browne went further. He wrote to Charles:

You, sir, such blessings to the world dispense,
We scarce perceive the use of Providence!

and in dedicating his "Destruction of Jerusalem" to the Duchess of Portsmouth, he declared that he placed her image at the Temple gate to render the building sacred! Such scurvy sycophancy as this raises a smile of mingled scorn and humour—humour because it is so preposterous, and scorn because it is so essentially mean—but some of the best spirits of the age were not above being offenders. Otway—who was allowed to starve, and who killed himself by a ravenous attack on a hot roll—addressed the worst of the bad crew of court dames in these words:

"Nature and Fortune were certainly in league when you were born; and as the first took care to give you beauty enough to enslave the hearts of all the world, so the other resolved to do its merits justice, that none but a monarch fit to rule the world should ever possess it. The young prince you have given him by his virtues declares the mighty stock he came from," and so on ad nauseam.

Dryden left Otway far behind in this direction; he is the grand master of the art of soft sawder, and has never been equalled save, perhaps, by Aphra Behn in an address to Nell Gwynne. He seems to have had a sense of shame on the matter, however, for when the purpose of the dedication had been served, he almost invariably withdrew it; and it is to be remembered in his favour that he consistently refused to inscribe his "Æneid" to William the Third, notwithstanding the pathetic entreaties of Tonson.

Young was not much better than Dryden in the matter of fulsome eulogiums of great men and women, though he unquestionably must give first place to Dryden. Still he was an excellent hand, and if as a satirist he sneered at dedications, "washing Ethiops white," he did not let that consideration weigh with him in the least. He inscribed his "Last Day" to the Queen, and after praising her for the victories achieved by Marlborough, he goes on to declare that he is better pleased still by seeing her rise from this lower world, soaring above clouds, passing first and second heavens, and leaving fixed stars behind her; nor will he lose her there, but keep her in view through all the boundless spaces on the other side of creation, till he beholds the heaven of heavens open, and angels receiving and conveying her still onward beyond the stretch of his imagination!

In dedicating another poem to the Countess of Salisbury, he says: "To behold a person only virtuous, stirs in us a prudent regret; to behold a person only amiable to the sight, warms us with a religious indignation; but to turn our eyes to a Countess of Salisbury, gives us pleasure and improvement; it works a sort of miracle, occasions the bias of our nature to fall from sin," with more of the same contemptible sort.

But this kind of thing is happily done for; it has sunk into the limbo of forgotten things, and literary men of our day are glad to forget the degradation of their predecessors. Thus it is seldom you meet with the old style of dedication now. When we have them at all, they are generally addressed to the author's friends or relatives, and as often as not begin with an off-hand "My dear Emily," or consist only of three words, "To my Mother," or to some other relative, standing alone, as Thackeray put it, "in a field of white margin."

CATHERINE MAIDMENT'S BURDEN.

A STORY IN TWELVE CHAPTERS.

By MARGARET MOULE.

CHAPTER III.

Mr. Stewart-Carr stood in his library on the morning after his arrival; he had the morning paper in his hand, but it was not unfolded yet, and he showed no sign of intending to read it. He was looking out from the windows with an interested, scrutinising look. A beautiful outlook it was. Immediately under the windows were the gardens, still half in shadow, for it was not yet ten o'clock. But the shadowy part only seemed by contrast to give greater brilliancy to the others, where the dazzling sunshine made the scarlet geraniums into a blaze, and deepened the vivid colour of a great crescent-shaped border of lobelia, whose blue stood out against the brown of a copper-beech tree behind them. Behind the gardens, making a background to the gorgeous colour of the flowers, were the trees of the park, which stood in rows, and clumps, and irregular groups of every variety of beautiful green, with the silver of firs and birches lit by the sun to break it here and there.

"The grounds have been kept very well, at any rate. I'll tell Maidment so," Mr. Stewart-Carr said to himself, as he moved away from the window to the breakfast-table. "In most excellent order they seem. It's lucky, considering I want the place to look well to-morrow." He sat down to the table, unfolded the paper placed in front of him, and began his breakfast.

Mr. Stewart-Carr was a man of about forty. He looked, however, younger than his years. He was tall, well made, and broad-shouldered, with enough regularity of feature to make the description of him as "good-looking" a perfectly accurate one. And the expression his face possessed was good. A pleasant, thoroughly good-natured expression it was, which showed itself most clearly in the quick, dark eyes, and the mouth, which, as he was clean-shaven, was plainly visible. But there was more in Mr. Stewart-Carr's face than pleasant good-nature. There was something indefinable which told of power, which betrayed the fact that he had a will, and was accustomed to exercise it, on himself and others; and there were also thoughtfulness and intellect in his expression. And about his whole personality there was the utterly inexplicable something which makes his fellow-creatures speak of a man as a gentleman.

He turned over the morning paper thoughtfully, now and then letting his breakfast wait, to comment, in an abrupt soliloquy, on every item of news that struck him.

But he was quick in all his actions, and before half-past ten struck from the clock on the library mantelpiece, he had risen from the table and thrown his newspaper on the ground beside it. He walked to the mantelshelf for some matches, and taking a cigarette from his case, lit it slowly while he considered his plans for the day.

"I suppose I shall have to take them all out while they are here," he said to himself, after a few silent puffs at his cigarette. "Drive round, and so forth. I must look up the show places. I dare say Maidment knows them, by the way. I'll get through most of the business to-day and get it done, so as to be free for them. Let me see," he said, reflectively, waving aside the smoke of his cigarette slowly as he spoke. "There's some book-work to be gone through, of course; but I'd better undertake the out-of-door survey first. I'll go and look for Maidment. He's pretty sure to be expecting me after what I said to him last night. Yes, I'll go and see for him directly. Fenton," he said, to the footman who entered at this moment to take away the breakfast, "I shall be out all the morning if any one should call. Tell them that I do not know when I shall want luncheon. It had better be ready for me by two, though," he ended, adding to himself, "it can't take longer than that, I suppose, however much Maidment has to talk about."

A quarter of an hour later Mr. Stewart-Carr went down the gravel drive which led under the old battlemented towers and out into the park, where he turned aside on to a foot-path under the trees, a short cut to the agent's house. It was very hot in the sun, and Mr. Stewart-Carr, finding it so, lit another cigarette and walked slowly. He looked around him with increasing satisfaction at every step. Everywhere in the park there were traces of the most careful supervision and attention. All the fences were well mended, all the trees that needed it propped; and wherever gaps had occurred they had been carefully filled up by planting young trees.

"Maidment is invaluable," he said to himself, as he came in sight of the White House. "The way the men have been kept up to their work is first-rate." He gazed at the house musingly as he came closer. "The house looks fresher," he said, "pleasanter somehow, and brighter." His eyes had fallen on the pretty blinds and curtains which Catherine had kept fresh and bright since she had come to live there; and the indefinable interest given even to the outside of a house that has for its mistress a woman of "house-proud" instinct, attracted his attention.

He wondered, vaguely, without defining his wonder, what Maidment had done to the house, and then he opened the garden gate. It was a narrow bit of garden in front, but there was in it a shady hawthorn-tree, and under it a garden seat. On the seat at this moment were Catherine's garden hat, and her work-basket, a pretty, dainty thing of rush and ribbons.

"Women!" Mr. Stewart-Carr said in amazement, as he caught sight of these. "Who in the world can it be? Has he got married, I wonder? Hardly likely. Besides, I should be sure to have heard." He paused a moment to throw away the end of his cigarette before going into the garden. "Women!" he repeated to himself, with the air of one who has solved a puzzle. "That's what's the matter with the house!" Then he opened the garden gate and went in. He rang the front-door bell; the door stood open, and from the end of the stone-paved passage came the sound of a woman's voice. Catherine was talking in the kitchen to Margaret. Mr. Stewart-Carr could hear no words, but the low tones struck him as the feminine belongings in the garden had done, with a sense of something unusual and unexpected. He waited for a moment or two at the door, and then rang once more. Frank Maidment himself came out of the dining-room quickly.

"I am so sorry," he said. "I am afraid you have been waiting. Our establishment is small, as you know, and our one domestic would appear not to have heard the bell. Come in," he added, throwing open the dining-room door. On the dining-room table were a quantity of white pinks and mignonette, in sweet-scented confusion, with the brown jugs beside them waiting to be filled with them; Catherine had been arranging the flowers when she had been called away by Margaret. Frank Maidment saw Mr. Stewart-Carr glance at them. "Rather a litter, I am afraid," he said, "and it is not early enough to ask you on that score to excuse an untidy room."

"It needs none," Mr. Stewart-Carr said, briefly. Then sitting down in one of the two chairs Frank Maidment pulled out from the table, he took up one of the flowers and played with it a moment carelessly. "Are you—pardon my curiosity, Maidment," he said, lightly, "are you married since we last met?"

Frank Maidment smiled.

"Married? No," he said. "I'm not a marrying man. My sister has lived with me for three years. A woman makes a litter; but she is an improvement to a house on the whole," he added, still smiling.

"Your sister!" Mr. Stewart-Carr said. "Oh, of course, I see," he added, vaguely. He had a dim recollection that Frank Maidment had once, during his last visit to Moreford, alluded to his sister; but having absolutely no distinct remembrance of what he had said or what he himself might be expected to remember of it, he felt that the best course was to leave the subject alone as quickly as possible. He formed a rapid mental picture of Miss Maidment, and repeated, quickly: "Of course—of course you must be very glad of her society." Frank Maidment said no more, and there was a little silence while Mr. Stewart-Carr pulled out of his breast-pocket a memorandum-book. "We must enter upon business, Maidment," he said. "I thought the quickest way would be to come here and pick you up, if we go round the estate this morning; you told me last night, I think, that you would be disengaged." He spoke in a courteous, enquiring tone, and breaking off, looked up at his agent.

Frank Maidment was looking himself, and his best self, this morning. His tones were as steady, his bearing as self-possessed and collected, his manner as good, and his whole outward appearance as natural, as it had been when he went up to the Castle to meet Mr. Stewart-Carr the night before. There was not the least trace about him now that it had ever been otherwise.

"I am at your service, of course, Mr. Stewart-Carr," he answered, readily.

There was a curious contrast between these two men, as they sat facing each other—a very sharply defined contrast; but though it was sharply defined, it was only so to the observer who had perceptions nice enough to perceive it at all; it was by no means obvious. There was a surface similarity about them. Both were men who had not yet reached middle age, both had their fair share of personal attractiveness, both were gentlemen, both were wearing the same sort of rough tweed morning clothes. But Mr. Stewart-Carr expressed in his personality and his manner, indefinably but distinctly, the fact that such as he was now, so he always was. It was evident, on the contrary, that Frank Maidment's present bearing and manner were not perfectly natural to him, but were something out of the common.

"Thanks," said the other man; "I want to get through this kind of business in good time. You may remember, I mentioned the fact that I had some people coming down this evening — and that reminds me, Maidment, before we go out can you give me a rough idea of the show places about here? I am a useless cicerone in my own parts," he laughed. "I don't in the least know where to take them. But one can't let people go away with half the neighbourhood unexplored."

"Certainly," Frank Maidment answered; "I think there are six or seven you might see—easily. There are——" But before he could begin his list the dining-room door suddenly opened, and Catherine Maidment entered. She was wearing a very large white apron with a bib. She had in one hand a sugar-basin, and her keys in the other.

"Oh, I beg your pardon," she said, very confusedly. "I did not know, Frank, that you were engaged." She put down the sugar-basin and keys hastily and prepared to go back. But her brother detained her.

Mr. Stewart-Carr had risen at her entrance, and Frank Maidment followed his example.

"Catherine," he said, "this is Mr. Stewart-Carr. Mr. Stewart-Carr, my sister."

Mr. Stewart-Carr bowed. But for the fact that his manner was always composed, it would have been a somewhat agitated bow. Nothing could be further from the mental picture he had five minutes earlier formed of Miss Maidment than this. He had mentally pictured to himself an elderly woman—this was a young one; he had imagined a thin, rather ordinary person, whom he should possibly meet about in the grounds or in the village in an old-fashioned cloak—this was a shapely woman, decidedly extraordinary, and her dress was pretty and fresh. He had never before seen a woman in a white apron, and he instantly made up his mind that it was a most becoming form of dress. For he made up his mind at the same moment that Miss Maidment was a very pretty woman. Catherine had coloured with confusion at the thought of her apron and her hasty entrance—coloured even to her forehead. But the colour was the only sign she gave of confusion. She was self-possessed enough as she acknowledged Mr. Stewart-Carr's bow.

"I apologise," she said, with a smile, "for this untidy table. I was called away in the midst of doing my flowers, and I really quite forgot that I had left them here."

"It is I who should apologise, Miss Maidment," said Mr. Stewart-Carr. "I do so heartily for disturbing you in the morning. My excuse must be my business with your brother."

"Of course," she said. "Please do not put it like that. This room is generally quite presentable in the morning; the flowers are an accident, that is all."

"The accident has a delicious effect, Miss Maidment," he replied. "This room is beautifully scented. Your brother will hardly thank me for taking him away from it out into the heat, which is excessive by this time, I imagine, in the sun, and we can hardly manage our morning's work in the shade, I fear! Maidment," he added, looking at his watch, "I think, if it is convenient to you, we should be off."

Frank Maidment acquiesced instantly.

"About your list of places of interest?" he said to Mr. Stewart-Carr, as he rose from his chair. "We did not accomplish the list."

"Oh, you will, perhaps, be so good as to tell me them as we walk, and I can set them down." Mr. Stewart-Carr, who had risen when he first spoke of the time, advanced a step or two towards where Catherine stood. "Good-bye, Miss Maidment," he said. "Allow me to apologise again for my early visit."

"Pray do not," she said, and bowing to him again, she turned to her scattered flowers as he walked towards the door.

"I am to expect you when I see you then, Frank," she said to her brother, who was following Mr. Stewart-Carr.

"When you see me," he said, with a little laugh. And shutting the door of the cool room as he spoke, the two men went out into the glaring sunshine.

The sun had lost much of its power, and was shedding only long, slanting rays across the smooth slopes of the park and into the Maidments' garden, when Mr. Stewart-Carr and Frank Maidment re-entered it at four o'clock. Their round was over, but Mr. Stewart-Carr had come back that he might look into the work that remained to be done, in the shape of looking over accounts, and so forth, and see how long this was likely to take before he made an appointment with Frank Maidment for completing it.

Catherine Maidment came out of the house as they entered the garden gate. She was dressed for walking, and carried a small basket on her arm. She was wearing something light, and looked cool and fresh, and altogether in keeping with the pretty shady garden and the soft afternoon light. Mr. Stewart-Carr looked at her again, and thought she looked even prettier in a walking dress than in the white apron, and thought also he had really scarcely realised in the morning what a very pretty woman she was.

She greeted them with a little smile.

"You must have found it hot," she said.

"We have," assented Mr. Stewart-Carr. "But we have got through a great deal of work, and that is an alleviation to our feelings; and got through it most satisfactorily, if you will let me tell you so, Miss Maidment. Your brother will hardly let me tell him how excellent I find his management."

Catherine flushed hotly.

"I am very glad," she said, simply.

Her brother's face was flushed already with the sun, but it turned several shades darker under the dark skin as he met his sister's eyes.

"It is very good of you," he said, confusedly, to Mr. Stewart-Carr. "If you will come in I will show you the books."

Mr. Stewart-Carr raised his hat to Catherine, and she passed out of the gate as they went into the house.

Ten minutes later, Mr. Stewart-Carr, having arranged that his agent should come to him at the Castle at twelve o'clock on the following morning, had gone, and Frank Maidment was alone.

The dining-room was perfectly quiet, and it was rather dark, for the sun-blinds were still down. He walked to the window and drew up one of them slowly, and was going to draw up the second, when a sudden reluctance seemed to seize him; he dropped the cord, and threw himself into the leather arm-chair.

"What did I do that for?" he said. "I don't want light, goodness knows. One can think in the dark, and—I'd better," he muttered.

He threw his head back, and with some inconsistency let his eyes wander to the window. Between two of the park trees there was to be seen a vivid patch of blue sky. It was not dazzlingly blue now, the sun was too low; but it was a bright, clear blue, so clear that Frank Maidment's restless eyes seemed to find its fixed clearness trying—he lowered them quickly, and fixed them on a picture that hung just inside the window. It was an old and dim engraving in a heavy, old frame, and apparently the sombre outline suited his frame of mind better. He sat silent for a long time, balancing and swaying restlessly with one foot a small workstand of Catherine's.

"You are a fool," he said, at last, in a low, very bitter tone. "A cursed fool, Frank Maidment! Look at yourself and look at him! He is going straight—he is respected—he has power. He will get through this life, and have nothing to be blue about when it's done. And he enjoys himself and gets as much out of life as can be got—you bet. And you utter fool, you might, too! You're quite as capable. Your chance in life is quite as good, and you fool it—chuck it right away—and let yourself down to what you are—a hypocritical weak fool."

He laughed a bitter, cynical laugh, and, getting up, paced restlessly round the room. But at the end of the second turn he flung himself down again into the chair and laughed once more.

"Hypocritical!" he repeated, "rather! I thought I should have told him when he said all that about the cottages being in repair. I thought I should have told him that it was Kit—Kit! and not me. Told him! No!" he said, with a sudden turn of his mental position. "Told him! No! I haven't courage enough for that. I haven't courage enough for anything, but to let a woman drag me through my work, and spend all her energies trying to keep me straight. I am a despicable coward, as well as a fool. A coward! What should I have said to any man who dared call me that years ago! But it's true now—true as the daylight! I've thrown my chances to the dogs. I might have been much what he is, and I never shall—I shall be what I am—just this." He threw over the work-table that he had been swaying to and fro with the words. It fell to the ground with a little crash, and Catherine's silks and bits of half-finished work flew in all directions. He did not stay to pick them up; he did not even glance at them. He rose. "A fellow must have some comfort," he muttered. "He can't think these cursed thoughts for ever." He left the dining-room and went up to his own room, and came down again with some brandy. He poured himself out half a tumbler-full and drank it, almost at one draught. "A fellow must have something; he can't get on without it," he murmured, as he prepared to fill it again.

An hour later, in the twilight, Catherine came in at the garden gate. She was singing in a low tone, as she shut it, a little childish lullaby. She had been to see Tommy. And Tommy's baby sister having waked and cried, Catherine had hushed her to sleep, while their mother was getting supper for her family. The little lullaby she had sung rang in her head. It was one of her own childhood, and the little tune brought with it memories of long ago childish days with Frank; and she was in a very tender frame of mind towards him; and very happy because of Mr. Stewart-Carr's words of praise to him. She thought that possibly encouragement might yet do what her pleading had failed to do.

She opened the dining-room door: [illegible] looked around. She could see nothing [illegible] a moment, it was so dim. Then, at the [illegible] instant, she saw her brother's figure [illegible] glass beside him; and, going up to [illegible] she heard the heavy breathing of a [illegible] a drunken sleep.

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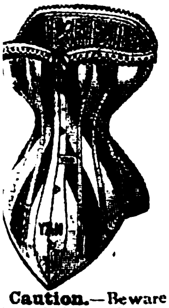
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All the Year Round

A Weekly Journal

CONDUCTED BY

CHARLES DICKENS.

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CONDUCTED BY

CHARLES DICKENS.

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BY RIGHT OF SUCCESSION.

BY ESMÉ STUART.

Author of "A Faire Damzell," "Joan Vellacot," "Kestell of Greystone," etc. etc.

CHAPTER III ALONE.

"SIBYL, darling!" Saying this, Grace woke her sister with a kiss. Sibyl had forgotten all about her trouble, for this morning everything seemed so bright and calm. The sun shone in brightly, lighting up the girl's few pictures and treasures in a pleasant, familiar manner. She had had a long, refreshing sleep, and felt full of life and spirits, so that it was only after a few seconds that she suddenly recollected her miserable evening, and how frightened she had been whilst waiting for Dr. Smith's arrival.

"Gracie, dear, how tired you look! But father is better, isn't he?"

"No; no better."

"Has the Doctor been this morning?"

"Not yet; and when he comes, it will be of no use, dear."

"No use? Why?" But Sibyl said this hesitatingly, and suddenly sat up in bed, passing her small hands through her masses of golden hair as if to lift the weight away from her temples.

"Because, because——" Then Grace could keep her secret no longer. She sat down on the bed, and put Sibyl's head on her shoulder.

"Sibyl, we have only each other to love now, that is all."

Sibyl burst into tears. She understood now quite well that the trouble which they had been fearing last night had overtaken them.

"Grace, Grace, is father dead? Oh, dear, it is so sudden, so terrible! What shall we do?"

This was the first thought of the younger sister—what would they do without him?

"Nan will come to-day, I am sure she will," answered Grace; for, after her father, Nan, since her arrival, had always been their only adviser, their only support.

"But suppose she can't come? Suppose her aunt is ill—dying? Grace, don't leave me!" for at this moment the front door bell rang, and Grace started up.

"I must go, Sibyl, dear. It may be—it must be Dr. Smith, and he may tell me what to do. There must be a great deal which ought to be done, if I only knew what it was. Stay in bed, Sibyl, and I will bring you up your breakfast when he is gone."

Sibyl was nothing loth. She buried herself in the soft pillows and gave way to her grief and to her meditation. She was more advanced in the art of wondering and planning than Grace; for though their education had been the same—and many would have called it a narrow one—yet their minds differed considerably. Grace thought of those she loved before herself, whilst her sister's little touches of pathetic commiseration always centred in a being called Sibyl.

Dr. Smith, of course, knew directly what had happened when he noticed the blinds drawn down. Mrs. Ashton's first thought had been to see that the outward signs of grief were not forgotten, in spite of other motives being wanting. The Doctor had expected nothing else; and yet he shook his head several times as if at some much-perplexing thought, even before he jumped down from his dog-cart and encountered Grace in the hall. He had lost all his usual rough, jovial manner as he took the young girl's hand in his.

"Thank you," said Grace, simply. She fancied she knew what the old friend's sympathy meant, and felt grateful for it; as a matter of fact, however, her thoughts were in no way like his.

"At what time was it?" he asked. Not that he cared very much to know; but he felt he must say something.

"I never looked," said Grace, sorrowfully; "I dare say Mrs. Ashton did. Will you come up, Dr. Smith? I have been sitting by him a long time."

Grace's words roused the Doctor at last from his unusual reverie.

"You must not overtax your strength. Yes, I will go up presently; but come in here with me, Grace."

He knew his way well as he pushed open the dining-room door, where at last a maid had lit a fire, and, from force of habit, a man-servant had laid for the dead master.

"Give me a cup of tea, child."

The Doctor did not require one in the least, Mrs. Smith having seen to his inner man before he had started out; but he wished to see Grace eat some breakfast, and this request had the desired effect. She made tea, and then, from very courtesy, she began to eat too, at the same time talking on with strange calmness, and telling Dr. Smith everything.

It was such a comfort to be able to tell some one—some one, too, who would not cry as Sibyl did.

When, however, she mentioned her father's wish to write something, the Doctor looked up eagerly; but he was disappointed in his expectation. No writing had been accomplished, and barely an intelligible sentence uttered.

"Now, Grace, you must not worry yourself about arrangements for the funeral," he said, almost bluntly; "indeed, you know nothing about such things. Mr. Blackston will come over; I'll see to that. I know he was your father's business man if ever he required one, which was not often. By the way," added the Doctor, as if a new thought had suddenly struck him, "what will you and Sibyl do?"

"Do?" asked Grace, looking at him with rather a puzzled expression. "I don't know. I never heard father say a word about it. He never spoke of death; I wish he had! I don't think he thought of dying so suddenly. Perhaps," added Grace, "he wished to write something about us when he asked for paper; but, you know, he could not hold a pen."

"Yes, I expect he did," answered the Doctor, a little absently, for he was strangely unlike himself; and certainly it was not grief at the death of the master of the Warren, though he had known him for many years.

"We shall never know now," sighed Grace, not noticing the hesitation of her old friend's speech. "I dare say Nan will come to-day, if she can. I told you, didn't I, Dr. Smith, that she went to nurse her old aunt? She did not like leaving us; but then she could not guess what would happen."

"Of course not. I hope she will be able to return soon; she is a very good, worthy creature, and I think she would do all she could for you in these trying circumstances."

"I am sure she would!" cried Grace, with glistening eyes. "No one knows how good she is, Dr. Smith, or guesses it, I am sure, except ourselves. She was so kind, so patient with us when we were young—for of course we were very troublesome."

The Doctor smiled.

"I don't believe you were ever 'very troublesome,' Grace. Dear me, time does go quickly. How old are you, or is it an impertinent question now that you are so tall?"

"I am seventeen; but Nan says I am very old for my years. Sibyl is just a year younger, only her birthday is in June."

"Seventeen," sighed Dr. Smith. "A most unfortunate age." He was half speaking to himself.

"Why?" asked Grace, a little hurt.

"Nothing, nothing, my dear. I mean, of course, that at your age one is more sensitive, more—what shall I say? One requires a protector—a home, in fact."

"I shall do my best to make Sibyl happy. It matters most for her because she is so lively, and young, and——"

"Much too pretty," finished the Doctor, sharply.

"Please don't say that." Grace was again a little hurt. "I suppose she is pretty; at least, of course I think so. I never see any one half so nice-looking as dear Sibyl; but I dare say in London there are many prettier girls. We see so few people here; only once we saw at church a very beautiful lady, at least, she was dressed so well; but Sibyl said that if she were dressed as well she would be just as pretty, and I think she would."

Dr. Smith grunted a little as he answered:

"Ah! she said that."

But at this minute Grace mentally stopped short. It was so shocking to talk about dresses when her father was lying dead upstairs, that she felt a little angry with Dr. Smith for having led up to this subject; certainly it was very unkind of him.

"Are you coming upstairs?" she asked, in an altered tone; "there is no one there. Sibyl is in bed; she was dreadfully tired, poor child, and so unhappy."

The Doctor rose; he, too, was angry with himself, not because he had led the conversation up to dress, but because he had not said one half of the things he had meant to say. He made a great effort now, however.

"My wife sent a message to you, Grace, this morning. She is so sorry for you, so——"

"Thank you. How kind of her; I wish we knew her better. We know you so much the best, don't we? But father never liked our going away from home, you know that."

"Yes, yes, I know; anyhow, Grace, she told me that she would be much pleased to see you and Sibyl at our house, to stay, I mean, for some time."

Grace looked up again a little puzzled. Why should they want to go and visit Mrs. Smith, when all the Warren was theirs to roam about in? Still by nature Grace was courteous and grateful, so she only showed her surprise by that one look.

"Please thank her very much for us—for me and Sibyl—and by-and-by perhaps—— But of course I must wait till I have talked it over with Nan, mustn't I?"

"Of course, of course," and once more the Doctor did not say what he meant to say, and simply followed Grace upstairs.

He was accustomed to look on death, and it failed to affect him; but to-day Dr. Smith looked with a peculiar interest on the peaceful face, that expressed the quiet repose of the master of the Warren. When he turned away, and Grace had once more locked the door, he paused, and on the threshold of the chamber he said, slowly and reflectively:

"I really believe, Grace, that he meant to do the right thing; but he was always putting off—all his life he put off. When you have something to do, something that is of consequence to others as well as yourself, take an old man's advice: don't put it off."

Grace did not answer. She did not quite like the implied reproach upon her father; and besides, what could she say?

"I must be off," continued the Doctor, presently, as if he were shaking off remembrances which were in some way painful to him.

"Were you any good to that other—I mean, where you went to last night?" asked Grace, presently, for the recollection of that night would always be engraved on her mind to her dying day; and yet the events seemed now a long way off, and hardly to belong to her own life.

"Yes, she'll pull through—but it was a near thing!—otherwise, child, I would have stayed with you." And the grey-haired, weather-beaten man took and kept Grace's hand in his. He felt a strange new sympathy for this girl. "I will see to everything; only, you know, that lawyer must come by-and-by, and there may be formalities to go through. Still, he is a good sort of fellow—besides, I'll have a talk with him first. Your father had no relations, had he? You never heard him speak of any?"

"Oh, no. I heard him say he was an only son; but perhaps——" Grace paused, and did not like to go on. She was going to say, "My mother had some——" but the words died away on her lips. No one—no, not even Nan—had ever mentioned her mother to her; but she and Sibyl, in confidential moments, had often wondered about her—whether she had been fair, perhaps, and, of course, very pretty? Grace wanted to ask some one now about it, but she dared not; and if the Doctor guessed her wish, he did not help her out with her unexpressed thought. On the contrary, he suddenly pretended to be in great haste, and at once hurried into his trap.

Dr. Smith had several strong and well-defined opinions and crotchets which helped to enliven his life—a life which might otherwise have become somewhat monotonous. One of these crotchets was a firm and rooted belief that he excelled in the art of riding and driving, and joined to this was an unswerving faith in his knowledge of horseflesh. He had had more accidents than any doctor for twenty miles round, and even his wife could have told you how he had been taken in by horse-dealers; but Dr. Smith's belief in himself remained unshaken—though its foundations were of sand it stood firm. He also told all his friends that he could cure any horse of any trick, and could in a short time educate the most troublesome mare, provided she were a thoroughbred. The result of this was that his wife suffered many anxious hours, especially when a new horse was bought by her lord, so that in proportion as the horse lost its tricks Mrs. Smith lost her nerves.

"A splendid creature, my dear; but it has a little trick of shying at nothing. I can soon cure that, and then it will prove a most useful animal." This was his favourite formula. The "little tricks" of this last splendid creature had already landed the Doctor into two hedges, and had spoilt more than one of his vehicles, had broken two collar-bones, dislocated his wrist, and twisted his ankle; but his faith in himself was as firm as ever.

The animal which he was driving this morning required all his attention, so that he could not meditate, as much as he would otherwise have done, about the affair of the Warren and its occupants; but more than once he muttered:

"He might so easily have done it! What on earth——" here his horse nearly bolted at a white milestone, placed on the desolate high road, that crossed the moor over hill and dale towards his own town; so he had to break off for a time. "In the name of all wonder, why didn't he make a will? I could swear that he meant to provide for those girls; and yet Blackston declares he did no such thing, but always said there was time enough, and that he had no intention of dying just yet." Then, in a louder voice, to his groom, Dr. Smith said: "Jones, get down and take that stone out of the mare's off forefoot. How on earth did she manage to get it in? Woah—quiet, Vixen."

When Jones had once more twisted himself into the dog-cart, after taking the stone out of the mare's foot, the Doctor made a very decided remark to himself:

"I declare, I'll make my will to-night, and, also, I'll make Blackston acquainted with the fact; not that it matters much about my will. And, ah! well, perhaps he's wrong about the other case—only, certainly, it looks bad, very bad, his wanting to write just as he was breathing his last breath.

"It's a shame, though, about those girls; however, it's none of my business, but it's a pity he couldn't hold his pen."

Such were some of the honest Doctor's soliloquies, as he drove quickly across the heath on this cold, though sunny, November morning. Happily for him, Vixen was in a somewhat pleasanter frame of mind than usual, otherwise, Dr. Smith might have again found himself landed in a hedge, so loosely did he hold the reins as he drove along, his mind being full of "those poor girls."

BRIGHTON HALF A CENTURY AGO.

When Fanny Burney accompanied Mrs. Thrale to Brighthelmstone in 1779, the fashionable promenade was the Steyne, and the popular evening resorts patronised by strangers were Shergold's New Assembly Rooms, and Hick's at the "Ship Tavern." In 1833, the date of my first visit to the same locality, Brighthelmstone had long since become Brighton, and the Steyne, shorn of its ancient glories, had gradually subsided into—what it still is—a comparatively deserted thoroughfare, mainly occupied by dozing fly-drivers, and the inevitable blind man and his dog. The Diary of the author of "Evelina" alone preserves from utter oblivion the names of Shergold and Hick, but the old "Ship Tavern," founded by the latter, has gained rather than lost by the lapse of years, and still flourishes as an excellent and well frequented hostelry, one of the few existing links between the present and the past.

When I first knew Brighton, the Pavilion had not yet been purchased by the town, but remained pretty much as it had been in the days of George the Fourth, its appointed custodian occasionally supplementing his salary by exhibiting the gaudily decorated apartments to some stray visitor. Hove was then a remote and thinly populated suburb, the western limits of Brighton proper extending only to Adelaide Crescent and Palmyra Square. Eastward, on the contrary, the tide of fashion was at that period steadily flowing; Kemp Town, with the exception of some half-a-dozen houses still in the workmen's hands, was completed and for the most part inhabited, among the original settlers being the Duke of Devonshire, the Marquis of Bristol, Laurence Peel (brother of Sir Robert), and the projector of this gigantic undertaking, Thomas Read Kemp, for many years member for Lewes.

The last house in Arundel Terrace, the "ultima Thule" of eastern Brighton, was called the "Bush Hotel," exposed to all the winds of heaven, and from the day of its first opening to its final collapse rarely frequented even by a passing stranger. Between Kemp Town and the newly erected Eastern Terrace, a speculation of the tailor Nugee, was a common dotted with two or three small cottages and a tallow manufactory; in one of the former dwelt a singular personage named Murray, popularly supposed to have been a smuggler in his youth, who drove a thriving trade as a dealer in agate snuff-boxes and other curiosities, although where and how he got them no one ever succeeded in discovering.

I doubt if even in its best days the Chain Pier could have been a profitable investment for the shareholders, the total amount of twopences paid at the entrance by non-subscribers never representing more than an infinitesimal dividend; but at the period I write of it had one advantage, of which Newhaven has since deprived it, namely, the excitement produced by the arrival—weather permitting—of the Dieppe steamer (the "Dart," Captain Cheeseman), to land or call for passengers, on its way to and from Shoreham harbour.

The idea of endowing the western side of the town with an opposition pier had not yet germed in the brain of any speculative projector, nor had the wildest flight of imagination anticipated the erection of such gigantic caravansaries as the "Grand" or the "Metropole"; people were then contented—as well they might be—with such old-established hotels as the "Bedford," the "Norfolk," the "Albion," and the "York," all which, by the way, appear to have suffered little, if at all, from the proximity of their colossal rivals.

In those pre-railway days visitors to Brighton had the choice of being conveyed thither by Newman's blue-jacketed "boys," or more economically by one of the regular coaches steered by Sir St. Vincent Cotton, and other accomplished amateur whips, who performed the journey from the "White Horse Cellar" in five hours, treated their passengers to sandwiches and sherry, and pocketed their half-crowns with condescending urbanity.

Between 1835 and 1850 — I do not profess to be precise in the matter of dates—London-super-Mare possessed three very eminent clergymen, all admirable preachers and universally esteemed, namely, Frederick Robertson, James and Robert Anderson. Of these, the first was indisputably the most popular, as the numerous editions of his published sermons sufficiently testify; James Anderson, whom I knew personally from living near him in Arundel Terrace, was the incumbent of St. George's, at the back of Portland Place, and a prominent figure in the best society of Brighton. He was a tall, burly man, with a dignified air and kindly smile; he was gifted with a rare natural eloquence and an impressive delivery, and it was impossible to listen to him unmoved, and it was truly said that, when he preached a charity sermon, no one succeeded so well in extracting tears from the eyes of his hearers, and money from their pockets. Robert Anderson, on the contrary, was retiring in manner, and rarely seen out of the pulpit; I have been told, however, that he possessed a vein of quiet humour, and remember hearing an anecdote related by him, to one of his intimates, with great gusto. He had recently superintended the repairs of his chapel, the frontage of which had been cemented by a necessary application of mastic, an improvement highly commended by one of his congregation, a worthy, but illiterate, individual, who concluded his eulogium by saying: "I'll tell you what, Mr. Anderson, now that you have finished masticating' your chapel, I shall follow your example and masticate my house."

The Brightonians of that day, as a rule, could hardly be called enthusiastic playgoers; and the theatre, then as now overlooking the Pavilion gardens, was certainly not as well supported as it deserved to be. At the period in question it was jointly managed by one of the innumerable Vinings and a local dentist named Bew. The stock company was of more than average excellence, several of its members, such as Henry Marston—whom I remember as Rigolio in the "Broken Sword" — Misses Caroline Rankley and Crisp—the latter a capital soubrette—having been subsequently promoted to the metropolitan boards. "Stars" were apt to fight shy of Brighton, owing to the very small encouragement held out to them by the townspeople, the only London celebrities who succeeded in drawing even tolerable audiences being Charles Kean and his wife. I have seen Farren—the "cock salmon"—play three of his best characters to a five-and-twenty pound house; and when the charming Miss Taylor—Mrs. Walter Lacy—favoured us with a visit, the result was even less satisfactory. Indeed, as far as public amusements went, an occasional concert—generally by second-rate artistes—at the Town Hall, or a subscription ball at the "rooms," sufficed to meet the requirements of the residents, who, being exclusive rather than gregarious, eschewed any approach to familiar intercourse with mere birds of passage, and lived, like Lady Kicklebury, "in their own sphere."

The cricket-ground, called "Brown's," from its owner, one of the mainstays of the Sussex eleven, was situated just beyond what is still termed the "Level," adjoining the high road from London. It was limited in extent, but the matches, especially those between Kent and Sussex, then the leading cricketing counties of England, were more numerously attended than any I have seen in the present far more spacious arena. Kent at that time boasted a team including such admirable players as Fuller Pilch, the two Mynns, Felix, Wenman, and Hillyer; while the home side, besides Brown, was no less efficiently represented by Lillywhite, Broadbridge, Box, Dean, the brothers Napper, and my fellow-Etonian, Charles Taylor.

Among the permanent residents no one was more generally popular than the genial and kind-hearted Horace Smith, who for many years occupied, with his wife and three daughters, a house in Cavendish Place. Scarcely less socially in request was the eminent tragedian, Charles Young, who, after his retitement from the stage, passed his remaining days at Brighton, where he died in June, 1856, aged seventy-nine. Another dramatic celebrity, the Duchess of St. Albans—formerly the arch and lively Harriet Mellon; but when I knew her a stout, red-faced, and somewhat eccentric old lady—arrived punctually at the commencement of the winter season, and created a periodical sensation by collecting together all sorts of people, at what she called her "omnium gatherums," in Regency Square. I was present at one of these "amalgamations," and can perfectly recollect that while dancing was going on in one room, in another a young fellow was singing "Coal-black Rose," with a scratch wig and a crape mask, both of which he adroitly whipped off and pocketed, previous to convulsing a fresh circle of listeners with the "Calais Packet."

The office of Master of the Ceremonies was then filled by an estimable gentleman, named Eld, of whose peculiar mincing gait Sydney Smith gives the following humorous and accurate description, quoted in Julian Young's Diary: "I never was in Brighton till to-day," he said to a friend; "but nevertheless I have made acquaintance with a great local power. Who he is I know not; but I am certain what he is. It is that distinguished functionary, the M.C.; it could be no one else. It was a gentleman, attired point device, walking down the Parade like Agag, 'delicately.' He pointed out his toes like a dancing-master, but carried his head high like a potentate." Those who recollect the original will recognise the fidelity of the portrait; it was the very man hit off to the very life.

I do not know if the club on the Old Steyne, between the house formerly occupied by Mrs. Fitzherbert and Castle Square, still exists; but I remember dining there many years ago with an old friend, General Sir William Keir Grant, a thorough cosmopolite and indefatigable traveller, who had lost his right arm in a duel. He was in a merry mood that evening, and accounted for it by saying that he had paid a visit the same afternoon to a newly married couple, staying at the "Bedford" on their return from a honeymoon trip to Italy. "I found Madame at home," continued the General, "and in the course of conversation asked her how she liked Venice. 'I was very much disappointed,' she replied; 'but, to be sure, we timed our arrival most unluckily, for, only fancy,' she added, with perfectly unconscious naïveté, 'the place was flooded all the week we were there, and we had to go about in boats!'"

In one of the narrow thoroughfares leading from the Marine Parade to St. James's Street was—and possibly still is—a billiard-room, where Kentfield, better known as "Jonathan," was wont to display his masterly skill. Among the habitual frequenters of the establishment was a singular personage familiarly styled "Badger"; but what may have been the origin of the nickname I never could discover. He certainly was not a partisan of the cruel sport of badger-baiting, nor did he keep a specimen of that unpleasantly smelling animal in the bottom drawer of his wardrobe, like "Soldier Bill" in Whyte Melville's "Satanella"; the sobriquet, however, had somehow or other stuck to him, and he liked to be called by it. He was a natty little man, always well dressed, and might be seen on most afternoons strolling along the King's Road, and invariably accompanied by his wife, as smartly attired as he was himself. Early one morning, I met him —to my surprise, alone—on the Cliff, faultlessly got up as usual, with the exception of his hat, which was of an antiquated shape, and very much the worse for wear.

"Why, Badger," I said, "what could have induced you, of all men in the world, to venture out in such a terribly old-fashioned hat?"

"Ah," he replied, rather ruefully, "it looks odd, but it is only for a day or so. The fact is, there is a match coming off to-day between Jonathan and a London player, which I wouldn't miss seeing, from start to finish, for anything, and could only manage that by contriving that my wife, who is, ahem! rather inclined to have her own way in some things, should dispense with my escort on the promenade this afternoon. So, knowing how particular she is about appearances, I thought it advisable to mislay the hat I generally wear, and routed out this thing from a cupboard. Louisa had no sooner set eyes on it than she positively declared she would not walk out with me again until I found the other, or bought a new hat. So you see," he added, with a significant wink, "of two evils, I choose the least, and wear the old one!"

A MANUAL OF SMALL TALK.

A TONGUE like the pen of a ready writer is one of the last traits which any competent observer would include among the characteristics of the average Englishman or Englishwoman. As a nation, we are undoubtedly slow of speech. If we except some half-dozen of our greatest orators, even our most practised public speakers do not attain to anything like fluency—and, Heaven knows, it is not for want of practice. The average politician is nothing if not a speaker. Even those who, in "the House," are but "dumb dogs," find themselves in perpetual request as orators, either on electioneering platforms or at public dinners, at the opening of a church bazaar or the laying the foundation-stone of a lunatic asylum, in a word, at one or other of those countless social, political, or religious "functions" which, without the presence and utterance of the local Member of Parliament, are, by common consent, held to be incomplete. Yet, when the great man rises to deliver, impromptu, the speech which he has carefully rehearsed beforehand, how he hums and haws, how he fumbles for the right word, and misses it five times out of ten; how often he loses the thread of his argument, and is driven ignominiously to ransack his sheaf of notes for the idea that will not come into his brain; how broken-backed are his sentences, how nicely "deranged his epitaphs," and with what an evident sense of relief he reaches, at last, the purple patch of his peroration, in which, having got it carefully by heart, he feels that no further mishap is possible! Shakespeare knew him well—our ordinary English orator—though, having a wholesome fear of Court and Parliament before his eyes, he was too wary to satirise him, save under the safe disguise of a clerk of ancient Greece—and by the mouth of an Athenian Duke:

> Where I have come great clerks have purposed
> To greet me with premeditated welcomes;
> Where I have seen them shiver and look pale,
> Make periods in the midst of sentences,
> Throttle their practised accent in their fears,
> And, in conclusion, dumbly have broke off,
> Not paying me a welcome.

If that was not a study from the life—English life—then criticism is naught, and Dr. Furnivall's theory anent Shakespeare's "extra-dramatic bits" is a fond thing vainly invented.

But if the case of our professional speakers be so parlous, what shall we say of the readiness or unreadiness of the mere ordinary member of society? Who does not know the long-drawn agony of the moments which follow upon an introduction, whether at garden party, or "at home," or conversazione, or, worst of all, in that terrible period of unrest in the drawing-room which immediately precedes a modern dinner, and which is peculiarly entitled to be considered the Englishman's "mauvais quart d'heure"? What would not one give to escape from, or to abbreviate, the trying interval of enforced silence when the shy and hungry pair just introduced to one another's acquaintance have exhausted all their ideas about the weather, and the Academy, and the last explosion on board an ironclad, and now sit or stand helplessly and hopelessly racking their brains for any subject on which articulate speech may be possible? At such times, even the gawky youth who fingers the dainty china with which his hostess has decorated her mantelpiece, until the ugliest and most precious specimen drops with a crash into the fender, is apt to appear almost a benefactor to his species; for, at least, his crime thaws the frozen tongues and loosens the limbs stiffened by self-consciousness, and amid the universal chorus of sympathy and suggestion the social ice breaks up and melts—if only for a time.

I am told that, in America, professors of small talk exist, who, for an adequate fee, will undertake to furnish the social aspirant with a continuous flow of ideas, and to drill him or her into intelligible and even elegant and grammatical utterance of the same; but I have not heard that any such school has yet been established among ourselves, though, indeed, "'twere a consummation devoutly to be wished." The most fruitful suggestion that I have yet heard made on the subject, on English soil, was imparted to me, recently, by a gallant young defender of his country who, having just returned from a term of service in Canada, had perhaps become infected with some touch of Yankee cuteness.

His method—and I am bound to say that whether because of it, or in spite of it, his fount of converse very seldom ran dry — consisted in going through the alphabet in regular order, and broaching in turn a subject beginning with each successive letter. Thus, on his first introduction to the lady whom he was to take in to dinner, he would start with a remark on the Academy. If this failed to lead to a conversation, he would try Banshees, and then Cremation, and so on through Dancing, and Education, and Foreign Travel, and Gigantic Gooseberries, to Yachting and Zola, or until a subject was started which struck a sympathetic chord in his interlocutrix. Personally, so he confided to me, he had never known the method to fail, though, on one occasion, he got as far as M before his silent companion was wooed into eloquence on the subject of matrimony—a topic, alas, as dangerous as it is doubtless attractive.

I have not yet had an opportunity of testing the value of the process myself, and am reserving it for some social knot worthy of so desperate a solution. Meanwhile, I have found it, on occasion, not unprofitable to make the mutual embarrassment of myself and partner the theme of conversation, and so to convert the ailment into its own antidote. By the time we have agreed how difficult it is to find topics of conversation with a new acquaintance, and have exchanged experiences on the subject, enlivened perhaps by reminiscences of awkward predicaments in which we have found ourselves placed in this respect, we are already fairly at home with one another almost without knowing it, and have skilfully cured ourselves by this homœopathic treatment of our nervous affection.

For after all, in the matter of small talk, more than any other, the old proverb holds good: "Ce n'est que le premier pas qui coûte." We have all—even the dullest of us—plenty to talk about, if we can only get fairly under weigh. The difficulty is to make the start; and just as a well-educated Englishman has usually a fairly large vocabulary of French words, and yet seldom attains to fluency in talking French because he can't get them into circulation, so the average diner-out has really a quite sufficient fountain-head of conversation stored up in his or her brain, and yet never shines as a talker, because he (or she) cannot set the current flowing from the cistern of thought into the conduit pipes of speech.

A well-known novelist is wont to relate how she was once attacked by a yearning amateur with the following remarks:

"Oh, my dear Mrs. ——, how nice it must be to write a novel! and to get paid for it! I'm sure I could do it if I tried. How d'ye begin?"

"How d'ye begin?" Whatever may be the case with novel-writing—of which I desire to speak with all the reverence of profoundest ignorance—that is the crucial question for every man or woman, boy or girl, who is ambitious, as Mark Twain has it, to "keep his (or her) right end uppermost in conversation."

And behold, to help us to the solution of this most practical and most perplexing question, comes from the press of Messrs. R. Bentley and Son, with all the pleasantness of wide margins and glossy paper and clear type, the first of a promised series of "Dullard's Handbooks," entitled, "Conversational Openings and Endings; Some Hints for playing the game of Small Talk," a book which, as its name implies, has for its object to suggest how we may most fruitfully begin and most gracefully conclude the constant interchanges of small talk which Society is for ever calling upon us to effect.

Starting with the happy conceit that

Society Small Talk is very like a game of chess, "and all the men and women merely players," the author utilises the time-hallowed forms of Chess Manuals to give point to his suggestions. With the warning that Black stands for the male and White for the female interlocutor, he may be left to illustrate his method for himself, in the following extract:

"We will begin with the moment when an opening is most sorely needed—that is, when Black is introduced to the lady he is to take down to dinner. And here let me say, that by far the best openings are those derived from, and suggested by, the situation itself. It is extremely crude and awkward, when you are going to take a lady down to dinner, to say with an ingratiating smile, as you offer your arm: 'It has been very foggy to-day!' as though the logical deduction from that remark must be, 'It has been very foggy, to-day, therefore let us go down the stairs in couples!'—which is absurd. This is better:

BLACK.	WHITE.
1. I believe I am to have the pleasure of taking you down to dinner?	1. I believe so.
2. I always think it is a dangerous thing to be introduced more than a minute beforehand.	2. Why?
3. For fear we should have nothing more to say when we get into the dining-room.	3. What, have you so little confidence, etc. etc."

Our author is at his best in the various "dinner openings," of which the following may be taken as specimens:

TEMPERANCE OPENING.

BLACK.	WHITE.
1. May I ask you to pass me the water?	1. Certainly. Are you a teetotaller?

In four moves Black should now be in the middle of a discussion on temperance.

BREAD OPENING.

(This is a common-place, but very useful opening.)

BLACK.	WHITE.
1. Is this your bread, or mine?	1. Yours, I think. I always keep mine on my left.
2. Really! I always keep mine on my right.	2. On your right! do you? That is a sign of an original mind.

This game promises well for Black.

Variation. White's

PLAYFUL BREAD OPENING.

BLACK.	WHITE.
1. Is this your bread, or mine?	1. Mine, I think, as well as the last. You have already eaten two rolls that were meant for me.

"This game should be rapid and lively," is our author's comment, and I am disposed to agree with him; but even a smart skirmish such as this promises to be is better than the dulness of a silence varied only by disconnected sentences few and far between. And, after all, one never knows into what interesting topics it may branch out. Indeed, this is the great charm and beauty of our author's suggestion—that his "openings" are real openings on to the boundless sea of possible conversations. Were they but capable of adoption, they would undoubtedly tide us over the awkward moment when, like the novelist in embryo, we don't know how to begin, and would launch our bark of small talk, with the least possible friction, on to the great ocean of congenial subjects. The difficulty would seem to be that we can't keep the book to ourselves. And how shall we venture to use, for instance, "White's Playful Bread Opening" when our particular Black has likewise read his "Dullard's Handbook," and knows that our spontaneous banter is not original, but has been learnt up as a lesson for the occasion? Surely, like the augurs of old, we should find ourselves unable to continue the game without laughing, and that would spoil all—unless, indeed, as might not improbably turn out to be the case, our common consciousness of guilt formed a bond of sympathy between us, and so gave us a quite new opening uncontemplated by our author.

Perhaps, however, we are doing him a wrong in supposing that we are to take his suggestions in this literal fashion; and what he has really had in mind is to convey to us, under the guise of witty and good-natured chaff, that, after all, even small talk is a game, or an art, which deserves that we should take a little pains to play or to practise it with success. For such a doctrine there is indeed a great deal to be said. No one would dream of taking a hand at whist with skilled players if he himself knew nothing of the main principles of the game; a beginner does not intrude himself into a set made up of first-rate lawn-tennis players; a cricketer does not expect to be given a place in his club eleven until he has learnt at least to bat and to field respectably. Those who wish to take part in these amusements are content to practise, in private or in company, with players of their own calibre until they have attained a certain degree of proficiency; they are at the pains to watch and learn from the play of those more skilful than themselves; they are eager to gather what hints they can from books. It is universally felt that no man or woman has the right to spoil the enjoyment of others by taking a hand in a game which he or she is incapable of playing with some degree of skill.

Why should not the same rule hold good with the game of conversation? True, it is one which differs from all other social amusements, in that we are all obliged, whether we like it or no, to take part in it; but, on the other hand, it is one for which we all have considerable capacity, and abundant opportunities of practice. I imagine that if the veriest "duffer" among us knew that he would be compelled to play lawn-tennis or cricket every day of his life, whether he would or not, he would think it worth while, both for his own sake, and yet more for the sake of others, to spend some time in practising services, or to secure half an hour's daily batting practice "at the nets." Why, then, should we not in the case of the game of small talk give some thought, not only to the matter of our conversations, which is a more arduous undertaking, but also to their form; to the best and pleasantest method of establishing between ourselves and our interlocutors that electric "rapport" of sympathy, which alone makes real and enjoyable talk in any way possible.

For opportunities of practice, they are easily found in the constant intercourse of home life, the machinery of which would surely work none the less smoothly because we took pains to be agreeable to one another; and for theory nothing could be more admirable than our "Dullard's Handbook," if we are prepared to study it, not with slavish literalism, but with an intelligent desire to get at the best of its spirit. I, for one, can look back on many a "gaucherie" which might have been avoided, and many an awkward incident which might have been smoothed over, to the great enhancement of the pleasures of social intercourse, if the little dexterities and the happy turns suggested in this volume had been duly studied, digested, and put in use.

And if any one complains that we are making too much of the frivolities of social intercourse, and claiming for mere banalities a quite disproportionate amount of care and attention, we shall reply that these frivolities and banalities of society are the entrance porch which leads to the solemn and serious things of life. How many a conversation begun in jest continues in earnest, and contributes, as only rich, suggestive, stimulating talk can contribute, to form and mould the thought, the growth of which within us is the main business of our lives! Even in the most commonplace people there are, if we can only find them, unfathomable depths—points at which the most seeming shallow life touches the infinite. In the midst of the most superficial conversation we are like bathers on a shelving shore of sand, where the shallow wavelets ripple up all light and golden in the sunshine; but where at any step we may come to the sharp shoulder from which we plunge headlong into unknown depths.

To get the utmost of stimulus and suggestion from every human being with whom we are brought into contact, is to get the fullest value out of life and out of society; and if the study of small talk will help us to this, then, even in the eyes of the most rigid of censors, the study of small talk is neither vain nor unprofitable.

A NATIONAL ANACHRONISM.

The existence of an independent State in the recesses of the Pyrenees may be one of the facts which every schoolboy is supposed to know; but it is pretty safe to say that ninety-nine men out of a hundred could tell you less about Andorra than about the history of Montezuma. Yet Montezuma has been dead for centuries, and Andorra is as living an entity as it was a thousand years ago.

The Republic of Andorra is one of those curious survivals of the past which link modern life with antiquity. It is an anachronism, and yet in some respects an embodiment of the political dream of ages. It is at once stagnant in its social affairs, and perfect in its political organisation. It is a complete realisation of Lincoln's definition of Republicanism—government of the people by the people for the people—yet the people themselves are as they were a thousand years ago, and are, therefore, a thousand years behind the age.

Away up on the Spanish side of the Pyrenees, and stretching from the borders of the Province of Catalonia to the French side on the border-line of the Department of the Ariége, is a carefully delimited territory of valleys and mountains some seventeen miles in length, and varying in width from nine to eighteen miles. This is Andorra, an independent Republic and also a feudatory State; managing its own affairs by popular representatives, yet paying annual tribute of a nominal amount to its feudal superiors, the Spanish Bishops of Urgel, and also to the French Government as the political successors of the Counts of Navarre, who became Kings of France.

Something of a mountain basin is this territory, intersected by the River Valira, and watered by many rushing streams. As the Valira runs in three branches, Andorra may be said to consist of three valleys, framed in by the great chain of the Pyrenees, which send a spur half way through the country. The basins of the Valira and its branches form something like the letter Y, and if we dot the lines of the letter with villages, and suppose the whole encircled with high hills, we shall have a tolerably fair topographical conception of the country. The sides of these hills, however, are swept by innumerable streams, rushing in limpid purity over rocky beds, and, when the winter snows melt, with tremendous rapidity. Higher up among the hills is a chain of ten or a dozen lakes, amid the wildest surroundings; and elsewhere there are other considerable sheets of water well stocked with fish.

In these hills it is said there are rich stores of iron, and lead, and copper, of granite, and of marble. There are, indeed, evidences of ancient working; but mining is practically dead, while even quarrying is little pursued.

Wolves, bears, and wild boars once roamed these far solitudes in numbers, and even now are occasionally seen, while foxes abound. The eagle and the vulture find their homes on the peaks and crags, and among winged game there are partridges, woodcocks, snipe, quails, blackfowl, wild geese, and wild ducks. It is, if not a paradise of sport, at least unbroken ground for the sportsman who is disposed to "rough it."

The difficulty is to get there, and once there, to find accommodation, for there is only one hostelry with any pretence to civilisation, and that in the capital town. Not only are there no regular roads within the bounds of Andorra—what do they want with roads when they do not possess a single wheeled vehicle?—but there is no regular road connecting it with the outer world. There are mule-paths into Spain on the one side, and into France on the other, through mountain passes called "Ports," but most of these are closed by the snows and torrents of the winter and spring. The only road which may be relied on all the year is that which connects Andorra-la-Vella, the capital, with the Spanish town of Urgel; but Urgel itself has no carriage-road connecting it with the rest of Spain, and is the centre of an unruly district, the inhabitants of which, in strong contrast with those of Andorra, have an insatiate craving for revolutions and riots. Then the climate of Andorra is very cold in winter and very hot in summer, while in the autumn both characteristics are exhibited in hot days and cold nights.

These are not attractions, certainly; but the visitor will not be annoyed by crowds of guide-booked tourists and staring idlers. He will probably find himself the only stranger, at freedom to roam among some of the most magnificent mountain scenery in Europe, contrasting with verdant smiling valleys, and green pastures bright with plenteous flocks and herds. He will find scenes of beauty and grandeur to gratify every æsthetic sense; but more than all, he will find a people phenomenal in character, in condition, and in political history.

They probably came out of Spain originally, for they speak the Catalan language, and their sentiments are more Spanish than French. Charlemagne is said to have rescued their country from the Moors, and bestowed it on the Bishops of Urgel. The ancient charter, however, was not a deed of gift, but a sort of rent-charge or tithe-charge, for while the Church was to get certain dues, and retain plenary jurisdiction, the people were to have unrestricted Home Rule. In process of time the rights of the Bishops of Urgel were assailed by some of the Spanish nobles, and assistance had to be craved from the other side of the Pyrenees, from the French Counts of Foix, in Ariége. By this alliance the claims of the Church were upheld, and in reward the Bishops of Urgel gave the Counts of Foix an equal share in the sovereignty of Andorra. Thus the Bishops and the Counts were Co-Princes, and the rights of the Counts of Foix descended to Henry of Navarre, through him to the Crown, and thence to the present Republican Government.

But while Andorra has been feudatory to a double Princehood, she has also preserved a political independence, and sends ambassadors of a sort both to Spain and France. To France she pays a tribute of some thirty pounds per annum, and to the Bishops of Urgel about twenty pounds every second year.

The only other way in which the double seigneury is exhibited, is in the administration of justice. This, by the terms of a joint agreement made some six hundred years ago, is vested in two judges or magistrates called Veguers, one appointed by each of the two co-seigneurs. For the purpose of enforcing law and order these Veguers have a certain control of the local militia. There is, also, a Judge of Appeals, who is appointed for life by the Co-Princes alternately. The Veguers delegate small cases to bailiffs nominated by themselves, and in grave cases there is a right of appeal against the sentence of the Judge of Appeal to the Co-Prince who appointed him.

For the rest, however, the Andorrans are absolutely independent, and they do not seek or want alliance with any other State. They have their own national flag, their tree of liberty, their national arms, and a complete system of representative government. Although they pay tribute to France, and to the Bishop of Urgel, they will not allow either to take any part in the Government or to engage in any enterprise in their territory without permission. Once an attempt was made to put up a line of telegraph between France and Spain through Andorra, which the Andorrans quietly defeated by cutting down the poles, resenting both the innovation and the violation of their territory. And, curiously enough, notwithstanding the frequent conflicts between the two countries since Andorra acquired her charter from Charlemagne, there has been no attempt on the part of either France or Spain to "annex" this mountain State. The Carlists did make some unsuccessful attacks in 1874; but then they were rebels. The double feudal tie seems to have been a protection and an advantage, instead of an irksome yoke.

A national army has been mentioned; but in the strict sense there is no army. Every able-bodied head of a family is a member of the militia force, and is bound to take his turn of duty and to furnish a gun and ammunition. This force is about six hundred strong, and it may be augmented, in case of need, by a call to arms of every male in the State. But this militia-army has neither uniform, nor pay, nor the usual accoutrements of an army; it has only rifles and the knowledge how to use them.

The Government of the country is by elective bodies. The chief is El Consejo General, which may be called the Parliament of Andorra. It is composed of twenty-four members, representing the six provinces, or Parróquias, into which the country is divided, four to each; and two Syndics, and a Secretary, appointed by the elected members. These two Syndics occupy the posts of President and Vice-President respectively.

Besides this, each province, or Parróquia, has a provincial elective council for local administration, something like our County Councils. In the five principal Parróquias there is a further sub-division into Cuarts, with further delegation of local government, somewhat on the principle of the District or Parish Councils which have been proposed for England and Scotland. In short, Andorra seems to be ahead of the rest of the world in local government, while also preserving a democratic national Government.

Yet, with it all, she is the most thoroughly conservative nation in the world. When, or at what period she perfected her present system of government, we are unable to say in more precise terms than that it was centuries ago. She has made no change since; and her social condition remains practically the same as it was a thousand years ago.

Does this seem incredible? Well, we have the authority of one who has spent several years among the Andorrans, and who has studied them as they have never been studied before. No railway has ever invaded the domains, and there are no telegraphs, no carriage-roads, no canals; there is not a single wheeled vehicle, no steam-engine, no written laws, no standing army, no public debt, no paupers, no coinage, no postage stamps, no newspapers, no literature, no societies, clubs, or institutions, no asylums, no public companies, no dissent from the Roman Catholic religion, and no foreign commerce.

A land of negatives this, but not unprosperous. It is, perhaps, hardly correct to say that there is no foreign commerce; for such of the necessaries of life as the Andorrans cannot produce for themselves, they are obliged to import from Spain or France. Then they act as intermediaries, in a way, between the two countries—buying young horses and mules at the French fairs, and, after a sufficient time of mountain pasture, selling them again to the Spanish dealers and carriers. They grow tobacco, too—more than they can consume, and the surplus they export on mule-backs to Spain, with a few other odds and ends, to pay for their cutlery, guns, cloth, etc. And timber, also, they send down to Catalonia in the same way.

Their only manufacture — if we except saw-milling—is a species of rough woollen cloth, out of which they make rugs and blankets for their own use; the machinery being worked by water-power. Some of them are engaged in smuggling—into Spain, not into Andorra, for Andorra is a land of free-trade—and some also in such legitimate carrying-trade as there is. But the bulk are engaged in purely agricultural and pastoral pursuits. The lands along the streams and in the valleys generally are fertile, supporting large herds of mules, horses, cows, and sheep, and admitting, in addition, of a limited cultivation of cereal crops, vegetables, and tobacco.

They are an industrious, well-ordered, peaceable, and trustworthy people, and if reserved towards strangers, that must be accounted as but a natural consequence of their isolation. They are temperate — although drunkenness is not unknown— and moral—although crime is not altogether absent. There is only one jail in the country, and it is seldom occupied; and they are not prone to litigation, since litigants have to bear all the expenses of the administration of justice.

That there is a certain dignity about their quiet, pastoral, independent life, unruffled by the storms of contending nations, and the paroxysms of political revolutions, cannot be denied. Sublimely indifferent to the rest of the world, they have worked out their own destiny for the last thousand years, and as yet they show few signs of change.

But it must be confessed that there is a serious want in their social organisation. They live in a political Arcadia; but their very circumstances enshrine the elements of decay. They present a remarkable example of society without progress.

For one thing, the Andorrans never travel, and thus they have no opportunity of seeing anything of the industrial and national developements elsewhere. Occasionally one of the richer of them may send his sons to college in France; but, as a rule, education does not proceed beyond the elementary stage. Even the few simple schools they have are not of long existence, and practically the Andorrans of to-day know little more than did their forefathers five or six hundred years ago.

Thus they have not only no newspaper and no literature, but also no printing-press.* A very few of them may receive papers from France or Spain; but of the Andorrans generally, it may be said, that after leaving school they never read anything but their church missal. Some of the houses may have a few books of devotion, but it is doubtful if they are ever opened.

So in their domestic arrangements. The progress of the centuries has brought no improvement in their houses, which are still small and poor, built of rough stone, without mortar, and without glass in the windows. Their furniture is of the meanest, and their pigs and poultry share the same roof as the family. The villages are irregular, mean-looking collections of houses, without any pretence of streets, and without drainage or lighting. The capital is the only place which may be called a town, and this owes its appearance more to natural situation on an imposing rock than to architectural effort.

The Andorrans are intensely orthodox, and there is not the slightest difference of opinion on religious subjects. There are neither Protestants nor Dissenters, and there has never been any wave of religious revival sweeping over its peaceful area. For a thousand years, it is said, there has been nothing to break the continuity of their religious practice and sentiment; and if they have not been intolerant, it is probably because there has been nothing to test their tolerance.

They have neither poverty nor taxation, and the small expenses of Government are paid out of the rents charged for pasturage and timber-cutting, on the lands belonging to the commonwealth. Having no commerce to speak of, they have no currency of their own, and use with equal indifference the coinage of France and Spain. And having few foreign relations, they use the postage stamps of both nations for their correspondence.

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* "The Valley of Andorra" is a romantic tale which relates to the country, but is a French (not an Andorran) publication. It has been admirably translated by Mr. F. H. Deverell (to whom we have to express our grateful indebtedness for much information about Andorra), and is published by Mr. J. W. Arrowsmith, Bristol. The reader who desires to know something more about life in Andorra, although somewhat idealised, should procure this interesting shilling romance.

Most remarkable of all, perhaps, they have no ideas of amusement. They have neither social festivities nor outdoor games; neither theatre, nor lecture-hall, nor café. They care not for music, and there are few musical instruments in the country. They care not for flowers, and the visitor looks in vain for a garden. They neither sing, nor paint, nor sketch, nor dance; and what they do with their leisure time during the long, dark, silent winter months, one cannot conceive. Perhaps, like the sailor's parrot, they pass their time in thought.

There are not many more than five thousand of them altogether, divided, as has been said, into six Parróquias; but they manage to retain the respect of their neighbours, and to abstain from anything resembling a foreign policy. They till their fields, watch their flocks, have an occasional shot at the game, or a cast at the trout in the streams and lakes, send off their surplus mules and tobacco when ready, and, for the rest, attend strictly to their own business. They have managed this so effectually, that they have kept their frontiers intact, and their rights unimpaired; have preserved their language, their manners, their ideas, and their whole organisations without change, for more than half the term of the Christian era.

There is nothing more striking in the history of nationalities, nothing more remarkable among social institutions. Away up in its mountain solitude this little unconsidered trifle of a State has held its own, and kept on the path it had marked out for itself; and has developed a system of representative and local government which more "advanced" nations have only attained—when they have attained it—after repeated revolutions, political upheavals, and social contentions. Yet, with all its political enlightenment, Andorra is a relic of the dark ages; a fragment of society as it existed in feudal days; a national and social anachronism.

A STRANGE ACQUAINTANCE.

A STORY IN FOUR CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER I.

Certainly my new friend Warden is the most nervous man I have ever met, and yet, at the same time, I have known him give positive evidence of rare personal courage and presence of mind. In fact, the man is a mass of contradictions, and it is occasionally impressed upon me very vividly, by a sort of instinct, that there is something queer beneath the surface which does not at present appear, but which, if it did, would cause me to regard him with actual repulsion. I don't understand this feeling myself, and do not expect any one else to do so; I only know that it exists, and though at times it is lost sight of and almost forgotten, still I know that it is only lurking in some out of the way corner of my innermost conscience, ready to spring up and confront me when least expected. There is, I think, nothing at all surprising in the fact that this—doubt—suspicion—call it what you will, instead of causing me to shun the man who inspires it, only makes me seek his company the oftener and the more eagerly. Distrust him I may and do, avoid him I do not; for to my mind there is something peculiarly stimulating in the society of a man whose past, present, or future holds something which at once fascinates and baffles you. A secret once solved is valueless in my opinion. A secret, so long as it remains a secret, possesses a vague and inexplicable charm which I would not willingly dissipate. Yet in spite of this I always feel compelled to bring all my thinking powers to bear upon whatever the subject may be that puzzles me. Here, I say to myself, is a nut to crack. I am not particularly anxious to accomplish that end; in fact, the longer the shell holds out the better I shall be pleased. Nevertheless, I apply the crackers all the same, only too often to find—nothing!

Now, I fear it would greatly disappoint me to find that my new friend, Richard Warden, was a man with a spotless past and an unblemished record. I would rather discover him to be criminal than commonplace; though I am conscious that the admission implies a vast amount of moral depravity on my part, which I can only account for by mentioning that I have generally found the society of really worthy people so very tame and uninteresting, and that the most agreeable person I ever met was a man who was subsequently sentenced to penal servitude for forgery on a particularly imposing and remarkable scale. He could, as I well remember, converse on almost any subject with the greatest ease, and showed the same delightful manners when arraigned before a jury of his fellow-countrymen as he had at the table d'hôte, where I first encountered him. My meeting with Warden came about in this way. It is not often that I go to a music-hall, but on this particular occasion I had been attracted by meeting that morning, in Oxford Street, an army of sandwich-men, all bearing the name, in gigantic capitals, of "Joe Jorkins, the Lion Comique."

It occurred to me that if nothing better turned up, I might as well drop in at the "Pagoda" and see the great man, who, for the singing of three songs nightly, in a harsh voice, and grimacing at the public over the footlights, received a sum which would make the mouths of the well-born and highly educated water. Well, I went and heard the star sing, or rather, howl, "Oh, Mary Ann, your mother's looking!" and other similar specimens of music-hall minstrelsy, to the extraordinary and vociferous delight of his innumerable admirers. Suddenly, when the entertainment was nearly over, from the left hand side of the stage there came a whiff of something, and a voice among the audience cried: "Fire!" The effect was electrical. A moment before every one was engaged in keeping time with their feet to a refrain of the popular idol. The next—and with a mighty shout of terror, the dense packed mass of human beings were fighting and falling over each other in their rush for the various exits, which were soon jammed by the panic-stricken throng of men and women.

The great "Comique" had fled from the stage on the first warning of danger. What I should have done myself, whether I should have joined the general mêlée and fought and struggled like the rest, I cannot tell. For while I was making up my mind, some one next to me said:

"Keep cool, it's the only way."

It was a tall, sallow-faced man, with lantern jaws, and a drooping, drab-coloured moustache, who had occupied the adjoining seat to my own, and had witnessed the performance with the same weary indifferent expression which he wore even now.

"I dare say it's a false alarm," he continued; "anyhow, we may as well stay here and be decently cremated, as be knocked down and trampled underfoot by the mob."

I felt myself unable to regard either contingency with the equanimity of this stranger; but nevertheless, partly out of shame, and partly because, in spite of the perceptible smell of burning, there was very little smoke and no ominous crackling to be heard, I kept my seat—as well as my head—for some time longer, until the hall had sufficiently emptied itself to allow me to walk quietly out of the place. As I saw it described in the papers next day, some woodwork at the side of the stage had caught fire, owing to its propinquity to a gas jet. Fortunately there was little or no damage done, owing to the prompt and efficacious measures which were taken, and no serious results beyond a few broken arms and other accidents caused by the mad struggle of the majority to escape from the building.

I left the hall, still in company with the stranger, who had kept his head and consequently enabled me to keep mine.

"Got far to go?" he enquired, briefly, as soon as we had reached the street.

"Not very," I said. Then, with a sudden impulse, I turned to him: "In fact it's close by. Won't you?—er—can't I offer you——?"

"Thanks," was the reply, "I don't care if I do."

I was somewhat taken aback by the alacrity with which he accepted my invitation, almost before the words were out of my mouth. However, I felt I owed him something, and what trifling hospitality I might be able to show him should be offered ungrudgingly.

"I take it for granted you are an unmarried man," he remarked, after we had gone a little distance, "or you would scarcely propose to introduce a complete stranger into the bosom of your family at this hour and in this unexpected manner?"

"Well, no, perhaps not," I admitted, with a laugh. "No doubt under those lamentable circumstances my spirit would be too completely broken to venture on any such proceeding. Yes, you are right in imagining mine to be a bachelor ménage. Here is my turning—you see I was right in saying it was close by."

My rooms were on the first floor, a very comfortable set, and having raked together the remnants of a fire which still smouldered in the grate, remarking as I did so that a fire was a very good thing in its place, I produced decanters and glasses from a convenient cupboard, together with a box of my very best cigars, in honour of the occasion.

My new acquaintance proved himself to be very good company. He was full of anecdote, and a capital raconteur, and before another half-hour had passed I felt that I had every reason to congratulate myself heartily on having fallen in with such an original and entertaining character. Certainly this was not what one would have expected from the expression of his face; indeed in repose—and it generally was in repose—the countenance was a remarkably inanimate one. Even when relating the most ludicrous incident, it remained quite unchanged; though from an artistic point of view, perhaps that was not to be regretted, as it served rather to accentuate by the very force of the contrast the point of the good thing he happened to be recounting. I could not help wondering to myself, as the time slipped thus pleasantly away, whether by any combination of circumstances it would be possible to break or in any way disturb this man's immoveable calm. I knew by my own very recent personal experience that he had shown himself equally impassive under circumstances which might well have tried the nerves of the strongest — for surely the prospect of a death by fire, helpless and hemmed in on all sides, might make the boldest shudder! But while I was asking myself this question and turning it over in my mind, at the same time that I was acting the host and taking my part in the conversation, it was answered for me.

It was by this time about twenty minutes past twelve. Every one else belonging to the house, with the exception of myself, had no doubt retired for the night. There was no other lodger on the premises, and, as I had my latch-key, I could come in at any hour of the day or night I pleased without disturbing any one. The house, then, was quite quiet, when all at once there came a slight sound outside my door. I recognised it at once, but took no notice at first, for my visitor was relating some of his recent experiences of the Paris Exhibition, from which he had but just returned. But when the faint sound I have just spoken of occurred, he stopped suddenly in the midst of a sentence. I waited a second or two for him to continue.

"You were saying?" I said, glancing at him as I spoke.

Good heavens! The change I saw in that man's face frightened me! The impassive, blasé expression was gone, and in its place I saw a look of ghastly, livid terror—of fear, unmistakeable and overwhelming. His hands clutched the arms of his chair; his jaw had fallen like that of a dead man, and great drops of agony stood upon his brow. I rose from my seat in haste, almost overturning it.

"Are you ill?" I asked, with anxiety. "What is the matter? What can I do for you?"

Then, with an effort, and in a husky whisper, he answered: "Did you not hear it?"

"Hear what?" I asked. "Surely you do not mean——"

"It was like the sound of finger-nails on the panels of the door. There it is is again!"

"Pray don't let that alarm you," I said, hardly able to keep myself from laughing outright. "There is nothing at all remarkable or supernatural about it, as I can easily prove to you." And crossing over to the door, I threw it open. "Walk in, Peter," I said; "for I suppose it is you."

My invitation was promptly accepted, and a very fine tabby cat proved to be the disturber, and proceeded to rub his head against my legs, and generally express, cat-fashion, his great satisfaction at being admitted.

"Peter and I are great friends," I continued, introducing him. "He always comes up to pay me a visit some time in the course of the evening. He's rather late to-night, but was probably engaged earlier, and that is the way he announces his presence—by scratching at the door. I'm sorry you——" I stopped. What was it I had been going to say? "I'm sorry you were alarmed"? That would scarcely do, so I changed it to: "Perhaps you don't like cats? I know some people have an extraordinary aversion to them. If so, I'll send Peter away. He really has no business to be prowling about at this time of night. But I'm afraid he is a dissipated animal, and keeps very bad hours."

By this time his face had resumed its former expression, with the exception of a slight nervous twitching at one corner of the mouth, which was, however, nearly concealed by his moustache, and perhaps he was a little more drab-coloured than before.

"No," he replied, slowly, "I have no dislike for cats — rather the reverse; but——" He paused, and appeared to be searching in his mind for an explanation. "The fact is, I'm nervous—highly nervous." ("You must be, indeed," I thought to myself.) "Really, it almost amounts to a disease with me at times."

"Ah, that accounts for it," I replied,

thinking in my own mind that it did nothing of the sort. "Very likely, too, that little scare we both had to-night had something to do with it."

"No doubt," he answered, eagerly, appearing to grasp the excuse I held out with avidity. "That had a good deal to do with it, you may be sure."

I was not altogether sure of it, by any means, but stroked Peter's glossy coat with an air of conviction.

After this we resumed the conversation where it had been so abruptly broken off; but, somehow or other, the interest seemed to have gone out of it. Peter had unconsciously acted the part of a wet blanket, and I even forgot myself once so far as to yawn. My new friend took the hint and rose.

"I must apologise for keeping you up so late, and indeed I have some way to go myself, and, unless I fall in with a cab, shall have to walk the entire distance."

Of course I assured him that I never went to bed before the small hours; but that if he must go—— And go he did; but not until he had requested me to look him up some evening at the address he gave me; adding that the acquaintance had commenced under somewhat unusual circumstances, and he did not think that it should be allowed to drop. I assented cordially to this remark, being of the same opinion myself; the more so that there appeared to be the elements of something, which might turn out to be highly interesting, if properly developed, about this fresh and accidental acquaintance of mine.

So he took his departure; but it seemed to me that as he passed Peter, who had established himself in front of the fire, and was paying some slight attention to his toilet, he, either by purpose or accident, bestowed upon him a kick, and that of no inconsiderable force, judging by the feline objurgation which followed.

"Never mind, Peter," I said, addressing that intelligent animal—who had evidently made up his mind to pass the remainder of the night on my hearth-rug—after the visitor had departed. "You were only the scapegoat on this occasion. Perhaps some day we may find out the real reason for his strange behaviour. Nerves are all very well, but they won't account for the look of downright, uncompromising terror that I saw on that man's face, if ever I saw it on any face in my life. Yet, from what happened earlier in the evening, I should certainly have supposed him, of all men, to have been superior to anything of that sort. I wonder what it really meant? I should very much like to find out." I took up the card that he had placed upon the corner of the mantelpiece. "Richard Warden, Esq., Mandeville Mansions, W. A good address. My new friend seems to be somewhat of a swell. So much the better. I shall certainly look him up, as he requested me to do. So good night, Peter, and pleasant dreams."

CHAPTER II.

It was with no ill-intention, but simply owing to my naturally inquisitive disposition, that I prosecuted a few cautious enquiries among my other friends and acquaintances concerning this man Warden. For it is really remarkable how often among own circle you can, if not actually meet with some one who is acquainted with the individual concerning whom you are making enquiries, at least find a man who knows another man who knows him. This was just what happened in this particular instance. An old friend of mine had another old friend, who had once been on rather intimate terms with the elder brother of this identical Richard Warden. I say, had been, advisedly, as the individual referred to had died a couple of years or so before, and his junior had thereupon succeeded him in possession of a very fair estate, somewhere up in the North. This last is a very comprehensive term, and covers a good deal of ground. I, not unnaturally, enquired as to the cause of his death—not that I suspected anything like foul play, though it is not easy to be sure of anything, when there is only one life between you and a snug property, and——

However, I was relieved to hear that the relative in this instance unmistakeably owed his decease to a pure accident. It appeared that he had been drowned while skating on a lake in his own grounds. The ice had given way owing to a sudden thaw, and the water being very deep in that particular part, these two circumstances helped to bring about the catastrophe. There had been several other persons involved in the same accident, but this was the only case which proved fatal. Every effort had been made at the time, on recovery of the body, to restore life, but without success, and the unfortunate man, being unmarried, was consequently succeeded in the property by his only brother. Well, that was fair and square enough; but what seemed strange about the matter was the refusal of the successor to reside on his estate, or to occupy the fine old house he had thus unexpectedly inherited. For about a month after the sad event just chronicled, he took up his residence there; then, without any explanation, he came up to London in great haste, and the next thing known was that the place was advertised to be let, and let it was to a retired sausage-maker, or something of that sort.

"Perhaps he was hard up, and wanted the money?" I suggested.

"That might have been the reason, of course," was the reply. "But I never heard it given as one—in fact, the only explanation I ever did hear was a very ridiculous and inadequate one—not worth repeating; especially as it only came through the servants."

"Nevertheless, I should like to hear it all the same—if it's no secret?"

"Oh, no, not at all," replied the man who had given the previous information, and whose acquaintance—through our mutual friend—I had made for this very purpose. "But they said—I know you'll laugh—that he complained of noises—little trifling sounds, which seemed to aggravate him beyond endurance—like some one tapping at the door, or scratching at the wainscot. Ridiculous, wasn't it?"

Contrary to my informant's expectation I did not laugh.

"And did any one else hear them?" I asked.

"I'm sure I don't know," he exclaimed, in tones of disgust. "After all, you know, it couldn't have been anything but the mice in the wood-work. You know what those old country houses are. Bosh! that couldn't have been the reason! Besides, I tell you," with a sudden access of excitement, "I've seen the man in the hunting-field, and there isn't a bolder or more reckless rider anywhere. And is it likely," with much feeling, "that a fellow who will take anything that comes in his way, would let himself be driven out of his own house by something scratching? They might scratch the place down before I'd budge!"

I said nothing in reply to this, but I thought the more.

I was right in supposing that Mandeville Mansions, W., was an aristocratic address; indeed, they turned out to be a very imposing block of buildings in one of the best thoroughfares; and, what was more, the flat occupied by my new acquaintance was on the first floor. Consequently the rental must have been a small fortune—evidently there was no lack of money here—and yet you would have thought that any man would prefer his own ancestral home to the most luxurious of lodgings to be met with anywhere!

It was about half-past eight in the evening when I called on him, about a fortnight after our first memorable encounter. I was admitted by a discreet middle-aged manservant, who informed me upon enquiry that his master was at home; and, what was more, the latter certainly seemed, in his emotionless manner, glad to see me. As I sat opposite to him and noticed the colourless sphinx-like cast of his countenance, it seemed almost impossible to imagine it otherwise, still less, as I had myself seen it, convulsed with a speechless horror! Could I have been mistaken, and could the expression have been due, as I had at first supposed, to intense physical pain—some spasm of the heart which had caused that terrible look? While as to the report I had heard about him, though it certainly seemed to agree with my own experience, what reliance could be placed upon servants' tales?

As it grew later, the wind began to rise.

"We shall have a storm to-night," I said, after a pause in the conversation, during which my host seemed to be straining his ears after some faint sound which came from the outside. He made no reply. "I rather enjoy a good hurricane myself," I continued, "so long as I'm under cover and——"

"Hush!" he said, stopping me in the middle of my sentence.

There was a faint tapping at one of the windows. It grew louder and more persistent, and seemed to say: "Let me in—let me in. I will come in!" I should have thought nothing of it at any other time; but with that absurd story in my mind——Pshaw! my nerves were getting as bad as the other man's, who, after a moment's hesitation and intense silence, during which every sense seemed to be absorbed in the effort of listening, suddenly rose from his seat, and, crossing the floor, threw up the lower sash of the window, and stared out into the darkness. A trail of variegated ivy, which was trained on wire frames round each window, had become loose, and was driven by the wind against the glass. He broke it off, and returning with it in his hand, flung it upon the red-hot coals, where it curled and writhed and crackled until it was consumed.

I began to think there was some foundation after all in those rumours.

"No doubt you think me very fidgety," he explained, with a short, hard laugh, as he wiped his damp forehead—yet it was anything but a warm evening—"but I can't endure these little interruptions. They affect me very strangely." And he gave me a quick, stealthy glance, which seemed to ask, "Does my explanation satisfy you?"

I nodded my head. "Just so," I answered, gravely; "I've felt the same thing myself, though I'm not much troubled with nerves as a rule."

There was another pause after this—then:

"I knew a man once," he began, staring at the fire, "who one night, as he sat alone, heard something tapping at the window—just as we did a moment ago. At first he took no notice, he thought it was only the branch of a tree outside. But at last the sound was so persistent that it began to weary him, so he, too, went to the window and looked out."

He made a long pause here. There fleeted across my mind a wild thought: Was this really some one else's story he was telling me, or was it his own?

"And did your friend see anything?" I asked, with an affectation of indifference.

"He saw a face pressed close against the window-pane. A dead, white face which he had last seen in its coffin, only now the eyes were wide open and looking at him."

The low, monotonous tone in which he related this ghastly incident so impressed me, that I could scarcely refrain from shuddering.

"Then he recognised the face?" I asked, involuntarily sinking my voice.

"It was his"—did he really hesitate before he uttered the next word, or did I only imagine it?—"his father's, who had died the year before under rather strange circumstances."

I should have liked to have asked what those circumstances were. Perhaps he had been drowned!

"And what did your friend do?" was the question I substituted.

"Oh," with a yawn and a shrug of the shoulders, as though dismissing the subject, "he went mad, or shot himself—I'm not quite sure which."

"A guilty conscience, I suppose," I ventured to remark.

"Something of the sort. Shall we turn the subject? It is not a very lively one."

"By all means," I replied, with pretended alacrity. Then it could not have been his own story, after all; and yet—— I should have preferred to continue the conversation in the same channel; for the subject, though grim and improbable, fascinated me.

It was a wild night, and, as I took my way home, it was with some difficulty that I succeeded in turning the different street corners, round which the wind seemed to lie in wait for me. But I trudged on, with my head down, and took little heed of its boisterous attentions, for I was too much occupied with my own reflections to be susceptible to outward influences.

CATHERINE MAIDMENT'S BURDEN.

A STORY IN TWELVE CHAPTERS.

By MARGARET MOULE.

CHAPTER IV.

"Indeed, Miss Arbuthnot, it is not that I am unwilling to lend you any horse in my stables. Need I say so? It is simply that I do not consider Queen Bess a safe mount for a lady."

"That is all very well, Mr. Stewart-Carr," was the laughing answer. "I don't believe you though. The truth is that you think I am not horsewoman enough to be allowed your best mare."

Mr. Stewart-Carr's expected guests—six in number—had all duly arrived at the Castle on the evening before. They were at this moment all assembled in the breakfast-room, which was a larger, more imposing room than the library, where Mr. Stewart-Carr had taken his solitary breakfast the morning before on his first arrival. It was hung with a rather dark old tapestry at each end; but the gloom of this had been successfully counteracted by the paintings which covered the oak-wainscoted walls on each side. They were excellently hung, and all by the best painters of the day; Mr. Stewart-Carr was a connoisseur in pictures. The table was covered with the ordinary appliances of a well-appointed breakfast-table. This table was so well appointed that not even the disarrangement consequent upon the end of a meal could entirely destroy the first effect; and it was decidedly disarranged, for the hour was eleven and breakfast was just over.

The girl who spoke was leaning up against the frame of the large bow-window which overlooked the park, and made a cheerful break in the heavy tapestry at the upper end of the room.

She was a very pretty girl of three-and-twenty, with fair, curly hair fastened in the most modern style at the back of her small head, fresh colouring, bright brown eyes, and a rosy, mobile mouth. She was dressed faultlessly, if complete compliance with fashion constitutes faultlessness, in a close-fitting tweed frock; and she wore one or two very handsome rings on her well-shaped, small hand. Miss Grace Arbuthnot was rich, and she was to be richer some day, being sole heiress of her mother's large fortune.

She smiled defiantly at Mr. Stewart-Carr when she had done speaking, and the smile showed a pretty row of white, even teeth.

"You know that is really it," she repeated. Before Mr. Stewart-Carr could find the words he wanted, she turned round with a quick, unexpected gesture. She turned towards a young man who was standing beside her. He was a very good-looking young man, of eight or nine-and-twenty, tall, and very upright, with a simple, honest face, rather clouded at present; and he possessed that air of quick precision about him which seems inseparable from military life and training. He held a newspaper in his hand; but he appeared to be taking a very cursory interest in its contents, and a close observer might, indeed, have detected the fact that the advertisement sheet was outside. He looked up instantly, with a slight lifting of the cloud on his brow, as Miss Arbuthnot turned round.

"Captain Carnforth," she cried, "come here and bear testimony to my horsewomanship."

Long before she had finished her words, he had dropped his newspaper and joined Miss Arbuthnot and his host.

"Is 'horsewomanship' the right word?" she said to Mr. Stewart-Carr, smiling. "I'm not sure if it is; but, anyway, Captain Carnforth knows I can ride."

"Awfully well," put in the young man, enthusiastically.

"I am aware of Miss Arbuthnot's powers," said Mr. Stewart-Carr to him, with a smile that took away from the stiffness of his words. "I have every confidence in them. I saw you ride in Paris, remember," he added to Miss Arbuthnot.

"Oh, yes; so you did! Well, that was a horrid, hard-mouthed brute, and vicious besides, as you saw. If I could manage him all right, indeed you might trust me with Queen Bess."

"It is Queen Bess I do not trust," said her master.

"I know she'll behave like an angel with me," said Miss Arbuthnot; and as Mr. Stewart-Carr smiled at her energetic assertions she turned to Captain Carnforth. "Can't you say something more to support me?" she said. "I'm dying to mount her."

Grace Arbuthnot was what unkind critics frequently called "a very horsey girl." But the unkindness in the comment was quite undeserved. Grace took an intense interest in horses. She understood them very well, and she loved them as enthusiastically as a woman does when she cares about them at all. If she was a little apt to introduce into her conversation scraps of "horsey" talk and racing information, it was from no other reason but that her very simple keen interest in everything connected with horses made her often forget that it was not shared to the same extent by every one; and also that there was a prejudice against the expression of it by women. She was not in the least what is known as a "fast" girl; she was thoroughly good-natured and womanly at heart.

Mr. Stewart-Carr was the possessor of a very fine stud, and after dinner on the evening before she had insisted on inspecting them all under his auspices, and had set her heart on riding the animal in question, a beautiful, fiery bay mare.

"You will lend her to me?" she added to Mr. Stewart-Carr, dropping her defiant manner, and relapsing into a pretty pleading one, that made her very attractive. "Please——"

"No," he said, firmly. "I am grieved beyond words to seem so rude to a lady, but I do really consider her a dangerous animal. I could not think of your mounting her."

"And I could not think of doing without her," she said, resuming her former manner, with a saucy smile at him. "It is awkward, isn't it?"

"Surely, Miss Arbuthnot, it would be madness to run risks." Captain Carnforth had been listening to the conversation for the last few moments in silence, his ingenuous countenance undergoing several changes meanwhile. The last expressed consternation, and he endeavoured forthwith to clothe this sensation in the aforesaid tentative words.

"Risks!" she said, lightly. "What I'm trying so hard to prove is that there are no risks. I——" But she was interrupted.

The other four guests had divided, on rising from the table, into couples. One consisted of two elderly ladies, who had instantly engaged in a flowing conversation; the other of a lady who would have described herself as young, and a middle-aged man, with a good sensible face.

One of the elderly ladies suddenly broke off in the conversation. "Pray forgive me, dear Mrs. Kenyon," she said, "I must speak to my daughter for a moment." And it was her descent on the little group in the window that cut short Miss Arbuthnot's words.

"My dear Mr. Stewart-Carr," she began emphatically and breathlessly—she was rather stout and the slightest exertion made her tones spasmodic—"I surely heard you say something of a dangerous horse. Let me beg you not to listen to Grace if she wishes to ride it. She is so terribly rash!" Mrs. Arbuthnot cast a regretful look at her daughter as she spoke.

But the girl disregarded her mother's look; for all she did was to turn a sunny, smiling face upon her. "You don't ride, dear mother!" she said, laughing. "You are no judge in this case of the perils of the way!"

"I trust you, Mr. Stewart-Carr," Mrs. Arbuthnot continued, looking at him.

"Indeed, Mrs. Arbuthnot, you may," Mr. Stewart-Carr said emphatically, and, as he spoke, his eyes rested on the pretty, pouting face with a lingering glance.

"I don't mind any of you!" Grace Arbuthnot cried, defiantly. "Mr. Stewart-Carr, you are very unkind. I must ride her, and"—with a saucy look at him—"I shall."

Captain Carnforth gave a dismayed look at her, and seemed to endeavour to frame a new remonstrance. But whatever it might have been, it was unsaid. Mrs. Arbuthnot began a long series of remarks on rashness, recklessness, and thoughtlessness, which in themselves would have crushed any well-meant efforts on Captain Carnforth's part even if they had not been delivered, as they were, with a somewhat pointed disregard of his presence in the group.

Mrs. Arbuthnot meant the disregard to be pointed. If she had not been a very well-bred woman, she would cheerfully have turned her back on Captain Carnforth. He was one of the trials of her existence at present.

Mrs. Arbuthnot was a good-natured, good-hearted woman of about fifty. Without possessing any obtrusive match-making characteristics, she was reasonably anxious, as is every mother, probably, to see her daughter well and comfortably married. With this end in view, she entertained largely in town, and did her duty abundantly as a chaperone in the season, made up large house parties in their house in Scotland in the autumn, and, whenever it was possible, pursued with Grace a round of country-house visits. She wished Grace to have the opportunity of "making an impartial choice," she said; and as far as impartiality went, Grace had more than met her mother's views. She had distinguished no one whatever by her approbation, saying, as a general description of her sentiments on the subject, that she preferred horses to men, as being more interesting. This was all very well at first. But this year was Grace's third season, and Mrs. Arbuthnot began to get anxious. It would be terrible to have Grace spoken of as being "passée," or to have the interest in her which had been created by her mixture of frank unconventionality and sweet temper flag and disappear, as it too often did in the case of girls who had been too long in the social arena. So she determined that Grace must be married without delay—if possible, this year.

During the course of what Mrs. Arbuthnot, with a great inappropriateness from a personal point of view, described as a "little run" on the Continent at Easter, they had met Mr. Stewart-Carr. He had struck her at once as in every way very eligible, and she had taken a great liking to him personally. He had also been decidedly impressed by Grace, and it was with some effusion that Mrs. Arbuthnot had accepted his invitation to spend a fortnight at Moreford in July.

Since then Grace had, in some theatricals in town, made Captain Carnforth's acquaintance. They had the love of horses in common, and he appeared to interest

Grace more than any man had done yet, and they had improved the acquaintance, to Mrs. Arbuthnot's inexpressible annoyance, rapidly.

Knowing Grace's independent nature, she wisely forbore to remonstrate with her daughter; but she promoted strenuously everything that could recall Mr. Stewart-Carr to her mind, and threw every possible obstacle in the way of her meeting Captain Carnforth.

Her intense vexation, therefore, when she discovered that Captain Carnforth also knew Mr. Stewart-Carr, and was also to be a guest at Moreford, may be imagined.

However, nothing could be done to prevent it; and she thought it would be short-sighted to back out of the invitation when she was so very anxious to instal Grace some day as mistress of Moreford Castle. And also, she said to herself, that, after all, it was strange if she could not manage Grace. So she arrived at Moreford with a firm determination to ignore Captain Carnforth, and unobtrusively to throw Grace and Mr. Stewart-Carr as much together as she could.

She would on no account have interfered with a plan such as this, for riding, which would certainly throw them together, but that her motherly anxiety was really stronger than her diplomacy. She was very truly fond of her only child, and it was with real relief that she heard Mr. Stewart-Carr say, in answer to Grace's last defiant assertion about riding Queen Bess:

"Never, Miss Arbuthnot, if I can prevent it!"

He had far too pleasant an expression on his face for her to be in the least hurt by the firm tone; and she smiled at him as he continued:

"Shall we leave argument for the present? I have a plan of my own I want to propose. Dare!" he called to the middle-aged man, "will you ask Mrs. Kenyon and Miss Neville to come here? And come here yourself, will you? I thought," he went on after a slight pause, during which the other three guests had joined them, "if you thought it a good idea, that we might drive this afternoon to Beaumont Priory. There are some wonderful old ruins there, I am told. I don't know them myself; but I believe they're well worth seeing. And I would tell them to put a hamper in the carriage, and we might have afternoon tea there."

"It's an awfully good idea!" cried Grace Arbuthnot, enthusiastically, before any one else could speak.

She was echoed by Miss Neville, who expressed herself, being a person of adjectival and adverbial conversation, to the effect that it would be "charmingly delightful." Every one else having assented, Mr. Stewart-Carr arranged to start at two o'clock, and was moving towards the bell to ring and order the carriage, when the door was opened, and a footman entered. He came up to his master, and said:

"Miss Maidment wishes to see you, sir. She told me that she came by appointment, sir."

Mr. Stewart-Carr pulled out his watch.

"Twelve," he said, regretfully. "So it is. I am so sorry," he said to the little group, "but I have a business engagement with my agent this morning."

"Do you go in for the employment of women, Stewart-Carr?" asked the middle-aged man, with a smile.

"Women! No! What do you mean, Dare?"

"The man announced Miss Maidment," was the reply.

"Miss Maidment! Fenton's an ass! He meant Mr. Maidment, of course. Dare," he went on, "take care of the ladies for an hour for me. See that no one is dull, will you, including yourself?" he ended, with a little laugh, as he opened the breakfast-room door. He closed it again behind him and crossed the hall, and went along a passage towards the library in some wonder. "Miss Maidment!" he said to himself with a smile. "What an idiot Fenton must be! I knew he hadn't many brains."

He opened the heavy library door, thinking confusedly at one and the same time of his servant's stupidity and of the books he was to investigate.

"Good morning, Maidment," he began, cheerily; then raised his eyes and stopped abruptly.

Sitting in a heavy oak chair by the window, with two large books in her arms, was Catherine Maidment. She rose as he came up to her.

"I am sorry my brother is not able to keep his appointment," she began, before Mr. Stewart-Carr could speak. "He is—ill this morning, and I have come to take his place, if you will allow me to do so."

Catherine Maidment was very pale. Her eyes were heavy, and her lips more set than usual.

Mr. Stewart-Carr looked at her without answering for a minute. He was so taken by surprise that he could not collect his ideas, or grasp sufficiently what she had said to answer it coherently. He said in the meantime, courteously:

"Please do not stand, Miss Maidment." Then, seizing the one idea that was clearest, he continued: "I am sorry Mr. Maidment is ill—very sorry. Possibly our long, hot walk yesterday tired him."

"I do not think so, but I am not sure," Catherine answered. "He is subject to very bad headaches, and he is suffering from one this morning."

"Ah! then of course it is the sun. I am really very sorry."

"Will you let me go through the books with you?" pursued Catherine. "I think I know all that he would wish to say; and he would be very glad to have it done."

"Go through the books with me!" echoed Mr. Stewart-Carr, forgetting his courtesy for a minute in his surprise at the idea.

"If you please," continued Catherine, moving as she spoke towards the table, as if to lay the heavy books upon it.

"Allow me," said Mr. Stewart-Carr, taking them from her. "I beg your pardon for not taking them sooner."

"I hope I am not late," said Catherine, looking at him as he hesitated and did not open them.

"Certainly not," he replied. "The appointment I made with your brother was for twelve o'clock, and it is only just that now. But do you really wish to go through them?" he said, looking at her. "Because, though of course I should be glad to get through them, and I hardly know when I may have another hour, they could wait; for I do not really like to trouble you, Miss Maidment."

"It is no trouble," she said, simply. "May we begin?"

He looked at her once more, and coming to the conclusion that she was quite in earnest, drew two chairs to the library table.

"I am at your service," he said.

Catherine sat down, drew the books nearer to her, and opened the largest.

"This," she said, "is the summary of accounts for the three years since your last visit here. The other is the record of the work done on the estate, and the exact expenditure it has cost. My brother said he had told you of his plan for keeping these, and you approved of it. Shall we take the accounts first?"

"If you please," he said. Mr. Stewart-Carr expressed no more surprise; he felt no more astonishment. The curious position in which he found himself seemed to have become suddenly perfectly natural; he seemed to catch from the woman beside him her quiet, matter-of-fact way of regarding it.

She began at the first page, and showed him, month by month and year by year, every item entered clearly and methodically, every balance correct; and every moment he spent in the inspection made him feel more accustomed to the situation, and more completely at ease in it. When he realised the fact that many of the entries were made in a neat, small handwriting, which he knew was not Frank Maidment's, he seemed to know instantly whose it was. And when she said, quickly, as she first turned a page on which it was, "I have, you will see, copied in some entries for my brother," her words came to him only as an expected confirmation.

After half an hour's minute examination of the book he signed his name after the last entry, as acquiescing and approving of the whole, and Catherine opened the other book.

"These are the improvements my brother has attempted on the estate," she said. "I believe he has written to you, though, and obtained your separate sanction to each of them."

"He has, certainly," replied Mr. Stewart-Carr. And, as he spoke, a recollection came over him of various letters he had during the past three years received in Paris, Vienna, Florence, and many other places; letters which he had read and answered, though generally assentingly, rather cursorily. The curious contrast between the surroundings in which he had written those answers, and the surroundings in which he was now to criticise their results, struck him suddenly. He could not help glancing once more at the woman beside him. She was apparently not in the least aware of his look; her head was bent over the book, and her grey eyes were intent upon it.

"The first is the road you had made from the Far Lane to the village," she said. She raised her head as he turned his to look at the entry. "I cannot tell you what a blessing it has been to the people out there. The children from the

Lane never came to school in winter and always gave the impassable fields as an excuse, and the women, too, could very rarely reach Moreford. But the new road has changed all that."

"It does not seem to have been a very expensive improvement," he said, looking at the balanced account of the expenditure.

"No," she said, eagerly. "I—my brother thought it would be well to get it done while they were making the new bit of high-road at Molton Cross, and so procure the materials more easily and cheaply."

"It was very thoughtful of Mr. Maidment."

Catherine turned over the page that contained the account of the road-making in question, and proceeded to enter upon the records of several smaller works, the drainage of fields, the erection of new farm buildings, and so forth, all equally carefully detailed.

"This," she said, a quarter of an hour or so later, "this is the account of the cottages you had built instead of those wretched thatched ones on the edge of the common. The people—well, you cannot realise what it has done for them," she said, excitedly. "I have always been glad that I—my brother——" She broke off suddenly, and for the first time during the interview showed a little confusion; but recovering herself instantly, "It is the most excellent work that could have been done," she ended, quietly.

"You take a great interest in the estate, Miss Maidment," he said, looking at her with some curiosity.

"I am interested," she answered, quietly. "My brother has, of course, mentioned these plans to me, and I have watched the carrying out of them with great interest. I like the people, and care for their welfare.'

"You are not a Socialist, I trust," he said, laughing. "You are introducing no democratic principles in this unsophisticated spot."

"Indeed, I am not," she said, with a certain subdued dignity, which somehow prevented Mr. Stewart-Carr from continuing, as he had intended, in the same light manner.

"I need not ask you that, when I see the care that Mr. Maidment takes of my interests," he said, very courteously.

"I am glad you think so," said she, simply; and they pursued the inspection of the book, which was nearly ended, in silence, only broken by short, necessary comments from Mr. Stewart-Carr, and the briefest of explanations from Catherine.

She rose when it was over, and prepared to take the books.

"You will wish to keep them yourself, though?" she said, suddenly.

"No; I should wish Mr. Maidment to keep them. Whether I am at home or not at home, they could be in no better keeping, I am assured. Please tell him so. And also tell him I greatly regret to hear of his indisposition. But I will send them to the White House; I could not think of your taking them."

"It would be no trouble," she said, simply.

"I cannot allow it," he said, decisively. "And now, Miss Maidment, let me thank you greatly for taking all this trouble upon yourself. Accept my congratulations, too, on your brother's most excellent financial management. I shall hope to convey them to him in person very soon."

Catherine's pale face flushed all at once a sudden deep red. But Mr. Stewart-Carr did not see it; he was opening the door, towards which Catherine had moved, and when he looked round it had faded again.

"Good morning," she said.

"I will let you out," he answered; and he led the way along the passage, and out into the hall. As they crossed the hall to the front door, Grace Arbuthnot was coming rapidly down the large staircase. She stopped short until Catherine had gone across the hall and out of the door. Then as she bowed to Mr. Stewart-Carr, and turned away down the drive, Miss Arbuthnot ran down the remaining steps.

"Who is your nice-looking caller?" she said, abruptly, to Mr. Stewart-Carr. "She isn't half bad-looking, and her frock isn't half bad, either."

"My agent's sister, who brought me a message from him," he said, a little shortly. Then, as if conscious that he had been abrupt, he added, in his ordinary, pleasant tone: "Won't you come for a stroll in the grounds? There's a quarter of an hour before lunch, and I see you have your hat on."

Grace Arbuthnot accepted the invitation, and to the infinite delight of Mrs. Arbuthnot, who happened to see them from the drawing-room window, the two walked on to the sunny lawn together.

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BY ESMÈ STUART.

Author of "A Faire Damzell," "Joan Vellacot," "Kestell of Greystone," etc. etc.

CHAPTER IV. A VILLA AT LONGHAM.

IT does not take an hour by rail from London to reach Longham, where the pretty country and the little villa residences make one almost forget how short a space of time separates one from the great, bustling metropolis.

The villas and residences had been built by slow degrees, so there was a pleasing variety about them, as well as a pleasing irregularity as to their size and shape.

The land had been sold in lots; and many of these lots had been bought by retired Londoners, who, having made their fortune in trades more or less genteel, had then settled down to enjoy the fruit of hard toil in what they called a rural district. Besides these grand, "desirable residences," there was a good sprinkling of smaller villas, most of them semi-detached, and owning minute patches of ground called by the agents "elegant gardens." These were sometimes divided from each other by substantial walls, which shut out both air and sunshine, but made the villas strictly private. Others had but a light fence acting as a wall of separation. In the last cases the semi-detached families made it a point of honour never to have parties on the same day—this private information generally coming through the servants. They would not even take the air at the same time, and they tried to carry out the principle of the old-fashioned toy weather-glass, where the lady and gentleman never appear in company.

Longham had, like all other country places where a population strictly genteel has grown up by degrees, a very decided code about its social circles. On the whole the rich usually fared the worst, for they had made their money in a more profitable, though less genteel manner than the poorer and sometimes more genteel settlers. To have made your money by meat, was to be in a very low position at Longham; even though the butcher's mansion, which rose large and stately in its own grounds, was infinitely superior to most of the Longham residences. Gin, on the other hand, was a very aristocratic commodity, though happily, as a commodity, it was less generally used than meat. The gin distiller's residence was less gorgeous than that of the retired butcher, but more appreciated by the neighbours; it was a first-class house, and was visited by the very best inhabitants at Longham.

Again, all kinds of office work gave a certain standing to those who were thus employed; for Longham did not enquire what special paper work was done, and would have been surprised, and even shocked, to hear that some of those who were among the most esteemed, and in the first list of "our visiting friends," were by no means to be highly respected in London. These office gentlemen had all of them first-class season tickets; all wore irreproachable coats; and could all speak English without shocking over-sensitive ears.

But the special interest of Longham was centred in its female population, that is the wives and daughters of all these various gentlemen; they could not go off to London every morning, but they found plenty of work, during the afternoon, in deciding the difficult question of their various positions. To solve these questions there was a special tribunal at Longham, consisting of five or six ladies—real ladies, with real pedigrees, and quite, quite real ancestry. If this court, after mature consideration, thought it advisable to include a new-comer into their set, then the way was easy, plain, and pleasant for her; but if not, then Mrs. Dash had to go through a series of troubles; she had to bear many petty insults, and she and every one knew that it would take her years to work her way into the charmed circle of good society. That is to say, of course, if her courage and perseverance did not fail her in the meantime, or if her inclination and ambition did not die a natural death when confronted with innumerable difficulties. In one or two cases the judgement of the tribunal—not at all a secret one, by the way, as every one knew perfectly the names of those real ladies—had been reversed, not because the culprit had worked harder than others in the same situation, or had borne more snubs; but because, either some strong personal merit had been discovered in her, or some aristocratic connexion, before totally unsuspected, had come suddenly to light. In this case the sad past and the silent rebukes were amply compensated for. Mrs. Dash at once found herself in the midst of a nest of warm friends, who never mentioned the time when she had lived under a cloud; but received her in a courteous, ladylike manner, which had all the appearance of belonging to devout Christians.

We have come to recognise that there must be sets and differences of rank; that there must be social jealousies and social triumphs in this evil world of ours. Longham was not worse than other places in declaring plainly that all men are not and cannot be brothers, and that all women are not sisters. The "We don't visit them" implied to Longham people no lack of Christianity; nor did they pretend to unravel the mystery of social position. If one less particular matron ever humbly suggested to her daughters, "I don't see, my dears, why we should be so very select," she was silenced by the sensible answer:

"One must be particular in places like Longham. One must know something of the people one associates with; they might turn out to be very undesirable acquaintances."

Without venturing to solve the social problem, we will turn into a semi-detached villa, where lived one of the tribunal, and therefore a real lady. She was a widow, who had years ago come to Longham, keeping up her position on very small means, and bringing up her family in the way she thought they should be brought up. Her husband had been in the army, but had died just after the birth of her fourth child, leaving her to cope with the world, and to educate her family on that sum which richer people call "next to nothing."

Ellen Gordon was not at all daunted by difficulties. She had plenty of spirit, and excellent health. Though she had been a poor clergyman's daughter, she had come from a good family, and her husband, Captain Gordon, was also of a good stock. Being a younger son, the Captain was without much private fortune. Why Ellen Douglas had married a poor man had always been the wonder of her friends; they would have imagined, said they, that, being pretty and attractive, she would have made a good match. She was certainly ambitious, but nevertheless she had married the poor Captain; had proved herself a good wife, and did not bemoan herself unduly when he left her for a better world with little money to make her ends meet in this.

Her character, however, was not altered by the fact of widowhood. She was still ambitious; still proud; still courageous and managing. Every one said she was an excellent mother, and her own relations helped her as much as they could. Her boy, the apple of her eye, was put to a good preparatory school, and, being clever, he managed to get on the foundation of one of the public schools. If he had not done so, Mrs. Gordon would have lived on bread and water rather than not bring up her son as a gentleman, with all the advantages which other gentlemen's sons received. As to her three daughters, she knew well how to give them the necessary advantages at the least possible cost. All three were good-looking; the two youngest were even more than pretty, whilst the eldest, though not equal to her sisters, had a beautiful figure, and was very graceful.

From childhood their mother had taught them that self-help must be their motto. If they wished to look well-dressed, they must learn to make their own clothes, for it was utterly impossible for her to pay dressmakers' bills for the three Miss Gordons.

If they wished to be thought agreeable, they must get over all awkward shyness, and they must not indulge in repartee, or in un-ladylike tastes, such as a liking for women's rights, lady doctors, house-decorators, or conveyancers.

On the other hand music, singing, and dancing were all elegant accomplishments, when performed in a ladylike manner. There must be no professional tendency in the singing—though there was no harm in playing the pianoforte as well as was possible; above all, there must be no vulgar flirting.

The three Miss Gordons had well repaid their mother's care and thought for them. The eldest, naturally, was more her mother's confidant than her younger sisters; but otherwise they all lived happily together, and all, at present, agreed in their ideas of life and people. Nor was real affection wanting. "Dear mother" was the oracle of all her daughters; none of them grudged any labour for her. The eldest, Frances, made all her mother's elegant caps, which visitors fancied were bought in Regent Street; Minnie, the second, saw that "dear mother's dresses" looked better than any one else's; whilst Bee, the youngest, prided herself upon the fact that even Mrs. Leigh, the gin distiller's wife, did not sit in a prettier or better arranged drawing-room than their own mother.

"I have brought up my girls," Mrs. Gordon said, sometimes, to her most intimate friends, "to have no expectations from any one. They could all three be equally happy with a poor man as with a rich one; and if I must some day part with them"—she sincerely hoped they would all marry, and that as soon as possible—"I shall feel happy about them."

The intimate friends said in a chorus that never before had daughters been blessed with such an excellent mother.

But though to outsiders the Gordon family was admired—not to say envied—by many, yet it must be owned that poverty had often made itself felt in a very disagreeable manner to the four ladies. It was very sad not to be able to afford more than two servants, and these not the most expensive of their order; it was also very humiliating to have so many fewer dresses than the Miss Leighs; and the struggle to keep up appearances entailed a vast amount of manual labour. Their stock of jewellery was small, and was shared amongst them till they sometimes feared it would be recognised; and then, in spite of good management, it was impossible to avoid having flys for their parties, and this expense was often a great consideration. The chief worry of their little troubles fell on Mrs. Gordon and her eldest daughter; Minnie and Beatrice were spared many of the details and contrivances, whilst the son and brother was never allowed to hear at all about money matters.

Not one of the four knew that the mainspring of Mrs. Gordon's courage was the possession of a secret on which she constantly meditated in the privacy of her own thoughts.

One bright November day, when Longham looked most cheerful and inviting, for the cold only suggested nice walks or pleasant skating parties, warm, cosy firesides, and other winter delights—the poor were out of sight at Longham, and, I fear, often out of mind—Beatrice Gordon came down into the drawing-room with her sister Minnie, equipped in a most becoming style, whilst on her arm was slung a pair of skates.

"I am sure, dear, the ice won't bear," said Mrs. Gordon, looking up with maternal pride at her two younger daughters. Certainly any mother might have been proud of them, so pretty and fresh did they look on this sunny morning.

"There has been a very hard frost for two nights, mother, darling," said Beatrice, "so we thought we might as well go and see if there was the least chance of being able to skate. I am sure the Admiral will not let us go on the ice till he has sent one of his men to test it."

"Captain Grant will try it; I heard him say so yesterday."

"Yes, he asked us to come, you know," added Beatrice, who had a knack of speaking the truth.

"Then you will call for Mrs. and Miss Crozby," said Mrs. Gordon, carelessly. She meant, however, that her daughters were not to go unchaperoned to the skating-pond, and that she did not wish to go there herself.

"Yes, we settled that yesterday," answered Minnie, who was the smallest and most elegant, but also the fine lady of the three sisters.

"Ask Mrs. Crozby for the 'Times,' and leave it in the hall," called out Frances, who could not go out this morning, because she had to cut out a ball-dress for herself, which her two sisters would help her to make when they came home. They always helped each other, otherwise they could not have got through so much. Mrs. Crozby, a near neighbour, always lent them her "Times," a day or two old, it is true; but that did not matter, for then they were allowed to keep it, and it might be seen on their table, giving a comfortable look to the room. By this means Mrs. Gordon saved threepence daily, and yet had the most fashionable paper in her room.

Left alone, Mrs. Gordon and her eldest daughter turned to the subject just now uppermost in their minds.

"Captain Grant is a very agreeable fellow, every one says, and yesterday Mrs. Crozby remarked that he really is the heir-at-law of an enormous fortune. Do you think it is true, mother?"

Mrs. Gordon looked pensive.

"So much may happen before an heir-at-law becomes real owner. Still, the Admiral will leave his son a very comfortable little income."

"Money goes to money," sighed Frances, half-sadly. "It does seem hard on us that we must depend on husbands if we ever mean to be rich; and yet we should certainly know better than most girls how to spend money rightly."

"I am sure you would. No one could guess our income by the way we live."

"It isn't for us, mother, so much as for Austin. I heard from him this morning, and he says he means to try and get some tutoring to do, now he has taken his degree, so as not to cost you anything; and he wanted to ask me first whether I thought you would mind his travelling."

"No, no; of course not. Travelling does a man so much good; only I should like to have had him at home a little. When does he wish to go?"

"He said he had accepted it conditionally of course; but he knew you would be disappointed, and I think Beatrice will break her heart."

Mrs. Gordon smiled. What was best for Austin was her first consideration; the rest was of little consequence.

"He need decide on no profession just yet. If only we could afford—— But, no; the army is meant for men who have some private means, Frances, otherwise it is a miserable profession for a gentleman. He becomes a mere machine, and is sure to be looked down upon."

"Austin must be appreciated wherever he is."

"But promotion is so slow. Well, I will write about this travelling business. Yes, he had better go. But where, and who with?"

"Some youth called Jones," replied Miss Gordon, with a slight accent of disdain. "And he speaks of travelling in Germany."

"Austin will perfect himself in German; that will be an excellent thing, supposing that by-and-by some good opening should present itself for him—a post where modern languages were necessary. Yes, I will certainly write at once."

No one would have guessed, to hear Mrs. Gordon's business-like tones, that her boy was all the world to her. Her daughters were loved, but Austin was idolised. The girls must make good marriages, because their future depended on it; but Austin must make a worthy match, because he was her boy, her pride, the head of the house of Gordon, now sunk so low as far as wealth and importance were concerned. But in all these speculations the mother put Austin first, not her own love or her own longings.

"There is Bee, leaving the 'Times' in the hall," said Frances, looking up. "You don't want it this minute, do you, mother?"

The girl was in the midst of an important part of the ball-dress, and did not wish to leave it, and Mrs. Gordon was anxious to catch the early post; so she sat down at her writing-table, penned a few lines to Austin, and then rang for the maid to post the letter.

"When you come back, Mary, bring in the 'Times,' she added. "Miss Beatrice left it on the hall table."

The maid obeyed. Mrs. Gordon did not often read the newspaper in the morning, but to-day she read it half unconsciously, and half to idle away a moment whilst she thought of Austin and how she could help on his plans.

Hardly had she glanced at it, however, than she gave a little exclamation of surprise.

"It must be! How tiresome that Austin's letter is posted! How very, very curious!" The widow rose from her seat, and her face turned pale from the intense excitement she was experiencing. "Frances, my dear, say nothing about this to your sisters; but I believe—I think—yes, it must be so. I am the heir-at-law of this man's fortune!"

Frances hurriedly left her work, looked at the "Times" over her mother's shoulder, and read the announcement of the death of James Gordon: "At The Warren, November 17th, James Gordon, aged fifty-eight."

WRITERS—AND READERS.

"LITERATURE, my friend, literature is the force which moves the world." So says Quilpen, from behind a cloud of tobacco-smoke, and out of the recesses of an easy-chair in the smoking-room in that institution of the future, the Authors' Club. In this opinion Qailpen by no means stands alone. The pen, we are told, on good authority, is mightier than the sword—by inference, the ruler of the world. Volumes have been written, volumes are being written, probably volumes will continue to be written, to show that, practically, the destinies of the world are ruled by—authors; that it is they who make history, that it is they who, sitting at the helm, steer the ships of the nations. Possibly a humble scribbler may be allowed to ask leave to doubt it—to doubt, that is, if literature really is the force it is supposed to be. It is, no doubt, pleasant to be able to say, as Qailpen is apt to say:

"Men of my craft sit above kings, and priests, and princes. Literature is the true source of power."

It is nice for Qailpen to be able to say it; but—well, for my part, I doubt it. Qailpen, passing his life as the ornament of a more or less intellectual society, after all only forms one of a set, a clique. He is unconscious of, or ignores, the great world without—the great world which, if he only knew it, has never heard of Qailpen, not though Quilpen is the greatest Qailpen that ever lived. John Ruskin somewhere points out what a difference it would make to the world of letters if rich men would only spend on books an appreciable fraction of what they spend upon their wine-cellars. The consideration of this observation ought to make Quilpen pause when he talks about literature being the source of power, because rich men do not spend that fraction.

We are told that this is a reading age—told it every day for two in the morning papers. Is it? In what sense? Let the non-writing person examine his or her acquaintance and see. I know a man—a man who is well spoken of, a man who turns out his two, three, or four books a year, besides innumerable articles—who makes no secret of the fact that he never reads anything but the newspapers, and not the leading articles in those. He only skims them for the news. I doubt if, among people who write, this man is in any way remarkable. I have heard of men, whose names, as writers, are familiar in our mouths as household words, who hate reading. It is true that a specialist keeps himself abreast of works treating of his special subject, for the purpose of attending to the joints in his armour. The poet Jones probably pays some attention to the latest poetic utterances of the poet Smith; the popular novelist glances at the newest fiction. But the reading of these gentlemen is done in a more or less commercial spirit. It would be found, if we could only get at the inner secrets of the heart, that the folks who write, read, when they do read, rather for the sake of writing than for the sake of reading. One's own personal experience leads one to believe that a love of reading, for reading's sake, is not a distinctive feature of those who write.

Let, therefore, the non-writing person examine his or her acquaintance. If this supposititious person is a man, and his occupation is "the City," does he find that his City friends are readers? Hardly. It is true that they swallow one paper in the morning, and, possibly, another one at night; but, in nine cases out of ten, they simply regard these as trade circulars which keep them abreast of their business. Of course, a hideous murder, a "cause célèbre," commands attention. The taste for these things has always existed. Then there is a "glove-fight," the turf, cricket, and perhaps politics. Possibly a book has advertised itself into a prominent review. "I see there's a notice of So-and-so's new book; seems to give you plenty for the money." Or, "See those extracts from Such-and-such's new poem? They say he's got three hundred guineas for half that number of lines." The average City man has no more intimate relations with literature than that.

Or suppose that the acquaintances of the supposititious non-writing person are in trade. Does your baker read? I confess that I have the best of reasons for knowing that my butcher doesn't. He has something better to do, and for that he is prepared to piously "thank Heaven." My butterman is a Dissenter. He disapproves of light literature; he will probably disapprove of this article which is being written now. He subscribes to Mr. Spurgeon's sermons, and reads them during his nap on

Sunday afternoon. It is probable that if the tradesmen of this, or, for the matter of that, of any country, were polled, it would be shown that a large, a very large, majority are of opinion that a taste for reading involves not only a waste of time, but a waste of money. A person who is fond of reading must buy books sometimes, you know. The trading classes are against free libraries; if you doubt it, ask any one who has had anything to do with free libraries. They never use them themselves; logically enough, they don't see why they should pay for them for the use of other people. Booksellers don't even read the books they stock upon their shelves. Pick out a book haphazard, ask the bookseller his opinion of its merits, and you will see.

If the always supposititious non-writing person be one of the "masses," the "toiling millions," he will, I honestly believe, be able to number as many readers among his acquaintance as he would if he were one of the "classes." Our artisans read, some of them, say five per cent. of them. What they read is a matter for further consideration. The intelligent mechanic studies publications having an educational bearing on his trade, the engineer studies works on engineering, the gardener studies works on gardening—the commercial spirit again! The artisan, being a practical man, wishful to improve his position in the world, confines his attention, for the most part, to printed matter which will aid his "getting on." If you descend a step lower among the "masses," you will find that readers—what readers there are!—stick to the Newgate Calendar, and records of what is ironically called "sport," "glove-fights," horse-races, and such-like.

Turn to the professions. Take the clergy. At first glance one would be inclined to exclaim, "You will find the readers here. If a clergyman, the man who should be the wisest of men, does not read, who does?" Experience teaches us that it is advisable to be cautious in arriving at conclusions. There are clergymen who read, but they are very far from being the majority. They have read once—of necessity. Something, they alone know what, prevents them reading now—from choice. Here again a peculiarity comes in, which has already been referred to. It will be found, as a rule, that the clergyman who reads, writes—not only sermons, but books, and in the public prints. One cannot but suspect that it is for the sake of writing that he reads. A doctor reads, occasionally, professional works. It may be doubted whether, if he can help it, a man of law reads even those. As for soldiers, I only knew one soldier who had a taste for books, and I always understood that he was the most unpopular man in his regiment.

If the supposititious non-writing person be of the gentler sex—now we come to readers! She knows crowds of them, it is the women who are the readers, just as scurrilous and, surely, untruthful persons in France tell you that it is the women who go to church. Think of the crowds of papers, penny papers, highly respectable penny papers, which cater for women, and which cater only for women. Which pour out, for ever and for ever, novels in weekly instalments—or whole, in penny numbers—which no man ever tries to read, and could not if he tried. Think of the "fashion papers!" Think of "Mudie's!" Women abound who read seven novels a week. It is two to one that they will not be able to give you the titles of one of them a fortnight afterwards. Ask them if they have read "Lady Lucy's Lingering Last"—they never know. When they have got half-way through the second volume, they think it is the book they read at Brighton, or when they were stopping with the Kites at Birmingham; or wasn't it one of the Tauchnitz volumes which they purchased at Lausanne? They are never certain to the bitter end.

If, it may be asked, none of these people do read for reading's sake, who then does? The answer is, just a creature here and there. But they are, relatively, so few in number, that they may be regarded as a pailful of sugar in the English Channel. To all practical intents and purposes they are non-existent. In a literary sense, newspapers form the staff of life. The great Quilpen is under an odd delusion if he supposes that it is his articles which give the newspaper for which he writes its popularity. It may be doubted if any of his very best articles—in England, at any rate—ever caught fifty purchasers on any given day. It is the news they contain which sells the papers, and the way in which the news is served and spiced. Of the books which are read, a good ninety per cent. are works of fiction. We are speaking of the books which are read, not bought. The books which are bought and not read are as the sands of the sea for multitude. And the point of the joke lies in the way in which the reading which is done is done. Who is there who regards reading as a serious exercise? Examine into that man's motives! Be sure that into that man's reading there enters nothing of the commercial spirit.

The truth is that books are the companions of our idle hours. They are our playthings. There is nothing which is more certain, yet nothing which a certain school of writers will more virulently deny. We take up a poet—if we take him up at all—to while away a sullen hour, that we may enter with him into the world of dreams. We read a novel for the amusement it provides. Did any one ever know a man who was moved out of the path of life which he had set himself to tread by the perusal of a book? One hears of such people. Just as one hears of a man who knows of a man who knows a man who saw a ghost. Take what is called "serious" reading. It is notorious that the folks who find delight in that are very careful to make sure beforehand that the works they patronise contain nothing which is in any way likely to clash with their preconceived ideas. Can one conceive, for instance, Mr. Brown, of Ebenezer, reading, or allowing any of his family to read, the publications, say, of Messrs. Burns & Oates? Do Radicals find their delight in what their always truthful prophets call Tory "lies"? Or Churchmen in Dissenting "trash"? Think of the temperance tales which are read exclusively by teetotallers. Of the treatises on the evils of gambling which are skimmed by those who never touch a card. Of the theological novels which find their public among those who fondly and wildly imagine themselves to be students of Theology. We are continually being told that thousands of boys have been sent to sea by the mere perusal of "Robinson Crusoe." If the address of one such young gentleman be sent to us, we will enquire into his case by the minute methods adopted by the Charity Organisation Society. We venture, in advance, to hazard an opinion that he will be found to have had an inborn taste for the sea, and that he would just as certainly have become a sailor if "Robinson Crusoe" had never been written.

So do not be hasty in condemnation; it is at least doubtful if a good deal of nonsense is not current as to the good which books do, and the evil. "Good books for the young," that is a stock phrase. "The influence of vicious literature upon the masses," that is another. Then there is that black bogey, "the penny dreadful." When I was young—I am not ashamed to own it!—I read everything. I read every "penny dreadful" I could lay hands upon. I read "good books"—that is "goody" books—and did not particularly like them. I never met a boy or girl who did. One did not mind the story part, what story there was, but the "goody" part one skipped. What is more, even at that tender age, I was conscious that the "goody" book presented quite as "vicious" a picture of life as the "penny dreadful"; one couldn't believe those "goody" books were true. I read novels—all sorts of novels—history, plays, sermons, poems, essays, controversial works; I was very fond of controversial works. I was of an enquiring turn of mind; I had a free hand; I read what I chose; and I do strenuously declare that nothing I read ever had an ill effect on me. The only thing which happened was that I gradually began to grow more critical. I began to prefer good works—good in a literary sense—to bad. I know, at the present day, a young lady who, I have reason to suppose, is of the discreet age of twelve. She appears to have a pretty liberal taste in books. A little time ago I caught her reading "The Murder in the Hansom Cab." The day after she was absorbed in one of Mr. Henty's books for boys. Then she gave Miss Yonge a turn. Then it was the "Vicomte de Bragelonne." Now, after a dozen other authors have intervened, it is "A Girl in the Karpathians." I protest that, so far as I am able to judge, and I know her tolerably well, this young lady is as pleasant, and sweet, and wholesome a specimen of English girlhood as you would care to meet. I know other youngsters—plenty of them. I know youngsters who read anything. I know others whose parents and relatives, guardians and friends, take care they don't. The chief difference to be noted between them is that the one set, as a rule, like reading, and the other set don't. No; what moulds the character of the young is a wide subject, and a deep one; but I am pretty sure it isn't books.

I am quite sure that on children of an older growth books have no practical influence whatever. With some they are a hobby; with others they aren't; nothing more. Some like them; others do not; there's an end. When Quilpen tells me, with an air of ill-repressed importance, that he intends, soon, to write a book with a purpose—say to put down gambling, or to raise the rate of wages, or to reform the churches—he amuses me. His book on gambling will be taken up by a publisher who makes a spécialité of that kind of thing. If his book on the rate of wages, or on the reform of the churches, is well done, it will sell. Quilpen will have made an honest penny; he may even have gained kudos. I doubt if he will have done much more.

Think of it! Think of the great multitudes of books which have been written for a purpose, and by acknowledged masters! Think of Tom Hood's "Song of the Shirt!" We were told, by the sort of people who are always imparting to us similar information, that he had struck a blow at sweating. Had he? Was he himself not sweated to death? Have the sweaters gone? Has the evil not grown more instead of less? Charles Dickens—no man takes off his cap to Charles Dickens with more humble reverence than the present writer!—was always tilting at evils. The poor law system, the Circumlocution Office, the Chancery delays, the cesspool of politics. Is there any improvement in these things?[*] With one great reform his writings are supposed to have had something to do—the abolishment of imprisonment for debt. I was only reading the other day about the great part his writings had played in that reform. But imprisonment for debt isn't abolished. It's only a legal fiction. Go to the debtors' side of Holloway Gaol, and of the country prisons, and see. The impecunious debtor is housed under the same roof, he occupies the same cell, he is treated, to all intents and purposes, in the same way as the convicted thief. How Thackeray gibed at cant and humbug, the affectations of a meretricious society! Has the world grown easier for a poor man to live in since Thackeray died? Has there been any appearance of fruit from the seed he sowed? Consider the mighty mass of volumes which have been hurled at the cardinal sins; they ought to have been crushed beneath the mere weight of damnatory literature. If they have been, then, like truth, they have been crushed to rise again.

No, Quilpen, write your book with a purpose; fill it with the well-worn truisms; have a shot at something; let it be well done. The book will sell. Folks will buy it. But, though it sell by the hundred and the thousand, by the million, if you suppose it will move the buyers out of the way in which they are inclined to tread one tittle or one jot, you are not a wise man, my Quilpen. There is only one book which has influenced the lives of English-speaking people. That is the Bible. If you look abroad, or, for the matter of that, at home, you will see what slight influence even that has had. If the Bible has done so little, who is Quilpen that he should do anything at all?

Books are playthings. That is the conclusion of the whole matter. The companions of our idle hours—as pleasant companions as a man can have. For my part I am content that they should be no more. I never chance upon a book written for a purpose, but I want to hear the case for the other side. I never read of the evils of intemperance, but I am inclined to ask if there are no evils attendant on too much temperance. I wonder! There are some things I think I know, though they are not many. I like to come upon them in my favourite books, shrewdly written, in pleasant words. When I come upon them, haphazard, in a book, or a paper, by a 'prentice hand, metaphorically, I hug that apprentice to my breast. But when I am told, as some folks tell us, that literature is the lever which moves the world—write me down as one who doubts it.

A STRANGE ACQUAINTANCE.

A STORY IN FOUR CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER III.

I HAVE no intention of boring any one with a detailed account of the progress of the acquaintance between my new friend Warden and myself. It progressed in an irregular and desultory fashion. Sometimes we did not see each other for a month at a time; sometimes he would drop in upon me two or three nights in the course of a week. Still, taking it all together, we certainly saw a good deal of each other; and, as I think I have said before, the peculiar atmosphere of something mysterious, not to say suspicious, which hung round him by no means repelled me, or caused me to shun his society. He still continued to present the same remarkable admixture of callous indifference and acute nervousness, which had struck me so strangely at the first, though the attacks of the latter became rarer as time went on.

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[*] EDITORIAL NOTE.—The answer to this question is not altogether so certain as the writer seems to think. For my own part, I think there is "a good deal to be said on both sides" of his ingenious argument.—C.D.

One day, having lunched together by appointment—it was some time during the month of August, when the hydrophobia scare was at its height—as we were lounging lazily along one of the less fashionable thoroughfares about noon, our ears were suddenly saluted by a cry of "Mad dog!" The effect was electrical on the passers-by, and a general panic and stampede ensued. Every adjacent doorway or place of refuge was rushed for; even the neighbouring lamp-posts were scaled by the more agile. I made a bolt myself for a chemist's shop, which struck me, under the circumstances, as being the most desirable place of refuge possible. I naturally expected that Warden would have followed me; but nothing of the kind. For, as I peered anxiously out between the phalanx of bottles in the window, I beheld him calmly contemplating the scene, in which two policemen, wearing thick gloves, and otherwise protected, were closely pursuing a wretched animal of the mongrel species, which, with bloodshot eyes and lolling tongue, had as yet eluded capture by running from side to side. It seemed to me as I watched him that the dog made straight for that sole spectator; he even appeared to make a snap at him as he passed. But that moment's delay sufficed to bring the cur within reach of his pursuers; a noose was thrown over his head, and, thus secured, the life was soon battered out of his poor, worthless body, which was then hauled away in triumph.

"Of all the foolhardy tricks," I began, as I rejoined him.

He shrugged his shoulders with an air of the most complete indifference, and made a remark about something else, as he brushed off some of the foam which had fallen on him from the animal's jaws. But I would not let the matter drop so easily.

"Why, surely you must know," I exclaimed, with some little irritation, as I remembered my own ignominious retreat in the face of the enemy, "that death by hydrophobia is death in its most horrible form?"

"No," he cried, wheeling round suddenly, so as to face me, "there is a far worse fate than that!"

"And what may that be?" I asked, rather curious as to the answer.

A sort of spasm seemed to cross his face, but he made no answer; and once more the thought struck me: What a strange, unaccountable being the man was!

Nothing worth mentioning occurred for some months after this—in fact, not until one evening in the Christmas week when we had arranged to go to the theatre together. Warden called for me at my rooms, and from thence we adjourned to the Lyceum. Our seats had been secured for us, and were in the second or third row of stalls. By-the-bye, I must not forget to mention a remark which Warden made to me on our way to the theatre. I happened to observe that it was my birthday, and on that day I had attained the age of thirty-nine. Warden at first made no reply to this remark of mine, and I thought he had not heard it, when all at once he surprised me by saying:

"To-day is also an anniversary with me."

"Oh, really," I responded, with some interest, for it was very seldom indeed that he ever volunteered any information concerning himself, even of the most ordinary kind; and but for what I had myself picked up about him, I should have been totally ignorant of everything relating to his history or circumstances. He never spoke of his past, and all I knew of it was by report and my own surmises on the subject, which proved, however, to be very far indeed from the truth. I waited for him to continue, but he did not do so, and I wondered in my own mind as to the probability of the anniversary in question being that of his brother's death—that unfortunate fellow who was drowned.

We were about half-way through the play, and the curtain had just fallen after one of the acts, when he touched me on the arm. I had been completely absorbed in the play, and for some time past had almost forgotten my companion's presence.

"Do you see that man over there?" pointing to a box which appeared to me to be empty. He spoke in a strange, hoarse whisper, and I noticed that, though personally I had no reason to complain of the heat, the perspiration stood upon his forehead in large drops, and his hair hung lank and heavy, as though charged with moisture. "There," he repeated, "over there—in the second box from the stage, on the lowest tier. Ah! now he is behind the curtain!" And he gripped my arm so tightly that I almost cried out.

Now it happened that my attention had been previously directed towards this very box by reason of its being the only vacant one in the theatre, every other one having its full complement of wealth and fashion. Occasionally I had cast a glance towards it to see whether it had been taken possession of by any occupants. But it always remained blank, and thus detracted from the general effect of the otherwise brilliant and crowded audience.

"I think you must be mistaken," I said. "The box certainly appears to me to be quite empty, and has been so all the evening."

"Are you sure?" he asked, with an appearance of the most intense eagerness, but at the same time relinquishing my arm. "Look now—behind the curtain nearest to the stage! Is there not some one there, with his face partly concealed, or am I mistaken?"

I put up my opera-glasses, and took a steady survey of the box through them.

"There is no one there, I assure you. Perhaps you are deceived by some arrangement of the hangings. Look for yourself."

I offered him the glasses, but he shook his head and waved them aside with a ghastly effort at a smile.

"No, no; I will take your word for it. It was my mistake, and one I have often made"—I did not quite understand what he meant by the latter part of this remark—"and it is of no consequence."

I wondered to myself why he behaved as though it were.

"Did you think it was some one you knew?" I asked, feeling somewhat uncomfortably impressed by his look and manner. Really, I hoped there was no insanity, or anything of the sort, in the family.

"Yes—no," he replied, with the same set, unnatural smile, "I thought it reminded me of some one, but the face was partly hidden. Pray do not think any more about it. It is of no consequence!"

I thought of that very uncomfortable story of his about the face at the window. Really, this peculiar habit of seeing faces was a most undesirable one and very trying to the nerves. As it was, it quite spoilt the rest of the play for me; for my attention now was always wandering from the stage and the players, in the direction of that empty box on the lowest tier.

Next morning, as I was making a somewhat late breakfast, I was told that some one wished to see me. I was annoyed at being disturbed over my matutinal meal and leisurely perusal of the "Times," and sent out a rather peremptory message, stating that I was engaged, and enquiring into the business of the individual in question. The answer brought back to me was that the matter was a most urgent one, and that the person waiting begged to see me, if only for a minute. There was no help for it.

"Show him in," I said, and, to my surprise, I recognised in the individual thus ushered into my presence the elderly and discreet man-servant of my friend Warden!

"Why on earth," I began, "did you not say from whom you came, instead of letting me think it was a stranger who wanted to see me? I suppose you have brought a message or note from your master? How is he this morning?"

The man, who struck me as looking uncommonly queer and shaky, answered, to my great surprise, "Mortal bad!"

"What do you mean?" I cried. "Do you mean to say he is ill—and if so, what's the matter?"

"That's what we don't know, sir; and that's why I've took the liberty of finding you out—seeing as you were a friend of the master's, and the Doctor, he says——"

I saw the man (who was evidently very much upset for some reason or other) was getting involved; so I stopped him.

"Sit down," I said, "and tell me all about it from the beginning." He obeyed after a little demur, and thinking I might arrive at a better understanding of the affair by the means of questions, I asked him first of all, "You say, or at least I understand you to mean, that your master has been taken ill?" The man's lips moved, and again I caught the words, "Mortal bad!" in a husky undertone.

"Whatever it is, it must have come on very suddenly, for he seemed in his usual health when we parted, about half-past eleven last night." I might have added that, to my mind, there had appeared to be something more than usually strange about his manner; but thought it as well to keep my own counsel for the present.

"Yes," was the answer. "And he seemed the same to look at when he came home, about twelve o'clock, as I was sitting up for him as usual, and he says: 'You needn't wait, Matthews; I shan't want nothing more to-night.' Then, just as I were going out of the room, there comes a tap at the window. 'What's that?' he says, starting up. 'Nothing, sir,' I says; 'unless it's the wind.' 'You fool!' he says, speaking in a sort of rage, with his teeth shut tight, and his eyes a-starting out of his head, 'you know there's no wind to-night. It's some one outside the window—you know it is!' forgetting how high it was from the ground. And yet, sir, as true as I stand here, when the sound come again it was just for every bit as though it was some one drubbing on the glass with their fingers!"

The man left off, and looked at me hard. Then, seeing that I had apparently no comment to make, continued:

"Then he walks to the window, and, drawing back the curtains, looks out. The Lord only knows what he sees there! Whether it was the reflection of his own face in the glass that he took for something else—or what. But he gives a dreadful sort of a cry, and screeches out: 'There you are! So you've come for me, have you, with your awful white face? It's no use trying to keep you out any longer!' And with that he dashes his fist right through the glass, and falls down in convulsions."

He came to a full stop here, and wiped the perspiration from his forehead.

Good heavens! What did all this mean? What was the dark secret of this man's life? Was it madness — or something worse? Whose was the face at the window? Was it the same he saw at the theatre? I turned to the man, who was still wiping his face and breathing hard, and asked:

"What did you do?"

"Well, I managed to get help from the floor above, and got him to bed — but it took two of us to hold him—and then I sent for a doctor. But all the time he was raving, and crying out dreadful things that made your very blood run cold only to hear him."

"Ah, delirious, of course," I remarked, eyeing him.

"That's what the Doctor says. But it's been an awful night!" and the man shuddered as he spoke.

"And how is he now?" I asked, much disturbed and shocked, not to say mystified, by what I had heard.

"A bit quieter now. The Doctor he's give him something, and we've got him a nurse; but he said that if he'd any near friends or relations, they ought to be sent for. That's how I came to take the liberty of coming to you, sir, knowing as how master and you was intimate, and thinking as you'd like to know," and the man picked up his hat and prepared to go.

"Quite right, quite right," I said. "I'll come round as soon as I can, and I hope I shall find your master better."

The man shook his head.

"I never knew no good come of seeing faces promiscuous like," he remarked, solemnly. "And there was a winding-sheet in the candle only the night before last!"

CHAPTER IV.

In less than an hour I was standing at his bedside. The sick man seemed sunken in a sort of stupor; he lay with his eyes wide open, and staring towards one corner of the room, perfectly unconscious of the presence of any one. I spoke to him, but without producing any visible impression. The Doctor and nurse were both in attendance, and I enquired of the former what was the meaning of this strange seizure. He shook his head, after the manner of the profession, and spoke vaguely and learnedly of the brain and the nervous system, and of a possible shock to either or both, which left me no wiser than before. But I think, if the truth had been told, that he was as much puzzled by the peculiar character of the case as any one else.

There was nothing for me to do, and though I hardly liked to leave him alone, with nothing but hired assistance at hand, I took my leave, promising to look in again later in the day, as the Doctor thought that there might be a change towards evening; though he declined to commit himself so far as to declare what the nature of that change would be, and whether for good or ill.

I thought a great deal about it during the day, and about eight o'clock in the evening I was again by my friend's bedside. He lay in just the same condition, apparently quite insensible to all outward influences, and his eyes were still wide open and fixed in the same immoveable stare.

The Doctor had been again, so the nurse told me, and had promised to look in once more towards midnight, when the alteration, either for the better or worse, might be looked for. I determined to wait for him and hear his report, and with that intention passed from the bedroom into the adjoining sitting-room, the door between the two being open, and flinging myself into an easy-chair by the fire—such a comfortable, well-padded easy-chair!—began to ruminate.

What a strange, mysterious affair it was! How singular it seemed that no other relative or friend beside myself had put in an appearance! Surely I could not be the only friend the poor fellow had! What a very strange affair it was! Should I ever get to the bottom of it? Should I ever understand what it all meant? I wondered how long it would be before the Doctor came. What a very comfortable chair it was! What a comfortable room! There were every imaginable requisite and luxury—and the man to whom it belonged lay unconscious of all his elegant surroundings in the room beyond. Poor chap! I was very sorry for him—I hoped he'd get better—I hoped——

I suppose I must have dropped off to sleep at this point of my meditations. When I woke, with a start and a shiver, I was surprised to find, on looking at the clock on the mantelpiece, that it wanted only twenty minutes to eleven, and that the fire was out! Then I heard the sound of some one speaking in the adjoining bedroom. Probably it was that woke me. I had no doubt that it was the Doctor's voice I heard. I must hear what he had to say; so crossing the floor lightly, I pushed open the intervening door, which was ajar, and entered. Then I found that I had been mistaken. It was not the Doctor's voice I had heard, for there was no one present, beside the sick man, but the nurse, in her black gown and white cap and apron, at her post by the bedside. When she saw me enter the room, she laid her finger upon her lip, and, moving towards me, said, in a whisper:

"He's delirious again. I wish the Doctor would come! I've just sent the man to fetch him."

I looked towards the bed. Warden had raised himself into a sitting position. There was a hectic spot on each cheek-bone of his otherwise livid countenance, and his eyes, which were wide open, and still fixed upon that same corner of the room, were filled with a strange, wild glitter. His hair was damp and dishevelled; his fingers plucked restlessly at his coverings; altogether, there was something very terrible in his aspect.

I crept on tip-toe to one side of the bed, and half concealed myself behind the curtain. The nurse resumed her station opposite. I noticed a certain air of uneasiness about her, which was hardly to be accounted for even in such an apparently critical case. It could be nothing to her individually whether the man lived or died, so that she did her duty by him. Still the sick man raved and muttered, sometimes raising his voice to a shout, sometimes sinking it to a whisper. At first his words sounded mere incoherencies in my ears; but after a few moments they began to assume a certain sense and connection as I listened, at first half indifferently, afterwards shudderingly.

"There it is again—tap, tap, tapping at the coffin-lid! Strange that no one hears it except me! That's the sound I'm always hearing—now at the window, now at the door. I can't stay in the house, or some day I shall go mad and tell every one what I've done. What have I done? Nothing—nothing, I tell you. Who says it's murder? Every one knows that he was drowned. Drowned men never come to life again; if they do, what then? Screw them down—screw them down—good long screws—and a stout coffin-lid—a coffin-lid—a coffin-lid!"

The voice died away in a murmur. I looked across at the nurse. What she could have seen in my look I do not know that made her whisper back, as though in reply:

"That's what it's been all along—always about some one drowned, and something scratching at the coffin-lid. It's dreadful to hear him! I never had such a case before."

The woman looked pale, and seemed genuinely frightened. What difference was there between this man's ravings and those of other patients she must have nursed in her time? I wondered how I looked myself, and whether some of the horror I could not help but feel as I listened to these incoherent outpourings of a disordered brain showed itself in my countenance. And yet, as I tried to impress upon myself, they were but the ravings of delirium—if only they had not fitted in so horribly with certain strange and hitherto inexplicable circumstances in the past! Those reports I had heard concerning his elder brother's death — his own refusal to occupy the family dwelling—the servants' tales, and— But he began to mutter again.

"It's all mine now—all mine! Money —lands—everything! No more poverty and debts—no more—ha, ha! What— not dead after all? Not dead? But no one knows but me—no one saw it but me. Quick—quick—screw him down— screw him down all the same. Now, that's safe and sure—safe. And I am rich—rich. And dead men tell no tales, though living ones may. What's that?"

He stopped short, and holding up one finger, as if to command silence, appeared to listen intently, and somehow in that ghastly moment I thought of that time when Peter, the cat, came scratching at my door late one night when I had a visitor!

"What's that?" he repeated, "something scratching inside? Something tapping at the lid? There it is again—louder! Make haste—make haste! It's only the mice in the old woodwork. It's only the death-watch ticking! What's that?"

He broke off suddenly again. Good Heavens, what awful secret was it that those ravings laid bare? How much was delirium, and how much was—— Again I glanced across the unconscious figure on the bed to the woman in the black and white uniform of her order. She appeared to have entirely lost her professional calm.

"Oh, why doesn't the Doctor come?" she murmured to herself. "There's something wrong here, I know."

"What's that?" asked the sick man again. "There's something over there—in the corner there. Don't you see it?" And he began to gesticulate wildly. "There — there — in the dark corner! Don't you see a face?—a white face—a dead white face! Let me go! let me go!" And he struggled fiercely, and would have flung himself from the bed had not the nurse and I both seized him and exerted all our strength in holding him back. There were steps on the stairs below.

"Thank Heaven!" breathed the nurse, "here's the Doctor at last!"

"Don't you see the face in the corner?" shrieked the sick man, "the very same face I saw at the window last night! And I let him in—fool!—fool!—I let him in, and now he'll never leave me! Look at the water dripping from his clothes! Look at the pool of water on the floor! Why did I let him in? Why did he come to life again? Why wasn't the water deeper?"

His voice had been rising higher and higher, and just as the door opened to admit the physician, he gave one long, thrilling cry, never to be forgotten by those who heard it.

"Buried alive! Oh, horrible—horrible!" and with wild staring eyes and dropping jaw fell back upon his pillow.

"Too late," said the nurse, as the Doctor hurried to the bedside, "too late—he's gone!"

I will say no more; but leave each one to draw his own conclusions with regard to this strange affair, and solve, if he can, the mystery. I think there is little doubt as to what the result will be in any case.

SOME LATER DINNERS AND DINERS, SOCIAL AND LITERARY.

In the early years of William the Fourth's reign, one of the most celebrated "entertainers" in London Society was that beautiful, accomplished, kindly-hearted, and wayward woman, the Countess of Blessington. At her dinners and re-unions in Seamore Place, and afterwards at Gore House, Kensington, she assembled the celebrities of the day—Walter Savage Landor, James and Horace Smith (the authors of "Rejected Addresses"), Sir Henry Balfour (afterwards Lord Dalling), Lytton Bulwer (afterwards Lord Lytton), Samuel Lover, Trelawney (the friend of Shelley), Thomas Moore, "Ion" Talfourd, Prince Louis Napoleon (Napoleon the Third), and Benjamin Disraeli (Earl of Beaconsfield). A quotation or two from Crabb Robinson's diary will show the reader what manner of "lions" were held in easy thraldom by this fascinating entrepreneur:

"Reached Lady Blessington's after ten. With her were D'Orsay, Dr. Lardner, Trelawney, Edward Bulwer. A stranger, whose conversation interested and pleased me, I found to be young Disraeli. He talked with spirit of German literature."

"At half-past seven went to Lady Blessington's, where I dined. The amusing man of the party was a young Irishman—Lever—a miniature painter and an author. He sang and accompanied himself, and told some Irish tales with admirable effect. One of King O'Toole, and one of an Irish piper. In both, exquisite absurdities, uttered in a quiet tone, and yet dramatically, constituted the charm. Among the other guests were Chorley (the novelist and 'Athenæum' critic), and the American, Willis. Count D'Orsay (l'ami de la maison) did the honours."

Of Thomas Moore, on whose dining-out proclivities I have already enlarged, N. P. Willis gives a lively sketch:

"We went up to coffee, and Moore brightened up again over his chasse-café, and went glittering on with criticisms on Grisi, whom he placed above all but Pasta. . . . This introduced music very naturally, and with a great deal of difficulty he was taken to the piano. I have no time to describe his singing. It is well known, however, that its effect is equalled only by the beauty of his own words; and, for one, I could have taken him into my heart with my delight. He makes no attempt at music. It is a kind of admirable recitative, in which every shade of thought is syllabled and dwelt upon, and the sentiment of the song goes through your blood, warming you to the very eyelids, and starting your tears, if you have a soul or sense in you. . . . We all sat round the piano, and after two or three songs of Lady Blessington's choice, he rambled over the keys awhile, and sang, 'When first I met thee,' with a pathos that beggars description. When the last word had faltered out, he rose and took Lady Blessington's hand, said 'Good night,' and was gone before a word was uttered"—a truly theatrical exit!

The Countess's guests were mainly attracted, perhaps, by the brilliant talk which flowed and sparkled under the auspices of their beautiful hostess; but she was fully conscious of the social importance of a good dinner. She kept an experienced chef, and her menus were designed in excellent taste and with sufficient liberality. Though she did not pretend to vie with the sumptuous banquets given by rich nobles and financiers, no one under the Countess's roof was allowed to forget the great advance which the higher cuisine had made in England since the Peace.

The Earl of Dudley and Ward was one of the bons vivants of the period. Not that he leaned to such excess as a Roman patrician or a French noble of the days of Louis the Fifteenth. To an Emperor he would allow no better dinner than "a good soup, a small turbot, a neck of venison, and ducklings with green peas, or chicken with asparagus, or an apricot tart"—which, indeed, ought to satisfy any Kaiser, Czar, or Emperor who ever lived. The Earl kept a good cook, and entertained nobly. He was, however, one of the most absent-minded of men, and the hero, in consequence, of numerous capital stories, though I am not at all sure that the "absence" was not sometimes made a convenient cover for the caustic satire in which he was not slow to indulge.

At a dinner given by the Earl of Wilton, whose cuisine was one of the best in London, Lord Dudley, falling in with a dish which did not meet with his approval, began to apologise to the guests for their indifferent entertainment as if he had been their host. "The fact is," he said, "that my head cook was taken ill, and some kitchen girl, I suppose, has been employed to dress the dinner."

On one occasion he was entertaining the Duke and Duchess of Clarence—afterwards William the Fourth and Queen Adelaide. He and his royal guests were scarcely seated before he began to soliloquise aloud. "What bores these royalties are! Ought I to drink wine with her as I would with any other woman?" and continuing, "May I have the honour of a glass of wine with your Royal Highness?" Towards the end of the dinner he asked her again, and she replied, smiling: "With much pleasure, Lord Dudley; but I have had one glass with you already." "The brute! and so she has!" muttered her eccentric host.

He was a frequent visitor at the Brighton Pavilion, and noted with regret the decadence of its cuisine after the death of George the Fourth. One day, when sitting next King William, he growled, sotto voce: "What a change, to be sure! Cold pâtés and hot champagne!"

Meeting Sydney Smith in the street, he invited him to dinner. "Dine with me to-day—dine with me, and I will get Sydney Smith to meet you!" This invitation to meet himself, a prior engagement compelled Sydney Smith to decline. Another time, on meeting him, he put his arm through Sydney's, saying: "I don't mind walking with him a little way; I'll walk with him as far as the end of the street." As they proceeded, W. passed them. "That is the villain," exclaimed Lord Dudley, "who helped me yesterday to asparagus, and gave me no toast!"

As a contrast to these notable repasts, I am reminded of a certain frugal meal enjoyed, once upon a time, by a couple of English artists, Stothard and Constable. I have said "once upon a time," but it was really in the year 1824, and in the summer, though the month and day are not recorded. The two artists went for an outing, walking from London to Combe Wood, where the hills and dells are clothed in copse and underwood, and you make your way through tangles of gorse and bramble and bracken-fern. They started early in the day, provided with some sandwiches for dinner. Before they reached their destination, Constable broke in upon the stock of provisions, eliciting a reproof from Stothard for his ill-regulated appetite. They arrived at a crystal spring. The water was low, and difficult to get at; but Constable took from his pocket a tin cup, which, unnoticed by his companion, he had bought at Putney. The day was hot, and the water intensely cold. "Hold it in your mouth, sir, some time before you swallow it," said Stothard. "A little brandy or rum now would be invaluable." "And you shall have some, sir," said Constable, "if you will retract what you said; for I have brought a bottle of rum from town — a thing you never thought of." Though Constable carried their fare, Stothard was the caterer. As they lay on the grass, enjoying their meal under the trees that shaded them from a midsummer sun, Stothard, looking up to the splendid colour of the foliage over their heads, said: "That's all glazing, sir."

The defeat of the motion in favour of Parliamentary Reform, introduced into the House of Commons by Mr. Lambton, afterwards Earl of Durham, on April the seventeenth, 1821, was due, it is said, to a dinner. The debate was long and animated; and so many members desired to speak, that it was adjourned to the following night. The motion was then put, and carried by fifty-five to forty-three; but what caused general surprise was the absence of the mover, Mr. Lambton, and his principal supporters. It seems that they were all dining beneath the hospitable roof of Mr. Michael Angelo Taylor, and lingered too long over the attractions of the "soupe à la reine" and "Barnes's claret," with the result that the anti-reformers, observing the thinned ranks of their opponents, "snapped" a division; so that, when Lambton and Brougham hurried into the House, they were received with mocking laughter, and found that all was over. The occurrence suggested a squib in the "John Bull" newspaper, which has been attributed to Canning, entitled "Michael's Dinner"; it was adapted to the tune of "Soger Laddie."

At this time the editor of "John Bull" was also its founder and principal contributor, Theodore Hook, whose brilliant talents and reckless courage had raised him to an influential position in the world of politics. He was the chief literary swashbuckler and swordsman of the Tory party during the stormy days of Catholic Emancipation and Parliamentary Reform. Moreover, he was an indefatigable diner-out; and his flow of humour, his high spirits, and his remarkable powers as an improvisatore, made him a welcome guest. The very last entry in his diary indicates the character of the society into which he had made his way: "To dinner to Lord Harrington's to meet the Duke of Wellington. There, Duke and Duchess of Bedford, Lord and Lady Southampton, Lord Londonderry, Lord Canterbury, Lord Lyndhurst, Lord Redesdale, Lord Charleville, Lord Strangford, Lord Stuart de Rothesay, Count D'Orsay, Lord Chesterfield, and Fitzroy Stanhope."

In more than one of his clever but superficial works he has introduced some amusing satirical sketches of middle-class society and its heavy dinners; but they will not bear quotation. Here, however, is an anecdote which he records on the authority of the Marquis of Hertford—the Marquis of Monmouth of Lord Beaconsfield's "Coningsby": A Mr. H., having received a boar's head as a present from a German friend, chanced to mention the circumstance to the Marquis, adding: "And now I have got this wonderful delicacy, I declare I don't know how it is to be dressed." "Oh," said Lord Hertford, "send it to my cook, Champigny; he shall do it properly for you; it is really good eating." The banker accepted the offer, and in due time the head was returned, with much artistic garniture, and bearing evident marks of skilful and appropriate treatment. "Well," said the Marquis, the next time he met Mr. H., "how did the head turn out? My fellow says he devoted himself to it with enthusiasm; it was one of the finest specimens he had ever had the pleasure of manipulating." "I dare say he is right," answered Mr. H.; "but if so, there was a great deal of trouble and ingenuity thrown away; for it was so confoundedly tough, after all, that I for one could not get my teeth through it." "Tough, was it? You could not have dressed it sufficiently." "Why, of course, I never dressed it at all; your people dressed it, and dressed it well, too. Nothing could look better, but as to eating it—— However, some of them at table contrived to get it down, and said it had the true flavour." "My people!" repeated his lordship. "My man dressed it, certainly; but there's the cooking!" "What cooking?" enquired Mr. H. "It got no cooking but what he gave it; we eat it just as it was sent, of course." "What, raw?" shouted the Marquis, laughing. "Why, my good friend, Champigny only prepared the head for roasting; your man should have cooked it afterwards." "Then why the deuce didn't the fool say so?" enquired the discomfited banker.

Hook, according to his biographer—"Ingoldsby" Barham—"was much sought after by lords and ladies who had a dinner to give or a Christmas party to manage." In short, he was a professional diner-out; and, in return for his dinner and his wines, was expected to amuse the company. Lord Beaconsfield introduces him in "Coningsby," under the pseudonym of Lucian Gay, as one whom Nature had intended for a scholar and a wit, but Necessity had made a scribbler and a buffoon. His conversational powers he characterises as brilliant, and adds that he possessed all the resources of good fellowship. A constant guest at the tables of the nobility, Whig as well as Conservative, he was frequently an inmate of their country seats and admitted to their social penetralia. At Hatfield House, where he provided private and confidential dinners for the admirers of amateur theatricals; at the late Lord Canterbury's, the Marquis of Hertford's, Sir Robert Peel's, Sir Francis Burdett's, he dined well and oft.

To his remarkable facility as an improvisatore, Charles Greville bears this testimony. In his diary, under the date of August the fifteenth, 1834, he records a dinner at Farquhar's, at which, among others, he met Mrs. Norton, her sister, Mrs. Blackwood, and Theodore Hook. After dinner he displayed his powers of improvisation, and was very brilliant. Each lady gave him a subject, such as "The Goodwood Cup," "The Tithe Bill;" one "could not think of anything," but he dashed off and sang stanzas innumerable and very droll, with ingenious rhymes and excellent hits; "his eye begetting occasion for his excellent wit," for at every word of interruption or admiration, every look or motion, he indulged in a digression, always returning to one of the themes imposed upon him. "It is a tour de force," adds Greville, "in which I believe he stands alone, and it is certainly wonderfully well worth hearing and uncommonly amusing."

The diary of Charles Greville, Clerk of the Council to George the Fourth and William the Fourth, from which I make the foregoing extracts, may be taken as our guide to not a few dinners of more than average importance, though he describes them with provoking brevity, and inconsiderately omits the menus, oblivious of their historical and ethical significance. Thus he records a Royal dinner: Host, George the Fourth; place, the Pavilion, Brighton; but brands it as cold, and the evening afterwards as dull beyond all dulness. "They say," he adds, "the King is anxious that form and ceremony should be banished, and, if so, it only proves how impossible it is that form and ceremony should not always inhabit a palace. The rooms are not furnished for society, and, in fact, society cannot flourish without ease; and who can feel at ease who is under the eternal constraint which etiquette and respect impose? The King was in good looks and good spirits, and, after dinner, cut his jokes with all the coarse merriment which is his characteristic."

This may amuse the reader:—April, 1829. "'Dined at the Covent Garden Theatrical Fund dinner. The Duke of Clarence could not come, so they put Lord Blessington in the chair, who made an ass of himself. Among other toasts he was to give 'The memory of the Duke of York,' who was the founder of the institution. He prefaced this with a speech, but gave the health, etc.; on which Fawcett, the comedian, who sat opposite, called out in an agony, 'the memory, my lord!' He corrected himself; but in a minute after said again 'the health.' 'The memory,' my lord!' again roared Fawcett. It was supremely ridiculous."

On one occasion Hook met at dinner Moore, Fitzgerald, and Luttrell, and one can well believe that the talk of these men must have lent a piquant flavour to the dishes and enhanced the aroma of the wines.

Macaulay was an inveterate diner-out; not for the sake of "the viands" (as Lord Lytton calls them), but for the enjoyment he found in talking and being talked to; some people sourly say that his chief enjoyment lay in the former direction. At Holland House he was one of the most frequent of guests. He thoroughly appreciated the fine qualities of its noble owner, who was somewhat obscured to the general vision by the effulgence of his gifted but imperious wife. The pleasures of the cultured and refined society which they assembled under their historic roof never palled upon him; and in the brilliant conversation which Lady Holland so skilfully initiated and so gracefully kept going, he was, as we all know, a principal factor.

He was himself a pattern host. On his own account, it is true, he was no epicure; and his nephew tells us that at any time he would have been amply satisfied by a dinner such as is served at a decent seaside lodging-house. This was a sad moral defect; but happily his conscientious views of the obligations of hospitality prevented his guests from suffering by it. He generally selected, by a half-conscious preference, dishes of established character and traditional fame. His dissenting friends he treated to a fillet of veal, "which he maintained to be the recognised Sunday dinner in good old Nonconformist families." On Michaelmas Day he would have been wretched had no goose smoked on the board. At Christmas, he never forgot the old historic turkey. "If he was entertaining a couple of schoolboys who could construe the fourth satire of Juvenal, he would reward them for their proficiency with a dish of mullet that might have passed muster on the table of an augur or an Emperor's freedman. . . . With regard to the contents of his cellar, Macaulay prided himself on being able to say with Mr. John Thorpe,* 'Mine is famous good stuff, to be sure,' and if he were taken to task for his extravagance, he would reply, in the words used by another of his favourite characters in fiction,† that there was a great deal of good eating and drinking in seven hundred a year, if people knew how to manage it."

Sometimes he would flavour a domestic repast with a series of quotations from the "Almanach des Gourmands;" that curious mirror of the vulgar luxury and leisure which prevailed in Paris after the austere sullenness of the Republic, and immediately prior to the parvenu magnificence of the Empire. His wonderful memory retained the choice bits of unconscious humour and extravagance with which Grimaud de la Reynière has studded his eight volumes; and he loved to describe the portentous ceremonies of a Parisian banquet, from those complicated inconveniences of arrangement, "que les personnes bien avisées ont l'attention d'abréger en mettant d'avance le nom de chaque convive sur chaque couvert, dans l'ordre de leur appétit connu ou présumé," to the "visite de digestion" on the morrow, the length of which was supposed to be proportioned to the excellence of the entertainments. He would enumerate every item of the dinner from the "potage brûlant, tel qu'il doit être," on to the "biscuit d'ivrogne," not forgetting the imperative declaration that "tout bon mangeur a fini son dîner après le rôti." He reminded his hearers that, according to De la Reynière, oysters, after the sixth dozen, ceased to whet the appetite; and repeated, with unfailing relish, the closing portion of the description of a grand entertainment given under the Consulate: "Ceux qui veulent faire grandement les choses, finissent par parfumer la bouche de leurs convives (ou plutôt de leurs amis, car c'est ainsi que s'appellent les convives d'un déjeûner), avec deux ou trois tasses de glaces; on se la rince ensuite avec un grand verre de marasquin; et puis chacun se retire en hâte chez soi—pour aller manger la soupe." But his favourite quotation was the admirable passage which prescribes the period—varying from four to six weeks according to the excellence of the dinner—wherein the guests may speak no evil of their host (ah, how much happier would be Society if this rule were generally proclaimed and acted upon!) who has, moreover, the privilege of holding them to longer silence by issuing fresh invitations before the "truce of God" (as one may justly term it) has expired: "On conviendra que, de toutes les manières d'empêcher de mal parler de soi, celle-ci n'est pas le moins aimable."

It was characteristic of Macaulay that he loved to assemble round him the contemporaries of his University period. Thus: "To the 'Clarendon' at seven, where I had ordered dinner for a party of ex-Fellows of the dear old College. . . . We had an excellent dinner. The Dean of Durham's favourite dish, 'Filet de bœuf sauté au vin de Madère aux Truffes,' was there. We all tried it, applauded it, and drank his health in champagne recommended by him." And again: "Lord Mayor's Day; and I had a dinner as well as the Lord Mayor." The guests consisted exclusively of old Fellows and scholars of Trinity, and he had got some College ale sent up from Cambridge. "I did my best as host. The dinner was well cooked, the audit ale perfect. We had so much to say about auld lang syne that great powers of conversation were not wanted. I have been at parties of men celebrated for wit and eloquence which were much less lively. Everybody seemed to be pleased."

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* In Miss Austin's "Northanger Abbey."

† In Miss Ferrier's "Marriage."

I shall take note of a few of the dinners at which Macaulay assisted, for the sake of the reminiscences they call up of men and events. He had already won his spurs in the lists of literature when, in 1826, he dined at Sydney Smith's remote Yorkshire parsonage. At Edinburgh he dines with Jeffrey, at his house in Moray Place, and speaks of the great critic's conversation as "very much like his countenance and his voice—of immense variety; sometimes plain and unpretending even to flatness, sometimes whimsically brilliant and rhetorical almost beyond the license of private discourse. He has many interesting anecdotes, and tells them very well." He dines at Bowood, Lord Lansdowne's seat, and has "oceans of beer and mountains of potatoes" for dinner. In January, 1834, he dines with his sisters, and stays late. "He talked almost uninterruptedly for six hours. In the evening he made a great many impromptu charades in verse." In May, 1831, he eats his first dinner at Holland House. Among the guests were Lord John Russell—Allen, warden of Dulwich College, a great friend of the Hollands—Lords Holland, Alvanley, Mahon—afterwards Earl Stanhope—and others.

He dines at Marshall's, where the great attraction was the presence of the two wits, Rogers and Sydney Smith. "To see them together was a novelty, and a novelty not the less curious because their mutual hostility is well known, and the hard hits which they have given to each other are in everybody's mouth. They were very civil, however. But I was struck by the truth of what Matthew Bramble says in Smollett's 'Humphrey Clinker': that one wit in a company, like a knuckle of ham in soup, gives a flavour, but two are too many." He dines with Earl Grey in Downing Street. "At eight we went to dinner. Lord Howick took his father's place, and we feasted very luxuriously. At nine Lord Grey came from the house with Lord Durham, Lord Holland, and the Duke of Richmond. They dined on the remains of our dinner with great expedition, as they had to go to a Cabinet Council at ten." He dines at Lyttleton's, in Grosvenor Place, and meets Lords Brougham and Plunket, and many more lords and commoners. "Lyttleton, till last year, lived in Portman Square. When he changed his residence his servants gave him warning. They could not, they said, consent to go into such an unheard-of part of the world as Grosvenor Place. He gave me a dinner of dinners." He dines with Lord Althorp, and with Sir James Graham, and each Minister regales him with turtle, turbot, venison, and game.

He attends a Holland House dinner, at which Earl Grey, Lords Brougham and Palmerston, Luttrell, and himself are the only guests. Allen sat at the end of the table, carving, and simultaneously sparring with Lady Holland, who, because the dinner was not so good as usual—the French "chef" being ill—kept up a continual lamentation during the whole repast. "The soup was too salt; the cutlets were not exactly 'comme il faut'; and the pudding was hardly enough boiled." Later, he dines at Lord Essex's in Belgrave Square. Never was there such a contrast! Macaulay had been led to understand that his lordship's cuisine was superintended by the first French artists; and that he would find there all the luxuries of the "Almanach des Gourmands." But no, his lordship was a true Englishman; and there was not a dish on his table which Addison's Sir Roger de Coverley, or Miss Burney's Sir Hugh Tyrold—in her "Camilla"—might not have set before his guests. "A huge haunch of venison on the side-board; a magnificent piece of beef at the bottom of the table; and before my Lord himself smoked, not a 'dindon aux truffes,' but a fat wastel goose, stuffed with sage and onions. I was disappointed," says Macaulay, "but very agreeably, for my tastes are, I fear, incurably vulgar."

When he dines for the first time with that famous society of men of light and leading, "The Club," at the Thatched House, Lord

Holland is in the chair; and among the members present are the Bishop of London, Lord Mahon, Phillips the painter, Dean Milman, Elphinstone, Sir Charles Grey, and Hudson Gurney. Lastly, he goes to Buckingham Palace. "The Queen was most gracious to me. She talked much about my book—the 'History of England'—and owned that she had nothing to say for her poor ancestor, James the Second. 'Not your Majesty's ancestor,' said I, 'your Majesty's predecessor.' I hope this was not an uncourtly correction. I meant it as a compliment, and she seemed to take it so."

Boyle Farm, at Thames Ditton, in the days of the ex-Chancellor, Lord St. Leonards, was the scene of many a delightful dinner, at which the famous lawyer assembled the most distinguished of his contemporaries. The house maintained, in fact, a tradition of hospitality; for in the Walpole period, Mrs. Walsingham and her daughter, Miss Boyle—an amateur artist of some distinction—entertained their friends at Boyle Farm with frequent liberality. Miss Boyle married, first, Lord de Ros, and, second, Lord Henry Fitzgerald, and still resided at Boyle Farm, where, in 1827, her son, Lord Henry de Ros, and four other young men of fashion, Lords Alvanley, Castlereagh, Chesterfield, and Robert Grosvenor—each subscribing five hundred pounds—gave a most gorgeous fête, which was celebrated by Moore in his poem, "A Summer Fête," dedicated to the Hon. Mrs. Norton, one of the beautiful women to whom it owed its crowning attraction. "Pavilions on the banks of the river; a large dinner tent on the lawn, capable of holding four hundred and fifty; and a select table for fifty, laid in the conservatory. Gondolas floated on the water, containing the best singers of the Italian Opera; and in a boat Vestris and Fanny Ayton, the one singing Italian, the other English. . . . This was long remembered," says Croker, "as the Dandies' Fête."

Very attractive were the dinners which Grote, the historian, and his accomplished wife, gave to their many distinguished friends at East Burnham Park, from 1838 to 1852, and afterwards at Popple's Park, in the house which was humorously named "History Hut," because built with the profits arising from Grote's monumental work, the "History of Greece." Here, Hallam, Sir George Cornewall Lewis, Baron Bunsen, De Tocqueville, Macaulay, and other men of light and leading, partook of Mrs. Grote's refined hospitality.

I have brought my record down as near to the present day as seems desirable, or, at any rate, is convenient. In these later Victorian years the art of dining has been and is cultivated on a very extensive scale; so that the menus of the middle class now display a taste, a variety, a refinement, and an attention to hygienic conditions, such as a century ago would hardly have been found in "patrician" menus. That the dinner has not suffered in historical importance is tolerably evident. It is still the great consecrating rite, the sacred ceremony, which confirms the appointment of an Indian viceroy or an Australian governor-general; which expresses the national gratitude to a great traveller or a popular actor; which testifies to the reputation of a sound divine, or a fortunate speculator; which sustains the appeal for aid of a deserving charity. If we want to do honour to a man, or show our sympathy with a cause, we straightway ask ourselves and others to dinner. In truth, politics, literature, art, society, all gravitate towards the dinner-table. And thus I am minded of the height and breadth of my subject, and of the small portion of it which I have been able to explore in this and preceding articles. Alas, I have been unable to treat at any length of legal dinners, ecclesiastical dinners, theatrical dinners, official dinners, Scotch and Irish dinners! There would be something to be said, too, about Oriental dinners, American dinners, colonial dinners, and dinners in the savage wild—which are rather exciting, when one runs the risk of being one's self the principal dish! The materials are abundant, and the field is wide, since everybody dines—that is, everybody who can afford it—or at least partakes of a meal which, with more or less justification, everybody calls dinner. Of course there is the true dinner as well as the false dinner, as these articles have incidentally shown. May my readers always enjoy the good, the true, and the beautiful!

CATHERINE MAIDMENT'S BURDEN.

A STORY IN TWELVE CHAPTERS.

By MARGARET MOULE.

CHAPTER V.

The day after Catherine Maidment's interview with him, Mr. Stewart-Carr sat alone in his library. It was a very hot morning, so hot that it had not seemed possible to suggest outdoor amusements for his guests. But they were all disposed of, nevertheless; Mr. Dare and Captain Carnforth were playing billiards, and the four ladies were, to the best of their host's knowledge entertaining one another with conversation, gossip, and pretty needlework in the drawing-room.

Mr. Stewart-Carr had left them in order to clear off an accumulation of letters. The work had taken him about an hour, and the result was visible in the little pile of addressed and closed envelopes which lay at his left hand on the table. But it was difficult to say whether he had really finished his letters; he did not attempt to close his writing-case, but then neither did he take up his pen to begin another letter. He had leant both elbows on the table, and was resting his chin upon his hands, and his eyes were apparently fixed on the opposite wall. His thoughts had left his letters and his surroundings altogether; they were with one of his guests, and that guest was Grace Arbuthnot.

In one of the letters he had just answered the writer had asked if his settling down at Moreford were the precursor of "another change" in his arrangements; "congratulations, no doubt, are premature, but surmises are inevitable," his friend wrote. The careless words had quickened in Mr. Stewart-Carr's mind a certain train of thought. It was by no means a dormant train of thought, it was one which had been very often with him for the last few months; indeed, it was scarcely ever absent from him. It was the thought of married life with Grace Arbuthnot as his wife.

It seemed to him that it was well for a man who had reached his age to marry and settle down. He held serious views as to his responsibility towards his tenants, and excellently though they might be cared for in his absence, he was beginning to think that the erratic, easy life he had heretofore led was not compatible with his standard of duty to them. This idea had been floating in his mind for some time, together with another hazy idea—that a man could not well settle down without a wife; and when he first met Grace Arbuthnot in the spring in Paris, both these notions had suddenly crystallised and become together one definite resolve. Miss Arbuthnot had taken his fancy, and had seemed to him exactly the right sort of woman to become the mistress of a country house. Her interest in outdoor pursuits fitted her for a country life, her "horsey" ways and little eccentricities of manner would wear away, he told himself, very quickly; and he was quite keen-sighted enough to see and greatly like the sweet, kindly nature beneath. He had asked her and her mother to Moreford, in order that he might learn to know her better, and he had definitely proposed to himself in doing so that, if all went well, he would before their departure ask her to marry him. At the time he had felt fairly hopeful that the answer would be yes. She had liked him, evidently, and they had been excellent friends, and during the four days she had spent in his house, they had still continued excellent friends.

This morning he was thinking to himself that it was time to put an end to the simply friendly relations between them. It would be well, he thought, to let her see clearly what he intended his attentions to mean; but he could not quite make up his mind as to what line to take, and this was the question that was occupying him as he sat idle at his writing-table. Grace Arbuthnot was very erratic, he thought, perplexedly, and all women were incomprehensible, he thought further with a sigh; and then he rose and lit a cigarette to clear his perceptions. There was yet half an hour to lunch-time, and he sat down in an arm-chair and smoked reflectively; but the change of occupation did not help him to formulate his course of action. His thoughts went back vaguely to Grace herself—her charm, her fitness for the position, and her pretty face.

At this very moment, while he was thinking of her, Grace Arbuthnot had risen from her chair in the drawing-room, and saying lightly that she had a letter that must be written for an early post, had left the drawing-room and gone upstairs to her own room. But once there by herself she did not write, or apparently think of doing so. With her bright eyes dancing with mischief, she took off her morning frock, and in an incredibly short time had dressed herself in her habit. Her cheeks were flushed with excitement as she glanced at herself in the glass to see if her little rough hat and her veil were straight; then she ran downstairs, quickly and cautiously, out of a side door, and into the shrubberies that led to the stables.

"Now for a triumph!" she said to

herself, excitedly. "I'll canter her round the park, and then ride up to the dining-room window when they're all at lunch. It'll be lovely!"

She reached the stables, and found, as she had hoped, that it was the dinner hour, and only one stable-boy was left in charge. Him she bribed with half-a-sovereign to saddle Queen Bess and bring her out. Then Grace Arbuthnot vaulted lightly into the saddle, and rode rapidly out of the stable yard before the eyes of the bewildered boy.

"Lor, I hope she won't hurt!" he said to himself. "The mare's nasty enough to-day. But, there, she said she could manage her!"

Miss Arbuthnot meanwhile cantered down the sloping green turf that led into the wide avenue of the park, Queen Bess going very gently and easily.

"She's as quiet as a lamb!" said Grace to herself, with a smile of superiority, "I knew she would be with me!" And her spirits rose higher and higher as one grassy slope after another was left quickly behind. In a few moments the avenue came in sight, and with its appearance Queen Bess's energy seemed suddenly to flag. She settled down into a slow, steady, determined trot. Possibly she thought it the pace best suited to her rider. She was quite intelligent enough to have found out that she carried a strange, light burden on her back, and that the touch on her bridle was strange, too.

Grace Arbuthnot, however, did not approve of this arrangement on the part of Queen Bess; she had no mind to be taken through her exciting enterprise in this comparatively tame fashion. There was no glory whatever in managing Queen Bess if she went no faster than her present trot.

So Grace Arbuthnot gathered up the reins, and leaned over and patted her neck, making various exciting and encouraging sounds the while. Then she sat up again, and gave the reins a little, quick touch. But Queen Bess paid not the least attention to either injunction; she gave her pretty head a little toss, and then trotted on as stoically as before. Grace Arbuthnot was annoyed at her failure, but by no means daunted; she waited for a few moments, then she tried the same plan again, making the encouragement and the touch on the reins both rather more commanding than before. But neither the action nor its intent influenced Queen Bess; she only tossed her head again, and this time she laid her ears back slightly, though Grace, in her vexation, did not notice this.

They had arrived at the side path which led to the White House by this time, and Grace Arbuthnot, thinking that perhaps the gravel irritated her, and led to her stubborn refusals, turned her off on to the grass beside the footpath. But Queen Bess did not alter her pace one hair's-breadth for this, and her rider, now intent on making her submit, determined, impulsively, to try stronger measures. In her quick run through the hall at the Castle she had caught up her riding-whip, and had been holding it till now in her left hand with the reins. Now she transferred it quickly to her right, and gave Queen Bess a sharp, stinging little touch on her satin side. She little imagined what the result was to be. The instant she felt it, Queen Bess kicked —kicked so viciously and artfully, that Grace Arbuthnot was thrown, suddenly and heavily. Queen Bess stood calmly looking at her as she laid, white and motionless, on the turf, and then, with a wicked look of something like satisfaction in her intelligent eyes, she turned, and trotted slowly and placidly back in the direction of her stable.

But Grace Arbuthnot did not lie there alone on the turf for long. Frank Maidment had been standing in the doorway of the White House, watching for Catherine, who had gone out in the village, and wondering, idly, when she would come back to dinner. He saw Queen Bess and her rider in the distance as they turned out of the large avenue, and watched their approach with some interest. He knew the horse, and knew Miss Arbuthnot to be one of the guests at the Castle. As he discovered that no groom or escort was with her, his interest grew into wonder. What could she be doing alone, he thought, and on that spirited horse? But his thought and his wonder were cut short together when he saw Queen Bess throw her rider. He rushed, hatless, out of the doorway, through the garden, and along the turf, to where Miss Arbuthnot lay. He looked around him for one moment, as uncertain whether to go for help or not; then he suddenly leant down, and picked up the unconscious girl in his arms. He was strong and powerful, and the light weight of Grace Arbuthnot was nothing to him. He carried her easily back to the White House, and laid her down on the broad, old-fashioned sofa in the dining-room. But then he did not know what to do.

Margaret had left the house on an errand ten minutes before, and there were still no signs of Catherine's approach. He gazed in helpless perplexity at the white face and figure that lay so motionless before him. When he first reached her, before he raised her from the ground, he had felt her heart and her pulse, and they had both beaten faintly. He recalled this now, and told himself that she had only fainted. So, acting on his common sense, he loosened the top fastenings of Miss Arbuthnot's habit, and getting some cold water, gently put aside her hair, and bathed her white forehead, and the lips which were very nearly as white. But still she did not move; not a finger stirred, and he was at his wits' end. He was just thinking that it would be the lesser of two evils if he left her alone and went out for help, when the door of the room opened with a quick turn, and Catherine came in.

"Frank," she began, "I'm so——" But she stopped suddenly at the sight before her. "Frank!" she said, "who—what is——"

"For goodness' sake, Catherine," her brother interrupted, "don't mind who or what yet. Come and get her round; I can't. Margaret's out, and I thought you'd never come in."

Before he had done speaking, Catherine had thrown down her hat and gloves and run out of the room. In a moment she was back again, with salts, sal volatile, and half-a-dozen other remedies.

"Take the cushion away from her head," she said to her brother. Very gently and deftly he did as she told him, and laid her pretty, fair head down as carefully as any woman could have done.

"Go and see if Margaret is come back, and send her here. She was thrown, I suppose," Catherine said, kneeling quickly down beside the sofa, with the salts in her hand. She had instantly imagined Miss Arbuthnot to be one of Mr. Stewart-Carr's guests, and the riding-habit the girl wore had led Catherine equally to the other conclusion.

"Yes, I saw it—just outside the avenue. Shall I go and tell them up at the Castle? The horse may have got in."

"Wait a moment or two, and see if we get her round first. She may be worse than we think, of course, but I'm nearly sure she has only fainted; and if she has come to, it would not alarm them so much. Send Margaret, quick."

A quarter of an hour later, the two women, who were anxiously watching Grace Arbuthnot's face, saw the brown eyes open very slowly, a faint pink came across her cheeks and on the colourless lips.

"Where am I?" she said, very low. "I—I am not at home."

Catherine crossed the room hastily to the window, outside which her brother was watching, and sent him up to the Castle.

"Oh, I remember," the girlish voice went on, faintly. "I—I wanted to ride Queen Bess, and—I don't know what happened."

Catherine stroked the fair hair soothingly.

"Don't think about it yet," she said, gently.

"But I must," she continued, anxiously. "What will Mr. Stewart-Carr say? He told me she wasn't safe; he said he wouldn't lend her, and—I took her."

"Don't mind," Catherine said. "You are getting better, and you needn't think of it at all now."

"I—who are you?" Grace Arbuthnot said, with a touch of returning eagerness. "You are very good to me. I have seen you—where?"

"I am Catherine Maidment, and I am taking care of you till they send for you from the Castle."

"Oh, I know—I remember. I saw you on—yesterday. You were going away, and I was coming downstairs."

Catherine did not answer. Her face flushed deeply. She stooped lower over the girl, and smoothed her hair again.

"My brother is gone to tell them at the Castle; they will be here directly," she said, after a little pause.

Catherine had hardly ended her sentence when one of the Castle carriages drove up, and Mr. Stewart-Carr, springing from it, hastily helped Mrs. Arbuthnot to alight. She came into the dining-room of the White House more breathless than she had ever been in her life.

"My dearest Grace," she began, excitedly, after a greeting to Catherine—"my dear girl, how could you be so rash?" And during the little bustle of getting her daughter away, Mrs. Arbuthnot grew more excited and more breathless with every moment, until, at length, she was compelled to stand aside, and let Catherine and Mr. Stewart-Carr give all the necessary help and directions.

At the carriage door Miss Arbuthnot turned to Catherine.

"You've been so very kind," she said, "and I never thanked you."

Catherine only smiled, and put her arm round the girl's waist to support her as she got in.

"Good-bye," she said. "I hope you will soon be better."

Then Mr. Stewart-Carr raised his hat to Catherine, and the carriage drove away.

Frank Maidment came in as it did so.

"I walked slowly," he said, briefly, to his sister. "Stewart-Carr wanted to drive me, but I thought the fewer people the better, so I waited and walked."

"How did it happen?" said Catherine, moving about the room, and setting things to rights as she spoke.

"Oh, I don't know. The mare kicked, and threw her all in a moment. Nasty, vicious animal! I can't think how she came to be out alone on her. I hope she isn't hurt, really."

"Oh, no, I think not," Catherine said. "She will be all right after a rest. It is only a bad shaking she has had. She is a very nice girl, I thought, and pretty, too," she continued, after a little pause, during which she straightened, with a few deft touches, the disarrangement made by scent, and salts, and the various other odds and ends that had been set down on the neat dinner-table.

"Yes," Frank Maidment replied, rather curtly. "Can't you ring for dinner, Catherine?" he added, hastily. "It must be no end late."

Catherine rang, and, five minutes later, the brother and sister sat down to dinner together.

The few words Frank Maidment had spoken during the last hour about Miss Arbuthnot's accident were, save for monosyllabic replies that were absolutely necessary, the first that his sister had heard from him for nearly two days.

On the night when Catherine found him, on her return from the village, in that heavy, drunken sleep in the dining-room, it took her very long to rouse him at all, and still longer before she could touch any of his perceptions, or make the least impression on him.

Her face was white and drawn, and she herself was cold and trembling with a sort of hopeless, sickening despair, before she could bring him to let her help him upstairs to bed. She accomplished it, however, at last, and left him in his own room undressing, but talking incoherently to himself as he did so. Then she came down into the empty, dark dining-room, and, throwing herself into a chair, broke into long, tearless sobs, which only ended when the silence above made her check herself, and creep upstairs to see if her brother were in bed. Finding that he was, and again fallen heavily asleep, she went down again, and sat alone, thinking, in the dining-room, till the summer dawn began to come through the blinds.

The next morning, when she went to her brother's room to tell him that she must keep his appointment with Mr. Stewart-Carr in his stead, he had met her with the very briefest words of shame-faced assent. He was quite sober enough, then, to know that any attempt to keep it himself was out of the question. All about him were the traces of his last night's work. His eyes were dull and heavy, his hands were shaking, and his head ached so incessantly that an instant's connected thought was impossible. From his window he had watched Catherine set out across the park, carrying with her the books Mr. Stewart-Carr wished to see, and then he had finished dressing, and gone slowly and uncertainly downstairs.

When Catherine returned, he did not once refer to her interview or any of its details; but he took the books from her and carried them to his own room, a small room opening from the dining-room, in which he was supposed to transact business, receive the tenants when necessary, and so forth; and here Catherine found him, half an hour later, sitting looking at them, with heavy, miserable eyes.

Since then his attitude towards Catherine had been one of intensely deprecating penitence. He was silently, but punctiliously attentive to her, very thoughtful for her, and shyly and tentatively affectionate in all his actions. He had done instantly anything and everything she asked him, down to the most insignificant trifle.

Catherine, watching him carefully and minutely, felt, she hardly knew why, greatly disquieted. Accustomed as she was to his fits of penitence, there was something in this one unusual in his manner, and it frightened her. She felt as if, in the last outbreak, her brother had passed a sort of turning-point, or crisis, at which he might have stopped and saved himself if he only would. But he had not, he had let himself go past it, unheeding; and it seemed to poor Catherine's aching heart as if he had taken now a very perceptible step along a down-hill road, which even with the help of her love and patience he could never retrace. She could not get near him, could not even try to touch him, or calm him, or help him in any way while he remained in this self-absorbed, miserable silence. And she welcomed even his interest in Miss Arbuthnot's accident as something which might bring him out of himself. But, as dinner went on, he drifted back into the same state, and after a few brief answers to Catherine's further enquiries into details of the accident, relapsed into perfect silence.

Half an hour after dinner, as Catherine was standing at her front door, wondering if she should brave the heat, and go out in it again or not, her brother came to her and said, laconically, that he was going out fishing, and should not be back again until tea-time. Catherine put her own plans and thoughts aside instantly, and, turning into the house, helped him find his fishing-tackle, and inspect its condition, and finally saw him off at the garden gate. Then she suddenly felt rather tired; she was irritated with herself for the feeling, and told herself it was unreasonable; forgetting wholly that her morning's walk in the village, the excitement of Miss Arbuthnot's accident, and, what she never analysed, the weary strain of her daily life, were more than enough to account for it. But she decided that she would not go out again; and bringing down her work-basket from upstairs, resolved to establish herself in the garden for the afternoon.

She did not go into the small front garden, where Mr. Stewart-Carr had seen her hat and work-basket under the hawthorn-tree. She went to the other end of the passage, and opened a glass door leading out into a rather larger square of garden at the back. There were few flowers here, and it was very simply laid out; there was one large square of grass in the middle, and round it ran a small narrow flower border, and a gravel path. In the middle of the lawn was an enormous mulberry-tree, which gave an almost impenetrable shade; beneath its trunk was a comfortable rustic seat. Here Catherine placed herself, and set her work beside her with a little sigh of content and rest.

It was very cool under the mulberry-tree, for not a glimmer of sunlight came through the close green leaves. It was quiet, too, in the garden. The only sounds to be heard were an occasional twitter from a stray chaffinch, energetic in spite of the heat, and the cool, trickling sound of a little brook. It ran through the park just outside, and its course had been slightly diverted, so as to take in one corner of the little garden, and water a fernery Catherine had made there.

Catherine's thoughts strayed as she sewed in the cool and peace of the garden. They returned to Miss Arbuthnot. Catherine wondered first if she were better, and then she thought, rather curiously, of the fair young face, with no marks of care or pain upon it. She wondered whether Grace Arbuthnot had ever in her life any sort of trouble or pain, and then she went on to speculate as to what a life, that was perfectly easy, and cloudlessly happy, would be. She wondered if it could be, indeed, a cloudlessly happy life, when it was free from all emotion and all agitation, and she became so absorbed in her thoughts, imaginings, and wonder, that she did not hear Margaret's voice saying at the glass door: "This way, sir. Mistress is in the garden, sir."

And she started violently, a moment later, when Mr. Stewart-Carr came up to her, and lifting his hat said, half-apologetically:

"I am so sorry to disturb you, you look so very cool and peaceful here. But I came to thank you."

"To thank me?" she said, lifting her eyes to his, and forgetting, in her surprise, to reply to his greeting.

"Yes," he said. "To thank you for your goodness this morning to Miss Arbuthnot."

"Indeed, indeed, I don't want any thanks!" she said, earnestly. "I did nothing." Then, all at once remembering that she had not even welcomed her visitor, she moved away her work with a sudden gesture. "Won't you sit down?" she continued.

"Thanks," he said. And he sat down on the pretty rustic seat beside her. The shadow thrown then by the mulberry-tree only reached just beyond Catherine's rush work-basket, which lay on the grass at her feet; but before Mr. Stewart-Carr rose to go away again the shadow had stretched all across the lawn to the fernery, and the afternoon was nearly gone.

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By ESMÊ STUART.

Author of "A Faire Damzell," "Joan Vellacot," "Kestell of Greystone," etc. etc.

CHAPTER V. AN ANNOUNCEMENT.

"Mother, you never told us," said Frances, quietly; for her mother had trained her too well for her to forget to be dignified. "You never even hinted at such a possibility. It would have been such a pleasant thing to look forward to. But I cannot understand it. Is it really true?"

"I believe so. I wanted to avoid any of my children looking forward to uncertainty. So many things may happen to prevent the lawful owners enjoying their rights."

Mrs. Gordon smiled a little, and even Frances did not guess what a tumult of thought and excitement she was going through. For years she had kept this secret, and now at last she might mention it to her eldest daughter. Frances noticed that her mother's small white hand trembled a little as she held the paper, that was all.

"Besides, Frances, there is a curious and a very sad story attached to the life of this poor Mr. Gordon—a story which Minnie and Bee ought never to know. But you being the eldest, I shall of course tell you—that is, by-and-by."

Mrs. Gordon walked to the window and looked absently out of it, and then she continued:

"Of course, Frances, you must not mention this to any one till I find out it is true. Mr. Gordon may have made a will on his death-bed, he may have left his money to——" she paused, and did not finish the sentence. "But a few years ago I ascertained, through indirect means, that he had made no will, and that he most likely intended the rightful relations to inherit his property."

"I do not understand, mother; this Mr. Gordon, was he a near relation, and has he no one belonging to him?"

"It is altogether a very sad and shocking history; he was not received in society."

Mrs. Gordon said these last words in a low, sad tone; she could say nothing worse of a man than this; for if "society," lenient enough for the sins of those within its pale, casts out one of them, what indeed must be his guilt! It was certainly past forgiveness.

"Ah!" answered Frances, in the same tone. "How terrible! No wonder you never mentioned him, mother. But isn't it tiresome that you sent that letter to Austin? He will be obliged to keep his engagement. If this is true you will want him; shall I write by this evening's post to him?"

Mrs. Gordon considered a moment, then said, quietly:

"No; if it is as I expect, I cannot upset his arrangements. The property comes to me, and not to Austin, and of course the lawyers have really the whole responsibility of the affairs. I am surprised that I have had no letter yet; anyhow, I will write to Mr. Blackston this morning." Mrs. Gordon gathered up her writing materials, and took the "Times" with her. "I shall go to my own room, Frances. Do not let any one disturb me till luncheon time."

She walked slowly away, and Frances looked after her mother with honest pride. No one, she thought, had such a graceful bearing; no one in Longham was so thoroughly a lady as was her mother. Then, how clever she was; did she not manage all the business matters of the family? Had she not, without help, made them what they were, the most sought-after young ladies in the neighbourhood? And now this wonderful secret about this money, her mother had kept it to herself so that they might not be disappointed if the realisation never came to pass; and her wisdom had prevented them from growing up useless and extravagant.

"I dare say it has made all the difference to Austin. How hard he has worked all his life, and what a dear, good fellow he is; never extravagant because he knows mother cannot afford much expense for him. Yes, indeed, she has been good. If only I might tell Minnie!"

The present had now to be thought of, so Frances once more picked up the ball-dress, and tried to begin working again.

"Perhaps next year we shall not have to slave away if we wish to appear nicely dressed," she thought, a little smile of intense satisfaction lighting up her face. Certainly it would be pleasant, very, very pleasant, to be rich; but then her mother had given her no particulars, and there seemed to be some unpleasant history attached to this fortune. What did that matter, so that in the end they, this highly respected family of Gordons, became possessed of it?

Frances's meditations did not stop till a merry little clatter of voices and doors made itself heard, and the two Misses Gordon entered the drawing-room full of stories about the delightful walk they had had.

"But of course the ice would not bear," said Minnie, laughing. "I believe Captain Grant just invented that to make us take the walk; and fancy, Frances, he walked all the way back with us!"

At another time this would have been interesting news, but to-day Frances only thought: "He is a very long time making up his mind about Minnie; but when she has money she can marry anybody she likes," and Frances looked at her sister with almost a new interest. How pretty she was! Her figure was as nearly perfect as it could be; her small neck was like an exquisite slender column; her head round and small, surrounded with an abundance of fair hair. She and Bee were outwardly much alike, but the youngest Miss Gordon had a deep-cut brow, shading grey eyes, which, though not large, were full of expression. "Sweet and womanly" would have been the words used by those who wished to describe Beatrice Gordon's expression apart from her beauty. Minnie was perhaps the prettiest, but the expression of her face was quite different. She was a decided flirt, though her bringing-up had forbidden flirting; so she hid as much as possible her airs and graces from her family. Minnie had had many flirtations, but they did not count; one had been with a penniless curate, another with a penniless officer; this latter still worshipped her, but then he was in Ireland, so Minnie did not think much of him. To-day she had settled that Captain Grant was a different personage. In the first place, he was an only son; in the second, he was not quite young, being past thirty; and then he was respected and looked up to by every one who knew him; lastly, he was a thorough gentleman, so courteous, so good, so handsome. Yes, there was no doubt about it, the woman whom he loved would be a woman to be envied.

"I wonder which of us he admires the most; but Bee might not make him a good wife," thought Minnie. "She is quite a child still, and has really few ideas beyond enjoying herself and being nicely dressed. She never can understand about people, and things, and the future, as Frances and I do."

"Where's mother?" asked Minnie, aloud, looking round the room; "and oh, Frances! how little you have done to your dress! You will never be able to finish it in time! Whatever has made you so long? Did any one call?"

Frances blushed as she answered "No." So that Minnie, always of a curious disposition, at once concluded that some one had, if not called, at least "put in an appearance."

"Mother never writes upstairs unless she has something very particular to do. I wonder what it is?"

"Austin wrote about his not coming home. He means to tutor a youth and he is to start at once for Germany."

"He is not coming home!" cried Beatrice.

"It is to save mother any further expense," said the elder sister, reprovingly. "Of course all this year he was obliged to have rather more money than usual."

"It's horrid being poor," sighed Minnie. "I mean to marry a rich man, and then you two can come and stay with me and have some fun."

"What nonsense! I do not see why we should not be left independent, even if you do marry Crœsus," said Bee, a little crossly, as she walked away.

Something Minnie had said had jarred on her. Did her sister in any way mean to allude to Captain Grant? Just as Beatrice reached the hall the front-door bell rang, so that Beatrice could not escape before she found herself confronting Captain Grant himself.

"I beg your pardon, Miss Gordon; but I fancy this silk scarf is yours. Did you drop one? A woman gave it to me as I was going home."

The maid retired, and Beatrice blushed a little with the surprise of seeing the Captain again—moreover, just as she was thinking of him—so she hesitated before owning her lost possession.

"Yes, I took it in case we skated, to put on afterwards. How careless of me! Thank you. Won't you come in? Mother is in."

"No, thank you." (A pause.) "You are not tired, I hope. It was my fault, taking you all that way on false pretences."

"No; I did enjoy the walk so much, and so did Minnie!"

Captain Grant had entered, and now stood in the hall rather as if he were on parade duty, and Beatrice were his commanding officer.

"I am very glad your sister enjoyed the walk. Are you quite sure she is not tired?"

"Not a bit tired. We often walk farther than that."

"Next week my aunt is coming to stay with us, and then I hope you will come to the Towers. It is very dull having no lady to take the head of the house; but when my aunt is here my father means to make the old place gay. Do you think your sister—I mean your sisters—will come and help us?"

"I am sure they will," answered Bee, looking up almost sadly.

After all, it was Minnie he was thinking of and asking for; and all this morning, for the first time since she had known Captain Grant, she had fancied that he was thinking chiefly of herself, and she had suddenly dreamt a little dream of happiness, and of making herself more worthy of him. This seemed the first thought when one looked or spoke of Captain Grant. All he said was so quiet, so serious, that one recognised at once his earnestness. He did not, as most officers Bee had met, pay very broad compliments or try to look fascinating, twirling at the same time the inevitable moustache; neither did he show an ostentatious politeness to one woman and forget the commonest courtesies to all others, especially old maids. On the contrary, this Captain Grant, wherever he might be, always looked round to see whether the elder ladies were seated, whether they had some one to talk to, or whether they were placed in a draught. If he saw a very old lady rising, he offered her his arm to cross the room, so that his less polite fellow-officers privately called him Sir Charles Grandison; but all the same, his influence in his regiment—and he had much—was always exercised for good; and though some might laugh at him, yet all respected him.

Beatrice was silent for a few minutes when she had said to herself, "after all it was Minnie." She was not jealous, but a little sadness came into her heart; she had looked up to the Captain, though it was only a month ago he had come back to his father on furlough—only a month ago—yet all his actions had impressed themselves on the youngest Miss Gordon as something different from any she had seen before. He certainly did like one of them, she thought, for he was too truthful to be able to hide his feelings, but Beatrice was at this moment puzzled as to which of them it was.

He did not stay any longer now, perhaps because he heard a door being opened, or perhaps because he had nothing more to say; and when he had gone, Beatrice went slowly upstairs trying to stifle any little jealous feeling that arose in spite of herself about Minnie.

As she passed her mother's door, it was suddenly opened, and Mrs. Gordon said, quickly:

"Come in a minute, Frances, I want to consult you about——"

"It is Beatrice, mother," answered the girl. "Can I do as well as Frances?"

"Oh, no—never mind; but stop a minute, before you take off your things, I wish you would post these letters for me; do it yourself, they are important." Beatrice assented and went downstairs, taking the letters in her hand. When she was just going to slip them into the post-box, she noticed the address of one of them.

"That is to mother's lawyer; I hope it does not mean he is coming here, horrid little man. Mother says he is clever; all the same, I cannot bear him." Then Beatrice posted the letters and hurried indoors in order to be in time for luncheon.

CHAPTER VI.

IN THE MIDST OF A BALL-DRESS.

The next morning Frances had a headache, and sent word to Beatrice that she would be much obliged if her sister would go down and make the coffee for her. Minnie never came downstairs till the last minute of grace, and Mrs. Gordon was not allowed by her affectionate daughters to perform any little household duties which they could do as well. When the message reached Beatrice she was already dressed, having risen early for two reasons: firstly, because she had not slept well with those words ringing in her ears, "it was Minnie after all," and secondly, because she had been so much surprised to see how little Frances had done to her ball-dress, that she was determined to help her by working at it for her before breakfast.

"Poor Frances!" thought Beatrice; "she has to hear about all the worries, so I think that being the youngest and the most stupid I ought to help her."

She ran downstairs to the dining-room, took out the work, and sat down to it with much diligence. The Gordons had only one fire lighted in the morning, to avoid expense; in the afternoon they all migrated to the drawing-room, but there, of course, no dress-making on a large scale could be undertaken.

All the time Minnie, who never did anything for any one which she could possibly help doing, her mother excepted, was sleeping soundly upstairs, the housemaid was busy in the drawing-room, so the house seemed comparatively quiet as the young girl, sitting as close to the fire as possible, stitched away in solitude. How few of the Longham folk could have guessed that one of the pretty Misses Gordon had to work on a chilly November morning, in order to appear and to help her sisters to appear as one of the Longham "belles" in the evening!

This same thought entered Bee's mind and she smiled over it, though after the smile came a little sigh.

"I don't believe Captain Grant guesses how much we think about our clothes. I expect he would despise us very much if he knew; and, besides, I never see him staring critically at us as some of the officers do—he looks straight into one's face when he speaks, and seems to expect the answer quite seriously. I wish I could say something nice or original, or something even worth listening to; but Minnie is more amusing than I am, she says such funny things about other people that one can't help laughing."

This soliloquy was interrupted by the postman's knock, and in a few minutes the housemaid brought in the letters. Beatrice, sitting near her mother's place, saw two business-looking envelopes placed on her plate, but thought very little more of them, for a letter was placed in her own hands. With a sort of dazed feeling, she opened the envelope and read these words:

"Dear Miss Gordon,—I believe the ice will really bear to-morrow. At all events in our shallow ponds there will be no danger. I shall give myself the pleasure of calling at your house to-morrow morning, however, to report on the state of things in order to spare you a useless walk, should the weather change during the night. I hope Mrs. Gordon and your sisters will give us the pleasure of their company; lunch will be provided for the skaters under a tent.—Yours most truly, Colin Grant."

Although Beatrice read this very matter-of-fact letter several times, she could not but acknowledge to herself that except for the direction on the envelope, the contents might have been equally suitable for each of the three Misses Gordon. Still he had written to her, Beatrice, and if after all— She would have liked to linger over these thoughts; but she remembered the dress and set to work again diligently, when, to her surprise, the maid reappeared, saying:

"If you please, Miss Beatrice, mistress wishes to have her letters taken upstairs to her."

Never in all her life could Beatrice remember her mother sending for her letters. She had constantly told her daughters that she disapproved of the practice, and that it showed an impatient and undisciplined character to be unable to wait for one's correspondence till one came downstairs.

Of course, Beatrice handed the two official-looking envelopes to the maid without further remark, but nevertheless she said to herself:

"Something very extraordinary must have happened. Mother did not have her letters sent up to her even when she was expecting to hear whether Austin had taken his degree."

However much the youngest Miss Gordon might wonder, her curiosity was not to be satisfied. Mrs. Gordon, Frances, and Minnie appeared rather later than usual, but no remarks were made on the post except about Captain Grant's note, which Beatrice rather unwillingly gave up.

"I shall not skate to-day," said Frances, decidedly. "I must finish my dress for the ball, there are only two more days. I suppose yours is quite ready, Minnie?"

It was Minnie's turn to go out, for the three girls never appeared together.

"Yes, I shall wear my pink silk. Mother, may we go this morning to the ponds?" Mrs. Gordon was quieter than usual, but her two younger daughters did not notice it; now, however, she looked up quickly to answer Minnie's question.

"You can go, Minnie, with Mrs. Crozby, but Beatrice had better stay at home and work at Frances' dress—that is, one of you two must do so, as I want Frances to help me upstairs with some business." Minnie blushed with vexation.

"We could help her to-night;" but Mrs. Gordon's will was law, she never allowed her opinion to be questioned, and as she seldom interfered with their pleasures, the three had learnt to obey without much questioning.

To-day, however, it was really too trying, because Minnie knew that Beatrice had done already her share, and that, in fairness, she ought to be the one to stay behind; but then what a chance she would miss of making herself agreeable to Captain Grant, the heir of the Towers, and quite the most important and eligible young man in Longham! Beatrice had said nothing. She felt that if only Minnie would act fairly, she, Beatrice, would not lose her great pleasure; but then—no one knew Minnie better than Beatrice. All her life she had had to give way and accept Minnie's petty tyrannies—tyrannies which were exercised with a sweet smile or a "You can do it, can't you, Bee?" But to-day it appeared harder than ever; harder, because she could not offer any excuse for her desire to take her sister's place.

Mrs. Gordon was too much occupied to notice the little episode except by saying:

"You must settle it among yourselves, girls. Frances, I shall want you to help me in half an hour."

The ladies separated to their various occupations, and Beatrice, resolutely taking up her sister's gown, shed one or two tears on the thin material.

There was no doubt about the frost to-day. Another bright, crisp November morning; the Longham gentlemen meeting at the station walked briskly up and down the platform and exchanged remarks about the various degrees of frost registered during the night in divers nooks and corners of their villas or mansions. The daughters at home talked of skating costumes or the most convenient style of skate; the mothers alone grumbled about the bitter cold, and had anxious thoughts about frozen pipes. Life was not made up of many grand ideas among these villa residents, but of practical comforts which had been earned by past years of privations, and the remembrance of this past made the present feel more snug and comfortable. Let the thermometer register what degree of frost it liked, it would not freeze up the balance at the banker's, and coals could be purchased in proportion to the cold.

One melancholy worker, sitting alone in the dining-room of Eastview Villa, thought, too, about the skating; but it was of her sister's pleasure. She had seen her go off with the Crozbys, radiant with happiness, nodding to her and saying as a parting consolation:

"It is a pity you cannot come too. It all comes of Frances putting off her things till the last minute."

Bee had been obliged to bite her lip to prevent herself saying something cross. The motive was not a high one—simply: "I don't think Captain Grant would appreciate a girl who could not give up her own will sometimes;" but it served Beatrice's purpose, and she was able to nod her good-bye to Minnie without the tears appearing on the surface. "Tears, idle tears," she said, smiling, remembering how at other times she could sing the song with a smile on her lips.

The house relapsed into silence, and Bee was left alone. Stitch, stitch, stitch; the dress was beginning to take a form; the maker became interested in her work. Even the vision of the shallow ponds at the Towers faded from her mind, till suddenly there came a ring at the bell, and before Beatrice could remonstrate with the maid, Captain Grant was ushered into the dining-room, and discovered Beatrice surrounded by a cloud of light material, and pins, cottons, and scissors strewn about her.

She blushed deeply, from surprise, pleasure, and shyness, as he spoke.

"I beg your pardon, Miss Gordon, but I only came to see if I could not persuade you to alter your mind. Your sister said you did not care to come out this morning."

There was a slight emphasis on the word "care," as if the soldier wished to find out the truth, and truth was more natural to Bee than falsehood, even though Mrs. Gordon often said to her daughters that it was often very unnecessary and unladylike to give one's exact reason for one's actions.

"I did want to come very much, but one of us was obliged to stay and finish this—this work." The Captain made no comment, and appeared almost sorry to have forced Beatrice to give an explanation; then, without any awkward apology, he turned the conversation.

"This frost is certainly going to continue, my father says, and he considers himself very learned on the subject of weather. I hope you will still get some good skating; but perhaps," he added, glancing at the flimsy material, "dancing is more in your line."

"Yes, dancing is delightful, but this is for Frances; she and Minnie are going to the Leighs' ball on Thursday. I am the youngest, so I do not get as much dancing as the others; we can't go out all three together."

"Why not?" asked the Captain, innocently.

"Because it would not be the—thing, I suppose; people would say the three Misses Gordon filled up the room," and then Beatrice laughed heartily.

"I have been so long away from England that now and then, I fear, my ideas are old-fashioned. Society seems to me to be getting so much more a studied affair than formerly. People do not go out for amusement, but for all kinds of other motives."

Beatrice was conscious of a new feeling; she recognised that Captain Grant was real, that all he said was not spoken because it was "the right thing to say." The girl had been brought up so much on the other principle, that the difference struck her forcibly to-day. She was thinking, as her heart beat a little faster than usual, "he came really to see me, to-day," and then she recollected that she ought to tell her mother that this visitor was here, that her mother would object to such an early call, and also that her pleasant talk would be over. She would, however, first make one remark:

"I believe you always say what you think, Captain Grant, without caring about society."

"No, not always, but I hope I do not say what I hold to be false; for instance, I will not say I am sorry you are not coming, because I fancy you are 'on duty.' Forgive the military expression."

"I had been grumbling very much to myself about being 'on duty.' I suppose soldiers never do that! Anyhow, thank you for coming to see; perhaps I shall lose all my——" She did not know how to end, for the Captain rose, feeling he ought not to intrude any further.

"The thought of you will make me feel what an idle creature an officer on furlough is, Miss Gordon," he said, smiling and holding out his hand; "however, I have learnt this morning that women can speak the truth."

Beatrice again blushed with pleasure, for the tone was too gentlemanly for her to take offence at the words, and yet she felt that his praise was almost undeserved. However, when he was gone the youngest Miss Gordon registered a vow.

"I always will speak the truth now, and act it too."

VENETIAN LIFE.

The Venetians take life easily, though they do now and again affect to get prodigiously excited. During the first ten minutes of my acquaintance with the stout, dark-eyed lady whose tenant I was subsequently for two months, she stormed and made such a bother about a few francs, more or less, per month, that I expected the house would always be in an uproar on her account. But it was by no means so. When we had come to our agreement, and she had straddled her nose with glasses, to put her name to the paper, she suddenly became as calm as the lagoon outside; and that calm she maintained all the rest of the time. I thought she would stay in my mind as a picturesque sort of Fury. Instead of that, I think of her as I used to see her most often: lolling about her fine, wide, stone staircase, with a cigarette between her pearly teeth, and casting her salutations to the right and left among her various clients.

There was a dustman who used to come into the corte every morning, to take away the rubbish from the four doors that opened into the place. He was a very gentle old dustman, and not at all a martyr to his profession. I used to gaze at him while I was shaving. When he had set his barrow on one side and put his broom in it, he would fumble in his pocket for his snuff-box. This he would open, inspect, and smell deliberately, raising his thankful countenance to heaven after the indulgence. Then he would take up the dust at the doors; and, before departing, he would once again gratify his nose with a pinch. He even picked the grains of snuff off his labelled arm, and enjoyed them separately rather than run the risk of wasting them. You would have thought a gentleman of his line of life would have had no desire to vex his nostrils with any superfluous irritant. But the way he dallied over the pleasure told a different tale.

It is the same with the other inhabitants of the dear old city. I do not admire the Venetian boatmen half as much as most people, who know them only in Mr. Gilbert's operetta, affect to do. They are not heroic and lovely all through; nor is their devotion to duty or the fair anything like as constant as their devotion to franc-pieces. But when the mood is on them, they are deliciously idle—hardly to be stirred into action by the bribe of a large silver crown. They much prefer to sit in a cluster on the marble steps by their gondolas, gossiping airily about nothing in particular, and looking as impudently well-to-do as the fat pigeons, which roost about the golden pinnacles of the Cathedral of San Marco what time they have had enough of the Indian corn with which thoughtless visitors from America and Great Britain are ever ready to stuff them. In their more active moments, the handsome, bronzed fellows are all civility and smiles to the emotional, elderly ladies from Germany and elsewhere, who approach them and comment audibly to each other on their fine manly beauty and magnificent complexions. "Did you ever see such a delightful mixture of burnt sienna and apple rose?" "Never! my dear. His cheeks are perfect pictures; and then his eyes—so large and liquid—almost like a gazelle's, only, of course, so much darker and more passionate!" The gondolier has enough knowledge of foreign languages to feel these strange compliments, and he shows his teeth amiably at the ladies. And afterwards he clamours at them for their patronage, which, however, they withhold.

Yet, if they had the needful courage, they could not do better than get aboard the black little boat, and allow themselves to be propelled lightly into mid-canal. For it is on the water in Venice that one understands best of all the feeling of pleasant, calm inertia, which seems to pervade the people and the place. The tall houses, with their stone faces and green shutters, glide by like buildings in a dream; and there is no sound save the subdued washing of the water against the swaying sides of the boat. Now and again a gondola comes in the opposite direction. First, the glitter of its bevelled steel prow, then the body of the thing, with, perhaps, a fair face behind the glass of the cabin, and afterwards the bending oarsman. When it has gone, there is a recurrence of the same marble palaces towering towards the blue; bridges, and, at intervals, other gondolas. It is impossible to take such a city altogether seriously.

I was one of many inhabitants of a great house, the lower windows of which were heavily barred. Perhaps, two hundred years back, it was the palace of a very important nobleman; but, if so, no trace of him was left. The very paintings on the ceiling to the rooms had all been done over again, and the artist of the nineteenth century was not a very clever fellow. But the size of the rooms was, of course, unchanged; and for this I was grateful to the builder.

It is wonderful how cheaply a man may live in Venice if he will. Even the hotels are not so exacting as the hotels elsewhere. No one, however, to whom the p's and q's of life in Italy are tolerably familiar, should trouble the Venetian hotels. It is so much more unconstrained to have chambers. The big key, which makes one free of the house at all hours of the day and night, is certainly an encumbrance to the pocket; but then it relieves one from so many other encumbrances. It was all one whether I entered the corte at eight o'clock or one o'clock, except, perhaps, in the matter of the ghostly tenants of the vast echoing hall upon which the door swung from the outside.

Twice or thrice I was set adrift in the fair city at uncanny hours about daybreak, when the coral light of the east was but just beginning to break through the pale grey mist over the lagoon. This is not ordinarily an interesting hour in a city; but in Venice I found it so. In the first place, the flower-girls were then at their busiest in the market by the Rialto Bridge, and the perfume of lilies and hyacinths was at its freshest. Secondly, one could at pleasure then recast the inhabitants of Venice, and make them of what century one pleased for the entertainment of the fancy, in harmony with the different buildings. Instead of a long tail of black-coated youths bustling up and down the streetlets between the Square of San Marco and the Rialto, just as if they were in Cheapside—the common spectacle on an ordinary business day—one could attire one's people in the silks, and satins, and velvets which Venice of old loved so well before the era of sumptuary laws, and which gave such bewitching interest to the old city.

There is just a trace of the survival of some of this obsolete picturesqueness in the funerals of celebrities even in our day. This "palazzo" on the water-side, with the parti-coloured mob massing on both sides of the canal near it, is in mourning, and the funeral of the senator whose name it bears is about to be achieved. What a pretty sight is that long line of gondolas in the water, each laden with one lovely wreath of flowers, or many wreaths! In these gondolas Venetians of distinction are waiting to follow the hearse-gondola when it shall set out for the island cemetery away from Venice. Those old men, too, in claret-coloured uniforms and peaked caps, each with a long candle in his hand, lighted and clogging with grease; and those boys, in scarlet and white, also carrying candles! The old fellows, who owe much to the charity of the dead senator, are out of humour with their responsibilities this day. They don't scruple to quarrel with each other while they wait for the corpse, call each other very impolite names, and, in a sly way, drop the hot grease on each other's tender old toes. It is the same with the urchins. And from the other side of the canal the criticisms of the mob upon the group of fat clergy, who, also with candles in their hands, very considerably add to the bulk of the expectant crowd, descend into the midst of the mourners, but little mellowed into pleasantness by distance. The modern Venetian in low life does not like to remember the past days, when he was in such fear and terror of his parish priest. He atones for it by believing all that the daily press says in abuse of the Church, and by retailing such abuse in the coarse, hearty way characteristic of an emotional populace all the world over.

Some think there is now no passion in Venice—only sensibility. There is probably less passion than there used to be, but there is still quite enough to keep the warm blood pulsing through Venetian bodies three hundred and sixty-five days in the year. It shows itself in the energy with which Venetians hate what formerly they loved and feared, and in the two or three stern tragedies per week which take place in the poorer quarters of the city.

I much mistake if the two daughters of my Venetian landlady could not upon due provocation have shown that they, like their sisters elsewhere, have sharp talons under their smooth clouded skins. For all that, they were to me consistently gentle and pacific. One of them who found it most convenient used to call me in the morning—sometimes in curl-papers, I admit—and give me a most dulcet greeting with as sweet a smile as a human face may conjure to itself before breakfast time. Anon, the other or the maid would come and light the stove and bring the roll and coffee. The maid was a thoroughbred Venetian of the style Paolo Veronese has painted many times. Her eyes were blue, and her hair was like spun gold. She was somewhat loose of shape, and not always very cleanly of person. But she had a gift of smiling hardly to be equalled; and she had agreeable phrases on her rosy lips whenever she came to do me service, howsoever menial. She was not an honest handmaid, as we in England make estimate by honesty. But as they go in Venice, she need not be blamed inordinately. She stole nothing of price; but contented herself with lesser pickings and stealings, such as she might reasonably expect would never be missed. Daily she seemed to taste my liqueurs, for instance, and in this gradual way she at length wholly consumed one bottle which I had but opened and tried on the palate. Her wonder at what had become of it when I amused myself by examining it, and commenting upon its evaporated aspect in her presence, was most successful acting; and I forgave her the crime on the strength of her ancestry, which was vague, and therefore not likely to impress her with our notions of moral responsibility.

Venice is not a city in which to do much serious work. Somehow, the atmosphere is against all such effort. I believe there are two or three artists and writers of repute in the place; but I do not envy them their daily conflict with the spirit of disinclination which must strive hard to keep them aloof from canvas and manuscript. It is a city in which people who depend on the public for a livelihood, find it enough if they do but sit in front of or behind their wares. Thence they are quite willing to answer the enquiries of possible purchasers; and if the enquiries eventuate in a sale—well and good. For the rest, it is not a matter for repining, if the prospector goes his way without buying aught.

The Venetians work their hardest from half-past two until five in the afternoon. This is the time when the band plays in the charming Square of San Marco. Such fashionable folks as then abide in the city, come forth into the Square from the gondola stage hard by. The ladies are as elegant as their taste will allow them to be, and the gentlemen are exquisite dandies of a ridiculous type. They do not, it must be said, possess anything like as much beauty of face or form as one expects in them. The dark eyes and long hair of the ladies are, I suppose, worthy of notice, though blue eyes also are to be seen; but their deportment is much against them. It requires a considerable stay in the city to get accustomed to them. By that time perhaps they may appear as fascinating as they would like to be held.

The Venetian youths, like their cousins in Rome, are fond of dogs; and the uglier and more forbidding the dog, so much the more does it seem to be admired. This has a very odd result. The gentlemen wear their boots long in the sole and curved upwards, a mode which does not improve their personal appearance. When very exquisite indeed, they further attire themselves in tall silk hats, lemon-coloured kid gloves, and collars that rise almost to their lips. Then, with a dapper cane, and a poodle shaven so brutally clean that no lock of wool is left upon it, save at the tip of its tail, the gentleman considers himself completed for promenade. Up and down he goes, bowing zealously to the right hand and the left, ever and anon stopping to caress the tips of the fingers of a lady, and ever and anon pausing to unwind the chain of his poodle from his elegant legs. He is an expert at expletives; but the poodle is used to them, and bears without one whine of objection all the abuse it excites.

The more aged Venetians sit in the cafés under the colonnade, and admire the young men, their sons and grandsons, and wish they too were young again, and as able to enjoy life and bewitch the ladies as their more fortunate posterity.

And to and fro among the crowd of the seated and the promenading, go those rather audacious damsels, the flower-girls, eager for patronage. It is in vain that the more noble of the ladies look with disdain at their assaults upon the buttonholes of the gentlemen. They are perhaps the most strenuous seekers of lucre in Venice. If you repulse them once they try again five minutes afterwards. Nor is there any reproach or malice in their brilliant eyes when, only at the third or fourth appeal, you bow to your fate, and allow them to pin the flower to your coat with their own plump hands. One could forgive the girls their pertinacity in the public thoroughfare, if they would but leave one in peace at one's meals; but this they decline to do. They have the run of the restaurants, and so with one's soup or macaroni one has to endure a good deal of annoyance.

The band is delightful, of course. Italy is a musical country, and the blue skies go well with her instruments. So up and down the people go, now facing the brilliantly coloured Basilica of San Marco, and anon turned towards the Palladian buildings which enclose the Square. The pigeons are lively when the music plays. Perhaps they love sweet sounds; more probably they know that this is the time in the day when they are most sure of a surfeit. The pretty American girls, whose fond parents are hurrying them through the Old World, must be able to show their "folks at home" that they have fed the famous birds. The demand for Indian corn is therefore sometimes brisk while the band plays; and the photographer from the corner is sufficiently willing to turn his focus upon the pretty girl, as she stands with her back to the Cathedral, with a pigeon on each shoulder, and one bloated glutton of a bird perched upon one hand, while it pecks vigorously at the grain in the palm of the other hand.

I used to love to watch the movement of the lights upon San Marco's ornate pile, as that time of promenade drew towards a close. The gold of the sun as it sank into the west crept from glass window to leaden dome, and from one leaden dome to another, until at length it was held by no part of the building except the many gilt vanes which becrest the various pinnacles above the domes and windows. There it would stay while one paced the length of the Square—no longer; and afterwards it would climb the tall campanile by the side of the Basilica, linger for a moment on the faces of the exalted tourists who had ascended the building to see Venice and the Alps, linger for another moment on the campanile's highest point, and then vanish until the morrow. And out over the placid lagoon one might also watch its vanishing, from the red buildings of one island to the red buildings of another island; from white sail to white sail; and so on to the puffy wisps of cloud in the sky. Save from some vantage point or watch-tower of the city, one could not ordinarily see the glow far away on the snow of the Alps, ere night was thoroughly heralded by the stars overhead.

I have said that Venice is a cheap city. So it is; and especially if you dine with the people in the fish kitchens of the Street of the Smiths. There you get a slice of smoking polenta, as broad as a gondolier's palm and somewhat thicker, for a penny. Another penny will, if fish be abundant, as it generally is, buy a plateful of very palateable fry. Add to this a third penny for half a litre of wine, and the bill is told. There is no doubting the nutrition in such a meal. The faces of the clients of the shops in the Street of the Smiths are plump and hearty, and the clients themselves are not famishingly impatient to be served when there is a crush, as there often is of an evening, when such work as Venice does is mostly at an end.

The waiters in the more accredited restaurants here seem to have a warm motherliness of demeanour which one may look for in vain elsewhere. There were two of them in particular where I made my evening meals. One was very tall and thin, and the other was short and fat, and with a club-foot. The taller one was all humility and gentleness—"What would your Excellency please to fancy this evening?" for example; or "If your Excellency would condescend to give an eye to the fried calves' brains by-and-by, your Excellency would not regret it"; and so on. With his companion, amiability took a more genial turn. The little fellow would, notwithstanding his club-foot, speed towards an habitual guest, and catch him ere he made a movement to free himself from his overcoat. This was a duty he made peculiarly his; and when he had duly, and with reverent regard, hung the garment by the neck, he would stoop his pleasant little face towards his client, and ask, emotionally, about the gentleman's health. The remedies this excellent little fellow has suggested to me for a disturbance of the liver or a touch of catarrh would hardly be believed; and he was always surprisingly sympathetic when he could conscientiously congratulate the guest upon the re-establishment of his health. One day I had the honour to entertain, under his care, two Anglo-Saxon ladies, travelling acquaintances. On the morrow I asked him why he was so inordinately attentive to the younger and much the more beautiful of these ladies. "Is she not, then, to be the signor's 'sposa'?" he asked, opening his eyes as at a miracle. "By no means," said I. "Oh, and I thought it might be," observed Pietro, with a die-away sigh of disappointment; "for she was truly beautiful, and with so much gold about her neck."

One is disposed to imagine, indeed, that some of the Venetian men are rather too effeminate. They owe it to their shopkeeping ancestors and to the Austrians, I suppose. A good rousing war would perhaps be the making of them. They are just a little too content to be the very obedient servants of the various Tomnoddys who come to Venice from the North to spend their money and be enchanted. With such restricted ambitions in their souls, the germs of many gracious and robust virtues which assert themselves in other people do not seem with them to get out of the embryonic stage. Were I a lady in dread of mad dogs, I should never, for instance, look to a Venetian to stand between me and the infuriated monster in the hour of need. The little fellow would be ready to melt almost away in the ardour of his sympathy—after the disaster. There would be no end to the intensity of his grief, and the hot tears from his beautiful dark eyes would perchance fall pit-a-pat upon the pavement for five minutes in succession. This would be very laudable in him, but still it would be indicative of a void somewhere. The true grit of manhood would be wanting.

The best of it is, however, that, as a rule, there are no mad dogs in the narrow streetlets of the dear old city; and there is no stout call upon the more vigorous virtues of the people to prove them wanting. One is quite content to seek these more ennobling qualities in the history of the old Venetian State, and in the historical and other scenes which Venice's wonderful artists have painted in her famous halls and palaces. It is with nations as with people: they have their heroic and their quiet and seemingly trivial epochs. If, for successive centuries, a State declares itself great in word and in deed, it may be allowed, at the end of the time, to slumber a while; and no man ought, then, to reproach it for its inactivity. There was no pretence about the greatness of Venice a few hundred years ago. That ought to be set to the credit of the modern denizens of the city who, for no apparent fault of their own, have been born at a time when the city has no separate and proud national life. For my part, if I were a Venetian, I should feel much as I imagine the man feels who, after much exertion, at length, when he is old, realises that he is rich. Toils are over; the pleasures of retrospect have begun. Seated among soft, luxurious cushions, I should dwell with pleasure upon my past admirable efforts. Though in the eyes of the dull and the ignorant I might appear an uninteresting old creature, with my grey beard and nervous totter, I should not mind one jot. A man is what he feels himself to be.

So with the modern Venetian. He may be content to seem small, and even ridiculous, to the large, assuming people of the North, for he has the conviction at heart that he has been what they aspire to become.

OUR NATIONAL PORTRAITS.

The days are now happily numbered in which a collection of portraits, the interest and importance of which to the student of our English history can hardly be overestimated, is destined to remain in obscurity, more than half-forgotten by ordinary people, in the heart of the East End of London. Though the dwellers in that vast section of our metropolis are by no means incapable of appreciating art—as the eager and intelligent visitors to Mr. Barnett's admirable exhibitions at St. Jude's bear eloquent witness—it must be owned that a gallery of portraits alone is not calculated to attract the less educated part of the community so much as pictures which, by their beauty of colour, and portrayal of heroic, or pathetic, or familiar scenes, appeal more directly to the feelings or the experience. Hence the upper gallery of the Bethnal Green Museum, where our national portraits have hung for the last five years, is the resort mainly of small children from the neighbouring streets, who amuse themselves there when the weather is unfavourable for playing out of doors.

The collection thus relegated to obcurity is in many respects a remarkable one; and not the least striking fact connected with it is the shortness of time in which so large and so fairly representative a series has been acquired. It is only thirty-five years since the gallery was founded, and already it numbers over eight hundred portraits, although those acquired since 1885 have not been sent to Bethnal Green, and consequently are not accessible to the public. Established in 1856, through the exertions of Earl Stanhope, and with the co-operation of the Prince Consort, Lord Ellesmere's gift of the Chandos Shakespeare at once conferred dignity on the enterprise; and the collection has steadily grown in size and importance, while the salutary restrictions adopted by the trustees against the introduction of mediocrities and nobodies have kept it fairly representative. It was rightly laid down that "There ought not to be in this collection a single portrait as to which a man of good education passing round, and seeing the name in the catalogue, would be under the necessity of asking, 'Who is he?'" and that "the success of the whole scheme depended on confining the gallery to men of real distinction, of real fame." If the gallery is to maintain a high national character, care must be taken that these restrictions are not unduly relaxed; although, at the same time, the conditions must be wide enough to embrace all that is best and most worthy of note in our national life and history.

There is hardly a more fascinating way of approaching the study of history than by gaining familiarity with the actual appearance of the men and women of a given time, and endeavouring to read something of their character from their faces. Not only their faces, but the fashions of their dress, and the way in which they were painted, help to make them more real and living to us. When we get a notable period illustrated by a great artist the charm is complete. Witness, for example, the superb Vandyck Exhibition at the

Grosvenor Gallery four years ago, where we saw as in a mirror the Royalist side of the Civil War. We cannot hope for so comprehensive a picture of any period here as yet, though the literary history of the present century finds a remarkably full and brilliant record; but, taking one or two well-known names, we may group together some portraits connecting themselves with each, and so gain some idea of the value of the gallery as a whole.

If we give place to the ladies, Mary of Scotland and Elizabeth of England at once suggest themselves; but we shall have to admit that our gallery necessarily pales before the glory of the Elizabethan room at the Tudor Exhibition of last year, and the rare collection of her rival's portraits in the Stuart Exhibition of the year before. Still, from the copies of the Janet and Oudry portraits, the medallion of Primavera, and the electrotype from the beautiful effigy at Westminster, we may form some notion of Mary's perplexing personality; while the effigies of Darnley and his mother, and the portraits of Knox, of the Queen's mother, Mary of Lorraine—the Fraser-Tytler portrait, long thought to represent Mary herself—of the boy James the Sixth, and of old Buchanan of the "Detectio," serve to give life and colour to the stormy days of her reign. Elizabeth we see, pale and haughty in comparative youth; pale and severe in later life; old and ill-favoured on the defaced coin the original of which is at the British Museum; majestic in her last repose in the effigy from the Abbey. Of the men who filled her "spacious times," whose portraits we can study, may be named Leicester and Essex, Burghley and Cecil, Raleigh and Hunsdon, Nicholas Bacon and Sir Thomas Gresham, the Earl of Cumberland, wearing the Queen's glove in his hat, Shakespeare's Southampton, and, above all, Shakespeare himself.

If we pass on to the Commonwealth, we find Walker's fine portrait of Oliver Cromwell, in which the sternness of the face, with its keen eyes, is accentuated by the severe simplicity of the armour in which the figure is entirely clad; while this is contrasted so happily with the soft grace of the fair-haired boy in red, who bends to tie his master's scarf. Compare this with the portraits by unknown artists, with the bust by Pierce, and the bronze bust by an unknown sculptor, and we shall have perhaps a more vivid idea of the great Protector than before. In Ireton, John Howe in his earlier years, John Owen, Bulstrode Whitelocke, Milton, Andrew Marvell—though the somewhat ill-favoured portrait here represents him in later life—we see some of the notable men with whom Oliver surrounded himself. Harrington, of the "Oceana," whose interview with Mrs. Claypole we remember; Anthony Ashley Cooper, with his refined, handsome face; Walker's own keen, able face, as portrayed by himself, help to fill up the picture, though we miss, amongst others, Mrs. Claypole herself, Richard and Henry Fleetwood and Fauconberg, Warwick and Thurloe.

It would be tedious to follow this plan through the later Stuart reigns and those of the Georges; but the record of the present century is, as we have already hinted, so brilliant that it demands a few words. Here, to name a few only, are Charles Lamb, painted by Hazlitt, and Keats; Leigh Hunt and Byron; Coleridge, Southey, and Wordsworth; Sir Walter Scott, painted in his study at Abbotsford, and sketched by Landseer; Wellington in early life and in later years; Edward Irving, with a face intense in its spiritual earnestness; Arnold, of Rugby; Frederick Denison Maurice, Carlyle, and Darwin; Dickens, Thackeray, and George Eliot; Lawrence, Outram, and David Livingstone. Bust and painting and pencil sketch are all pressed into the service, and the result is of the highest interest and value.

There is a small, but choice collection of autographs, from which we may single out an Admiralty order, signed by our friend Samuel Pepys, whose portrait, in his brown "Indian gowne," holding his "musique" of "Beauty, Retire," referred to by him on several occasions with much complacency, is here; a receipt for two hundred and fifty pounds, to which Nell Gwynn has, with some difficulty, affixed her straggling initials; an interesting note in which Mrs. Siddons "takes the liberty to inform" a young aspirant to the stage, "that, although she herself has enjoyed all the advantages arising from holding the first situation in the drama, yet, that those advantages have been so counterbalanced by anxiety and mortification, that she has long ago resolved never to be accessory to bringing any one into so precarious and so arduous a profession"; and a summons to attend the Queen's Coronation, in which Her Majesty's signature, with far more character than those of her immediate predecessors, is seen to have already that firm, yet flowing style by which it is still distinguished.

One or two remarks suggest themselves in conclusion. The electrotyping of the Royal effigies at Westminster, at Gloucester, and at Canterbury, was an admirable idea which has been admirably carried out. But there are many monuments of eminent English men and women scattered through different churches of the country, which a chance fire or other calamity may destroy, or an unskilled attempt at restoration may irretrievably injure. It would seem very desirable that a few of the most notable of these should be electrotyped and added to the gallery, as opportunity offers. And there are a few more perishable memorials still to be found here and there, in the shape of portraits in coloured glass, such as the rare portrait of Prince Arthur Tudor, in the Priory Church, of Great Malvern. Accurate drawings of these, in a safe and accessible place, would be of the highest value to the historical student, and would find a fitting home in a National Portrait Gallery.

It would seem ungracious to say a word in disparagement of the catalogue, a monumental work in the completeness of its information, whether descriptive or biographical. Perhaps it is owing to the limited accommodation and the temporary nature of the arrangement at Bethnal Green, that it is not so easy to consult in connection with the portraits themselves, as one might wish. In the new gallery there will be a great opportunity for arranging and grouping; but it is difficult to devise a really satisfactory treatment of a catalogue which is constantly being rendered incomplete, by the addition of fresh portraits of all periods.

There are, of course, many blanks to be filled up as time and opportunity serve. Even within the last few years, there are names as yet unrepresented, which spring at once to the pen, and to which none could deny a place on the roll of England's worthies. Such are the names of Charles Kingsley, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Charles George Gordon, Robert Browning, and John Henry Newman.

NOTE.—Since the above was written, the thirty-fourth annual report of the Trustees shows that out of the five names last mentioned, two, Rossetti and Gordon, have been added during the past year.

HIS LAST EXCURSION.

THE announcement of the last excursion of the season, "see small bills," comes as something of a surprise. It was but the other day that the first of the season was announced, the harbinger of the summer that we hoped to have, and suggestive of all kinds of plans in the way of visits to all sorts of places. And now with the programme still unfulfilled, it has come to the last of the season. Harry means to go anyhow, his governor was there last week and had a splendid time; music all the way down, two full troupes of nigger minstrels, and the strongest half of a brass band; when they got there a first-class regatta on, and coming home, the liveliest party as ever was, with dancing on all the railway platforms they stopped at, and all so free and pleasant, that the old man was never so much pleased in his life before. This, no doubt, was an ideal excursion which we can't expect to attain again in a hurry: still with a fine day and a bit of sunshine, a sniff of the briny will be no bad thing, opines Master Harry.

Our excursion involves early rising. If it were not the last of the season, we would put it off till another occasion, for the wind "soughs" through the darkness of night in a melancholy way, and a dusky mixture of dawn and moonlight shows a canopy of thick clouds overhead, and driving raindrops are felt every now and then. On the way to the station, the street lamps are being extinguished one by one, prematurely as it seems, for there is not much daylight to boast of—and through the gloom sounds the continuous tramp of heavy footsteps, and working men, young and old, are seen on the march, with loose baggy garments slung on anyhow, and spare coats over their shoulders, and cans and bundles of grub hanging on here and there. The first morning train is waiting for us all, and it presently deposits a goodly contingent at King's Cross, the bulk of us connected with ladders and scaffolds, and the building trade generally; but one or two more lightly equipped and intending for St. Pancras, and the last excursion of the season.

At St. Pancras, the Terminus is just struggling out of its night's repose. Milk-cans—"churns" is the technical word, by the way; but, anyhow, churns or cans are doing a considerable deal of clanking, and early local trains are discharging a few loads of passengers who clear off with speed, intent on being "on time" at shop or factory; the porters are sweeping up the platforms. There is a kind of pitter-patter on the window-frames of this extensive structure, that suggests a downpour outside.

Altogether not a propitious outlook for the last of the season. But there is comfort in reflecting that we may find better weather at the other end. For our destination is the Norfolk coast, the west coast of Norfolk if you please, for it has a west coast, whatever sceptics may say to the contrary, and on that coast stands Hunstanton; whence, on favourable occasions, you may see the sun sink glowing into the salt sea waves. And to go to Hunstanton and back for four shillings, which is what we are promised on the small bills, considering that the place is more than a hundred miles distant from where we stand, is a marvel of cheap travelling, anyhow.

But there is another train to go before ours, and this a real midland excursion—to Birmingham and back in the day, for five shillings. Such places as Birmingham are independent of the weather, for as nobody is likely to go there in sheer lightness of heart and for the pleasure of the thing, so no one having reason to go there is likely to be deterred by a little rain. And thus Birmingham, on wheels, is pretty thickly inhabited already, and people are still hurrying up.

By the time Birmingham is disposed of, Hunstanton is ready to take its place. There is no great crowd at present to take advantage of the last of the season; that last shower sent many intending passengers to bed again. Even Harry may be looked upon as a doubtful starter, for there is nothing that damps his ardour so much as a smart shower of rain. But he arrives just at the last moment, and gets in as the train is gliding away. Harry is radiant in light grey tweed, with a cap of the same on the back of his head; but he is not in his usual radiant spirits. Monday morning, he explains, has followed too close upon Sunday night, and he is more disposed to sleep than to rattle on in his usual cheerful manner.

Our excursion train has a good deal to say at the small suburban stations that thickly line the route, each of which has a few passengers for us, who are sanguine about the weather, and make sure that it is going to clear up presently. But after leaving Tottenham the train frisks along, putting on speed as it goes, and we have only a glimpse of Broxbourne, on one of the prettiest reaches of the River Lea, and with an ideal "Anglers' Rest," where Isaac Walton might still feel himself at home, notwithstanding the changes that have passed over his favourite waters. And Rye House should be close at hand, with its associations of ancient "plot" and modern bean-feasts. But the railway takes a turn to the right, leaving the vale of the River Lea for that of the Stort, and the train almost comes to a stop as it rumbles slowly past the station of Burnt Mill. About the mill and when it was burnt there is nothing definite to be gathered; but Harry is now awake, and surveys the placid rural scene, where the channel of the quiet little River Stort is marked out by an irregular line of willows. Here was the scene, he explains, only yesterday, of one of the funniest games that ever was played upon the inoffensive brethren of the angle. The Stort, it seems, is a favourite resort of many of the metropolitan angling clubs, and the last Sunday of all was fixed for a grand international tournament, and some three hundred competitors came out betimes to dispute the prize. But when they reached the river-bank no river was there. It had disappeared in the night — the water drawn off by an irate proprietor. "Some of those red-tiled roofs," said Harry, indicating farm buildings in the distance, "might have lost their covering, but that a strong force of county police were on the ground to keep the peace.' The notion of running the river dry rather takes the fancy of the company, and suggests an anecdote about a man who, in his cups, undertook to drink the sea dry. "I'm on for the sea," he says, when they brought him down to his work; "but I don't undertake the bloomin' rivers." And, as the other party could not stop the rivers, the man took the cake after all. The story is as old as Egypt; but it comes in quite freshly here, and brings us along cheerfully to Bishop's Stortford, where everything is as quiet and rural as can be imagined, with a few cattle-trucks in a siding, suggestive of cattle-markets and fat and lean kine.

A rich and peaceful country lies around us, with the square embattled towers of churches showing here and there among the trees. Here is a village which boasts its own little station, an ancient church, a green castle mound, and red-tiled roofs moss-grown and lichen-covered; but the village does not concern itself with us, and we run on into a more bare and open country, where the white chalk gleams upon us from cuttings here and there on the hill-side. We pass through quite a deep cutting of hard grey chalk, which, says a fair and an imaginative passenger, reminds her of Matlock. But for the cutting we might have a glimpse of the stately old Tudor mansion of Audley End.

Coming out into the open here are wide corn-fields stretched before us—the harvest all cleared by this time—and with hundreds of gleaners at work scattered in groups over the hill-side, that is all one great enclosure, without trees or hedgerows, and bounded only by the horizon. Copses are scattered here and there, where Master Reynard may find an asylum; and here and there a scanty flock of sheep is folded in some nook or corner with the shepherd and his dog in attendance, survivals of the days when all this corn land was grassy down—days which may come again unless things take a turn, says one knowing in agricultural matters.

Soon we are in the flat country again, with the broad flanks of the Gog Magog hills showing for a while behind us, a flat and fertile country, full of groves, and copses, and avenues of tall elms; and yonder is "willowy Camus" winding through the landscape, all bristling with pollards and green osier-beds. And Cambridge appears—at least, the name of it—but it might be any other place, with trucks, and sheds, and covered platforms, for all we can see of it—so insignificant are the surroundings of this ancient seat of learning. Now there is a straight run over the ancient fen, with only an occasional watercourse or deep-cut ditch to remind one that all this wealth of verdure and vegetation is dependent for its existence upon sea-banks, and cuts, and huge systems of drainage.

There is no need to ask where we are now. We are gifted for the moment with one of the brightest, most charming glimpses: a reach of river here, a barge or two, a bridge, a few clustered roofs, and, rising above all, the lofty tower and graceful traceries of Ely's beautiful cathedral, majestic in form, fairylike in structure—a very dream realised in ashlar and freestone. Then we lose sight of Ely, and plunge again into the rich, fertile country, all ancient fen, and once the site of the last camp of refuge of the last of the free English, after the Conquest. This brings us to Lynn, of which one does not see much, although that little — the towers of churches, the masts of ships, the clustered buildings—gives a pleasing impression of the old fen seaport.

From Lynn we are backed into the branch line for our destination, with a wide marshy flat stretching on one side, while on the other is what must have been the coast in ages past—now bold rising grounds, conspicuously crowned with woods. Vast earthworks, of prehistoric date, lie among those clustering trees, and among the entrenchments rises the keep of the fine Norman castle, now a noble ruin. It is called Castle Rising, and there is an ancient distich current which testifies to its ancient importance. It was once the appanage of Isabel, the treacherous wife of Edward the Second; and here she lived, during a long period of her son's reign, in a kind of honourable captivity.

On the other side we now get the gleam of the sea over the wide salt marshes, and the hulk of some vessel, cast away on the distant shore, shows against the bright horizon in quite portentous blackness. Portentously, too, does the wind whistle, and howl, and hum through every crack and crevice of our railway carriage, while sometimes a sharp, biting shower streaks the glasses with arrowy films. On the opposite side the woods look quite warm and pleasant by contrast—the sweep of pine-woods over the sandy knoll, with the neat gravelled drive winding over the brow. This is Wolferton, and the station for Sandringham, which lies on the further side of the sand-hills, nicely sheltered from all this howling blast. But the beauty of colouring on the hill-side, and on the mossy, moorish patches below, makes one forget everything else—the bonnie heather all in full bloom; the lichen, and mosses, and strange plants of all kinds, which spread orange and tawny carpets, touched with seams of gold. All this is as charming as unexpected, and a stray, straggling sunbeam lights it all up with a wonderful radiance that touches not the dark belt of pine-trees beyond.

Still over the flat runs our train, and over a single line now, and we have to pull up every now and then while some train from the opposite direction passes by. And all these trains are well filled. Rosy girls, and anxious mothers, and sturdy children appear, with baskets, pails, wooden shovels, and bundles of sand-shoes piled among them. These people are all coming away from the seaside, and they look out at us, who are going there, in mild astonishment, mingled, one fancies, with a little gentle compassion. Then we catch sight of a few houses, built of a ruddy-looking unhewn stone—houses which at once transfer our imaginative lady traveller into the wilds of Yorkshire; but here, without further preamble in the way of suburbs, we are run alongside a platform, and here is Hunstanton.

My word! how the wind whistles in the rigging of our little crowd! How the skirts flap and crack in the breeze! There is a hillside covered with houses, built of the same warm-coloured unhewn stone—a comfortable settlement enough, but with no particular comforts to offer to us excursionists. A prim-looking iron pier stretches over the sands. Wet are the sands, the boulders wet, too, and slippery, the terraces swept by the wind. Harry curls up, and feels like a caterpillar. What about the toyshops, the articles of the beach, the little bazaars, the stalls full of nicknacks, the toy-boats and full-rigged ships? Everything that will fly away is stowed inside, and the proprietors eye us through their windows with the same air of mild compassion that we noticed about the retreating visitors. Bleak and cold gleams the white lighthouse on the cliffs. The red cliffs, with their caps of white chalk, are swept from end to end by the searching wind. There is angry, broken water beyond the sands. The boats at their moorings are shipping water by bucketfuls; some have already sunk; and there is some excitement in watching the efforts of their proprietors to retrieve such articles in the way of sails and oars which have been left in them. "Who's for a sail?" cries Harry, and volunteers to be one to man the lifeboat if she will undertake the trip. Among the white sea-horses wide sands are showing their broad backs, and, beyond, the dark coast of Lincolnshire runs out into the darker sea-line; on the horizon, a big screw steamer, three-parts out of the water, shows her huge bulk, panting and puffing out white steam, but making little headway.

"And this is the Wash!" cried Harry, surveying the scene. "It's beautiful weather for it, certainly, fine drying weather, only it's trying for the clothes-pegs. Brings out the patent blue, though, don't it? Next time I'll do my little wash at 'ome!" Harry is bitterly sarcastic against the weather, the scenery, and everything, and lets out his feelings before a philosophical sailor man who is selling nuts, and who puts down his basket to argue the matter out.

"Now, look y'ere, sir," he cries, "you can't expect to have all good 'uns, not even along of my nuts, you can't. And if you gets a crowd o' people, there's some good and some bad, and likewise with the weather 'tis the same, good days and bad 'uns."

Out of the mixture of good and evil, indicated by the philosophical nut-seller, there certainly comes forth a good dinner. They have prime beef and mutton down here. But the tradition of the Norfolk dumpling seems to have faded out of existence. The more familiar Yorkshire seems to have crowded it out of existence; anyhow at public tables, though, no doubt, it still survives in the domestic cuisine. But fortified and refreshed, Harry is once more disposed to enjoy himself, if he can get the chance. But the ministers of his simple pleasures are no longer here; the gay Bohemians all are fled. A band is announced for Wednesday evening, but that is of no use to us on a Monday. The pier is something of a desert, although the glazed enclosure at the end is a capital refuge against the biting wind. A family party are picnicking out here; the children career over the empty benches, and play imaginary overtures in the band-stand. A pair of young honeymooners are making eyes at each other. A young fellow, in rough sea-going rig, watches the angry waves that are playing battledore and shuttlecock with his little craft that lies out at anchor among the surf. And then the sun breaks out for a little while, and throws glorious gleams of light over breaking surf and wet sands, and the broad backs of shoals and sandbanks. The white lighthouse and the red and white cliffs gleam and glower in the sunshine, and the warm tints of the houses, and the vivid green of lawn and grassy slope come out in pleasant contrast. Girls are galloping their ponies over the sands, children paddle among the laughing ripples.

But great battalions of clouds are on the march, and with them is the wind that whistles and howls, and the driving shower with its keen biting drops. But, as Harry observes, it is fine drying weather, and the moisture of the shower is quickly carried off by the wind.

"And now, young gentleman," says the philosophic nut-seller, whom Harry has propitiated by the purchase of a pint of his wares, mostly good, but not warranted to be all good, "you'll go home, and say you've bin to Hunston; but you haven't, not yet. Hunston's about a mile and a half further along." But Harry declares that this is Hunston enough for him, and declines to explore the country further.

Yet the walk to old Hunstanton, which is the real original settlement from which the sea-bathing town is an offset, is really a pleasant one; and over the brow of the hill, away from the sea, the air is quite mild and genial. The quiet country lane is warm, and sheltered with green hedgerows, where honeysuckle and bramble flourish, and wide fields opening out, and great stacks of yellow corn piled here and there. Then the village appears, which is warm and snug, too, with its red-brick cottages weathered and mellowed by the shine and storm of a few centuries. And here are gardens of the brightest and most luxuriant, still full of roses, and with a wealth of autumn flowers. Lower down a kind of ravine breaks away towards the sea, on the edge of which stands the coast-guard station, with its tall flagstaff and neat, whitewashed dwellings, which all look towards the sea over a broken, hummocky shore. The place looks quite an ideal one for smuggling; but that is all over now, and the population of the village seem to be more in the way of harvesting, stacking, and threshing, than in any seafaring business.

A pleasant lot of the infant coast-guard are clambering about the low wall and the palings of the station, and a young woman is playfully threatening them with the vengeance of the authorities. A tall, paternal-looking coast-guard is on the look-out with a long telescope, and judges the weather with an impartial eye. "There is too much wind for rain," he says, "to last; but we shall have showers, no doubt." And the shower part of the prophecy is abundantly fulfilled.

But the church is a refuge from wind and rain—the church that lies in a sheltered nook out of the way of all the trouble and turmoil of sea and shore. A handsome church, with a fine square tower, and generally a noble air about it. Close by the church is the Hall, the seat of the family of Le Strange, which, according to genealogists, has been there ever since the Conquest; and the chancel of the old church is full of family memorials in the way of brasses, monuments, and inscriptions. Everything now in the church looks bright and burnished; the brasses well polished, the marbles bright and glittering. The old Norman font is wreathed with white flowers, and the chancel glows with the decorations for the harvest festival. The ladies who have been at the work have just finished their labours, and look tired enough; but the result is worth their labour and pains. All the fruits and flowers of the season have been deftly arranged in glowing trophies, that cast a radiance over the dim chancel, though the clouds above are dark and lowering.

Beneath a noble altar tomb in the very centre of the chancel, adorned with elaborate brasses, a whole family pedigree surrounding the central figure, lies Sir Roger L'Estrange—not the Sir Roger more or less familiar to us as the licenser of printing in the reign of Charles the Second, but his grandfather, probably. The father of our Sir Roger has a monument on the chancel floor with the punning inscription, "Hamo Extraneus Miles," an inscription probably prepared by Sir Hamo himself without any thought of humour, but considering himself indeed a stranger and pilgrim, even in his own land and among his own kinsfolk. In a satire on the licenser of the press, this Sir Hamo is described as the knight of the pulpit, and he seems to have been the author of several controversial works on the side of orthodoxy and authority in the civil and ecclesiastical contests that raged in his day. Sir Roger of the Press was his third son, a captain under Major Cartwright in the garrison at Newark, who conceived the rash plan of surprising Lynn for the King with a few bold fellows, but who was captured and barely escaped being hanged for his pains. But he is more interesting in later years under the Restoration as one of the earliest pioneers of the newspaper press. The "Public Intelligencer and News," which he started in 1663, was superseded after a time by the "London Gazette." But some years later he started another newspaper—the "Observator"—which had a more lengthened existence. Sir Roger was also a voluminous writer on many topics, but is best known to the general as the translator of Æsop's Fables. In the Rabelaisian satire upon the worthy knight, there is one passage of a little interest as referring to this particular church. "Climbing up a tree he espied, about two hundred leagues from him, the top of a steeple, which, by the cross on the top of it, he knew stood in the land of Norfolchia, not far from his father's castle." There is no cross now, and no steeple, indeed; but whether at any time the square church towers, so common in Norfolk, were ever adorned with wooden steeples, and these steeples terminated by a cross, is a question for the archæologists of the county.

But we have no more time to linger in this pleasant sheltered nook. The day is drawing in, and the weather is getting worse instead of better, and there is abundant demonstration, despite the coastguardsman, that it is possible to have it blow hard and rain hard at one and the same time. All things considered, it is satisfactory to gain the shelter of the station roof without a thorough drenching.

As dusky darkness settles over the scene, the train for St. Pancras is made up, and it is pleasant to exchange the dripping gloom outside for the lighted carriages, cushioned and warm. Harry is in his seat in good time, but only recovers his spirits when the train is fairly on the move. There is little to be seen till the moon rises solemnly in a cloudy sky over the town of Lynn, and we agree that it was on such a night as this that the stern-faced men set out for Lynn, when Eugene Aram walked between. We have a capital run to London, and agree that, as far as the railway company is concerned, we could not have had a better finish of the season. "But you don't catch me out again," says Harry, "not beyond 'Ighgate 'Ill, till summer comes again."

CURIOUS RAIN SHOWERS.

Contrary to popular belief, clouds are not essential to the production of rain. Sometimes the rain may be wafted on the wind from a distance; but it may also be caused by the condensation of moisture, without its passing through the intermediate state of clouds. In the higher regions this vapour may become frozen, even without the semblance of a cloud, and descending to a warmer stratum, be again dissolved, dissipated, or precipitated. We have it on the authority of Sir J. C. Ross, that in the South Atlantic it rained on one occasion for over an hour when the sky was entirely free from clouds. In the Mauritius and other parts of the southern hemisphere, this is not a rare occurrence; but in Europe it is, and the greatest known length of its duration was ten minutes at Constantinople.

We find frequent mention, in old writers, of blood rain, which was supposed to fall only at rare intervals, and to portend some dire calamity. This is no other than red rain, which, with red snow, is a perfectly natural as contradistinguished from a supernatural phenomenon, and is caused by various substances—plants, animalcules, and minerals—infinitely small, which, gathered into the air by the wind, mingle with the rain globules in such untold quantities, as to completely hide the original colour. Some years ago there fell a shower of red rain at Bristol, which, on examination, was found to derive its colour from the seeds of ivy-berries which fell with it. Pollen showers, vulgarly called yellow or sulphur rains, are comparatively common; some are the pollen of the Scotch fir; and one extraordinary fall of this kind of rain, which took place during the night, was phosphorescent, and greatly alarmed the beholders. One afternoon, we are told by Dr. Thomson, in his "Introduction to Meteorology," the wooded part of Morayshire appeared to smoke, and, for a time, fears were entertained that the fir plantations were on fire. A smart breeze suddenly got up from the north, and above the woods there appeared to rise about fifty columns of something resembling smoke, which wreathed about like waterspouts. The atmosphere now calmed, and the mystery was solved; for what seemed smoke was, in reality, the pollen of the woods. Readers of the "Origin of Species" will readily understand the importance of this distribution of pollen in the fertilisation of the fir-trees. Showers of "manna," like that, presumably, which saved the children of Israel in the wilderness, are frequent, and consist of an esculent lichen, which, in times of famine, has done good service in the preservation of a whole people. In 1815, a lake in the south of France suddenly became a patchwork of red, violet, and grass-green, which, on examination by Klaproth, was found to have been caused by myriads of various coloured animalcules.

Black rain is another curious phenomenon, which has not yet been properly and adequately explained. There fell, on the twenty-third of November, 1819, a remarkable black shower at Montreal, accompanied by appalling thunder. The fall had been preceded by dark and gloomy weather over the whole of the States and Canada, and, when Montreal itself was visited, the whole city became dark; the atmosphere appeared as if covered with a thick haze of a dingy orange colour, and the rain which fell had a thick and dark inky appearance, and seemed to be impregnated with some black substance resembling soot. The first visitation was made on a Sunday; on the day following, the weather became clearer; but on the Tuesday a heavy damp vapour with a black pall enveloped the whole city again, and it became necessary to light the candles and lamps in all the houses. "The appearance," says a writer, "was awful and grand in the extreme." A little before three o'clock a slight shock of earthquake was felt, and a noise resembling the distant discharge of artillery was heard. It was now that the increasing gloom engrossed universal attention. At twenty minutes past three, when the darkness seemed to have reached its greatest depth, the whole city was instantaneously illuminated by the most vivid flash of lightning ever witnessed in Montreal, immediately followed by a peal of thunder so loud and near as to shake the strongest buildings to their foundations; and this was succeeded by other peals, and accompanied by a very heavy shower of rain of the colour above described. After four o'clock the heavens began to assume a brighter appearance, and fear gradually subsided.

Showers of snow and earth have been numerous; but showers of flesh, fish, frogs, etc., of which every sailor can tell stories, are worth noticing, as being of more infrequent occurrence. The flesh was recognised as a distinct substance by Schenchzer, about the beginning of the last century, and its true animal nature was shown by Lemonnier, in 1747. It is said to have borne a greater resemblance to mucus than to gelatine or tannin; but it does not exactly agree with any of these. It is unctuous, greyish-white, and, when cold, inodorous and tasteless; it is soluble in warm water, and then resembles thin beef-tea. In South America an area of country forty-three miles square was, on one occasion, found strewed with fish; and on another occasion, in England, at a considerable distance from the sea, a pasture field was found scattered over with about a bushel of small fish. Herrings fell in 1828 in Kinross-shire; and instances of other similar falls are legion. At Ham, in France, a M. Peltier, after a heavy rain had fallen, found the square before him covered with toads. "Astonished at this," he tells us, "I stretched out my hand, which was struck by many of these animals as they fell. The yard of the house was also full of them. I saw them fall on the roof of a house and rebound from thence to the pavement. They all went off by the channels which the rain formed, and were carried out of the town." There is something of an apocryphal air about the latter part of this experience; but the phenomena of flesh, fish, and fishbone showers are reasonable enough. The fish are taken up into the air in a waterspout, borne along by the currents, and dropped, it may be, some hundreds of miles away, just as dust, containing small animals and plants, is gathered up near the Amazon and dropped on some vessel passing the Madeira or the Cape de Verde Islands.

Showers of hailstones of a great size are common; but perhaps the few instances which we give here are not so well known, and will therefore bear relating. In England, in 1202, hailstones fell "as large as big eggs," to use the words of the old chronicler. At the end of the seventeenth century some were found measuring from eight to fourteen inches in circumference; and in Scotland, in 1269, "there rose great winds with storms of such unmeasurable hailstones, that manie towns were thrown down by their violence, and fires spread throughout the kingdom, burning up steeples with such force of fire, that the belles were in divers places melted." In the Orkney Islands, in 1878, hailstones were gathered as large as a goose's egg; and in 1822 men and animals were killed by them on the banks of the Rhine. The most extraordinary hailstone on record, however, is that said by Heyne to have descended near Seringapatam, towards the close of Tippoo Sultan's reign; it was as large as an elephant! This is a great attempt on one's credulity, and, after it, perhaps we had better come to a close.

CATHERINE MAIDMENT'S BURDEN.

A STORY IN TWELVE CHAPTERS.

By MARGARET MOULE.

CHAPTER VI.

Mrs. Arbuthnot, having finished her after-dinner nap, was coming slowly down the stairs at the Castle on the following day. She was wondering what she could do with herself during the hour that lay between her and tea-time. Experience had taught her that time spent in looking for her daughter was likely to be time wasted. Grace was never to be found when she was wanted, and, from the fact that she had, at lunch-time, mentioned no definite plans for the afternoon, her mother inferred that they were, probably, privately well matured. She was not afraid for Grace, to-day. She thought the sobering effect of yesterday's accident would keep her from any very daring action in the immediate future, and Captain Carnforth being out for the day, on a long expedition, in company with Mr. Dare, her mind was completely at rest, and all the more at leisure to try and devise occupation for herself.

The other two guests—Mrs. Kenyon and Miss Neville — had retired, after luncheon, to the drawing-room, each with a book. Mrs. Arbuthnot would, however, have ruthlessly interrupted their literary pursuits if she had not felt considerably disinclined for conversation with Mrs. Kenyon or chatter from Miss Neville.

So she refrained from approaching the drawing-room, and stood looking around her in the hall in a somewhat doubtful and depressed frame of mind. As she did so the outlook from the front door caught her eyes, and, with a sudden determination that she would take a little fresh air, Mrs. Arbuthnot took up a sunshade that she had laid in the hall on returning that morning from a drive, and went out alone into the grounds.

She had not gone more than a hundred yards after leaving the gardens when the sound of quick steps behind her made her start, and Mr. Stewart-Carr came up to her.

He had been unavoidably absent all the morning on business connected with a political meeting, in which he was expected to take a prominent part, in the small county town near Moreford; and none of his guests had seen him since breakfast-time.

"My dear Mrs. Arbuthnot," he said, as he reached her, "are you making a lonely tour of my grounds? I am very sorry not to have been at hand sooner; but I was detained very much longer than I expected. Now I am on the spot may I accompany you? I can point out accurately all their defects and all their attractions," he ended, laughingly.

Mrs. Arbuthnot saw, in this unlooked-for appearance of Mr. Stewart-Carr, a most happy dispensation of Fate. The hour before tea would now no longer be tedious; and with a quick turn of thought, that was instinctively if unconsciously diplomatic, she decided that this hour might be well used by her to help forward what she mentally called "Grace's interests": in plain words, her own cherished scheme of marrying Grace to Mr. Stewart-Carr.

So she welcomed him very graciously, and acceded to his proposal still more graciously.

"Don't overtax an old woman's walking powers, that is all I ask," she said, smiling; "you young men are so alarmingly athletic."

He answered her by some complimentary and deprecatory words, and proposed to her that they should take their way towards a higher part of the park, which commanded a good view of the whole; and they set out across the shady slopes together.

"Whereabouts was it that dear Grace fell yesterday?" said Mrs. Arbuthnot, after a short pause, during which she had been carefully considering how to introduce the subject of Grace most adroitly and most quickly; and had come to the conclusion that direct methods, after all, were the most simple and satisfactory.

"Oh, nowhere near here," he answered. "On quite the other side of the park. It was near the White House—the house you catch sight of from the drive." Then, turning round to her, "I do hope," he went on, "that Miss Arbuthnot is not feeling any bad effects this afternoon. I hope she is still as much recovered as she felt this morning."

"Oh, yes, thank you," Mrs. Arbuthnot said, with an ease as complete as her agitation of the day before. "She is quite well again; the shock has entirely passed away. But," she added, more gravely, "it might not have been so. Dear Grace is so terribly reckless; I trust this may be really a serious warning to her."

"I blame myself greatly," Mr. Stewart-Carr went on, "for having such a horse as Queen Bess in my stables. I have meant to part with her for months; but you know how one puts off these things, and I never wrote or gave the order. I heartily wish I had. One has no right to keep dangerous animals."

"Indeed, Mr. Stewart-Carr, it is not you who should blame yourself. What more could you do than warn Grace? Indeed, if I remember, you refused to let her mount the horse."

"Yes; I refused," he said, with a smile. "Grace has, I hope, told you that she is quite aware of her recklessness and defiance in taking it," Grace's mother said, eagerly.

"Oh, yes," he replied, lightly. "We've quite settled all that. We had it out after breakfast this morning."

Very much encouraged by the thought of the understanding between the two which his last words seemed to imply, Mrs. Arbuthnot began to enter more directly on her subject.

"Grace is always very penitent after her rash acts," she said; "and thoroughly ready to own herself in the wrong."

"I am sure of it," he answered, warmly.

"And I often feel the recklessness will soon wear it itself out, with a little more experience."

"Doubtless," he replied.

"Grace's character is really a fine one in its way," she went on, musingly. "All she needs to develope it is a firm hand. I do not give her all she needs in the way of advice and control, I know well."

Mr. Stewart-Carr did not answer. He perfectly understood the somewhat undisguised nature of this criticism. He knew that Mrs. Arbuthnot meant to let him see clearly that, if he intended to propose to Grace, he need fear no discouragement; rather, he would receive the warmest encouragement. And he knew well, in his own mind, that to propose to Grace was just what he did intend to do. But yet this openly expressed encouragement did not give him the strong sensation of pleasure which it might well have been expected to give. He thought over the words vaguely; then he flicked at a fern with his stick in passing; and all at once the sun seemed to him very hot, and he thought of the thick, heavy shade under the Maidments' mulberry-tree. It was just at this time yesterday, he thought, that he had been sitting there. Then, suddenly becoming aware that Mrs. Arbuthnot's words demanded some sort of comment, and that his silence was, to say the least of it, uncourteous, he pulled himself up quickly, and turned to her.

"I—beg your pardon," he said. "I must have seemed very rude. I really do not know how it was, but I was thinking."

Mrs. Arbuthnot did not mind his erratic response, and she by no means minded his "thinking." The more thinking that he indulged in the better, she thought, if his thoughts were, as they certainly must be now, she told herself, with Grace.

She told herself also that it would be wiser to lay aside the subject of Grace for the present, in order to let what she had already said have its proper weight. So she reserved, for a future moment, a little list she had prepared for Mr. Stewart-Carr's edification, of Grace's admirers during the past season, and suavely followed his lead, when he, anxious to atone for his breach of courtesy, began hastily to explain to her the history of that part of the park in which they now were, telling her that it was believed to be the only remnant of an ancient forest. Mrs. Arbuthnot gracefully assumed an interest she certainly did not feel in the ancient forests of England; and while they talked of them their round of the park was completed by reaching the gardens once more.

On one of the smooth lawns, the turf of which looked like velvet, a table was spread for afternoon tea; and near it, trying to look as if their appearance there was unconnected with a longing for tea-time, were Mrs. Kenyon and Miss Neville. Mrs. Arbuthnot and Mr. Stewart-Carr joined them quickly.

"It's no use thinking of Dare and Carnforth," their host said; "I don't expect them till dinner-time, if then; so will you please give us some tea, Mrs. Arbuthnot?" But he suddenly looked round him, hastily. "Where is Miss Arbuthnot?" "Where is Grace?" exclaimed he and her mother, simultaneously.

"I have not seen Miss Arbuthnot since luncheon," said Miss Neville, emphatically. Miss Neville was "considered pretty," and was a little jealous of the superior effect made by Grace Arbuthnot's fresher, younger, more decided attractions. She and her aunt, Mrs. Kenyon, with whom she lived, were old acquaintances of the Arbuthnots, and had been asked to meet them at his house by Mr. Stewart-Carr with the intention of making a pleasant house-party. Outwardly he had succeeded admirably, for Miss Neville's feelings were hidden deeply within her own breast. She was far too wise to betray them by word or look.

"Grace ought to be in by now, wherever she may have wandered to," said her mother, a little anxiously, as she poured out the tea and handed to Mr. Stewart-Carr two cups, which he proceeded to convey to Mrs. Kenyon and Miss Neville.

"Shall I go and look for Miss Arbuthnot?" he said, coming back to the tea-table and taking up a plate of cake.

"It is very good of you, Mr. Stewart-Carr," began Mrs. Arbuthnot; "but I don't like to give you that trouble."

"It is none," he said, handing the cake to Mrs. Kenyon as he spoke. "I shall have great pleasure. I will go directly I——"

But he was interrupted.

"There is Grace!" her mother exclaimed, suddenly. "Who has she got with her?"

Coming across a grassy slope, which, being fairly free from trees, was therefore well in sight, were two figures—those of Grace Arbuthnot and a tall man.

Miss Arbuthnot was walking rapidly along in an easy, graceful manner, with a long stick in one hand. The man carried a large basket. Mr. Stewart-Carr scrutinised the two for a moment, then, turning to Mrs. Arbuthnot:

"That is Mr. Maidment," he said—"my agent. It was he who picked Miss Arbuthnot up yesterday. I do not think you saw him at his house, though. He is one of the nicest fellows possible. I must go and speak to him."

"Mr. Maidment!" said Mrs. Arbuthnot. "He found Grace, did you say? Do, pray, bring him in and let me thank him. I was far too worried yesterday to thank any one properly—I am afraid I hardly said anything I should have said to Miss Maidment herself. Do, please, bring him in!"

"Certainly," said Mr. Stewart-Carr, moving away from the little group towards the gate, which he reached at the same moment as the other two.

A moment or two later the three crossed the lawn together. Grace Arbuthnot's white skirts were wet and muddy, her little sailor hat was tossed to the back of her head, and her general appearance more or less dishevelled and draggled. But she seemed unaware or unconscious of it, and without even observing Miss Neville's critical and rather withering glances, went up to her mother, and scarcely waited for the end of Mr. Stewart-Carr's introduction of Frank Maidment to say, with an irresistibly bright laugh:

"My dear mother, you must please be very grateful to Mr. Maidment. He picked me up yesterday, and he dragged me out of a pond to-day!"

Mrs. Arbuthnot looked helplessly from her daughter to Frank Maidment, and then to Mr. Stewart-Carr, while Mrs. Kenyon and Miss Neville looked on in silent, and, in the case of the latter, somewhat sarcastic surprise.

Mr. Stewart-Carr came to the rescue.

"Sit down, Maidment, won't you?" he said, placing a chair for him near to Mrs. Arbuthnot. "And perhaps," he added, turning to Miss Arbuthnot with a smile, "you will go further into detail. Have you been on a poaching expedition in my preserves, may I ask, with Maidment as aider and abettor?"

"I got—into a hole," she said, with a laugh. "I never thought of poaching; I'll try that another day. It would be thrilling! I went to-day to try and get those water-lilies you showed us the other day. I thought I could, if I went by myself. But it was no good; I only got stuck in a muddy hole, where I couldn't reach the lilies or get myself out. Mr. Maidment came by at that moment; he heard my screams and rescued me! He also kindly carried home the basket. Now," she ended, with a pretty, impulsive gesture, "everybody knows everything, and may I have some tea?"

While Mr. Stewart-Carr carried her cup to Grace Arbuthnot, Mrs. Arbuthnot turned to Frank Maidment.

"I must tell you how sorry I am," she said, "for not having expressed my gratitude to you and to your sister, yesterday. The confusion of the moment must be my excuse. You will let me thank you now."

"There is nothing to thank me for," he answered, readily and courteously. "I am glad I happened to be at hand, and I am delighted to have been of any use."

"And will you please convey my best thanks to your sister?" Mrs. Arbuthnot went on. "I am most grateful to her for her care of my daughter."

"I am coming myself to thank Miss Maidment," put in Grace Arbuthnot.

"Indeed, she doesn't need thanks," he said, quickly. "But, at the same time, she will be delighted to see you."

"Maidment," said Mr. Stewart-Carr, approaching him with a cup in his hand, "you'll have some tea? Let me introduce you first, though, to Mrs. Kenyon—and Miss Neville."

As Frank Maidment took his cup, after having acknowledged the introductions, he gave a rueful glance at himself.

"I hadn't the least idea," he said to Mr. Stewart-Carr, "when you allured me with the offer of tea, how muddy and unpresentable I was. I apologise sincerely."

"You're not half so muddy as I am, Mr. Maidment!" cried Grace Arbuthnot.

"And you got muddy in a good cause, no doubt," added Mrs. Kenyon, with a little smile.

"I don't think you are dishevelled enough to apologise to me, Maidment," laughed Mr. Stewart-Carr. "And I am sure the ladies will—indeed, they have excused you. Oh, you do take sugar," he was handing Frank Maidment the sugar as he spoke. "I'm thankful to find some one to keep me in countenance."

"You are in a minority?" said Frank Maidment, with a smile.

"My dear fellow, not one of these ladies takes any! I have heard them all refuse it each day, and I have each day felt more guilty in enjoying four lumps myself."

"My dear Mr. Stewart-Carr," said Mrs. Kenyon, "some one must support the sugar industry of the country, and we, of course, look to you to do it, as we, naturally, expect the stronger sex to take all trouble off our shoulders!"

"It's a trouble Mr. Stewart-Carr undertakes very readily," laughed Grace Arbuthnot. "And I believe Mr. Maidment also thinks it more of a pleasure," she added, turning to him with a saucy smile.

"I do," he said, returning her smile. "I confess it, frankly."

Mrs. Arbuthnot, who was not a person capable of appreciating even the simplest attempt at a humorous tone in conversation, had felt herself rather at a loss for the last moment or so, and therefore seized the little pause which followed Frank Maidment's words, as an opportunity to make a perfectly comprehensible, if somewhat uninteresting and irrelevant remark, on the character of the country round Moreford. And with this lead, the conversation for the next ten minutes became general. At the end of that time, Frank Maidment rose, and set down his tea-cup.

"I must be going," he said to Mr. Stewart-Carr. "I said 'two or three moments' to you just now, when you asked me in. I have let more than that go by, I think!"

"It's not late, Maidment," Mr. Stewart-Carr said.

"My sister will be looking for me, I think," he answered. And then he went on to take his leave. He came to Grace Arbuthnot last. "Good-bye," he said; "I am very sorry I couldn't get at the lilies for you."

"Good-bye, Mr. Maidment," she said. "Don't mind the lilies. I'll take a boat next time! Thank you ever so much for being so clever in getting me out of the mud!"

He looked for a moment at her pretty, smiling face, as he took the hand she offered; then lifting his hat again, crossed the lawn to the gate accompanied by Mr. Stewart-Carr, while Mrs. Arbuthnot, aided by the other two, endeavoured to cross-examine Grace as to the details of her adventure.

An hour later, Mrs. Kenyon, Miss Neville, and Mrs. Arbuthnot had all gone to their rooms to dress for dinner. Grace, however, had not gone with them. During their walk to the Castle, Frank Maidment had incidentally spoken to her of the excellent fishing that was to be had in some of Mr. Stewart-Carr's trout-streams, and Grace, at the information, had become fired with a desire to fish them. She had completely forgotten the desire again, however, until they were all re-entering the house after tea, when it recurred to her mind, and then, turning suddenly round to Mr. Stewart-Carr, she had demanded, with the impulsive vivacity which, to him, made one of her greatest charms, to be thoroughly and instantly informed on the subject of his fishing, his fishing-tackle, his personal knowledge of the craft, and every possible detail connected with the idea. He had responded by proposing to show her the fishing-rods he possessed, and Mrs. Arbuthnot, only too glad to promote the desirable prospect of a tête-à-tête between them, had left them together in the hall.

"They are as old as the hills, I'm afraid," he said, as Grace, on her mother's departure, perched herself on the lowest step but one, and sat looking at him with her elbows on her knees, her face between her hands, and serious, considering eyes. "And they are all in my den. I don't dare say my study, for it's simply a little hole full of miscellaneous belongings, in a muddle. But, if you don't mind that, we'll have a look at them at once."

Grace assented eagerly, and he forthwith led the way to the room in question. It was an oddly-shaped little room. Part of it formed the first floor of one of the battlemented gateway towers, the rest ran out into the modern part of the house, and was as light as the queer round part was dim.

Mr. Stewart-Carr shut the door, and proceeded to dive into the recesses of the round part, while Grace, after a curious glance round her, stood under one of the large windows in the lighter end, to await the result of his researches. He came to her in a moment with five or six fishing-rods. "I've got some better ones somewhere," he said, vaguely, presenting the best of the lot for her inspection, and setting the others down on a chair. "These are odd ones that I've brought here, and left here, and so on; and they're not improved by disuse. But I'll have that one done up for you, if it's light enough. Fenton shall take it into Molton to-morrow, and get it done."

"Oh, thank you!" Grace said, eagerly. "Then I could fish at once. I shan't catch anything, I know, but I'm dying to try. It's awfully good of you."

She gave him back the rod, with a quick little movement. Her face was bright with impulsive excitement, her eyes shone like a child's, with eagerness, and the dim background of the round part of the room seemed to enhance the fresh colouring of her face, and define every line of her pretty figure.

Mr. Stewart-Carr took the rod from her and put it in a corner near the door, then he put the others back into their place. He came rather slowly back to the window, watching Grace Arbuthnot intently as he did so.

She had leant her elbows on the sill and was looking out with a soft expression in her eyes, and a little expectant smile on her lips.

Mr. Stewart-Carr felt an odd sensation as he looked at her. This, he told himself, was the woman he intended to make his wife. He had firmly decided that with himself, and nothing stood in his way, nothing remained but to ask her. He believed she would say yes to him. He had tried, as he had resolved, in the library the day before, to show her what he wished and hoped, and he had fancied she understood. At least, she had seemed to him, in some undefinable way, far more approachable to-day. And now he had before him an opportunity fitting in every way. They were alone; they were not in the least likely to be interrupted; and she was apparently in a softer and more emotional mood than was often the case with her.

He determined—and the decision gave him a kind of thrill as he made it—that he would settle his fate and decide his destiny, now, at this moment.

He came close to Grace Arbuthnot. She did not move. She was still gazing out of the window.

"Miss Arbuthnot," he began. She turned slowly from the window at his voice. But then he could say no more. The words he had arranged suddenly stuck in his throat. Something, he did not know what, made him suddenly pause. He looked at her; but no words would come. He could not go on. There was no hurry after all, he thought. On second thoughts, he would wait—wait a day or two longer. "I—don't you think we had better dress for dinner?" he stammered.

Grace Arbuthnot did not seem to have noticed anything strange in his manner. She seemed to recall herself, though, at his words.

"Oh, yes," she said, with a smile. "It must be dreadfully late."

She passed swiftly out of the door he opened for her. But she must have dressed with unusual quickness, for it was still a quarter of an hour to the dinner hour when she came quietly into the empty drawing-room and ensconced herself in a window with a book. She did not read it, however; for her eyes were constantly turned anxiously to the door, as if expecting some one. It opened suddenly, in a few moments, and Captain Carnforth came in.

"I hoped I should find you here," he said, in a low tone. "I thought Dare and I were never going to get back."

"So did I—I mean—so did we," she said, correcting herself, with a bright blush.

NOTE.

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BY ESMÈ STUART.

Author of "A Faire Damzell," "Joan Vellacot," "Kestell of Greystone," etc. etc.

CHAPTER VII. CINDERELLA.

IT was late in the afternoon when Minnie came back, very tired and rather cross. The skating had not been quite so amusing as she had fancied it would be. Captain Grant had disappeared very soon after her arrival at the ponds, and when he came back he busied himself with everybody, instead of devoting himself to Minnie. Minnie would have preferred coming back directly after lunch, but Miss Crozby, a strong, energetic young lady, who went in for athletic exercises on principle, would not get tired, and her mother was quite happy sitting at the Towers gossiping with other interesting mothers. The Towers was one of the oldest houses at Longham; its grounds were extensive and well kept. Admiral Grant, though living alone, was a great gardener, and kept his place in good order against the time that "Colin should bring home a wife."

Longham generally wished that that time would come soon, as it was a universal injury that one of the most aristocratic mansions of the neighbourhood should be almost useless in the way of serving for a place of entertainment. All the young ladies speculated on the Captain's choice, and lately the prettiest Miss Gordon had been considered the favoured one. To-day, however, the anxious mothers fancied that Minnie Gordon had refused him, as it was noticed he had not been as attentive as usual to her. Others said that he was "too much of a gentleman" to persecute a girl with his attentions in public; so Minnie was still the favourite for the post.

Minnie, though feeling cross, was not going to let Beatrice notice her disappointment. Had she done so, and had she mentioned the fact that Captain Grant had disappeared from the ponds in the morning, Beatrice would have felt bound, under her new vow, to mention his visit. As it was she kept it to herself, and her mother and Frances both seemed too preoccupied to think about visitors.

Beatrice spent a dull afternoon till her sister came back; but she had the satisfaction of having nearly finished the ball-dress, and now felt that virtue had been rewarded. That little talk was worth more than a day's skating among a host of uninteresting people.

"There, now, I can put it away and enjoy myself," she cried, when Minnie entered. "How late you are, Minnie, and how tired you must be!"

"I am sorry you were not there; it was such fun, and I skated better than usual. Where is Frances?"

"Still with mother upstairs; they went up directly after lunch. What can be the matter?"

"Stupid bills, I suppose. It does seem hard that we are so poor, and that those stupid Leigh girls, who are so plain, should have more money than they know what to do with. I do declare that each new dress they put on makes them look plainer than the last. To-day they were in maroon velvet. Fancy putting on velvet dresses just to skate in."

"It must have looked warm and comfortable. How very nice we should look in maroon dresses, Minnie dear."

"I wouldn't wear it if I could. It is so unladylike to display one's riches."

"Who else was on the ponds?"

"All Longham. I suppose Captain Grant hardly knows who are the right people to ask yet; it was rather awkward skating with people one does not visit."

"I don't see why it was awkward. I expect Captain Grant thinks our cliques rather foolish."

"Beatrice, what will you say next? I suppose you have been reading some horrid Radical book lately. The Miss Waynes were there; very forward girls, who spoke to me as if we were intimate friends. Clergymen's daughters always think that because they are their fathers' daughters they can patronise everybody."

"I am sure they could not patronise you," said Beatrice, thinking of Minnie's chilly politeness to those who presumed to make too many advances with her. "But I think these are sensible, downright girls."

Beatrice, somehow, experienced to-day a gentle feeling of universal good-will towards all the visitors that Captain Grant had invited.

"I did not say they were not very good," said Minnie, pettishly. "Do let's have tea, Beatrice; skating makes one so thirsty."

"I'll ask mother if she will come down;" and, so saying, Beatrice skipped out of the room, feeling very young and very happy, for, evidently, Minnie had not had such a happy five minutes as had fallen to her share that morning.

Frances opened the door of her mother's room as Beatrice knocked.

"What do you want, Beatrice?"

Beatrice was so astonished to see, through the half-opened door, her mother's travelling-box and various articles strewn about that she could hardly speak.

"Minnie wishes to know if we may have tea; and—why! wherever is mother going?"

"Yes, order tea," said Mrs. Gordon, from the far end of the room. "I am coming down soon. Frances, have you ordered the fly?"

"Yes, mother."

The door was shut, and Beatrice was still more astonished. What could her mother be thinking of doing at four o'clock on this November afternoon, and why was the matter kept so secret? When she returned to the drawing-room Minnie had gone to take off her jacket, and before she returned all the party were assembled.

"I must go to London on business this evening," said Mrs. Gordon, simply; but Beatrice, looking up at her mother, saw an unusual look in her face. There was an excitement about her which she tried in vain to conceal.

"Not for long, mother? Who will go to the ball with Frances and Minnie, on Thursday? I have been working so hard at the dress."

"Mrs. Crozby will take them. I have just written a note to ask her; and, as I may be away for several days, I must trust you and Minnie to do nothing foolish or—unladylike in my absence. Don't go to the ponds without Mrs. Crozby or some one else of whom I should approve. Frances must take head of the house."

"How tiresome that you are going away just now, mother," said Minnie. "I suppose it is to talk with that horrible little lawyer?"

Mrs. Gordon looked up quickly; but Minnie had evidently said this most innocently.

"Yes; now that Christmas is coming on we must be——"

Mrs. Gordon paused, and began looking about the room in search of something she had lost.

"Why can't he come here, as he usually does?" asked Beatrice.

"Don't ask so many questions," said Frances, crossly. "How curious you are, Beatrice; it is very unladylike."

Bee blushed, but said no more; only she could not help wondering in her heart what very unusual events could make it necessary for her mother—who never left her daughters alone—to start off on a journey without any previous notice.

"Perhaps we have lost some money, and that worries her. Oh, dear! how tiresome money is! I wish we were like the Miss Waynes, who go out as nurses and governesses, instead of trying to keep up appearances by slaving away at our clothes."

But then, looking at Minnie with her pretty face and elegant manners, Beatrice decided that people would not like such a pretty governess if they had the chance of such a treasure.

"Good-bye, mother," said the three Miss Gordons as Mrs. Gordon stepped into a fly; "good-bye, and don't be anxious about us."

"Do write to-night," said Frances.

"And, mother, do bring me a new hat, if you can, from London," said Minnie.

But Beatrice only kissed her mother and said nothing but "Good-bye." She could not tell why, but a presentiment of misfortune made her sad this afternoon. Why all this secrecy? Why this uncertainty of return? Perhaps it was as she half thought—they were ruined. "And we could not be anything but dressmakers," sighed the girl as the sisters re-entered the drawing-room and tried to settle down to their various occupations. "I am sure Minnie never could stoop to being a dressmaker even now, when ladies do so many queer things. And then, even Captain Grant might object to marrying a dressmaker."

This was in truth the first of a chain of wonderful events which were to sever the connections of the Gordons with Longham and with the old life; but the reason was certainly not what Beatrice imagined it to be—the loss of their little fortune. It all hung on the death of James Gordon, which had been inserted in the "Times" by Mr. Blackston, the lawyer.

CHAPTER VIII. "NAN."

ONLY a week had passed since the death of the master of the Warren, but what a change it had wrought in the house. Perhaps the difference was more in the minds of the survivors than in the ways of the household itself; all the servants were still there awaiting further orders from Mr. Blackston, who now seemed the master of the Warren. Every day he had visited Grace, had carried out all the arrangements for the funeral, and had in the most kind manner saved the girl all the trouble attending a death in the house. Not only had the lawyer been kind, but Mr. Smith, the doctor, had been unremitting in his visits, making an excuse of Sibyl's health to come daily to the Warren. Sibyl had caught a bad cold on the night of her father's death, and had been kept in bed ever since.

Troubles had not come singly to the sisters; for "Nan" had written to Grace, saying nothing but real compulsion could have kept her away from the Warren at a time of such great and unexpected trouble; but her aunt, an old lady of seventy, was dangerously ill, and Nan being her only relation, she felt bound to nurse her; indeed, old Miss Evans had begged her not tô leave her, but the moment she was better, Nan would hasten back to the Warren.

Sibyl had cried still more on hearing this; but Grace knew that Nan never exaggerated; if she said she could not come, she knew it was true, but oh! the loneliness she experienced as she went softly along the passages of the big house all alone. Sibyl, comfortably asleep among her soft pillows, never knew what Grace went through; and kind, unselfish Grace would not tell her.

To-day Grace felt happier; the weather had turned to bright frost, the great heath-covered hills shone out in glorious browns and deep purples in the bright sunshine, and Grace, standing at the hall door, found pleasure in watching the cloud shadows chase themselves on the distant landscape. She had not been out even in the grounds till to-day; but now, even without going further than the front of the house, she could see miles away over blue-brown hills. The Warren was situated on the top of a hill, or heathy moor, extending down one side into a valley, whilst beyond this lay a long stretch of undulating moors, or reclaimed, or partly reclaimed, lands.

Grace loved every inch of this view; she knew each tree in the landscape, every rising ground in the distance, just as she could find her way about the old house that had been home to her in a special manner. Home indeed, for she had known no other.

The funeral had been of a very private character, no one but the Doctor and the lawyer attended, no relations were sent for and none came. The master had been one who had courted the acquaintance of few, and these few were not such as cared to be depressed by attending a funeral.

Grace had taken one look behind the drawn blind at the terrible black-plumed hearse; only one look, and then she had turned away and burst into a great passion of tears—the first real tears she had shed since her father's death.

To-day, however, she was not crying, for Nan was coming back. Mr. Blackston had written to say that he would call upon Miss Evans as soon as possible after her arrival, and then he would settle up with her everything that had to be left. Grace had then put away all ideas of business till Nan's return, because after that, of course, everything would go smoothly.

It was three o'clock in the afternoon, bright and frosty, the ground felt as hard as a rock, the crisp, sharp feeling of the keen air was bracing in the extreme.

Grace felt that she only wanted Sibyl's presence to feel almost happy; but her sister was still upstairs in her bedroom, though she had been allowed to get up and sit by the fire.

Grace had never even wished to smile all this week, but now youth was reasserting itself, she hurried in and out, putting everything tidy because Nan was soon to arrive, and Nan's arrival was an event that made Grace feel cheerful. Nan was coming! Hark! there were sounds on the gravel some way off towards the entrance drive—certainly carriage wheels—then a fly turned a corner, and, at that minute, Grace could stop still no longer, but ran forward just as the vehicle took the last turn up to the front door.

"Nan!" cried the girl, and from out the carriage there stepped forth a tall, gaunt woman; she was dressed in black, but her clothes were so old-fashioned and so utterly unbecomingly made and put on, that they were of no assistance to her in the way of embellishment.

But even handsome, well-made garments would not have softened the austere features of Miss Evans. She had coal-black hair drawn down over her ears without any attempt at artistic waviness; her forehead was low and massive; her eyes small and stern-looking; her nose was the best feature she possessed, straight and severe but well formed; whilst her lips were thin and compressed.

Nan's manner agreed with her face. There was no softness about her; she was a woman of few words, firm will, and untiring energy, and yet it was this same woman who had been able to win Grace's heart, and to attach to herself even frivolous, easily led Sibyl. But much as these girls knew what they owed to Miss Evans, they did not know all, they did not guess that it was her influence and her dogged determination that had made the master of the Warren keep these innocent girls ignorant of all evil. All this and more they owed—and happily they knew not they owed it—to Nan.

"Dear Nan," whispered Grace, as she put both her arms round Nan's neck and was about to kiss her, "I am glad you are come at last."

"Let me pay the flyman," was Nan's answer, taking off her cotton gloves and counting five shillings into the driver's hand, with a certain look of regret at parting with so much good coin. The man drove off, not without casting a look of curiosity at the windows of the Warren. What was going to happen to the house now its master was dead? Down at Colham they had been asking him about it, but he would not be able to take back much news on this subject.

"Are you cold and tired, dear Nan?" said Grace, now that they were alone. "Come in quickly, I have made up such a nice fire in our dear old schoolroom. Do you know, I have not been in the downstair rooms since—that night. Nan, Nan, why were you not here?"

"Don't waste your energy over the past, Grace," said Miss Evans, in her dry way. Any other than Grace might have thought her hard and unsympathetic at this moment, but Grace knew better. "Tell me, child, what has Mr. Blackston said to you, and what is arranged about the—servants? Tell me everything." Miss Evans looked straight into Grace's face as they entered the schoolroom, but she saw nothing unusual in its expression, except a shadow of sadness. This discovery seemed to relieve her mind, for she undid her bonnet strings, and folded them up in a precise manner. Certainly Miss Evans was old-maidish.

"I told you everything in my letter. Mr. Blackston and our good Doctor have both been so very kind; but the former said he would leave all business matters till he could see you; indeed, he talked of coming this evening, or sending you a letter. How safe I feel with you now, dear Nan. Oh! this week has made me so old, so very, very old."

"Nonsense, child, you are always fond of analysing your feelings, Grace; and so Sibyl is in bed?" Miss Evans turned her head away, rose hastily, and appeared to be very anxious to tidy some ornaments on the shelf.

"When will you two girls learn to put things away, in my absence?" she said, quickly and almost testily, so that even Grace did not notice the slight tremor in her voice, or detect a few tears roll down her thin, hard face, for there was no trace of this emotion as she turned round again towards her darling.

"I am very sorry, but don't mind about it now. Your feet are cold, dear, let me take off your boots. There are many things I want to tell you which I could not put in my letters. Do you know, I can't bear Mrs. Ashton; she is barely civil to me now. I expect I offended her when father was—dying. We need not keep all those servants now, need we? There will be no more dinner parties, and we can live so quietly, we three; you can teach me to cook—you said you would some day, and——"

"Let us settle just what we can do to-day; come, I want to see Sibyl. As to Mrs. Ashton, she can go if she is uncivil. But you have asked nothing of my affairs." Grace looked up surprised; Nan usually never spoke of her affairs, never asked or requested sympathy, and had once for all given her reason—"I can't bear my aunt; she is a proud, mean, uncharitable old woman, and I only nurse her because she is my aunt, and because I can't help myself"—but to-day Nan was actually finding fault with Grace for not enquiring.

"Come and tell us everything upstairs; Sibyl will like to hear you talk too. She has been so good, poor Sibyl, though I know she feels more than she shows us. If I had not had her to think for I think I should have died too."

"Nonsense, Grace! Girls of your age don't die, as far as I can see. You look much the same as usual, only a little paler. You must keep up your strength, and not give way so easily; you may want all your courage some day."

Grace smiled; it was quite pleasant to be scolded by Nan again; her scolding did not mean much, for that was her way, and generally heralded some unusual piece of self-denial or thoughtfulness.

Sibyl was delighted to see Nan, who to-day showed her more kindness in manner, perhaps, than she did to Grace; and Grace mentally said: "No one can be anything but loving to Sibyl, she is so winning, so sad, when she is in trouble."

So the three spent a pleasant time together; and, because Sibyl was ill, they had tea by her fireside, listening to Nan's stories, told in a quaint, original manner, about the aunt who had really been very ill, and very much frightened about herself.

"One day," said Miss Evans, among other things, "she made me sit up all night reading to her, because she said it kept the thought of dying out of her head. However, she did not mind about my aching throat, and was much amused because towards morning I nearly fell asleep. Still, when she recovered her temper, she told me she would make me her heir. You may fancy, Grace, how much that compensated me for my sleepless night."

"You don't care about money, certainly," laughed Grace. "But you know, Nan, you stayed up a whole week with me, night after night, when I was ill."

"It was necessary in that case; but——"

Sibyl here interrupted the conversation.

"Nan, dear," she half-whispered, "did father make Grace his heir? Will she be rich? Will she be able to buy us pretty dresses, and——"

Nan jumped up quite crossly, and it seemed as if she really were cross this time.

"Sibyl, I am ashamed of you, asking about pretty dresses, at this time, too. You always were vain, though I have tried to knock it out of you. Well, I must go and unpack my things. I suppose, Grace, Mr. Blackston did not say for certain when he would come?"

Miss Evans bustled off, and then, for the first time, Grace fancied that her manner was strange, and that she was certainly more angry than was necessary with Sibyl. She hastened to say:

"Of course, Sibyl, you shall have all that I can give you, darling. We two shall always share alike; what I have is yours, you know that, little sister."

"Yes, Grace; but do you think we shall see more—more people, and go about more, like the girls I read of in books?"

"I don't think we are quite old enough yet."

"You are; you are past 'sweet seventeen,' Gracie, so shall I be next year, and then——"

"Do you really like seeing new faces, Sibyl? I don't much; yours and Nan's faces are the only ones I care to know."

"You always were like that, Gracie; but I should like to know just something beyond all this. I should like to know that pretty lady we saw in church once—do you remember her?—and other people too. Then I should like to go out to parties."

Sibyl's longings were interrupted by a knock at the door. It was a young maid bringing in a note.

"Is Miss Evans here, miss?" she asked. There was something in the tone of her voice that jarred on Sibyl, something that was not quite respectful. Was this fancy?

"Take it to Miss Evans's own room, Fanny," answered Grace, quietly, and when the door was shut, she added:

"It is from Mr. Blackston, I suppose. I hope he will come soon, and dismiss Mrs. Ashton; we do not want all these servants."

"No; of course not, and I do believe, Grace, they are not so nice to us now that we are alone, and that father is dead. But it's rather strange."

"I don't think they mean it, Sibyl, dear, and, if they did Nan would soon make them ashamed of themselves. I don't believe any one could be rude to her!"

Up in her room, Miss Evans was opening the letter that had been brought to her. Her fingers trembled as she unfolded the sheet of paper.

"Coleham, November, 18—

"DEAR MISS EVANS,—I have delayed the discussion of all business matters with your charges till your return. Would you be kind enough to come over to Coleham to-morrow at eleven o'clock, to meet a relation of my late lamented client? As your presence is absolutely necessary, I trust that nothing will prevent you from keeping this appointment.—Yours faithfully, R. BLACKSTON."

"It must come sooner or later," said Miss Evans, after reading the letter. "Oh, Heaven! that such things should happen, and that I should be powerless to help them! My poor Grace, my little Sibyl, if only I could bear it for you!" It was a long time before Miss Evans could regain enough composure to rejoin the two girls, but when she did so, not a trace of her anxiety was visible.

"Let them be happy at least one more evening," she said, "if it must be their last."

A RUN THROUGH CORSICA.

IN TWO PARTS. PART I.

WE had a sensational approach to the island. A violent storm from the south-west broke upon the ship—the "Desiderade," of the Transatlantique Company—when we were off the middle of the west coast of Sardinia, on our way from Bone in Algeria. It came with a grey, half-blue scirocco haze. The mountains of Orisotano, in Sardinia, suddenly put on mantles, and we could see the quiet water in the distance gradually toss itself into wavelets. Then the wind reached us, and in a quarter of an hour the "Desiderade," with its five or six score passengers and its enormous cargo of wine, tobacco, and dried fruits—the lading of which had kept us idling for several hours at Bone—was tossing and rolling like a child sick of a fever.

It was really most unpleasant. Until this came upon us there was a certain amount of diversion from the society of eight or ten commercial travellers from Marseilles, who told curious tales or sang songs, one after the other. Among them was one very singular little fellow. At first, I took him for a schoolboy of sixteen or seventeen; but his self-possession and audacity in the midst of a knot of men of various ages up to fifty, declared him older than he looked. He sang, too, with rare drollery, so that the steward could not help coming in, with his napkin over his arm, and joining in the applause the youngster excited, with the remark: "Well, that gentleman is a funny one!" He played the fool, with himself as a butt, so admirably and genially that every one whispered his praises. He was a jewel of a fellow traveller, in spite of his diminutiveness, his red-bleared eyes—the work of the North African sun—and his consummate "cheek." The phrase, "C'est un bon garçon," was applied to him a hundred times in my hearing.

But an hour after luncheon, which had been protracted from one o'clock until three, "to kill the time," the storm took us, and then, instead of songs and anecdotes, there were groans.

The consequence was, that we did not reach Ajaccio until eight o'clock in the evening of the second day at sea. Even then it seemed doubtful if we could land. Some said it was impossible, as the wind was right on shore. But the Captain, who wished to get his cargo to Marseilles as quickly as he could, said "Yes;" and so we came to an anchor in the dark and the rain, with the roar of the waves upon the shore in our ears, and prepared for the trials of embarkation.

These trials were far from inconsiderable. The sea ran high even where we were under the lee of a stone pier. There was furious strife between the various boatmen of Ajaccio, who had come out in quest of their prey. And the lamps in the ship gave us so dim a light that it seemed that one were as likely to step into the sea as into the boats, which rose and fell tumultuously, amid the curses of their different proprietors and the angry arguments of the different passengers. It was hard work to get oneself and one's luggage into the same boat. The man who was parted from his portmanteau, or lost one of his trunks, had to face the likelihood that his baggage would be held at ransom by the crafty detainer of it, and not returned until a full fare had been paid on its behalf.

Well, it came off at last; and after a few minutes more of anguished up and down in the bay, we were set adrift upon the wet pier in a searching downpour, and advised to get off to the custom house. The lights of Corsica's capital made a very poor show in the gloom. The low white line of foam, where the waves rose over the embankment in the middle of the bay, was a much better illuminant.

At dinner, which we ate at nine o'clock, in the "Hôtel de France," with aching heads, half-a-dozen of my commercial friends indulged in tempestuous abuse of Corsica. They detested the island. French! It was no more French than Formosa. To be sure, it is a Department of France, and its officers are, of course, therefore nominees of the Republic, but the people are not a whit more amenable to French civilisation than they were a few centuries back to such improving influences as Genoa thought it worth her while to offer them. The hotels are all dirty and dear, and there is no trade worth mentioning.

So far, my good comrades of the "Desiderade." Perhaps they were out of humour with their buffetings, which had been so extreme that certain of them preferred to land, bag and baggage, at Ajaccio, and proceed overland to Bastia, thence taking the short passage to Livorno, whence, by a long, tedious rail journey, they might get to Marseilles—instead of staying on board the steamer, and arriving the next day. I don't know how that may be, but I do know that my own first impressions of Corsica were anything rather than cheerful. As if the racket on board the "Desiderade" were not enough, the wind must howl dismally all through the night. Periodically, I had to get out of bed and bang to the shutters and window of my room, which the gale had broken open with a crash fit to frighten even a deaf man. The rain used these opportunities to stream in upon me and my properties. And hardly was I in bed, after one of my endeavours to make all fast for the rest of the night, than there was another scream of wind, and the defences gave way again.

It was but little better in the morning. When I got up I could see the waves bustling upon the sand of the square in front of the hotel, and the spray rising against a great statue of Napoleon, who stood facing the Mediterranean, as if in a futile attempt to make it hold its peace. There was a clashing of church bells at the same time, and a constant tinkling of lesser bells, which hung in rows from the necks and heads of the mules gathered under the hotel windows, and waiting to be harnessed to the different diligences which were to start for the interior. The Corsicans themselves looked in harmony with the storm. They were striding and lounging about under the shelter of the plane-trees of the square, with their hands in their pockets, dressed uniformly in black velveteen coats and breeches and broad-brimmed black hats.

It was a fierce day all through, even as it had opened badly. Between the gusts I went hither and thither in the town, amid the bad smells of the old streets with their monstrous houses of seven and eight storeys high, and the villas of the new quarter which aspires to attract wealthy travellers who like to winter in out-of-the-way places.

Napoleon's birthplace was of course an obvious and inevitable place of pilgrimage. I came upon it quite by accident. There was a tiny mildewed little square aside from a narrow street, and in the railed garden of the square was a staff, like a broomstick, upon which was a faded imperial eagle. The house in which Bonaparte's father gave to the light his remarkable family of sons and daughters faces the eagle, and is not, as Corsican houses go, a building to be despised. It is a show place, naturally. The burly dame who played the guide to me did not scruple to say she received an astonishing number of francs in the year, fees for the inspection of this house of big memories. A yacht would put into Ajaccio for no other reason but to give its master and his friends an opportunity of seeing the house. If the steamers plying between Marseilles and Algeria chanced to call at Ajaccio in the dead of night, that did not deter the passengers from coming ashore and knocking at the door to rouse the guardian or his dame from their warm beds to do their duty.

As with most such places, however, one does not get much more inspiration from it than one carries with one into it. The suite of rooms occupied by Bonaparte the elder must have been comfortable enough in his day. The floors of neatly laid wood or tiles are still as they were, and the painted ceilings also. If the custodian may be believed, the furniture, too, is the same. But of this there is grave doubt. The man who gazes at the bedstead, which is indicated to him as the one upon which Napoleon came into the world, may credit it or not as he pleases. It is but a poor decaying piece of wood at the best. You see the stiff little writing-table upon which young Nap used to do his school-work in the evening; the card tables, serviceable for piquet or écarté in times of social receptions, a husky old spinet "sair to hear," two rows of thin-legged chairs, gilded mirrors a little tarnished, sofas with bursting insides, and so on. Upon the whole, the house interests. It is not difficult to locate young Nap in its midst—to conceive him as masterful a boy as he was afterwards a masterful man.

From the house I wandered to the church in which he was christened—a poor cathedral in a dirty neighbourhood. But my efforts to get a peep at the register were futile. The dame who came to offer her aid to me could not understand anything about Napoleon Bonaparte. She had not even heard of him. Think of that. Besides, the curé was away, and he had the keys. Not that it would make any difference she assured me, for I should not find the name I wanted, of that she was positive. However, it would be but a trivial thing to see the mere records of this "prodigious and incomprehensible being," as Pozzo di Borgo, another Corsican of fame, and no lover of the great Bonaparte, called him—this "phenomenon, the like of whom will never be seen again, and who is himself a political and moral universe." This sounds a little bombastic, but it will bear analysis and tests remarkably well.

From the precincts of Napoleon I walked to the library of the late Cardinal Fesch, passing the tomb erected by Napoleon the Third to Madame Letitia, "mater regum," and other lesser members of the Bonaparte clan, and in the library I turned over the sheets of the "Moniteur" of 1815. It was piquant to read thus of Napoleon's overthrow. The atmosphere seemed to suit the incidents of the calm official report. Two or three stolid boy-students of the French college adjacent were at their books the while, and it was, of course, nothing to them that I felt some pride in recalling how my great countryman at length succeeded in checkmating their great townsman, and clipping his too-ambitious wings for ever and ever.

After luncheon in the "Hôtel de France," and a new chorus of diatribes against Corsica from my friends of the "Desiderade," I set forth in heavy, grey weather, and with the towering waves of the bay by my side, and walked several miles towards the "Bloody" Isles, to give them their literal English equivalent, off the western headland of Ajaccio. These islands seem to be unworthy of their name. The idea that they have been the scene of massacres, or other horrid bloodshed, may be dismissed in favour of the calmer truths that they got their designation from a town, Sagone, which in the long past ages existed on the mainland hard by, and to which they belonged. They are charming objects from Ajaccio; and the tower upon the highest of them gives the finish to their picturesqueness.

I walked for two hours along this highway from Corsica's capital, and then turned back, tired of battling with the wind. What do you think? During all this time, I passed not a single tavern or wine-shop, or house of refreshment of any kind. Instead of these there were sepulchres, one after another, skirting the road like little residential villas: square sepulchres, and domed sepulchres; some with coloured glass windows, some barred; some with neat little garden precincts of red geraniums, cypresses, and vines; others a wilderness. This is the fashion in Corsica. You do not, unless you are shockingly poor, lie in a broad cemetery with other folk. 'Tis a proud land, and a man loves his own relations too well to be willing to be separated from them, even in death. But for my part I do not think it is a custom that commends itself to the tourist. It would turn a sprite melancholy.

The next day, with the weather still menacing, and the clouds low on the green mountain bases which border Ajaccio's bay, I departed from the capital by railway to Corte. It was the middle of May, and it felt like a wet March day in England. The moist air, which came into the car from the upland marshes, and from the clouds, into the midst of which we soon ascended, set me sneezing as heartily as if I had been in a Scotch mist an hour after sunrise. But there was a perfume here that Scotland wots not of: the ravishing scent of wild thyme, cistus, lavender, and myrtle scrub all combined, and, as it were, bruised from the herbs themselves by the cruel patter of a myriad of raindrops.

Now and again a peasant in velveteens, with or without a shaggy little pony, stood amid the brushwood of his native land, and seemed to glower at the train. He had his gun on his shoulder, as a matter of course. Catch your modern Corsican of spirit moving without his weapon. He acquiesces in but few of the fine phrases which signify that a man is above the influence of the old Adam of human nature. When you and I are wronged by a fellow creature, we fly to the attorney, and assess our damages at so many score or hundreds of pounds sterling. But the Corsican still asks blood for blood, and still gets it, without stint. The well-set-up gendarmes at the railway stations on this little railway are not mere dummies, as they are in Italy nowadays. They are in active service, and may at any moment be sent off into the adjacent mountains upon a quest which will, as like as not, end in the death of one of them.

We do not pick up many passengers in the course of our two hours' ride to Vizzavona, which is the terminus of the railway on the south side of the plain of Corte. The ordinary Corsican has no great love for the railway: it is inconvenient for his horse or his ass. He does not mind the bridle-paths, which frighten the sentimental tourist out of his wits. Perhaps, too—indeed, probably—he has other reasons for keeping aloof from authoritative institutions, especially if he is one of the many who are wanted by the gendarmes for one offence or another.

Ere we get to Vizzavona, we are within sight of the snow. We are out of the touch of the wild south-wester which still rages against the coast. The atmosphere is indeed oppressively close; not even the foaming of the waterfalls, which here and there toss a gigantic volume of water towards the valleys, can freshen the air. The hill slopes, with their woods of chestnut-trees just leafing, give place at their summits to towering bare needles and crags of purpled rock, the precipices of which are crested with a white cap good to see. When the clouds above part with a little more than ordinary generosity, one sees also yet higher cones and points of snow, and the bright green of the pines, which stand nearly stem deep in the snow. If only the sun would shine but for one moment and give us a transformation scene! But this it sternly declines to do.

At Vizzavona we are turned out of the cars. The line goes no farther. Even President Carnot had thus the other day to submit to the nuisance of transhipment in the middle of this Department of France. There is a big lumbering old coach in waiting for us: one of those antediluvian monsters of locomotion in which men, and women, and portmanteaux are packed with about equal security and consideration. The coupé holds two, and there are thirteen of us! The conductor may well bite his nails and swear sweetly. Yet it is his own fault. He took our names at a station half-way between Ajaccio and the terminus, and thus gave bail that he would accommodate us.

An hour at this upland hamlet, in the midst of pines, with the snow within five minutes' walk of us, is spent very agreeably at breakfast, in a little place that serves as a hotel. The mountain cutlets are particularly good, and there is even caviare as a relish.

"This," said one of my commercial friends of the "Desiderade," apostrophising his cutlet, "is the first piece of meat worthy of France that I have eaten in Corsica, and I fear it will be the last."

This being so, the worthy man is amply justified in consuming a good deal more than his share of the Vizzavona mutton. The white-aproned dame who presides at the feast encourages him, for his compliment has made her beam. "Eat, monsieur, eat," she says, "there is still a quarter of an hour, and one may do much in fifteen minutes."

Off again. A young married couple, who travel with a maid for the wife, have wickedly got the coupé to themselves. A Frenchman, with an immense stomach, and myself are the last to approach the vehicle. We are, in consequence, somewhat at a loss for seats. "It is impossible," moans the conductor, with an unequivocal survey of my comrade's paunch. "Perfectly impossible," echo the occupants of the inside of the coach. They are already miserable enough with the consciousness that their legs are perforce wandering where they ought not to be. One elderly lady, in spectacles — possibly a mature English maiden—is fidgeting preposterously, and blushing like a tomato whenever, in the course of her movements, she smites her neighbour—a gentlemanly Frenchman. At length, however, we two are squeezed into the banquette, to the driver's manifest inconvenience, let alone our own, and, with the conductor hanging on somewhere by tooth and nail, we begin our rattle through the valleys and along the ledges of Monte d'Oro.

Down comes the rain again, putting out the driver's cigar—a peace-offering from the perfunctory traveller at his whip-elbow—and obscuring the hill-sides. Our pace is not sensational: we gallop stirringly neither uphill nor downhill. Perhaps it is due to our burden, which is certainly not a fleabite. The Frenchman with the large stomach utters an exclamation of wrath at intervals, as a hat-box, or a hand-bag, or a bundle of rugs descends, like an avalanche, upon his head from the towering stack of luggage on the coach roof. The conductor laments because he is fast getting wet, and there is no help for him. One white and black village after another is entered, traversed, and left behind. The peasants are to be seen loitering in the cobbled streets with their hands in their pockets, or standing in knots with no great show of animation or civility upon their dark-browed faces. The women folk, with handkerchiefs over their swarthy hair, stand at the door and watch us pass, apparently in perfect silence. It is like the pictures of a lantern show realised, more than aught else. Even the rain falls without making a noise like ordinary rain. So we go from one valley to another, until Corte is in sight several hundred feet beneath us.

Corte is black and old, and, as somebody said to me, "fine to see." A bewitching castle stands in its midst upon a pinnacle of rock. It is as impregnable as a castle well may be. You climb towards it by filthy, greasy alleys cut in the rock, with high, dilapidated old houses upon either side. The Corte boys, when they spy the strange cut of your clothes and the inquisitive turn of your head, pounce out upon you in troops of five or ten, and badger you like young bulldogs. I, for my part, am used to being reviled as an "Inglese." It is an insult that does not strike home one bit nowadays. Still, the alternate chant of "Englishman! Englishman!" and "throw us a copper! throw us a copper!" of these Corte urchins, intermingled with their gigglings and comments upon my personal appearance, were here almost too much for me. Of course I knew nothing would please them better than that I should turn round in a rage and flourish my stick. They would then instantly, for the time, flee to a doorway, and thence would defy me. I tried, therefore, another plan. Singling out the ringleader, I asked him boldly for information about the castle. He gave it me as courteously as a Spaniard, and, of his own accord, told me much more than I even wanted to know. This done, he raised his cap and went his way, with the rag and tag of his kind following reverently at his heels.

There are two lovely rivers at Corte. One rushes towards the town from one mountain gorge, and the other from another mountain gorge. They flow upon different sides of the town and join just outside it. The green turbid water of the Restonica, one of these streams, and the boulders of green granite which cumber its wild bed, are particularly fascinating. In the afternoon I amused myself by following its course towards the glen whence it descends from Monte Rotondo. But it was too wet to be a pleasant walk, and eventually I diverged by some one's family tomb and went elsewhere. This tomb, by-the-way, was set in the middle of a patch of spring onions growing famously, and several little plain-spoken lads in black velveteen were playing a kind of Corsican hide-and-seek round about it. Such a sight as this did one's heart good. It was a proof that at bottom a Corsican can be volatile in his youth. I daresay, however, these unfortunate little boys will all ere long be saddled with ghoulish responsibilities by their scrupulous sires. A boy who receives an injunction to kill some one when he becomes a man can hardly fail to lose some of the lightness of heart which is his natural heritage.

Though in its older parts a disagreeable, ill-smelling place, Corte has a very remarkable suburb of new houses. These are built after the design of some Parisian architect. They are red and white, and, if you please, seven and eight storeys high. They are unprovided with hydraulic or other lifts, so probably their upper tenants make but one journey daily to their rooms. From their summits one looks almost into the windows of the castle high up on its precipitous crag.

The "Hotel Pieraggi," which is reckoned the best in Corte, does not suffer from a plethora of guests. The Frenchman with the abnormal stomach, who was my neighbour on the banquette of the coach, was also my companion in this house. We had the place to ourselves. The master of the inn keeps but one servant, who turns his hand to everything; and when he has done the tasks which are immediately required of him, seems to enjoy nothing so much as a cigarette and a wrangle with his employer. This shrewd domestic beguiled us into dining at six o'clock that he might afterwards get us off to bed with as little burning of lamps as possible. My fat friend and I dined alone, and we engaged in a heated argument about the comparative characters of Frenchmen and Italians. He seemed to have a prejudice against King Humbert's subjects, and so I ventured to play the part of advocate. I must say, however, that when it transpired that our host was a Florentine, I felt disposed to throw up my brief, for he did not serve us well at table. The courses were all very slight: the cutlet apiece, which formed the nucleus of the repast, being nothing more than a mouthful, literally. But the wine was good, which was a mercy, and so also was the curd pudding, which is, perhaps, the most famous of the industries of Corte.

THE
ART OF TELLING THE TRUTH.

"Do you mean to tell me I'm a liar?" is the form generally used in certain classes of society in protesting against incredulity. Occasionally it is an awkward question to answer. If a man tells you—the story has often been told by professed eye-witnesses—that he has seen Mr. Spurgeon crawl laboriously up his pulpit stairs, to show how steep and thorny was the road to heaven, and slide gaily down the banisters, to impress upon his hearers the dangerous facility with which they could go to hell, you naturally look upon your informant dubiously; as you do upon the other, also an eye-witness, who describes the presence of the Archbishop of Canterbury at a prize-fight. In both cases, your speaking countenance has not been seriously misjudged. But there are many instances in which, hearing a strange story, you withhold your belief, not because you think the teller of the story is a liar, but from doubt as to his accuracy or powers of observation. The heroical friend, who struggled for nearly three-quarters of an hour with a burglar before help came, you consider a bad judge of time. The enthusiastic preacher, whose two or three hundred hearers are reckoned at not far short of one thousand, you do not regard as an Ananias or a Gehazi—you think he is loose in his estimates of numbers. You are recommended to look at a picture or read a book that is mere rubbish; the friend who told you that it was super-excellent was not a wilful deceiver, but he had no taste.

Ignorantly, carelessly, because of unrecognised bias, we fail to tell the truth. There are only a few men and women who have learned perfectly the art of telling the truth. Undoubtedly it is an art to be learned. It is one we shall not take the trouble to learn, unless we love the truth. So that the foundation of the highest sort of truthfulness is moral virtue, not mental efficiency. But the intellectual element comes in. A man must think before he speaks—this our grannies told us—and he must discriminate between what he knows and what he guesses, or imagines, or concludes, and he must be discreet in the use of his adjectives; and, probably, a man may die at a good old age without having been obliged to form much acquaintance with the superlative degree. As to this last item—could not a pledge be taken against the use of the superlative? Lovely and sweet and dear are strong enough for all purposes. What do we want with loveliest and sweetest and dearest? Why cannot the ladies tell the Rector that his Curate preached a good sermon; where is the need of saying that it was the best they had ever heard? And where the criticism is of the unfavourable sort, say the sermon was bad, and have done with it; the man who hears the worst sermon will probably not survive to tell the tale.

Touchstone says that "the truest poetry is the most feigning." Without going that length, we may affirm that the construction of correct versification gives a man so much to think of that he cannot attend very strictly to the truth of what he says. Blank verse, of the ordinary sort, does not come under this rule, it leaves the mind very free. And hymns—Dr. Watts ruthlessly sacrifices the sound to the sense; some lesser lights sacrifice the sound without benefiting the sense. But no one can read some parts of Pope carefully—those lines in which, in a word or two, he sums up the character or achievements of the notabilities of his day—without suspecting that an apt rhyme occasionally beguiles the poet into a more forcible expression of admiration or contempt than he would have given in prose. The teller or writer of the story has the impulse upon him so strongly to make it a good story, that it is next to impossible for him to avoid modifying its more commonplace features. And he adds a little here, and he prunes a little there. Point, before precision, is, it may be feared, sometimes even the historian's motto. There are veracious narratives we feel bound to accept on the word of our friends. We should not have believed the stories had any one else told them; as it is, we store them in our memories as splendid illustrations of the often-quoted saying of the poet, that truth is stranger than fiction.

Mr. Chadband, in his celebrated oration upon truth, gives us a suggestion as to the commonest danger to which that beautiful virtue is exposed. "If the master of this house was to go forth into the city and there see an eel, and was to come back, and was to call untoe him the mistress of this house, and was to say, 'Sarah, rejoice with me, for I have seen an elephant!' would that be Terewth?" Exaggeration is the most frequent fault in human speech. Often there is a kind feeling at the bottom of it. We want our Sarah to rejoice, and so the eel, in our description of it, enlarges itself into an elephant. But there is an opposite error, and of that Mr. Chadband proceeds to treat. "Or put it, my juvenile friends, that he saw an elephant, and returning said, 'Lo, the city is barren, I have seen but an eel,' would that be Terewth?" Why, of course not. There are people who fancy that while over-estimates are to be sternly condemned, under-estimates are innocent. Mr. Chadband's view is the right one; to tone the elephant down into the eel is as much an error as to magnify the eel into the elephant. We should "nothing extenuate," but we should be quite as careful not to "set down aught in malice." Archbishop Whately, in dealing with the folly of those who thought it was safer to believe too much than too little, remarked that the traveller who went a mile past a city was as far from it as the man who stayed a mile short of it.

People are bad hands at expressing an opinion, unless it is a very strong one, one way or the other; that is, those who are unpractised and who do not make a conscience of correct speech. But on the other hand it must be admitted that the careful truth-teller is sure to be misunderstood. He believes with certain modifications and qualifications; that is to say, answers his interrogator, he does not believe at all. Those who practise the art of telling the truth must not expect to have their sincerity appreciated by the common run of men. Indeed, one who always told the unvarnished truth would deceive anybody. Some have the idea that you are equivocating if you will not answer them with a simple yes or no. "Do you love me?" says the enamoured young man to his pretty cousin. She has known him from a child, and does love him; but only with a cousinly affection. She cannot say "No," to his question; and, if she says "Yes," she will awaken in his tender breast hopes that can never be realised.

Doctors find out by a little practice that they have to make allowances as to the descriptions patients give of their symptoms. Excruciating pain means one thing with one patient and another with another. The poor creature who has not slept for a week does not get so much pity from the doctor as the more stoical sufferer who has simply had one or two bad nights. Appetite, too, is a comparative thing. A frightful loss of it does not invariably mean risk of starvation. The lady or gentleman without appetite can still pick a bit. Mental feelings are also presented in strangely erroneous forms. Hearts are broken and mended many times in a life. The widow, so strict in her mourning as only to play on the black keys of her piano, was comforted at last. How many of us would be able to answer promptly to the question: "Are you happy?" A good deal of mental analysis would be called for. We are sometimes happier than we think, sometimes not so happy.

A court of law is a fine school for the cultivation of exactness in speech, though, at the same time, it is the place where falsehood is rife. You cannot be prevented from perjuring yourself; but an attempt will be made to cure you of making loose statements. Cross-examination is not pleasant to those who are exercised thereby; but it is very profitable. How? when? where? why? From the time of that clever old cross-questioner, Daniel—see the Apocrypha—to that of the great legal lights who shine in our courts to-day, men have had reason to remember afterwards the hours they spent in the witness-box. Stories of the supernatural are never to be trusted till they have passed through the ordeal of cross-examination. Just the prick of a pin from the learned counsel and the marvellous wind-bag collapses. A little forgotten fact is unearthed by a clever question, and the mysterious element in the case disappears, only a not very remarkable coincidence remaining.

Telling the truth is an art; but not nearly so difficult an art as telling lies. It is within reach of any man's powers, if he will take time and pains, to relate the thing that is; it takes a man of imagination and strong memory to bring forth the thing that is not. Besides, the liar cannot carry his lie all over the world and back to the creation; at some point or other he must piece it on to the universal truth, and, to do that neatly, he must be a good workman. But this is only part of the greater question as to vice and virtue generally. Virtue is for all who love it; in order to become an accomplished villain a man must have natural aptitude, careful training, and immense powers of application. And at any time the villain may be ruined, as a villain, by the unexpected coming to life of conscience.

FRENCH WIT AND HUMOUR.

It is to be supposed that the wit and humour of every nation reflect to a great extent the national characteristics; and that, therefore, the distinctions between the wit and humour of England, and the wit and humour of France, are as marked as their intellectual, ethical, and social distinctions. Yet I am not sure that this law applies to the quality which we call humour, a quality which is less purely intellectual than wit, and less likely therefore to be affected by intellectual differences. Humour concerns itself with the superficial, the obvious, the commonplace; with strong contrasts, with bold comparisons; with things that are transparently grotesque or amusing; with incoherences that everybody recognises. Therefore, the humour of one nation is much more easily appreciated by another nation than its wit. The humour of Rabelais will be understood by hundreds of Englishmen when less than a score will appreciate the wit of Voltaire. For that matter, in France itself, the humorous is much more widely taken up by the common people than the witty; and here in England the crowd roar with delight at Dogberry, while they make scant response to the brilliant word-play of Benedict and Beatrice. The truth would seem to be that wit, as a high product of the intellect, can be relished only by cultivated minds. The nuances that differentiate the French from the English intellect are therefore the nuances that differentiate French wit from English wit. That is to say, a greater incisiveness, a greater terseness, a lighter and a keener touch, and, I may add, a greater malignancy. Yet here again, when we come to look at the subject free from the influence of traditional criticism, we shall see that there is a closer similarity—at all events among the great masters—than is sometimes conceded. There are passages in Swift which Voltaire might have written, and in Voltaire which might have flowed from the pen of Swift. There are scenes in Shakespeare, which, allowing for differences of manners and social customs, might have been composed by Molière, and vice versâ. What one finds in French wit which one does not find in English wit is a certain academical polish of style; and what one finds in English humour which one does not find in French humour is a certain fulness of laughter and depth of enjoyment as of a man holding both his sides. There is more geniality of temper in our English humour, and even our English wit is better, natural, and more kindly. French wit almost always draws blood. Take that passage in "Alfred de Musset." Ulric says to Rosemberg: "You insult a woman whom you do not know." Rosemberg: "That, perhaps, is because I know so many others." Here, you see, the whole sex is made to suffer. The touch of the flail is so light, and yet how it cuts! You can hardly imagine an English writer putting so merciless a severity in the mouth of any of his characters.

This cruelty—this feline cruelty—this love of blood and wounds in the sayings of most of the professed French wits is to be detested. Take Rivarol, for instance. One day at table he made a bêtise in the hurry of conversation, and all his companions immediately exclaimed against him. "Strange," said he, "that I can never say a stupid thing without somebody crying out, 'Stop thief!'" There was at Brussels a certain abbé, known as the Abbé Roulé, because he had made a vow to wear his hair roulé, or rolled up, until the Revolution came to an end. In his hearing Rivarol was censuring the conduct of a certain party: "If they had had but a little more sense," said he, "they would have avoided this fault." "Sense! sense (esprit)!" cried the abbé, "it is that which has destroyed us!" "Then, sir," said Rivarol, "why have you not saved us?" Joseph Chénier was accused—unjustly, by the way — of having left his brother, the poet André Chénier, to perish on the scaffold without making any effort to save him. Thenceforward Rivarol spoke of him as the "brother of Abel Chénier."

Of the universality of humour which I have claimed as being much alike in character in all nations, an example occurs to me.

A Gascon, relating an adventure in which he and his sword had been engaged, confessed to having received a box on the ear. "Ah, ah! and what then? what then?" cried his hearers. "What then? Oh, the man was buried next day!"

The pleasant exaggeration of this is quite American. Instead of "a Gascon" read "a man down West," and the reader will perceive nothing inappropriate in the anecdote. The next is "quite English, you know."

The Duc de Roquelaure was far, very far, from being handsome. One day he met in the street an ugly Auvergnat who had some petition or memorial to present at Versailles. He immediately introduced him to Louis the Fourteenth, remarking that he was under a special obligation to the gentleman. The King granted the favour asked, and then enquired of the Duke what was this pressing obligation. "But for him, your Majesty, I should be the ugliest man in your dominions."

This reminds one of the story told of John James Heidegger, manager of the Opera House in the Haymarket in the times when George was King. He, one day, laid a wager with the Earl of Chesterfield that he would not find in all London an uglier face than his. After a long search the Earl produced a woman of St. Giles's, who at first seemed to outvie the manager; but when the latter put on the woman's cap, he was allowed to retain the palm of—ugliness.

Now, I take this story from the "Encyclopédie"; but it has been associated with Lady Mary Wortley Montague, and also with Madame de Staël.

Perhaps the following is distinctly French, though it is but a bit of exaggeration:

The illustrious Crillon, when beginning to learn dancing, was ordered by his teacher: "Now bend—now retire!"

"I would have you to know, sir," replied Crillon, "that Crillon never bends and never retires!"

The following sarcasm against episcopal wrong-doing might have proceeded from an English wit:

La Mothe d'Orléans, Bishop of Amiens, was in attendance, with several other prelates, on Madame Louise de la Vallière, some time after that Princess had taken her vows. The prelate stood apart and, apparently, took no interest in the conversation. At length, Madame Louise asked him of what he was thinking.

"Madame," he replied, "I dreamed that I was in Paradise, and that some one having knocked at the gate, Saint Peter asked who it was. 'A Carmelite.' 'Let her enter.' A few moments, and there was another knock—the same enquiry, the same reply. Then came a third rapping: 'Who is that?' 'A Carmelite.' 'Ah, good Heavens, nobody comes here but Carmelites!' After a while there was a fourth summons at the gate. 'Is that another Carmelite?' 'No, your Saintship, 'tis a Bishop.' 'Ah, ah,' said Saint Peter, 'he is welcome, for 'tis centuries since a Bishop passed this way!'"

One can hardly imagine our English country clergyman making as witty a reply to a remonstrating parishioner as the village curé in the following story:

He had preached to his flock in the morning that reason was a bridle to our passions; but, alas, in the evening he was found so exceedingly tipsy that he had to be carried home. Next day, one of his parishioners asked him what he had done with his bridle on the previous evening.

"Faith," said he, "I had removed it, that I might drink."

Perhaps an English usurer would hardly care to imitate Samuel Bernard, who, when the Marquis de Favières—notorious for his impecuniosity—said to him one day:

"Monsieur, I am going to astonish you. I am the Marquis de Favières; I do not know you, and I come to borrow five hundred louis."

"Monsieur," replied Bernard, "I shall astonish you much more. I know you, and I am going to lend them."

The reader will remember the discovery of the stone with the supposed Roman inscription, which Monkbarns makes and Edie Ochiltree exposes, in "The Antiquary"; and the similar discovery in "Pickwick," where the alleged Latin characters turn out to be those of "BILL STUMPS HIS MARK." Well, this joke is neither Scotch nor English in its origin; but may be traced to the "Mémoires de Ribeaumont," ed. 1777—where we read that, during certain demolitions and excavations which took place at Belleville, near Paris, about the middle of the eighteenth century, the workmen came upon a stone, engraven with rude letters, which attracted a good deal of attention among the learned, and was examined even by the members of the Academy of Inscriptions. These virtuosi decided that the following letters were visible, in the subjoined order:

I C
I
L
E
C H
E M
I
D E
S A N E S.

To what language these letters belonged, or what they signified, no one could conjecture. The most competent authorities were consulted in vain. At length, the beadle of Montmartre, happening to hear of the stone and of the perplexity which it had caused, asked permission to see it, and immediately solved the problem. The letters, he said, framed a simple enough direction: "Ici le chemin des ânes" (this is the donkeys' path). Formerly some plaster quarries were worked at Belleville, and the stone had been put up to notify to the peasants the route by which they were to take their animals to the loading-place.

The humour here is of a cheap and obvious kind, and intelligible to almost everybody. It will tell in any language; and the idea lying at the bottom of it—the want of common-sense on the part of the learned, and their tendency to give to trifles an undue importance—has always been popular in humouristic literature.

Now let us pause to enquire—What is Wit? and what is Humour? Barrow's famous definition of wit seems to us less a definition than a description; and he himself admits the difficulty of defining that imponderable quantity, when he describes it as "a thing so versatile and multiform, appearing in so many shapes, so many postures, so many garbs, so variously apprehended by several eyes and judgements, that it seemeth no less hard to settle a clear and certain notice thereof than to make a portrait of Proteus." He goes on to say: "Sometimes it playeth in words and phrases, taking advantage from the ambiguity of their sense or the affinity of their sound; sometimes it is wrapped in a dress of luminous expression; sometimes it lurketh under an odd similitude. Sometimes it is lodged in a sly question; in a smart answer; in a quirkish reason; in a shrewd intimation; in cunningly diverting or cleverly restoring an objection; sometimes it is couched in a bold scheme of speech; in a tart irony; in a lusty hyperbole; in a startling metaphor; in a plausible reconciling of contradictions; or in acute nonsense. Sometimes a scenical representation of persons or things, a counterfeit speech, a mimical look or gesture passeth for it. Sometimes an affected simplicity, sometimes a presumptuous bluntness gives it being. Sometimes it riseth only from a lucky hitting upon what is strange; sometimes from a crafty twisting obvious matter to the purpose. Often it consisteth in one knows not what, and springeth up one can hardly tell how."

The last sentence goes to the root of the matter, for the foundation of Wit would seem to be surprise. The essence of a jest lies in its unexpectedness. This was pointed out by Addison. Locke describes Wit as "lying most in the assemblage of ideas, and putting those together with quickness and variety, wherein can be found any resemblance or congruity, thereby to make up pleasant pictures and agreeable visions in the fancy." Addison added to these properties the requirements of delight and surprise, and, moreover, dissimilitude. "Every resemblance in the ideas," he observes, "is not that which we call Wit, unless it be such an one that gives Delight and Surprise to the reader—particularly the last." And he adds: "It is necessary that the ideas should not lie too near one another in the nature of things; for, while the likeness is obvious, it gives no surprise."

Wit, then, is the sudden and abrupt combination of dissimilar ideas in such a manner as to delight by surprising us.

As for Humour, we may take Leigh Hunt's definition of it as "a tendency of the mind to run in particular directions of thought or feeling, more amusing than accountable." It deals in "incongruities of character and circumstance," as wit deals in incongruity of ideas.

These definitions apply to French wit and humour as exactly as to English wit and humour. The difference in method or expression is, as I have said, a national difference; that is, it results from a difference in the national characters.

The Marshal de Bassompierre was employed by Henry the Fourth on several embassies. He once told the King that, when he went as ambassador to Spain, he rode into Madrid on the most beautiful mule he had ever seen, which had been sent by the Spanish monarch for his special use.

"Hah, hah, what a comical sight!" laughed out the boisterous King; "an ass upon a mule!"

"Yes, sire," said Bassompierre, coolly; "I represented your Majesty."

Malherbe, the soldier-poet, had a pleasant way of correcting his valet. He allowed him ten sous per diem—which in those days was considered a liberal wage—and when the man had offended him, he would say: "My friend, in displeasing one's master one displeases Heaven; and when one displeases Heaven, one must, to obtain pardon, fast and give alms; therefore I shall retain five of the ten sous I pay you daily, and give them to the poor, in your name, as an expiation of your fault." As a necessary result, the valet was very frequently in debt.

To a young lawyer who submitted to him an exceedingly indifferent copy of verses, Malherbe said, brusquely: "Had you no alternative between scribbling this trash and hanging yourself?"

In a certain village a tailor was condemned to be hung. The inhabitants sent a deputation to the judge, and modestly pleaded that his death would be a public inconvenience, since they had but this one tailor. "Spare him to us, therefore; and if you want to hang somebody, we have two carpenters, and can easily spare one of them."

This was the kind of humour that once entertained the King and his courtiers.

And this:

A pastor was examining the children of his parish in their catechism. The first question was worded: "What is thy only satisfaction in life and death?" The young girl to whom it fell laughed, blushed, and held her peace. The priest insisted on an answer, but was startled when the maid replied: "Well, if I must tell, it's the young shoemaker in the Rue des Agneaux."

This mild joke occurs in the "Mémoires de la Princesse Palatine"; yet I recently saw it trotted out in an American paper as something new, and localised in the United States.

Then follows a specimen of provincial humour — unconscious, of course. Men laughed at it of old—who will laugh now?

A Languedoc magistrate, whose wife had died at Béziers, was anxious she should be buried at the expense of the province. A deputy was sent to represent to him the opinion of the provincial parliament that this was impossible: "But if it were you, sir," he added, "we would do it willingly."

We all remember Puff's ingenuous excuse for plagiarism in "The Critic;" "accidental coincidence" it is now entitled.

"Haven't I heard that line before?" enquires Sneer.

"Yes," says Dangle, "I think there is something like it in 'Othello.'"

"Gad," exclaims Puff, "now you put me in mind on't, I believe there is—but that's of no consequence; all that can be said is, that two people happened to hit upon the same thought—and Shakespeare made use of it first, that's all."

Sheridan was anticipated by a French writer of the seventeenth century, the Chevalier d'Aielly, who, in an epigram, complains of having been anticipated in his good things:

Dis-je quelque chose assez belle?
L'antiquité tout en cervelle
Prétend l'avoir dite avant moi.
C'est une plaisante donzelle!
Que ne venait-elle après moi?
J'aurais dit la chose avant elle.

(Do I say anything tolerably good? Antiquity, in a freak of imagination, pretends to have said it before me. A jocose kind of damsel this! Why did she not come after me? Then I should have said it before her.)

I now turn to the French "Ana"—a formidable collection in very large volumes—for some samples of wit and humour, as understood by men of letters in the sixth century. Afterwards we will take two or three specimens from later writers.

Here are a few of the "Ana" which the learned Poggio thought worthy of preservation:

The city of Milan rejoiced, at one time, in a physician who effected rapid cures of imbecility. To restore his patients to their right minds, he fastened them up to the knees, or higher — according to the measure of their folly—to a post set in a particularly filthy pond in his courtyard, and there he left them without food until they showed some signs of reason. One day a lunatic was brought to him, whom he immersed in the water up to his thighs. When he had suffered this "cure" for a fortnight, he begged the physician to release him, which he did, on condition that he did not leave the courtyard. It chanced that a cavalier passed by, with his hawks and dogs, to enjoy the chase. As the poor lunatic remembered nothing of what he had seen in his days of sanity, "Tell me, I pray you," he said to the cavalier, "what animal you are seated upon, and what do you use it for?"

"This is a horse," was the reply, "to go hunting with."

"What is it you hold on your wrist, and what do you do with it?"

"It is a hawk, with which we catch partridges."

"And what are those round about you?"

"They are dogs to start the game."

"And what does this game, for the capture of which you make such preparations, bring you in yearly?"

"Oh, very little!" replied the cavalier; "perhaps six ducats."

"And what is the cost of your horse, and dogs, and hawks?"

"Well, fifty."

"Go your way, then, go your way," exclaimed the fool, "I beg of you, before the physician returns, or he will clap you into the pond up to your chin!"

There was at Constance a young Gascon gentleman, named Bonar, who every day laid in bed until a late hour. Against a comrade, who rallied him on his sloth, he thus defended himself: "I have to listen every morning," he said, "to a debate between Idleness and Diligence. The latter exhorts me to rise early and busy myself with something useful; the former maintains that it is better to lie snugly in a good warm bed, and that rest is preferable to work. I listen to the disputants in the hope they will at last come to an agreement; and this is the reason I lie so long in bed."

A servant of the Duc d'Orléans begged the Duke to ennoble him. Knowing the mean and deceitful character of the man, his Highness replied: "I can easily make you wealthy; but to make you noble is impossible."

Compare this answer with the utterance of the Emperor Sigismund, when a learned doctor, whom he had ennobled, abandoned his former companions and seated himself among the nobles. "He is a great fool," remarked the Emperor. "Any day I can make a thousand nobles; but in a thousand years I cannot make a scholar."

An Augustine monk was asked one day the meaning of the two peaks or tips which adorn the episcopal mitre. "One signifies the Old Testament," he replied, "and the other the New, both of which bishops ought to know by heart." "Then what is the meaning," continued his querist, "of the two straps which hang down from the mitre behind?" "Those signify that the bishops know neither the one nor the other."

A sly old fox, seeing some hens roosting with Chanticleer in a courtyard, endeavoured to beguile them by fine words. "I have good news to tell you," said he—"namely, that the animals have held a great council, and sworn to perpetual peace. Come down," he continued, "and let us celebrate this peace with our friendship." The cock, more crafty than Master Reynard, raised himself upon his spurs, and took a survey all round. "What see you?" said the fox. "I see two dogs coming this way." Reynard immediately takes to flight. "Stop, stop!" cried Chanticleer. "Do you not say that peace has been proclaimed among animals?" "Yes," said the fox; "but perhaps yonder dogs have not yet heard the news."

This fable of Poggio's has been imitated by La Fontaine.

A peasant having climbed up into a chestnut-tree to get chestnuts, fell, in descending, and broke a rib. "If you had consulted me," said a sour wit, who saw him in this condition, "you would never have met with this accident. But my counsel may, perhaps, prove of service to you in the future: it is, never to come down more quickly than you go up!"

The Samaritan's oil and wine would have been more profitable for a broken rib than the very best of advice.

Excellent was the counsel of Francisco Sforza—one of the greatest captains of his time—that when you have three enemies upon your hands, you must make peace with one, conclude a truce with another, and attack the third.

A Cardinal, who commanded the troops of Pope Boniface the Ninth in the March of Ancona, finding himself on one occasion in a position in which he must conquer or die, promised his soldiers that, if they secured the victory, those who fell should dine that very day with the angels. They marched to the combat with alacrity; but finding that the Cardinal was careful not to expose himself, "How is it," said one of them, "that you show no anxiety for the celestial banquet to which you have invited us so warmly?" "Because it is not yet my dinner-time, and I am not hungry."

Our preachers and teachers, young men's

associations and young men's magazines, are all doing their best to train the young man of the present generation in the way he should go, and he bids fair to be overwhelmed beneath good advice, like Tarpeia beneath her bracelets. But what better moral can be given to him than is implied in the following bon mot?

A young Florentine said to a friend that he had put aside a thousand florins in order to travel and know the world. "You would do better," was the reply, "to put aside two thousand in order not to know it."

This is from the Ménagiana, on a lady's portrait, and is tolerably neat:—

Ce portrait resemble à la belle;
Il est insensible comme elle.

This portrait's a likeness, dear Chloe, I see;
'Tis a charmer insensible just like to thee!

A rhyming version of a well-known anecdote, humorous, if not witty, may amuse the reader:

A certain preacher preached before the King:
"Time unto all the doom of death will bring!"
But as the royal visage paled, again
The preacher raised his voice in dulcet strain,
And sought his speech unlucky to recall.
"Yes, we must die—that is, sire, nearly all!"

For the following anecdote, the writer who calls himself Vigneul-Marville is responsible:

A young preacher, a man of handsome person, with a voice like thunder, much aptitude of gesture, and those other oratorical gifts which charm the hearer and hold his attention, one day, on ascending his pulpit, suddenly lost his memory, and was unable to recollect a word of his intended discourse. To have deserted his post would have been too signal a disgrace; and yet how was he to preach when he had nothing to say? In this extremity he resolved to maintain his position and employ his voice and gestures while uttering only disconnected phrases, such as, "In fine," "But, my brethren," "Hence it follows," "Thus we see," and so on. Never did preacher seem more animated, more full of fervour! He shouted with all his might, he flung out his ejaculations like trumpet-notes, he stamped with his feet, he banged with his hands, everything trembled under him, and the church, spacious as it was, resounded with his formidable voice. All the congregation were hushed in profound silence, everybody leaned forward with the utmost eagerness to catch the preacher's meaning; those who were close to the pulpit thought it was their proximity which prevented them from understanding what he said; those who were at a distance put it down to this cause that they lost all the fine things that their teacher was saying. For three quarters of an hour he kept his audience riveted upon his unintelligible eloquence, and when he retired everybody was persuaded that they had never heard so fine a sermon before.

Here is an old "Joe Miller"—but it comes from the Ménagiana:

At the last sermon of a mission in a rural parish everybody wept except a peasant. "And why do not you weep like the others?" "I don't belong to this parish."

Why should matrimony be so fertile a subject for the jester? Do the majority of married couples live on the bad terms indicated by his sorry gibes? The following belongs to a tolerably numerous class:

In a village of Poitou, a woman, after a very severe illness, fell into a lethargy. Her husband and her friends thought she was dead, and wrapping her up in a sheet, according to the custom of the Poitevin poor, carried her to the grave. On the way they passed so near a thorn-bush that the branches tore her flesh and drew blood, awaking her from her trance. Fourteen years afterwards she really died. When the bearers who conveyed her to the churchyard drew near the thorn-bush, her husband shouted a warning: "Not so near the hedge, my friends, not so near the hedge!"

This story has been adapted into English, with variations.

A very old pun: A Jacobin monk, who went to preach the Lent sermons at Beauvais, enquired the names of the principal inhabitants, and finding that many of them were called Foy, or Faith—Lat., "fides"—he exclaimed: "Non inveni tantum fidem in Israel!" ("I have not found so much faith in Israel!").

A King's compliments always please, and so they should when they are as witty as the following:

M. le Prince, going to salute the King after his recent great victory at Seneffe, found him standing at the top of the staircase. As Monsieur le Prince suffered much from gout, he went up slowly, and, when halfway, exclaimed: "Sire, I beg pardon of your Majesty for keeping you waiting." "Do not hurry, my cousin," was the King's happy reply; "for when one is loaded with laurels as you are, one cannot walk quickly."

At the consecration of the Cardinal de Retz, which took place in the Sorbonne, a large company of bishops were seated in a semicircle under the dome. A lady, who had been invited to the ceremony, exclaimed:

"Oh, how beautiful it is to see all those bishops yonder! I feel as if I were in Paradise!"

A gentleman, who was near her, checked her raptures:

"In Paradise, madam? In Paradise there are not nearly so many!"

Bishops, priests, monks, and the like were always fair game. Here is a specimen of the ridicule to which the monks were exposed:

A certain Father André, preaching in a convent, endeavoured to stimulate the charity of his hearers towards its cowled inhabitants. "There is now," he said, "a new reason, my friends, why you should give of your substance. This house has been struck by lightning, and has suffered greatly. Through the mercy of Heaven," he continued, "the devouring fire smote the library, where there was not a single monk; had it struck the kitchen, every soul would have perished."

Touching the bishops, the following epigram was written by an old French poet, Joachim Duchelard:

Au temps passé, en l'âge d'or,
Crosse de boys, Evesque d'or:
En ce temps sont aultres les loys,
Crosse d'or, Evesque de boys.

An admirable version of it has been introduced by Longfellow into his "Golden Legend":

In the days of gold,
The days of old,
Crozier of wood
And bishop of gold!
Now we have changed
That law so good,
To crozier of gold
And bishop of wood!

Here, for the present, my selections must come—even as the witty sayings of witty men come—to an end.

CATHERINE MAIDMENT'S BURDEN.

A STORY IN TWELVE CHAPTERS.

By MARGARET MOULE.

CHAPTER VII.

"Jenny, don't be so troublesome. Where's your manners, child?"

It was Jenny's mother who spoke, and with her words she made a step or two forward, with the intention of removing Jenny from her position.

Jenny, a small, fair child of three or four, stood before a visitor, making entreating gestures which told unmistakeably of a longing to be lifted up on to the visitor's knees. The visitor was Catherine Maidment; the cottage was the home of Tommy, Jenny being one of that youth's many sisters. She began to cry as she perceived her mother's intent, and Catherine Maidment stooped down and lifted the little thing to the desired place on her knee.

"There never was any one so kind to them as you, Miss Maidment," the woman said. "I tell 'em so, often; Tommy in especial, I do. I wonder where he'd have been all these days without the books and games as you brought him."

The words were accompanied by a glance at the door, whence, seated on the doorstep, engaged in a solitary game of marbles, was visible the rather dejected figure of Tommy himself.

There was a bright little fire burning in the room in a rough grate, and over it, suspended by a hook, swung a large teakettle. Mrs. Wilson, a tall woman, of a characteristically English country type, with a hard-featured but good-natured face, stood watching it, with arms crossed on her white apron, and rocking at the same time with one foot the old-fashioned wooden cradle, standing in the corner near the fire, in which lay a sleeping baby.

The afternoon sun slanted in at the window, and touched the geraniums in red pots, sending a bright streak of light on the table spread for tea, and resting finally on Catherine, as she sat on a low chair opposite Mrs. Wilson.

She was wearing a dark pink cotton gown, with some red ribbons about it, and a broad, shady black hat. Her profile was sharply outlined against the smoke-stained bricks of the chimney, and her hair was lighted up by the sun. She seemed curiously at ease in her surroundings, and yet, by their very contrast with her personality, they enhanced the charm of her appearance. She looked like the centre figure of a picture, the background of which had been painted in by another and very different hand. She stroked Jenny's hair as Mrs. Wilson spoke.

"I am fond of children, Mrs. Wilson," she answered, smiling.

"You needn't tell no one in Moreford that, miss," said her hostess, energetically.

At this moment the kettle boiled. She turned hastily to the table for the tea-pot, and proceeded to take the kettle from its hook and make the tea.

"There," she said, setting the tea-pot on the hob, "that'll be drawed in plenty of time for the children when they come out of school; and as for the master, I'll make him a fresh lot."

"What time does your husband get home?" said Catherine.

"About seven now mostly, miss; six it is in winter. It's a longish walk, you see." Wilson was a labourer on one of Mr. Stewart-Carr's most distant farms.

"Yes, it is," returned Catherine. "But seven is a very good time; it gives your husband a nice long evening."

"That's just where it is, miss," exclaimed Mrs. Wilson; "he don't seem to know what to do with himself much of an evening. He does up the garden a bit, but that doesn't take long, and then he goes out, up the street mostly. I do wish he'd a bit more ground to occupy him; something like them bits the parson lets out at Stoneleigh."

"Allotments, you mean," said Catherine, as she played with Jenny's hair, meditatively. "I will think," she said, after a pause, during which Mrs. Wilson cut bread and butter for her family with energy. "I might speak to my brother, and if you really thought your husband would work one, and knew other men who would like it too, I might get him to see Mr. Stewart-Carr about some land."

"I'm sure I wish you would, miss," replied Mrs. Wilson; "and I believe he'd do it, too, if Mr. Maidment was to ask him. I ain't seed much of him, of course; but he seems a kind, thoughtful sort of gentleman."

"I think it might be arranged," said Catherine, still thoughtfully.

Mrs. Wilson's thoughts, however, with the erratic discursiveness of the uneducated mind, had completely left the subject of the allotments, and were now engrossed with what had naturally been the great excitement of Moreford, ever since his arrival—Mr. Stewart-Carr's proceedings.

"He came down the street yesterday, Mr. Stewart-Carr did," she went on, "and Jenny was standing crying outside the gate—she'd been falling down, naughty girl, and spoiled her clean pinny, and scratched her knee a bit—and he stops, and asks her what's wrong; and then he says, very gentle: 'Come along with me, and see if we can't do something for it. And he took her to May's, and bought her a whole bottle of their best toffee, that he did."

"That was nice, wasn't it, Jenny?" said Catherine.

"He had a young lady with him," continued Mrs. Wilson. "She was dressed beautiful. Miss Arbuthnot, my master heard her name was; and he heard last night from Simpson, that's brother-in-law to Fenton up at the Castle, that Mr. Stewart-Carr's a-goin' to marry her, and pretty quick, Simpson says."

Mrs. Wilson paused for breath. Catherine said nothing.

"I hope they'll be happy when they do get married," Mrs. Wilson resumed. "It'll be very queer to have a lady up at the Castle, though; like the times Wilson's father tells on, fifty years ago, when old Mr. Stewart-Carr's wife was livin'."

"Yes," answered Catherine, as Mrs. Wilson paused, this time decidedly, and seemed to expect a break in her monologue. "It would seem strange, certainly. But it would be very nice for Moreford."

There was a little silence after her words. Mrs. Wilson was apparently not quite certain how to resume the conversation, so as to keep it still on the topic that so interested her; and before she could solve this difficulty, Catherine rose, and put Jenny gently down.

"I must be going, Mrs. Wilson," she said. "I am very glad Tommy is so nearly well. Let me know if you want any more embrocation. Good-bye, Jenny, dear; good-bye, Tommy; you'll be playing cricket again quite soon now!" And with a smile to the small martyr, Catherine left the cottage.

There was a curious look on her face as she shut the little garden gate—a look which seemed to intimate that she had been surprised, and possibly taken aback. It did not alter during her short walk along the street. She had not far to go, for at a little distance from the Wilsons' cottage there was a grass lane, which was a short cut into the park. Catherine turned up this with her eyes bent on the ground. She had not raised them more than once since she left the cottage, and she started violently when a voice just behind her said, suddenly:

"How do you do, Miss Maidment?"

She looked up quickly, her face hot and flushed with the shock, and saw at her side, holding out her hand with a smile, Grace Arbuthnot. In an instant her face grew hotter still, and she did not answer immediately.

"I'm afraid I startled you," said Miss Arbuthnot, enquiringly.

"Only for a moment; it was very silly," said Catherine, quickly regaining her composure. Her face lost the look it had worn on leaving the cottage, and she became all at once her usual self.

"I should think you must be surprised to see me still, and that is, perhaps, why you were startled," Grace Arbuthnot said. "We were to have gone on Monday; we only came for a fortnight. But mother fell down and put her wrist out on Sunday. She shook herself a good deal, and Mr. Stewart-Carr won't hear of our going till she's better."

"I hope Mrs. Arbuthnot is better," said Catherine.

"Thanks, yes; she is much better. But it's too ridiculous that it should be mother who tumbles down and hurts herself, when I, who am always in scrapes about recklessness, should come off scot-free."

"I don't think you did come off quite scot-free where Queen Bess was concerned," Catherine answered, smiling. "I hope you felt no bad effects from your fall."

"I? Oh no. Thanks to your care, there wasn't a trace of my wrong-doing next day. I was so sorry, by the way, to find you out when I came to see you and thank you."

"I was sorry to miss you," Catherine said. "But I truly did not want thanks."

"Well, you've had them in my heart, anyway," Grace Arbuthnot replied, smiling.

They were walking along the lane, side by side, and there was a slight pause in the conversation before Catherine said, interrogatively, as they reached the end of the lane:

"You are on your way to the Castle?"

"Yes, I am. I've taken a roundabout way, I know; but I wanted to come through the village—I'm so attached to it. I only know Scotch country people, you know, and these are so different. All these dear little children, with their curtseys and smiles, are too sweet."

"They are very characteristically English, certainly."

"There was one dear, wee thing who was crying the other day—Mr. Stewart-Carr was with me—ah!" she cried, breaking off suddenly, "there never was a truer proverb than that ridiculous one about 'talk of an angel'!"

As Miss Arbuthnot spoke, she and Catherine Maidment had entered the park, and just before them, walking quickly down the great avenue, was Mr. Stewart-Carr. On seeing them he quickened his pace, and in another moment he was shaking hands with Catherine.

"I hope you are well?" he said.

"I believe you were going to shake hands with me too!" laughed Grace Arbuthnot, as he hesitated for a moment after his first words.

"No," he answered, laughing too. "You and I have already met to-day, I rather think."

And then he turned again to Catherine.

"I have not seen you, Miss Maidment, since I made the acquaintance of your delightfully cool mulberry-tree, a fortnight ago," he said. "I have thought of it often since then. I thought of it when Dare and I were toiling up a long hill after the carriage on Friday afternoon. It was a most blazing sun, and we were 'saving the horses.' You remember?" he added, to Grace.

"Braydon Hill," she assented.

"The heat was awful," he went on, to Catherine; "and the hotter it grew, the clearer grew the picture of the shade in your garden. Couldn't you let me have that tree, Miss Maidment?" he ended, smiling.

"If you like to take it," she replied, smiling also.

He turned again to Grace.

"The tree is wonderful!" he said. "I wish you——"

"I wish its fruit were ripe," put in Catherine, quickly. "It is as good as its shade."

"You must come back again when the mulberries are ripe, and perhaps Miss Maidment will give us some," he said to Grace Arbuthnot.

She was making a little pattern in the gravel with the point of her sunshade, and looking at it intently.

"It's very good of you; I love mulberries," she said, gravely.

At that instant the Castle clock chimed the quarters and then struck the hour—five. Catherine started.

"It is later than I knew," she said. "I must go home."

"And it must be time we went home, too," Miss Arbuthnot said. "Five is tea-time, isn't it?" she said to Mr. Stewart-Carr, with a smile.

"Yes," he said. "I will walk back with you."

"Good-bye," Grace Arbuthnot said, giving Catherine her hand. "I haven't half told you how grateful I am."

"Please don't be," said Catherine, lightly. She held out her hand to Mr. Stewart-Carr. "Good-bye," she said, simply.

"Good-bye," he answered.

Then he turned, and Grace Arbuthnot, with a little backward glance to see if her skirts were straight, and a pretty parting nod to Catherine, turned too, and set out up the long avenue by Mr. Stewart-Carr's side.

Left alone, Catherine moved towards the footpath that led to the White House; but before she had taken more than two or three steps she stood still. Screened from sight by an oak-tree, she watched the two figures walking towards the Castle together. She could see that Miss Arbuthnot was talking quickly to Mr. Stewart-Carr; she could see him turn, and bend his head to listen, as if he were interested in what she was saying; she could even hear Grace Arbuthnot's light laugh. She watched until they disappeared altogether from sight round a slight curve in the avenue, and then she turned round, with a decided gesture, and set out in the direction of the White House. There was a curious expression on her face again—not the same that it had worn when she met Grace Arbuthnot, but an expression of resolute concentration, strength, and decision.

On that quiet, sunny afternoon, in Mrs. Wilson's cottage, Catherine Maidment had discovered something that startled her. No such thought as the thought of love or marriage in connection with herself had ever entered seriously into Catherine's head. She was not the kind of woman who naturally thinks of either. Her life had been very quiet; she had seen very few people in it; and among those few there had been no one who had openly expressed admiration for her, either by words or looks. She had never even realised the fact that she was a woman to whom any admiration was due. No one but old Margaret, and, in the days when she first came to live with him, her brother, had ever told her that she was pretty.

Catherine had laughed at Margaret and taken her words as the outcome of loving partiality for one of "her babies;" and she had laughed at her brother too, though his words pleased her, for she loved him so that she was glad to seem pretty to him. But she never took them seriously. It never struck her, even when she looked in the glass, that any one, except those who loved her, was likely to find her brown face attractive. Admiration, therefore, never entered into her scheme of life at all; and as for love, whenever she thought of love, as she, being a thoughtful, earnest woman could not fail to do sometimes, she thought of it only in outline; its nature was in her mind something undefined and incomprehensible — something which never had taken, and most probably never would take, definite form and shape for her.

But now her point of view had all at once changed, and changed with such suddenness as to bewilder and even frighten her.

Mr. Stewart-Carr's arrival, in itself, was a great event in a life such as Catherine led. This fact had prepared her, naturally, to be impressed by him somewhat strongly, when she first saw him. And on the day when he came to the White House for the first time she had accordingly been impressed, greatly. But the impression Mr. Stewart-Carr had made was not wholly due to the circumstances. By far the greater part was due to his personality. Catherine conceived a great liking for him. He was to her unlike any one she had met before; utterly unlike any of the very few cultivated men who formed her criterion of the sex. His manner and personality both appealed to her; they possessed a sort of magnetic attraction for her, which made itself felt at once, even in her two first brief interviews with him. In the difficult interview she had had with him in his own library, when she had gone to him in her brother's place, not even the strain of her position or the knowledge of its terrible origin could quite prevent her from experiencing the same feeling. She liked him; she was at her ease with him; she could have trusted him. On the afternoon when he had come to her in her own garden to thank her for her care of Grace Arbuthnot, these feelings had only strengthened and deepened. Mr. Stewart-Carr, perhaps unconsciously to himself, had drawn her out. She had talked to him as easily and unreservedly as if he had been her brother, her former strong personal attraction towards him growing with every moment; and when at length he took his leave, he had left Catherine with the curious feeling that this man, whom she had known but a few days, was better known to her and more of a friend than any man she had hitherto met.

Since then, unconsciously to herself, she had let her mind dwell upon him continually. Had she never met Mr. Stewart-Carr again, after that afternoon, his image would have remained for ever in her mind as that of the one man for whom she could have cared. But she was perfectly ignorant of this; the feeling existed in her quite unknown to herself.

Now, however, Mrs. Wilson's incidental words had brought this hitherto unsuspected feeling out from the recesses of her heart into the fullest light of her clearest consciousness. With the suggestion that another woman was to be the wife of this man, Catherine suddenly knew that she could have stood in that woman's place; that she could have loved Mr. Stewart-Carr. This bewildering revelation was quickened into life by the appearance of Grace Arbuthnot herself following so suddenly upon it.

Catherine had gone through a sharp struggle as she walked so quietly up the grassy lane by Grace Arbuthnot's side. It was not that she felt anything like jealousy; her realisation of her own state of mind was far too recent and indefinite for that. She simply struggled for self-control; she wished to become herself again, to feel her life untouched by any thought of what might have happened to her. And, as she stood watching the two walk away, her struggle was ending. She told herself that it was only a curious phase of feeling that had temporarily shaken her; that she had absolutely nothing to do with the man or the woman she had just parted from, whose lives so obviously and naturally belonged to one another.

When she had turned away at last, it had been with a little sigh, the meaning of which she neither understood, nor tried to define to herself, and she walked very quickly along the grass path. She felt odd and shaken, and she was very angry with herself for feeling so; her irritation quickened her steps.

She was within sight of the White House, when she suddenly looked up, and became aware, to her great amazement, that Margaret was hurrying along the path towards her. Something in Margaret's aspect, distant though she still was, made Catherine's heart stand still suddenly. In an instant she left the world in which she had been living for the last hour, and came back with a shock to the life she had known before.

"What is it, Margaret?" she said, in a quick, breathless tone, as the old woman reached her.

Margaret was breathless too; and Catherine had to wait for a moment while she strove to find words. But only the actual words were needed. She knew well from Margaret's face that trouble was waiting for her. She knew, too, she thought, what the trouble was.

"I was watching for you, miss; I came to fetch you, seein' you coming," Margaret gasped. "It's—Mr. Frank." She lowered her voice and looked round fearfully, as though the very trees might hear her; then went on: "He's worse than he's ever been, Miss Catherine. I can't do nothing; he's noisy—dreadful noisy, miss. I've shut up the house, and no one can't hear. I haven't been near him yet. I thought I'd try to find you; he'd take more notice of you."

Catherine gazed at the old woman's agitated face for one moment, during which it was to her the only steady point in sight, while the whole park, the sky, and the ground, seemed to dance before her eyes. But with a sharp shudder she recovered herself.

"Yes, Margaret," she said; "I'll go." And, giving her sunshade and a book she was carrying to the old woman, Catherine ran, with feet that hardly seemed to touch the ground, on towards the house.

The aspect of it, as she opened the garden gate hurriedly, seemed to intensify the horror Margaret's words had brought her. Hot as the afternoon was, the doors were shut and every window was closed. Even the sun-shutters of the dining-room windows were tightly closed. She opened the door, shutting it quickly behind her. She heard her brother's voice from the dining-room; he was singing wildly and excitedly, and Catherine paused and shuddered again, with her hand on the latch of the door, her face growing drawn and white. Then she collected herself by main force, and entered.

Frank Maidment was sitting on the edge of the table swinging his legs. Immediately before him was a chair which had been kicked over on to the floor; beside him on the table was a broken tumbler; in his hand was another, half full; and on the floor at the lower end of the table, among the folds of the cloth, which had slipped off, dragging with it to the ground a vase of flowers, were the broken pieces of a bottle, which had evidently been flung there; and all the air of the room was horribly laden with the strong smell of brandy. Catherine choked, and gasped for breath, as she shut the door; then she went up to her brother, and laid her hand on his arm. He was singing at the top of his voice—the far-away, unnatural voice of a drunken man—and he had taken not the faintest notice of her entrance, nor did he pay the least heed to her touch. Breaking off his snatch of song—an old English love-song that Catherine had often played for him—with a wild laugh, and putting the tumbler he held to his lips: "Here's to Grace!" he cried, and drained its remaining contents at one draught. "She's just the girl for me," he went on, flinging the now empty glass into the air, and catching it again.

"Frank, dear," Catherine said, gently. He turned upon her at the sound of her voice.

"Oh—you—you—aren't going to marry Stewart-Carr; no—you aren't—you aren't—you aren't. It's the other—Grace—not you, confound you!"

His eyes flashed, as he looked at his sister.

"Confound you!" he repeated. But Catherine did not flinch. Then he sprang off the table, and seizing Catherine's shoulder with an unsteady, shaking grasp, swinging to and fro as he held it: "Why aren't you Grace?" he continued, with violent incoherence. "Fetch me Grace! I will have her! I must have her! What did they say about her marrying Stewart-Carr? Curse it all! She'll marry me! Me! When I ask her! When I ask her!" He spoke the last words in a kind of chant, and then, loosing his hold on Catherine, swung himself on the table again, and broke out into the same wild song as before.

Catherine looked at him for a moment, and then quickly left the room. In three minutes she was back again, with a small glass in her hand.

"Frank," she said, taking him firmly by the arm, "Frank, stop singing at once and drink this."

As if arrested by the suddenness with which she spoke, he stopped and stared at her vacantly. She repeated her words slowly, in a steady tone of command, with her eyes fixed on him. And something in their gaze seemed to influence him. He took the glass from her, stupidly, but without a word, and drank its contents.

Half an hour after, the house was very quiet, and Catherine was alone in her room, lying, face downwards, on her bed. All her thoughts of the afternoon were as if they had never been. Her whole being seemed concentrated in one sensation, one conviction—the conviction that the care of her brother was hers for life, and she must find strength to meet it.

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BY RIGHT OF SUCCESSION.

BY ESMÊ STUART.

Author of "A Faire Damzell," "Joan Vellacot," "Kestell of Greystone," etc. etc.

CHAPTER IX. NO RIGHT.

THE little country town of Coleham was situated in a pleasant and hop-growing valley, about five miles from the Warren. It was composed of one long street called the Borough, and a shorter street running uphill towards a venerable castle of historic fame. Part of this ancient building was in a ruined condition, but the rest of it had been restored and was inhabited by Lord Southleigh. The town itself was very picturesque; the houses were old, and many of them were ornamented with old woodwork, and possessed high-pitched roofs and quaint bow-windows, whilst only a few of the shops, chiefly the drapers' and milliners', had ventured to make themselves fashionable by putting in large windows and pretentious doors. The greater portion of the Coleham inhabitants thought these modern improvements extremely delightful, and rewarded the enterprising tradespeople by calling their shops "handsome structures."

Happily the old-fashioned inn called "The White Doe" still kept its broad archway entrance, large courtyard, low panelled rooms, and small windows. The landlord had happily not changed the name of his house, nor had he called it a first-class hotel. Nevertheless, "The White Doe" was a highly respectable establishment, and could give, as it proposed to do, good accommodation to man and beast.

November was not a very busy time in the old town, nor was "The White Doe" overcrowded at this moment, so that when a well-dressed fashionable lady made her appearance, asking if she could be provided with two rooms, mine host hastened to offer her the two best bedrooms the house contained. They were large, low, and old-fashioned, but it must be owned that they looked a little dreary; so the lady at once ordered fires to be lighted, and then, saying that she was going out to dinner in the evening, she began to look about her with but half-disguised curiosity. When her fire had burnt up cheerfully, Mrs. Gordon unpacked her evening dress (a black silk dress which had seen much service, and had been turned and retrimmed by the skilful fingers of her daughters), and having made her simple toilet, she sat down to write a line to her eldest daughter till it was time to repair to Mr. Blackston's house.

The lawyer's family circle consisted of himself, his wife, and one daughter, whose first youth had flown, but who comforted herself by trying to cheat time, and still to be as playful at thirty as she had been at eighteen.

Mr. Blackston was an old-fashioned, courteous gentleman, sensible and business-like, not given to feeling too much the misfortunes of his fellow-men, because in his profession such misfortunes were very often to be met with. "Such is life," he would say, with a grave shake of his head, but his gravity did not go deeper than his face. His heart was serene and happy, knowing well that the balance at his banker's was large, and that his worldly affairs were most satisfactory.

But even this easy-going man had been unusually stirred by the death of the master of the Warren, and the events which had followed. This evening, as he gave his arm to Mrs. Gordon to help her to perform the journey to the dining-room, he felt a certain curiosity as to the kind of woman he was going to deal with.

"I am very much obliged to you," began Mrs. Gordon, after a little preliminary small talk with Mrs. and Miss Blackston, "for your kindness in offering me hospitality; but I thought I should be better able to carry on at the hotel any business matters which may arise—a charming, old-fashioned place I find it."

"Oh! now, isn't it?" said Miss Blackston, with a youthful, naïve expression on the "oh."

"Yes, indeed," echoed her mother, "and such respectable people are at the head of it."

In spite of these uninteresting remarks, which continued in the same strain all through the well-appointed dinner, both the mother and daughter were eagerly scrutinising their guest, for some of the business matters about which Mrs. Gordon had come to enquire had already been whispered, in Mr. Blackston's private moments, to his admiring wife and daughter.

"To-morrow, you will perhaps not object to coming to my office, Mrs. Gordon?" said Mr. Blackston, when he had escorted that lady back to "The White Doe," which was but a few doors off. "We lawyers think business is best transacted on our own ground, but pray believe that I am entirely at your disposition."

"That person you mentioned will not fail to make her appearance to-morrow, I hope?"

"I quite expect her, but—I should like to talk the subject over with you first."

Mrs. Gordon was well pleased with her first interview between herself and this country lawyer. Evidently he was a civil, easy-going, gentlemanlike man, so that she would have, she argued, no difficulty on that side. For all this, the widow hardly slept at all that night, so full was her mind of wonderful plans for the future. What if all her difficulties were now to be made smooth? Austin would take his proper place in society, and the girls would be dowered as other girls of good position. There would be no more need for marrying for money, they might now consider rank as well. Yet she felt glad that Austin would have nothing to do with the business; it was much easier to do as she had always done—manage everything by and for herself.

Punctually to her appointment, Mrs. Gordon was ushered into Mr. Blackston's sanctum, a dingy, town room. The lawyer greeted her warmly, drew forward an old leather arm-chair near the fire, took a straight cane-seat himself, and then at once plunged into business matters.

"I have read very attentively all the letters and documents sent me by your lawyer, and as far as I can at present make out, I can see no flaw in these papers, though I must first tell you that the late Mr. Gordon, of the Warren, was my client in a very limited sense of the word. Many years ago, eighteen or twenty years, I believe, Mr. Gordon appeared in our neighbourhood as a stranger. He rented the Warren, a very pretty, old-fashioned house on the moor. He was a strange, unsociable man, known chiefly to the hunting set. A year after his arrival, however, he went away for some weeks, months perhaps, for the neighbourhood knew nothing of his exact doings, and when he was seen again, there was a rumour that he had brought back a wife. Of course, there were surmises and wonderings. There certainly was a lady at the Warren, and a household of servants; every one expected that he would take his wife about and introduce her as Mrs. Gordon, but no such thing happened. The poor lady lived a very secluded life, her husband never introduced her, never mentioned her, and it was not long before the world said it out plainly that the lady at the Warren was not Mrs. Gordon by any legal right. Several of our country gentlemen fought shy of Mr. Gordon after this, and he so resented some small insults, as he chose to call it, that he retired more than ever into private life. He turned a cold shoulder on those even who pretended to know nothing of his private affairs, and yet, for all that, never a word escaped him which could possibly have explained the facts. Two girls were born. This was known, of course, through our worthy Doctor, as kind a man as ever lived; he attended the poor lady and reported her to be a pretty, delicate creature, very shy and nervous, painfully nervous, and evidently hating the position she occupied; but even from her he never gathered that she had the right to be called Mrs. Gordon. The subject was never mentioned and she never spoke to strangers except when forced to do so.

"Dr. Smith had a great liking for the poor lady, he never could believe any harm of her, and for several years insisted that it was for some easily explained reason that Mr. Gordon acted thus; but even the Doctor will tell you that he never was certain she was married. What reason had she for concealing the fact if she had been? The world in general said she was Mrs. Somebody else, but Dr. Smith won't have that said; besides, she was very young. Whatever was the disgrace or the mystery, the poor thing died at the birth of her second child, after two years of this seclusion at the Warren. That was all that was ever known by the outside world, though in those days many speculated about it. Hardly had she died than Mr. Gordon bought the Warren, and lived in the same manner as before. I believe the whole episode would have been forgotten had it not been for those two children. The mystery seemed to overshadow them just as it had done their mother, though after all there was but little mystery to my mind. There were the children, and Mr. Gordon acted the part of a father to them; but, of course, they were not recognised in any way by the neighbours, so that they have, I fear, grown up like nuns."

"Poor girls," murmured Mrs. Gordon, looking half shocked, half tenderly pitiful as she gently shook her head.

"Yes, indeed; it is a curious story, but especially sad for those girls. Till I received your lawyer's communications, I had no idea that I should find out the end of the sad tale. From this source, I learn that Mr. Gordon's father was a gentleman who had amassed a large fortune in India, had married a lady in that country and that one son had been born to them—the Mr. Gordon in question. The father having lost his wife, returned to England to superintend the education of his son. The two were not very compatible in temper, quarrels were frequent, and the last time that the two held any communication was when the son refused to marry a certain heiress whom Mr. Gordon had chosen to be his son's wife. The young man was told that unless he married her he would be cut off with a shilling; however, the father so far repented that he softened this threat with a command that his son was to marry the heiress or no one. Whereupon the son answered, "Then I shall marry no one." They parted, and the father lived some years longer, allowing his son a handsome allowance, however, till a rumour reached him that a lady was living at the Warren, the house Mr. Gordon junior rented, and the father, angry that his son had disobeyed him, sent a mutual acquaintance and asked him point-blank if the lady known to be living at the Warren was his lawful wife. At first the son parried the question, and then at last owned or intimated that he was not married.

"The mutual friend took the trouble to enquire about the place, found out that Mr. Gordon was not visited, repeated the confession he had heard and then left the neighbourhood. Mr. Gordon senior cared very little about public opinion, his son's affairs were not his, he said, but as long as he lived no one should be Mrs. Gordon junior, save the said heiress, who by the way was very plain, and was so afraid of being married for her money that she was constantly refusing all suitors. Mr. Gordon senior lived six years after this episode, and being fully persuaded that his son had been sufficiently punished, left him all his fortune with but one stipulation. The money was to go to his legitimate children, if he had any; if not, after his son's death, it was to pass to his distant cousin Captain Gordon, and then to his wife or their eldest son. Have I repeated the story rightly, as far as you know it, Mrs. Gordon?"

"Yes; perfectly so, except that at the time of the episode of the lady, old Mr. Gordon wrote to my husband, telling him of the contents of his will, and saying that it was his belief his son would never marry, for he was the most obstinate of men, and that as he did not wish his wealth to pass into the hands of illegitimate children, he desired to make us aware of the provisions of his will. This letter my lawyer can produce. The question remains to be answered, since that time did James Gordon ever marry? That must be ascertained."

"That can hardly be possible; he has never left the neighbourhood for long together, no lady has ever claimed the title of Mrs. James Gordon, and the poor mother of the two girls died, as I have said, six years before the elder Mr. Gordon."

"Then under that will I can rightfully claim the property," said the widow, quietly. She did not look up at the lawyer, but down on her lap, where her small black gloved hands lay lightly crossed.

"As no wife has come forward, and as we have it from the late Mr. Gordon's lips that the children are illegitimate, as far as I can see you can rightfully claim the property, and there is no one now who could dispute it."

"It is a very sad story," said Mrs. Gordon, heaving a little sigh. "I heard the particulars, as far as any one knew them, years ago, and I have often sighed over the wicked, wasted life of poor James Gordon."

"He was a very peculiar gentleman, hot-tempered, but very reserved and hard to manage. I fear too that his latter years were spent in no very good fashion, his friends were the worst set about here, and it is reported that he indulged in drink. Poor man; he was struck down in one night."

"And those—girls?" asked Mrs. Gordon, lowering her voice, as if the very thought of them overpowered her; but at the mention of "those girls," Mr. Blackston's voice altered.

"Ah! I forgot to tell you. This is the brightest side of the picture, for though he never brought them forward in any way, he never let them mix in the queer men society which found its way to the Warren, and they are charming young ladies. They had an excellent person to look after them, a stern, hard-looking, elderly female, but I believe she was most kind to the poor things."

"Poor things," echoed Mrs. Gordon again, then added in her sad voice, "This person is coming here this morning."

"Yes, I thought you had better question her yourself. I have been at the Warren a great deal lately, I have searched diligently for any papers that might clear up the mystery, but I found nothing, really nothing of importance."

"But after all the mystery is simple, is it not? James Gordon deceived some poor young woman with the promise of marrying her, and then he must have confessed that his father would not hear of it. Perhaps indeed he made no promises whatever."

"Unfortunately, as you say, madam, there could be but little mystery about it. For my part, I never saw the poor creature, but Dr. Smith always believed her to have been a lady born."

"So much the worse; but, indeed, Mr. Blackston, the chief reason of my visit here, for I cannot for any length of time easily leave my home, was to arrange something for those children. I cannot bear to think of their being turned out in the world with no one to care for them, and obliged to earn their own living without previous training. It is a very painful subject, and I wish, of course, that my daughters—the younger ones I mean—should know nothing of the sad dark page of our family history. They are too young and too innocent to be told the truth. It is better that they should hear nothing at all about it, so I wish to settle what can be done with those poor girls before we come to the place."

Several things in Mrs. Gordon's last remark had jarred on the lawyer, not because there was anything in the actual words themselves to object to, but in spite of himself his mind reverted to those young, pretty girls, so ignorant of the storm that was going to burst over them, and quite as young and innocent as were Mrs. Gordon's own tenderly nurtured daughters.

Yet he knew quite well that because they were young and pretty was no reason why they should be spared the knowledge which some day or other they must be told. Still he ventured to say:

"The second girl, Sibyl, is pretty, exceedingly pretty."

"Ah! that is very, very sad, a girl with no right to a name should not be pretty."

"But they are perfectly well brought up."

"In that case, it will be easier to settle something for them. I had thought of some school abroad, or that perhaps some German Hausfrau could be found, who would take one or both into her household, and teach them useful things. Of course, I would bear the expense till they could find some remunerative work."

"It was unpardonable of Mr. Gordon to make no provision for his daughters," said the lawyer again, not noticing the German plan. "I have looked in vain for some such provision, but he lived up to his income. I am afraid he was a selfish man from first to last."

"I fear so. Yes, he certainly should have provided for them, but I am more than willing to make up for the omission."

"I believe he meant to say something about this very subject. Poor man, on the very night of his death, he asked for paper and pen, but he had put off his last words too long, he never uttered them."

"Very strange," said Mrs. Gordon, though as she said this there stole into her heart that feeling which, though rarely expressed in words, might have been translated, "How providential that fortune favoured me, and that I can conscientiously enjoy the fruit of some one's ill-doing"; but at this moment a servant entered and announced, "Miss Evans."

CHAPTER X. AN INTERVIEW.

MISS EVANS entered; she looked taller, stiffer, and more angular than usual, or so it seemed to Mr. Blackston now he saw her contrasted with Mrs. Gordon, who, in her soft, dainty, ladylike dress, looked like the impersonification of refinement. Certainly there was nothing dainty about Nan's appearance. Her unfashionable black dress, her large, close-fitting bonnet, trimmed with plain black ribbon tied in bows under her chin, and her thick, woollen gloves, all helped to make Miss Evans in no ways "a thing of beauty." If she looked hard-featured when Grace's loving arms were round her, it cannot be wondered that she did so now that she stood in Mr. Blackston's office, summoned there to hear—what? Nan could not tell; but her guesses were not far wrong. In the presence of this elegant stranger, she looked like some gaunt block of granite just transplanted from its lonely quarry.

Mrs. Gordon's frigid little bow, unintentional as it was, made Miss Evans lift her small, piercing eyes to the stranger's face, and that one glance settled Nan's opinion of the stranger. "I hate you!" said that glance; for Nan already saw that here was the woman who was to begin the troubles of her darlings.

Mr. Blackston broke the silence.

"Good morning, Miss Evans! It is very kind of you to come at the appointed time, especially as I believe you only came back to the Warren yesterday. I hope that you left your relation in better health. Miss Grace told me that you were forced to absent yourself; but I am sure you little expected the sad event which took place in your absence."

Mr. Blackston had said all this to allow Miss Evans to collect her thoughts, for during this time he was watching her closely. He himself had but seldom seen, and very seldom spoken to, Mr. James Gordon's governess—or housekeeper, as some called her—but now she acquired special interest in his eyes as the person who had been longest at the Warren, and who, as such, could best reveal to him any secrets connected with it, supposing, of course, there were any. If he thought that it was an easy thing to make any woman tell what she knew, and that Miss Evans could be classed among the class of "any women," he was mistaken. If Miss Evans chose to be silent, no man on earth could make her speak.

"Thank you. My aunt has almost recovered her usual health," said Miss Evans, drily.

Mr. Blackston coughed.

Mrs. Gordon still sat gazing at this strange person, till she was seized with a little shiver at the bare idea of such a woman having anything to do with the bringing up of her daughters. "But of course for those poor girls it did not matter; however," she added to herself, "a less attractive woman I never beheld."

"Indeed!" continued Mr. Blackston. "I am delighted to hear you say so. Ehem! However, my object in troubling you to come here was to discuss the sad question of the future of poor Grace and Sibyl."

"Ridiculous names!" thought Mrs. Gordon.

No answer from Miss Evans, so that after a short pause the lawyer was forced to proceed without encouragement:

"You have been such a kind friend to the two sisters that Mrs. Gordon and myself naturally wish to consult you about them. What do you think would approve itself to their minds—ehem!—I mean as to their future?"

Mrs. Gordon thought this was a curious way of opening up the question, but of course said nothing.

"I hardly understand you, sir," said Miss Evans, stiffly and coldly.

Mr. Blackston was beginning to dislike his mission. He saw Miss Evans was going to resist every suggestion.

"You must know, Miss Evans, that the late Mr. James Gordon died in a very sudden and unexpected manner. He made no will—that is, none that my diligent search has been able to discover—and I fear, therefore, that he made no provision for his daughters."

Miss Evans did not answer, though had any one seen the fierce, angry look in her downcast eyes, they would, in some small measure, have guessed at the tumult in her heart.

"I suppose," continued Mr. Blackston, in desperation, "that you know of no such document existing?"

"Mr. Gordon never spoke to me of his private affairs," said Miss Evans, shortly.

"Of course not. I never thought he did—he was a very reserved man with everybody, with his daughters, too, I suppose, Miss Evans?"

The words were put in the form of a question, but Miss Evans perversely took them as an affirmative. Mr. Blackston was beginning, in his own mind, to call the woman "an ill-tempered, stupid old maid."

"However," he continued, "the unfortunate part of the affair is, that all Mr. Gordon's money, under his late father's will, goes to a distant cousin, in fact, to the lady here present, so that your young charges are left penniless—as is, alas, most often the case of children in their very sad, unfortunate circumstances. I am taking for granted, Miss Evans, that you understand my meaning, as all the people about here know it, that is, that the late Mr. James Gordon was never married to the mother of his children—he admitted this with his own lips—and that therefore, in the eyes of the law, they have no claims whatever on their father's property.

Miss Evans bowed her head.

"I had hoped," still continued Mr. Blackston, now, however, looking across to Mrs. Gordon, who was certainly a more pleasing picture to gaze upon than Miss Evans, "I had hoped that Mr. James Gordon would have saved a yearly sum of money for his girls; but there is only enough balance at his bankers to cover the necessary expenses of his funeral, and the discharge of his debts. This being the case, I am sorry, extremely sorry, to find that those girls are left, literally, without a penny; and had the heir-at-law been any other than our kind friend Mrs. Gordon, here present, the question would have assumed a very painful and perplexing aspect. As it is, you have yourself informed me, Mrs. Gordon, that you will defray all lawful expenses till such time as a suitable provision can be found. Am I right?"

Mrs. Gordon looked up at the lawyer with a gentle smile of acquiescence.

"Yes, perfectly right; though, of course, I shall, naturally, wish to have the entire direction of the money so spent upon them. I have turned over several plans in my own mind for their future welfare, and I happen to know a lady in Germany who keeps a small school, who will, I know, make it a duty to oblige me by taking these girls either as scholars or teachers. They will thus have the advantage of learning German, that is, if teaching could be their future vocation; or, if they have had too few advantages for this to be possible, then——" and Mrs. Gordon, in spite of herself, looked at Miss Evans, whose stern, impassible face annoyed her.

Mr. Blackston could not help noticing the last innuendo, and hastened to smooth down the remark.

"Miss Evans must be a good judge of the proficiency of her pupils. I believe you have been with them many years?"

"Yes; but they have had no advantages," was Miss Evans's reply, looking up and darting a look at the widow—it was as if she were throwing back her own words at her, and acknowledging that she was, as Mrs. Gordon intimated, a commonplace, ignorant woman.

It was strange that Miss Evans should at once have declared war, metaphorically, with this ladylike, agreeable, easy mannered widow; but so it was. Mr. Blackston wanted to find out if Miss Evans knew anything more than he had told her, for, as yet, all the information had been on his side; but in vain. Although he addressed several more questions, he always received the same guarded, self-possessed answer, reminding him of the short, sharp bark of a watch-dog, till, at last, he thought it advisable to end the painful interview, and rose, saying:

"We really want your help and advice, Miss Evans, as to the best means of breaking the news to your charges. Do you think it would be best for Mrs. Gordon to explain as much as is necessary to Miss Grace, or will you undertake this delicate mission?"

But, again, Miss Evans was not prepared to promise her help, and did not presume to offer her advice. She rose, too, and, standing up in all her grim height, she said, shortly:

"All such matters must be left for the family. I was nothing but Mr. Gordon's governess; I never interfered with any private matters."

"That reminds me, Miss Evans," said Mrs. Gordon, coming forward in her usual self-possessed manner, "I shall be much obliged to you if you will tell me of any debts of which I ought to know. To yourself, for instance; for, of course, in such cases, one cannot give the usual notice; but, naturally, I should wish to pay you half a year's salary, and any back payment due to you. I mention this subject now, because I am here for a few days, and I am anxious to settle everything that I can before my return home. For instance, I should like to arrange for the departure of your charges as soon as convenient, say ten days or a fortnight—I do not wish to hurry them unduly."

"Of course not," put in the lawyer;

"but you must see these poor children yourself, Mrs. Gordon, I feel sure they will interest you. When can we come to the Warren, Miss Evans?"

But Nan's human nature could stand it no longer. "Mr. Gordon's governess" turned round sharply, muttered an inaudible answer, and walked out of the room.

"Miss Evans has a most unfortunate manner," said Mrs. Gordon, smiling, as she turned back to her arm-chair, though in her heart she was not smiling at all.

"A rough diamond!" laughed the lawyer; "but then one could not expect much polish to remain, after having lived fifteen years at that house! A beautiful place, standing in its own grounds. It is five miles distant from a town. Besides, no one ever visited the place. Would to-morrow afternoon suit you to go there, Mrs. Gordon? I shall be ready to escort you at that time. We must hunt up the title-deeds, and see that there is no flaw in your right of possession. I believe you will find the neighbourhood really sociable; but, of course, it draws a line at respectability, and poor James Gordon chose to put his foot over that line, so——"

"Ah, of course."

When Mrs. Gordon was once more in her sitting-room at the inn, she sat down and wrote a version of the scene to Frances; but she only remarked about Miss Evans, that "The poor girls have had a rough kind of old maid to bring them up, so I do not expect to find them very presentable."

OVER THE WATER.

A COMPLETE STORY.

When and how the quarrel between the villages of Hastière-le-Vaux and Hastière-par-Delà began, is more than I can say. As long as I, Michel Dumont, can remember, we on the right bank of the river at Hastière-par-Delà have had nothing whatever to do with our neighbours just across the stream at the other Hastière. Monsieur le Curé says that the ill-feeling probably arose in the old days, when the parish church on our side of the water formed part of a large convent, and the ruin on the heights behind Hastière-le-Vaux was a fortified castle. If he is right it shows that stones crumble away more quickly than human love and hate, for to this day no lad from one side of the river ever goes courting a lass on the other side; no friendly greetings are shouted from shore to shore, by fishermen or washerwomen; each side has its own ferry-boat, and would rather lose half an hour of valuable time than use the wrong one; we do not even pray together, for while we hear our mass in the old parish church, the folk of Hastière-le-Vaux hear theirs in an ugly little chapel which they have built for themselves. Unluckily, the railway chose the wrong side of the water for us, and Hastière-le-Vaux is our superior as far as having the railway-station can count for superiority. The Curé has often told us that this state of feud is very wrong; but all he can say changes nothing. The old grudge seems like second nature to us, and seldom breaks out into an open quarrel.

Perhaps I ought to say, however, that I am not in a position to take what my uncle Blaise Barraud calls an impartial view of the matter, for I have lived in Hastière-par-Delà all my life, and have but little learning to help me to judge things. I have spent my time chiefly in learning my handicraft of stone-cutting, and when my day's work is over I am too tired for reading anything besides the newspaper; certainly, what I read there doesn't prove that we and our quarrel are worse than the rest of the world.

At the time of which I am going to tell I worked as foreman in old Nicolas Taelman's stone-yard, and earned really good wages; indeed, I should have been a well-to-do young fellow—as things went in Hastière—but there were my old mother and two little sisters to be provided for, and as I was the only unmarried son of the family, the heaviest share of the burden fell on my shoulders, of which I didn't complain; yet it hampered me, and kept me from saving, and from any notion of looking fo a wife, even if I had wished to marry, which I didn't exactly.

I felt what a dead weight my circumstances were to me when old Taelma made up his mind to leave off work an sell his business. It seemed quite natura that after being his manager for thre years I should succeed him, and I was th first he spoke to about his intentions.

"'Tain't only my age, lad, that pushe me to it," he said, "if I didn't want th money I wouldn't think of givin' in jus yet; but there's my son-in-law at Liég he's in what you may call a bit of a hobbl and some cash down I must have for him more than I can find just now, unless I either sell the yard or get into a hobble myself."

"Mon Dieu, Nicolas," I cried, "if you want to sell for cash down I'm not your man, worse luck. I could only manage instalments, with quite a little 'un to start with."

"Instalments won't do, my boy," he replied, slowly. "Of course, I can guess you haven't saved much, but I'd let you have it cheap. I'd give it you for three thousand francs."

"That's out of the question for me," I said; "I could no more find three thousand francs than I could make the river flow back up to Givet."

"Perhaps you couldn't yourself," Nicolas said; then he added, after a pause, "but I was thinking of Blaise Barraud, he's your mother's own brother, wouldn't he help you? He——"

"I wouldn't ask him," I interrupted; "and if I did it would be no use."

"Why, lad," asked Nicolas, "what have you against him? Is there any quarrel between you?"

"No," I said, shortly; "there's no quarrel. But for all that, I won't ask for help from him." Then I turned quickly away, for my Uncle Blaise, who was far and away the richest man in Hastière, was a sore subject with me, the more so, because a few months before, when he came back from America after thirty years' absence, I had thought, as Père Nicolas thought, that he would be sure to help his only remaining sister and her children. But I soon found that the memory of the old family quarrel which had driven him away from Hastière still rankled in his mind; moreover, that he meant to keep every sou of the fortune he had made out West for himself, or, rather, for his daughter Zoé. Besides which, he never took to me, nor I to him; and I had more than once made up my mind never to cross his threshold again, yet that was a resolve I always broke—on account of my cousin Zoé.

I say my cousin Zoé, though she was so entirely different from any other girl I had ever known, that I never felt on the same level of kinship with her as I did with my many other cousins. By her mother she was Canadian, and she did not speak French at all as we speak it. Sometimes it was hard to understand what she meant; still I liked her talk for its very strangeness. I suppose, too, it was her Canadian blood which made her so much more independent than girls are in our country, and so well able to give her opinion on matters about which women, as a rule, know little and care less, and she had no stiffness in her manner either. My mother called her forward, but I think she was more womanly than many girls who make a great show of being prim. I do not know whether or no she was pretty; she had long curved eyelashes, and large dark eyes, the like of which I have never seen before or since. Other girls' eyes have a knack of telling one more than their owners care to put into words—that is, if you are sharp at reading their glances; but Zoé's eyes were always a puzzle to me. They looked at you quite straight and simply, and yet they told you nothing. I never knew if she were pleased or vexed with me, if she were sorry for me, or if she were making fun of me.

These may seem odd reasons for being fond of a girl; but fondness is fondness, and has no reason. Something in her manner to me always made me feel shy and awkward with her, yet each time I left her I longed to see her again and to have a chance of cutting a better figure. I had got altogether into a foolish state of mind about her, for what was the use of a poor man like me wasting his thoughts on a girl who would have two hundred thousand francs for a dowry? Men of five-and-twenty, however, are not always wise; and then, you see, there was but one Zoé Barraud in all the wide world.

Of course, before my Uncle Blaise went out to America—that means before I was born—he had taken part in the feud between the two villages, as we all did; but when he came back he was very scornful at the notion of not being on sociable terms with your neighbours across the water. He said it was absolutely ridiculous and incredible that the feeling should be encouraged.

To Zoé, naturally, it was all new and strange. She asked a great many questions about the quarrel, and always ended by calling it childish and absurd.

The evening after I had had that talk with Nicolas about the stone-yard, I strolled down the road towards the house which my uncle had bought by the river, and which he was making very fine and smart within and without. I had no particular reason for going there, yet something which I did not care to confess to myself drew me that way. As I went up Barraud's garden I saw Zoé on a ladder nailing a rose-tree against the summer-house.

"Good evening, Michel," she cried; "you can just help me a bit here. You needn't go to the house. Mother is very busy and father has gone to Dinant."

She came down the ladder and I went up it.

"It's a nice evening, cousin!" I said, that being the only thing that occurred to me of the many things I might have said.

"Very nice," she replied. "Now that bough must go over the window, and that one to the right."

I did as she bade me, and she stood watching, while I tried to find something to say to her. I found nothing, however, except "Did my uncle go to Dinant this morning or this afternoon?"

"Oh, this morning," she answered. "He had such a lot of business. He's going about the boat, for one thing."

"The boat?" I repeated. "What boat?"

"Why, don't you know? Ah, I forgot you haven't been to see us since last Sunday week. Well, father has gone to see about an authorisation for a Government ferry-boat."

"A Government ferry-boat?" I exclaimed. "What an idea! The Commune refused to have one years ago. We have Blanc's boat on this side, and the other side has Lebon."

"Yes, Michel; but Blanc and Lebon only ferry those they choose to ferry. A Government boat would be at the service of everybody."

"It might be; but no one would use it, and no one would ply it."

"My father means to work it himself," she rejoined, quietly, "if every one else is too prejudiced; and as to being used, that will come with time. You know it will be cheaper, for one thing. Blanc and Lebon charge two sous; Government only charges one."

"Was the price the reason of my uncle's application?" I asked, meaning to be sarcastic.

"Not altogether—though it's a good reason enough. Something else, however, decided him to ask. The other day he had some business to do in Brussels. He had promised to take me, and we were going by the early train. You know Lebon's boat is much more convenient for us to get to the station by than Blanc's, so we went and hailed him. We have no quarrel with Hastière-le-Vaux. Lebon came out of his house, looked at us, and turned away. Father was very angry. We had barely time to go down to Blanc's, and then up to the station. He called all this across the river, but Lebon made no sign of hearing. I felt sure we should miss the train, and that I should lose my nice long day in Brussels, when a young man who lives next door to Lebon came running out, and, before Lebon could stop him, he had jumped into the boat and come over for us. He saved us the train; but father made up his mind there and then that such a state of things should be put a stop to."

"Who was the young man?" I asked. "I'd like to know."

"His name is André Vasseur. He's a stonecutter, like yourself. He thinks the quarrel as silly as we do."

"Does he?" I retorted. "Well, he learnt his trade at Liége; he scarce belongs to Hastière. But he doesn't want to have aught to do with this side, I know."

"Well, he's been to see us since, anyhow," she said, gently. "Father's taken to him; he calls him a very intelligent man."

A sudden throb of jealousy went through me.

"I know perfectly well, Zoé," I said, "that Vasseur doesn't want to make friends across the water any more than I do."

"But he has made friends with us—with father!"

"That's another matter," I said.

"Lebon didn't seem to think so," answered my cousin.

"But young Vasseur and old Lebon are two different people," I persisted.

"Yes, so we found. Now, will you put one more nail in there, and then I think it will do? Thank you."

"You're a fool, Michel Dumont," I said to myself, half an hour later, as I walked home. "You have had no encouragement to care for the girl, and no hope of winning her yourself; then why be jealous? Moreover, how do you know he means courtship, or that she'd have him if he did? Don't find mares'-nests, Michel!"

Before long, however, every one in Hastière knew André Vasseur meant courtship, and there was a deal of talk about it.

"I thought you were after Barraud's girl?" old Taelman said to me one day. "Surely you won't let that interloper steal your chances?"

"I've no chances for him to steal," I said, sulkily. "I never was after the girl."

"Vasseur's a pushing lad," Nicolas went on, after a while. "I'll tell you what he's after, besides Barraud's Zoé. He wants to buy my business, and carry it across the water."

"You won't sell it to him?" I cried. "You'll never let the yard go like that?"

"I'd rather not," he said, slowly; "but an offer's an offer, you see, and you won't take any steps."

"How can I take steps?" I cried, impatiently. "I've no means to buy it."

"But there's Barraud," he persisted.

"I gave you an answer to that long ago," I said.

"But, lad, if you married the girl, the money'd go along with her."

"Père Nicolas," I said, "sell your yard to whom you will, but don't get such a notion as that into your head."

"And she's a good girl," he went on; but I threw down my tools and walked away.

Blaise Barraud had got the ferry-boat, but it did not answer. The only thing it did was to bring down the price of the other ferries; otherwise, all went on just the same, and if any man chanced to hail the Government boat, Blaise had to do the ferrying himself. The men who worked for him utterly refused to do it.

I went to my uncle's but little in these days. When I did go, I nearly always saw Vasseur, who was in high favour with Blaise Barraud. Zoé, too, treated him in a much more friendly manner than she treated me. Perhaps that was partly my fault, for I was never at my ease with her, which she was shrewd enough to discern; while Vasseur had a very good opinion of himself, and was sure every one shared it.

One evening he began telling my uncle about his proposal to Taelman. "He's an old fool," he added, roughly. "I offered him three thousand francs for the business; and he says it is worth five thousand."

"Five thousand francs!" exclaimed Barraud. "The old Jew! You stick to three thousand. He'll close with you."

"He won't close with you for three," I said. "He won't let his business go across the water for less than five."

I knew Zoé would despise me for saying this; but Vasseur's manner always angered me.

"I'd give him as much as he'd take on this side. A price is a price," said Barraud, "he wants the money too much to let your offer slip. He won't get another in a hurry."

"Oh, he's got a customer in his eye," went on Vasseur, looking at me significantly. "Ask your nephew if it is not so."

I felt the colour rush to my cheeks. I don't know which I felt angrier with—Nicolas for mentioning the matter to Vasseur, or Vasseur for dragging it up then.

"Mind your own business, André Vasseur," I said.

"It is my own business," he retorted, "if I want the yard, and he means to make me wait until you have a try at getting the money for it first."

"You'll be a fool, Michel," said my uncle, "if you go borrowing from Peter to pay Paul."

"No fear, uncle," I said; "I've no intention of borrowing."

"No," went on Vasseur, "Taelman spoke of a far better plan than borrowing."

"Why, what——" began my uncle, with a sharp glance from Vasseur to me.

"Monsieur André," broke in Zoé, suddenly, "I wish you had brought your violin to-night. I should like to hear if you have forgotten 'Yankee Doodle.'"

"Forgotten it!" exclaimed Vasseur, taking a very different tone. "As if I should forget anything you are so good as to teach me. You shall hear me play it to-morrow evening."

So he went there one evening after another, and I only ventured into her presence now and again; and she taught him tunes, and he always had a pretty speech ready for her, while I only made a fool of myself before her.

"Good night, all," I said, abruptly, getting up to go.

"Good night," said my uncle, without moving.

"Good night, cousin," said Zoé, giving me a long look from those strange eyes of hers.

I taxed old Taelman with having gossiped about me to Vasseur.

"I said no harm, lad," he replied, innocently. "I only told him I wanted to sell you the yard, and that I hoped you'd find the price somehow. He jeered, and said something about you and your cousin Zoé. I told him I hoped she would have you. That was all."

"Quite enough, too," I said.

After that I do not know when I should

have gone to Barraud's again, if one evening Nicolas had not asked me to go and speak to my uncle about an order he had given at the yard. I was glad to have an excuse for going. I thought I would show them all—Vasseur, too, if he were there—that I had no intention of coming as a wooer. So I didn't smarten up at all. I just went as I came out of the yard.

It was a nasty night. A bitter wind was driving from the north-east against the flow of the river, which was swollen and muddy from heavy rains.

When I got to my uncle's I found him deep in business with Maître Rollin, the notary from Dinant.

"Sit down and wait," he said, curtly, when I blundered straight into my message. "We are occupied, and Maître Rollin's train goes in half an hour."

I crossed the room and sat down by Zoé, who had scarcely looked up as I came in. I supposed she had been expecting Vasseur, and was disappointed at seeing only me.

"You haven't been here for quite a long time, Cousin Michel," she said, softly.

"I come quite as often as I'm wanted," I answered, as coolly as I could; but my heart was beating so loud that I thought she would hear it.

"You know best about that, of course, cousin," she replied.

"And I expect," I went on, "that I shall come less, after a while—not at all, in fact."

"Why?" she asked, quickly, looking full at me; "you aren't going away? Monsieur André has not bought the stone-yard?"

"Not yet; but, for all that, I think I shall go. I shall do better elsewhere."

"You are the best judge of that, too;" she replied, still looking at me.

A great longing came over me to let her know why I wanted to go; but I wasn't clever at folding up my meaning so that it could be taken without being spoken out plain, and, while I was hesitating, I heard Maître Rollin saying:

"No, no, my dear Monsieur Barraud, the current is very strong to-night. I'd rather have your nephew to put me across, if he'll be so good. He's younger and stronger than you or I."

I got up mechanically, forgetting my errand, and went out with Maître Rollin.

"And when is Mademoiselle Zoé going to make up her mind?" he said, as we got into the boat.

I made as though I did not hear, and when once we were off, I had too much to do with punting across stream to talk or be talked to. It was real hard work, and when Maître Rollin had bade me good night, and had jumped ashore, I stood leaning on my pole for a few minutes, getting back my breath. As I waited, I heard some one speaking.

"Yes, yes, the boat is there," shouted Maître Rollin, in answer. "Good night, I don't want to miss the train."

"You won't—you've got ten minutes. Good night."

It was André Vasseur. I saw him through the darkness coming down to the water.

"I want to cross," he shouted.

I took no heed, but began to push off; before I could get clear, however, he had sprung into the boat.

"Who's that ferrying?" he cried, angrily. "Why did you push off when I called?"

"Because I didn't wish to do you a service, André Vasseur," I replied.

He gave a jeering laugh. "You thought you'd have a good innings with the fair Zoé," he began.

"Don't talk to me about my cousin Zoé," I cried, "nor about me to her; one thing, though, I will ask you: What did you mean, that night, about me and getting money to pay for the stone-yard?"

"You know what I meant," he said, laughing again.

"I do," I replied; "and here's what you deserve for it. Better late than never." I took my punt pole in my left hand for a moment, and drawing a step nearer to where he stood in the stern, I hit out straight from my right shoulder into his face. By the dim light I could see the blood flowing as he staggered from the blow. But he pulled himself together and prepared to pay me back. I dared not let the current master the boat, while I defended myself, so I dodged aside, and he struck with all his force into the air. The next instant there was a sharp cry—a splash—and I stood alone.

"It's my turn to laugh now," I shouted, "while you're swimming ashore."

But he made no sign of beginning to swim. Whether he could not, or whether the blow I had given him had partly stunned him, I did not know. Anyhow, I saw him sink and then come up again, and then sink again a few yards lower. As I watched him, he did not even seem to be struggling, and a terrible idea came to me.

"If he cannot swim," I thought, "so much the worse for him. I'm not to blame; let him drown." And, as I went on punting, I thought how it all would be. I would tell no one a word about it, and no one would guess what had caused his death. Suddenly the thought of Zoé rose above the vile temptation. She loved this man, I was sure; and she would lose him, and her young life would lose all its joy without a moment's warning or a word of farewell.

Before I knew what I was doing I had swung the boat round down stream. "I will spare her that," I said aloud, as if I were speaking to another man. But it was not easy to manage such a clumsy craft, and while I was doing my best to little purpose, I saw Vasseur rise again twenty yards below and then sink. If I meant to help him I must help him without the boat. I was swimmer enough not to fear for myself, so I threw off my blouse, and, with Zoé's name in my heart, I sprang after him into the icy water. I have often wondered since how I found him so quickly in that terrible perplexity of swirling currents. Find him, nevertheless, I did. He was quite unconscious, and hung like a log in my grasp. It seemed an eternity before I could get him on to my shoulder, and, when I looked for the boat, I could see her no longer. There was nothing for it but to swim ashore. How I managed that is a marvel to every one, especially to myself. There came one awful moment when I felt that all was over with me, for, as I gasped for breath, my mouth and nostrils filled with water, and, for a few seconds, I was at the mercy of the current. Then I pulled myself together for one last effort. "If we are both drowned," I thought, "perhaps she will be sorry for me, too." The next minute I felt the bottom under my feet, and, as I stepped to land with my unconscious burden, I knew that life was worth struggling for, even if I had to live it without Zoé.

The very next day, in the thick of all the talk about the accident of the night before, I told Nicolas that I had made up my mind to go to Antwerp and find work at the new docks they were building, and that he had best make his terms with Vasseur.

"You are going far enough, my lad," he said, sadly; "but if it must be, it must. I'll talk to Vasseur when he's got over his ducking."

The same evening I went to my uncle's. I thought I should be better able to make a new start when I said good-bye to Zoé. It would be like drawing a line under all that had happened that summer and autumn. I found her alone in the garden. It was a good opportunity of speaking to her; but the old shyness seized me, and I couldn't make a beginning. Nor did she wait for one.

"Michel," she cried, holding out her hands to me, "you were a brave, good man last night! Ah, cousin, you may talk of the old quarrel as much as you like, but you forgot all about it at the right moment."

"I didn't forget, Zoé," I said; "I didn't save him for his own sake—but for yours."

"For mine, Michel!" she exclaimed, with a look of wondering joy; "really for my sake?"

"Yes, Zoé; but I'd rather not talk of that—it's over and done with, I've come to talk of something else—I've come to say good-bye."

"Why, Michel? Monsieur André will never turn you out of your place now, even if he does buy the yard."

"That's nothing to do with it," I said; "I have made up my mind to go, and I mean to go."

For a moment she looked into my face, I could see there were tears in her eyes. "I mean to go," I went on—it was the look in her face that made me say this—"because I love you so dearly, Zoé."

At this she smiled.

"That's a queer reason to give, Michel," she whispered.

"It's a true one, Zoé."

"If it is true," she said, more softly still, "I should have thought it was a good reason for staying here."

"Zoé!" I cried in amazement, "you don't want me to stay? You surely don't care for me?"

"You know best, Michel, of course," she said, just as she had said it the evening before, "but remember you've never asked me."

"Well," said my uncle, when we told him, "the girl's been brought up to choose for herself, and she has sense enough to choose for herself. For my part, I had rather she took the other lad; but it's more her business than mine, so I'll make the best of it. Only mind, young man, no more talk of going away, I'm fixed at Hastière, and the girl stays with me."

That question was soon settled to his

satisfaction. My wish to go away had vanished; and when, a few weeks later, Taelman really sold his yard, it was Blaise Barraud who bought it, and I, his son-in-law, became the manager of his new speculation.

But the quarrel between the two Hastières still survives, and my children have nothing to do with the children of André Vasseur on the other side of the water.

A RUN THROUGH CORSICA.

IN TWO PARTS. PART II.

After a quiet night in my room at the Pieraggi, I was awakened by the factotum at half-past three in the morning, in readiness for the early train to Bastia, and in a few minutes the good man led me away with a portmanteau upon each side of him. It was the fairest day Corsica had yet shown me. The first flush of the dawn light was upon the snow on the noble crags above the town, and upon the dark velvety pines which clung to the precipices above and amid the snow. This soft coral hue against the more sombre vapour which slowly drifted by, as if dissolving under the power of the sun, was divine to see. The rivers Restonica and Tavignano tumbled along tumultuously in their common bed towards the eastern sea.

The distance between Corte and Bastia is about seventy kilometres, and the journey lasted nearly five hours. That is not a great pace. But of course we are in the mountains for the most part, ascending and descending, now between two walls of rock many hundred feet almost perpendicular, and now speeding along the side of an amphitheatre, whence we look down upon many a mile of ill-cultivated valley land, with the river Golo rushing furiously in its midst. The weather had at least done me service in the matter of the rivers and waterfalls. These were all of winter's magnitude, and roared famously from far and near.

How thinly peopled and ill-exploited the island is, to be sure! If it were a country in which the passions were kept under better control, there would be twice as many acres of grain and twice as many vineyards as one sees to-day. Specialists say that it would easily support three times the population it has. There can be little doubt that this is so. "It is because we lack hands"—"manca li bracchi"—said an old Corsican to me as I walked with him through one of the wilder parts of the country, and commented upon the vast areas of nothing but myrtle-scrub and brushwood. Perhaps he might have gone a little farther, and said also: "It is because, too, we have not enough security that we shall reap the fruits of our labour." If the bandits were cauterised from the land, Corsica might flourish. But France must bestir herself with a vengeance if she means seriously to eradicate an evil at which, for the last twenty years, she has winked, or which she has openly confessed herself powerless to remove.

There are Frenchmen of light and leading, but with a certain obliquity in their moral sense, who regard Corsica much as we regard the unfortunate beasts in our Zoological Gardens. "What! Would you have these interesting quadrupeds and birds of prey destroyed?" the enthusiastic zoologist might exclaim in wonder to the professed humanitarian who pitied them in their confinement. "Why, some of them are unique! Just think how interesting to the future generations of mankind collections such as these cannot but be! When Central Africa is settled up, there will be no wild beasts left; and students of natural history must come to these menageries for the good of their minds."

So with the cynical publicists of our day. "What," they ask, "can be more interesting than the spectacle presented by Corsica when we are about to enter the twentieth century of grace? It is a piece of mediævalism, perfectly preserved. In this little country we see the same animosities and combinations of families for protective purposes which were ordinary phases of life in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries upon the Continent. There is the same reckless indifference to bloodshed, the same defiance of authority, the same love of unregenerate freedom. Why, it is simply delightful! Instead of bothering one's brains with the ponderous chronicles of Froissart and the Italian histories, one has only to cross the water a few score miles, and take up one's abode in the heart of Corsica for a few weeks or months. All the books in all the universities of the world would not enable the student to realise the condition of Europe as it was five hundred years ago so well as a common sojourn of this kind. One may thus live in an atmosphere of terrorism, murder, lawlessness, and so forth, to one's heart's content, and, after a while, return to Paris or London with more than professorial enlightenment."

This is good satire in its way. Of course, however, the men who pretend to view Corsica as if it were really a precious picture or statue, cannot be regarded as very exemplary citizens of the world, much less as patriots. In the name of humanity, let the true spirit of progress do its work among this brave misguided people. It is bad enough to sit at a bull-fight unmoved by the torture of the horses, but it is immeasurably more brutal to wish to keep Corsica in its present state of social, political, and even domestic anarchy, in order that students of history may get an object lesson of a very emphatic and impressive kind.

A single vendetta tale of modern life will suffice to show what Corsica is like under the rule of the Republic. I borrow it from the narrative of M. Bourde, who the other day made an exhaustive enquiry into the social state of the island.

On the first of January, 1885, two youths on their way to church made a bet of a bottle of wine on the issue of a wrestling-match. They at once began the duel. One of them fell, and the other claimed the wager. It was disputed, and their altercation attracted several bystanders. In the heat of argument and passion, Orsini, one of the two, snatched a dagger from the belt of a bystander, and in a moment killed Orlanda, the arbiter of the match, because he said the wrestle ought to be repeated. Orsini is thereupon arrested and sent to prison for a few months.

The father of Orlanda, the victim, does not think such a punishment enough atonement for the loss of his son. He therefore vows vengeance upon Nicolai, the man whose dagger had killed his son; and shortly afterwards he slays him with nine stabs of a knife. This puts the families of Nicolai and Orlanda upon a first-rate footing of enmity, and the campaign of vengeance is promptly opened.

One of the Nicolai wounds a second son of Jerome Orlanda, the father of the first victim. Then two Orlanda attack three Nicolai, and kill one. For this crime the second son of Jerome above mentioned is arrested and charged. Jerome warns the Nicolai not to give evidence against his son, or he will be tenfold in earnest for fresh vengeance. But the wife of the dead Nicolai is not deterred. She goes to Bastia, and with her children in her arms, implores the jury to punish the assassin of her husband. "Justice," she cries; "they have killed an innocent man."

After this bold feat the poor woman dares to return to her native village. She is intercepted by Jerome Orlanda, and shot dead. Her daughter also, who was with her, is pursued by Jerome, and the child throws herself over a precipice to avoid the man. She is fortunately saved by some bushes, into which Jerome Orlanda fires to make sure (but does not hit her), after which he goes home contented. But his threat is deemed so far-reaching that the gravedigger dare not dig a grave for the poor woman's body. She has to be buried by stealth in the night, and the grave is dug by her relatives.

This fiend, Jerome Orlanda, survived in freedom for several months, but was eventually found dead, killed either by the gendarmes or in ordinary vendetta, it does not matter which. And so the feud exhausted itself.

Dramas of this kind would not be countenanced anywhere else in Europe. But in Corsica, where "twelve souls are not enough to avenge the deceased's boots," or it may be thought so, they are of common occurrence.

Meanwhile, we have run through the land to Bastia. The Golo, Corsica's largest river, has been with us for many a mile, hurrying its green water and foam through one rocky gorge after another. The latter part of its course is not sensational. It broadens and finds its way into the Mediterranean, through a level tract, the mere sight of which is enough to give one the premonitory symptoms of a fever.

When we turn from the coast towards Bastia, there is the glisten of a large lagoon to our right, with the white sails of fisher-boats upon it, and an infrequent palm standing against the bright background like a vignette of North Africa. Beyond is the spectral shape of Elba, from Monte Capanna, the highest point of which, Napoleon, no doubt, looked with some interest at the snow peaks of his birth island.

As significant as anything in Corsica are the sites of her inland towns and villages. They stand on hill-tops, which are themselves half fortresses, their high houses aspiring from these elevated foundations like objects fantastic and Turneresque. The inhabitants were of course thus well placed for security against pirates in the old days. Their little seaport, some miles away, was sure to be an unimportant village, from which they could at short notice convey the valuables and residents to the mother settlement in the clouds. In later times, when pirates were not of much account, there were feuds between the citizens of one town and the citizens of its neighbour town, which made the need of walls and a strong position almost as imperative as before. The classic tale of the quarrel between the town of Borgo and that of Lucciana half a century ago is something to the point. This originated in a dead donkey which was found barring the way to the Holy Thursday procession from one of the churches. Lucciana said that Borgo had wrought this insult. Borgo put the blame upon Lucciana. And so the corpse of the ass was dragged from one town to the other, until its decomposition put an end to the strife. The men of Lucciana seem to have had the best of the affair, seeing that they succeeded in impaling the ass upon the steeple of the Borgo church.

I had no sooner driven to another "Hôtel de France," this time in Bastia, than I made preparations for getting away again. The terrible altitude of the houses of this, the earlier, capital of Corsica, outdid that of the dwellings of Ajaccio or Corte. It serves the town well enough, it may be, in the summer heats; but to the casual visitor a walk in Bastia is like a promenade in a cistern. He has to take the rest of the island on faith.

So when I had breakfasted, and made the somewhat sombre-looking waiter smile at my praises of the picturesqueness of his native island, I went straightway, knapsack in hand, to a back street, where a bruised old pale-green diligence, much ventilated by natural decay, was standing, on the point of departure for Morsiglia, many miles to the north, on the west coast of Cap Corse. This miserable old coach was my home from ten o'clock in the morning until eight o'clock in the evening.

For several hours, however, the ride was one of considerable pleasure. The road skirts the shore the whole way. The islands of Elba and Capraia lifted themselves from the water in an attractive grey haze, and the nearer sea rippled brightly where it ebbed lazily against the coast rocks.

We passed several villages, of which Brando, Santa Severa, and Mucinaggio, are the most important, and it behoved me at each of these places to light a fresh cigar and drink another glass of wine or indifferent brandy with one or another hospitable Corsican into whose society kind chance led me. When I ventured to remark to one of these friends of a moment that I was surprised to find so much hospitality in his land, he replied quietly, as an effectual rebuff to me, "We are known for it. The Cap Corsicans have their vices like other people, but this is one of their virtues."

Anon I had to share my coupé with two other travellers, a gentleman and a lady. They had been present somewhere at an official banquet the previous evening, and were now returning to their little village adjacent to the place of my destination. From them also I learned that the Cap is the most affable and thrifty part of Corsica, with the best wine. At Mucinaggio, a picturesque little port for Rogliano, a group of villages in the mountains, I walked up and down by the beach with my lady companion, who seemed to think that an Englishman willing to try to talk Italian was a phenomenon of some account. She told me, with raised eyebrows, of one unfortunate compatriot of mine with whom she had conversed—so she phrased it—for a long time without evoking more than a monosyllable from him. "He was a very amiable young man," she assured me, "but it was like drawing a cork to get a word from him."

From this little seaport we rose through delightful woods of olives and chestnut-trees to Rogliano, where we dallied long at the post-office door, and made acquaintance with a few pretty faces. As a rule, there is not much beauty in Corsica. Occasionally one sees very young girls with faces that detain the attention. But the social condition of the island seems to give a hardness to the features before their time, so that the woman of five-and-twenty has the severity of manner of a man of thirty or forty, while the man himself looks as if he were meditating only how he may catch an enemy unawares. There may be fancy in this, but such is the impression one gets. I was told, however, that Cap Corse excels in the beauty of its maidens, even as in its wine and thriftiness. My lady friend of the coupé was my informant, and she herself was no bad illustration of her text.

After ten hours of the cramped, crawling diligence, I was glad to be set free in Morsiglia in the cool twilight. The usual concourse met the coach, and assailed the conductor with a multitude of questions, to all of which he gave intelligent reply. It was astounding how he could execute their very various commissions as he did, and also those of the half-dozen other villages through which we had passed. "Oh, it is nothing!" said my companion, when I commented on his ability. "The one before him could remember as many again, and he never made a mistake; whereas this one——" The man also engaged to get me settled for the night in this remote little village, with its group of houses all nestling round a couple of old fortresses of the time of the Genoese dominion.

I slept in an isolated house about half a mile out of the village. It was the nearest approach to a hotel possessed by Morsiglia. The building was in charge of a young man and a little boy, and I know not which was the more surprised at my apparition. But for the "say" of the thing, they would have declined to receive me. It was so dark, though, that such a breach of hospitality would have left me little alternative except to sleep under an olive-tree; for the Morsiglia folk retire early. By-and-by, however, we three became sufficiently intimate; and a supper of eggs, and bread, and poor wine was prepared for me. The lad proved a glutton for information, and ingenuously asked me many leading questions about my native land. One thing he objected to: he would not allow that London is the capital of the world.

"There is no city anywhere like Paris," he insisted; "and Paris is the world's capital!"

He would have hunted up his geography manual—compiled in Paris—to convince me, had I not stopped him. Still, he was willing to allow that England had some exemplary features.

"Ah, the Thames!" he exclaimed, with the sigh and gaze of a young religious devotee in pursuit of ideal goodness. "I should like to see that!"

I stared when they led me upstairs to my bed in this poor little house. A trestle support, and a straw mattress with a single blanket, placed in the corner of the common room in the attic, was what I anticipated. Instead of this, I had an apartment with a dressing-table, mirror, pincushion, a solid, polished mahogany bedstead and a feather bed, with all other necessaries, clean as a pink. There is no doubt about it: the Cap Corsicans have their virtues. I was assured of it in the morning, when, after breakfast, I was charged but two shillings for my accommodation; and the good man of the house offered to walk with me ten miles across the mountains, as guide, companion, and friend, and without money consideration.

This was a memorable walk, for the day was exquisite, and the balm of the Cap Corse herbs was in our nostrils all the way. We climbed to the top of the ridge that runs all through the peninsula like a backbone, and then I descended to Santa Severa, where by-and-by I caught a return diligence, and so, amid much dust and under a burning sun, found my way again to Bastia.

Here I was welcomed by the sombre-browed waiter of the "Hôtel de France," who doubted not that I would stay in the house several days. But he knew nothing of the erratic humours and restlessness of the average Briton on his travels. I had heard of a steamer to leave in the night for Livorno, and had taken my ticket for a passage by her.

Several long hours had in the meantime to be occupied in one way or another. As it was Ascension Day, I first of all went to a mass in the cathedral, which is much more pretentious than the cathedral at Ajaccio. The ladies were smitten abominably by the mania for gigantic hats and bonnets, and so the congregation was less interesting than it ought to have been. But the choir and the organ did their work well, and the echoes were stirring.

Outside there was other entertainment. The storm which had hurried the "Desiderade" into Ajaccio had wrecked a schooner against the pier of Bastia, and she had gone to pieces. The "pieces" still lay in mournful disorder, half in the water, and half out. I had read in the newspaper an editorial in which the little boys of Bastia were strenuously implored, for the shipowner's sake, to abstain from pilfering among this attractive medley of casks, and cordage, and bottles, and trusses of soaked hay. All the same, the little boys of Bastia were as busy as ants about the wreck, with their trousers tucked up to the loins.

There is a statue of Napoleon in an open space here as in Ajaccio; and here, as in Ajaccio, the ex-Emperor gazes pensively out to sea. He is looking at Elba, perhaps wondering whether it had not been better for him to have resigned himself to the worship of the few thousand inhabitants of that fair little island. The sculptor has put the globe at his feet—a compliment I hope he appreciates if he still has cognisance of human things.

I spent the last hour before sunset on the end of Bastia's pier, listening to the hubbub of Bastia's children as they dabbled in the water, and watching the shadows and lights upon the hinder hills, the lagoon to the south, and a shoulder of snow mountain which stood upraised from the middle of the island. There was something sweetly fascinating about this, my last picture in Corsica. The swallows sped fast to and fro across the inner bay, with its shapes of archaic, broad-sterned boats just rising and falling at its sides. I could see the fish in silvery shoals, hovering at the mouth of the harbour. Now and again one would venture in, and anon hasten back to his fellows; then they entered in a troop, and no doubt dined on garbage to their contentment.

All this time the islands of Elba and Capraia were momentarily getting clearer to the view. When the last crimson flush was on the shoulder of snow above mentioned, they were as solid as if they had been but a stone's-cast away. Then the shadows of night came slowly over the town, and the bells of the cathedral church clashed a peal.

A VIRTUE IN ECLIPSE.

It has often been urged by paradoxical thinkers, and by the sceptics of common life, that the fine old crusted wisdom which is dealt out to us in the popular proverb is by no means of uniform quality; that some of it is exceedingly faulty, and, indeed, very little better than folly itself. The virtue of thrift is not held up to praise in any monumental utterance of copybook morality, but there are several current wise saws of minor importance which indirectly say a good word for it: those which tell of early birds which get the worms, and of many mickles which make the muckle, and of the wisdom of storing provision for the rainy day. As a virtue, thrift is worthy of all that has been said of it, and even more. It marks one of those rare instances where the proverb has fallen short and has not said enough in praise of its subject. Perhaps it may be for the lack of this proverbial advertisement that thrift is certainly not a popular quality; or, on the other hand, it may be on account of some want of inherent charm that the framers of proverbs and maxims have given it the cold shoulder.

In spite of the encouragement which has lately been given to a scheme of national assurance for old age, it is to be feared that thrift is none the more popular with us as a nation, or nearer to that high status among the virtues which it enjoys in other lands, and in the estimation of the social reformer everywhere. Times are greatly changed since Mechanics' Institutes were first set going for the regeneration of the worker. Thrift then was the text—the "firstly," and "secondly," and "in conclusion"—of every discourse to which the intelligent operatives were treated on gala occasions, when the magic lantern, and the astronomical machinery, and the air-pump had exhausted their powers of attraction. It may be that, on account of these associations, the hearers did not then take to it; but the mechanic of to-day has other reasons for his distaste. He has discovered that these institutes were designed by certain trading economists, whose school he certainly favours less now than formerly, as places of discipline where the contemporary workers—his father and grandfather—might be indoctrinated with the saving grace of the gospel of cheapness. It was promised to them that their wages should be "good" and "fair"; but goodness and fairness were never properly defined. They were informed that the trade of the country would be ruined, and they themselves along with it, should they ask for more; and, lastly, they were adjured by the shade of Adam Smith to be thrifty, so that they might never be brought to eat the degrading bread of charity, or become an inconvenient burden upon the rates. Our worker of to-day fancies that he espies the cloven foot in this teaching, and bids the apostles of thrift to take their wares to another market.

How rapidly all these beliefs and teachings of a few decades ago are being swept down into the dim abyss of forgotten things! Already many of them are ancient history. The bears in the Regent's Park go on eating the same sort of bun that they have swallowed since the Zoological Gardens were first opened; but Demos is more critical as to his intellectual nutriment than these are as to their buns. Thrift held at the end of a stick will no longer attract him; and he has given notice that he would like to hear something of a doctrine which calls for less self-sacrifice on his part. This distaste may mainly arise on account of the boring he has undergone at the hands of his instructors; but more probably it comes from the secret preference of all classes of Englishmen for the spendthrift over the save-all. A more popular character than Charles Surface never trod the boards; and the fact that there would be no room for men like him in the new social state, constructed after the model of the Fabian Society, is the surest guarantee that such a state will never come into existence. Englishmen would never take kindly to a world in which there would be no borrowing nor lending, where men would be all Francis Goodchilds, with no Tom Idles.

Thrift, in short, has not within it the makings of a popular virtue; and it may be doubted whether it would have fared any better had it been made the subject of ever so many proverbial sayings. It is not the informing spirit of any one of our leading institutions. Governmental departments know nothing of it; and no one has ever accused our ancient seats of learning of "cultivating literature on a few oats." Very advanced politicians, even, who may happen also to be on the livery of a City company, have been known to speak tenderly of the Ancient Corporation of London—a thriftless body, if ever there was one. Again, it has been taught too exclusively by precept; there has been too little of attractive example; and, in truth, examples of this sort are not very easy to find. The man who is always mindful of that rainy day, who is always hesitating whether or not he shall spend sixpence, is not, as a rule, the pleasantest of companions, though we may admit that his scheme of life has its merits. We respect Francis Goodchild, but we are not quite sure that we like him. We certainly haven't a particle of respect for Tom Idle, but we are a bit sorry for him, and now and then make excuses for his peccadillos, and speculate whether he may not, after all, be merely a martyr to Atavism, or to some untoward surroundings.

It is certain that mere thrift may fail to win for those who practise it the rewards which too often crown the exhibition of qualities immeasurably inferior to it, qualities opposed to it in every possible way. Men who have been thrifty all their lives, are sometimes left bare by a sudden stroke of adverse fortune; and many of these often get scant help, or pity either, from those who might very well play the good Samaritan to them, for the simple reason that they have given too much time to money-grubbing, and too little to the cultivation of those arts, proficiency in which often makes the life of an impecunious man anything but an unhappy one. It is a great thing to learn the trick of always falling upon one's feet, of knowing where to look for open purses into which to dip when the hour for drawing cheques is past. No better example of this class could be produced than Mr. Algernon Lomax, a gentleman whose acquaintance I made in the course of some speculative investment business in the City some ten years ago. Lomax then had a house in Queen's Gate, and a fine place on the river, and horses, and carriages, and servants in due proportion. Though as an entertainer he had little in the way of manners to boast of, his wines and cuisine were choice enough to atone for this deficiency, and his whole household was well done in every detail, so well that people, who were described as "smart" in the society papers, went in crowds whenever they were bidden, either to Queen's Gate or to the "Alders." Indeed, as far as I can judge, I never saw anybody who was not "smart" amongst Lomax's guests except myself and Mr. and Mrs. Schultz.

Schultz was an Anglo-German of the commercial traveller type, but his wife was emphatically English, and speaking the English of—let us say—Marylebone. He had retired from business, in what line he had operated it was never disclosed, with a comfortable fortune, and Mrs. Schultz also had a nice little income of her own. There was also a little reservation as to her antecedents. Some people affirmed they had seen her, sometime in the sixties, on the stage, not in an acting part; and others hinted of music-halls; but they did not care to make themselves nasty on the business, as she was such a good, kind soul, and never gave herself airs of any sort. Of all the people who tasted Mr. Lomax's splendid hospitality none enjoyed it half as much as this worthy couple, and yet the host certainly did not put himself out to entertain them. He made them welcome and left them to shift for themselves, and they were perfectly happy in the consciousness that they were breathing the same air and sitting at the same table with the Hon. Miss Merridew and Captain Stallybrass, though these illustrious ornaments of society never gave sign of recognising their existence. Once, however, in the smoking-room, the Captain elaborated, to two or three choice spirits, the witticism that Schultz must be the broker who had furnished the place for Lomax at a low rate on condition that he should have a month's run of the house during the summer. Mrs. Lomax, who was supposed to have made somewhat of a mésalliance in her marriage, always treated them with haughty contempt; but Lomax would always smooth matters down whenever his lady had been unduly aggressive. He had a game of his own to play, and very cleverly he played it. Year after year Mr. and Mrs. Schultz repaired to the "Alders" for the regulation four weeks, and enjoyed themselves thoroughly in their own humble way, till at last the bolt fell, and struck both the roofs of Queen's Gate and the "Alders," and put a sudden end to the splendid hospitalities of Mr. Algernon Lomax.

For the career of this worthy was short and dazzling. After living well beyond his income—and that a most precarious one — for six years, and indulging in "flutters" on all the big races, and finally owning a horse or two himself, the inevitable crash came. Very few of the people, who knew him either in the City or in private life, were surprised or sorry. Mrs. Lomax had good settlements, not all antenuptial it was whispered, so there was no danger of the workhouse; but Lomax would, assuredly, have had to go there, had he been forced to depend entirely on the good offices of his "smart" acquaintance. He knew his world too well to waste his breath in asking help from any of them. He had given them entertainment in exchange for their company and countenance. They had carried out their part of the bargain, and he would have no cause of complaint if Captain Stallybrass should let him starve for want of twopence to buy a loaf; but all his guests were not of the Captain's sort. According to his reckoning, the accounts of some of them showed a balance in his favour. Schultz was the chief of them, and Lomax decided that the time had now come when he must ask Schultz to pay up.

Lomax was a student of character, and he was likewise a high proficient in the art of falling easily. He had not selected Mr. and Mrs. Schultz to sit at his table, year after year, for nothing. He recognised them—Mrs. Schultz especially—as belonging to that particular class which must have been specially designed to supplement the needs of persons like himself; and his estimate proved correct. They had been dazzled by his splendour, and flattered by his patronage, during the brief day of prosperity, and were awestricken by the magnitude of the catastrophe when it came. They ran to him, tremblingly eager with their proffers of help, so that Lomax afterwards, like Lord Clive when the wealth of the Indies lay uncounted around him, was astonished at his moderation. As it was, the whole Lomax family took refuge at the Villa Schultz, and remained there for six months at free quarters. Mrs. Lomax was suffering with nervous prostration, and required so much attention, that extra service had to be engaged for her especially, and a smart landau was hired for her use. Lomax found life almost insupportable without a certain brand of Dry Champagne—rather a costly one—and Schultz at once laid in a supply of it. He likewise made several pecuniary advances on the personal security of his guest. Then, when at last Lomax found a place in the country which would suit him, within reach of a little quiet hunting, where he might lie by till the time should be ripe for a fresh flight, the two girls, who had latterly been taught to call Schultz uncle, were left behind on a visit which has not yet come to an end. The nerves of Mrs. Lomax being still in a shattered condition, Mrs. Schultz has seen to the dear girls' new dresses, and other matters of the sort. Furthermore, it has been arranged that Frank, the only son and the family hope of the house of Lomax, shall spend all his holidays at the Villa Schultz. He is an idle, mischievous brat, with vicious inclinations, uncouth and odious as the children of parents of the Lomax type must be; but he has completely won Mrs. Schultz's heart, and made her his devoted slave. Whenever he goes back to school, which is generally ten days after term begins, he has twice as much pocket-money as any other boy; and it is suspected that once Mrs. Schultz added to her other gifts a meerschaum pipe, upon which she knew her dear boy's heart was set, and a pound of bird's-eye for consumption therein. She thinks that there never was such a fine, open-handed, high-spirited boy, and is even anxious to adopt him formally; but she has not yet ventured to suggest to his parents to part with their treasure.

Now Schultz has a brother living at Homerton, a worthy, industrious fellow, who is still slaving at a small salary in the same business which gave his brother his comfortable retiring competence. He manages to live decently, and even to put by a little. The brothers are on good terms, and greet one another cordially when they meet, which is, on an average, about twice a year; but I am informed that Schultz never gives to his brother, or to any of his numerous nephews and nieces, a penny-piece, nor do any of them ever sit at his board or enjoy his bounty in any way.

The young people at Homerton, I hear, are admirably brought up, in spite of the narrowness of the household; and I cannot help thinking that if their aunt and uncle, being childless, really wanted youthful society, they would have done far better to have adopted one or more of these than to have burdened themselves with the booby whose future they have virtually made themselves responsible for. And then a five-pound note, deducted from the heavy Lomax advances, might have been sent to Homerton at Christmas, where it would have been very welcome.

Schultz is naturally an upright, kind-hearted man, and he would certainly resent it keenly if any one were to tell him that he was acting unjustly in postponing his brother's interests so completely in favour of those of the Lomax family. He is, no doubt, a firm adherent of the view that every man has the right to do what he likes with his own, and it may be that he is merely asserting this view in the line he takes; but the more probable explanation of his conduct is that Lomax, though thriftless, has the art to fascinate and interest him, and to compel him to open his purse; while his brother, though thrifty to the backbone, is thrifty and nothing else, and therefore incapable of enlisting sympathy or assistance. It would assuredly have been more profitable to Schultz junior if he had cultivated some of the arts of Lomax, even though he might have been forced, on this account, to sacrifice some few pounds of his laborious savings.

CATHERINE MAIDMENT'S BURDEN.

A STORY IN TWELVE CHAPTERS.

By MARGARET MOULE.

CHAPTER VIII.

A FORTNIGHT had gone by since the terrible night which Catherine, after her brother's outbreak, had spent lying dressed on her bed.

In that fortnight it was as if ten years had been added to her life. For, with that outbreak, the last remnant of self-restraint that Frank Maidment possessed had apparently left him; and he seemed to give himself up, utterly and helplessly, to the power of his own uncontrolled will, and, day by day, to lose more of every quality that had gone to making up his real, better self. He kept himself perfectly sober during the day. It would have been impossible to find out—from his demeanour, when he was out of doors, getting through a semblance of his daily work, or rather, such of it as he could not leave for Catherine to do—the shame and self-indulgence of his secret life. He was quiet, self-possessed, and silent. His face during these days was white and haggard, his eyes were dim and heavy, with dark lines beneath. But the Moreford people, and Mr. Stewart-Carr, who, more than once, on meeting Frank Maidment, stopped him and rallied him on his looks, accepted unquestioningly his own explanation; he felt the heat, he said.

But, in the evenings, when he was in his own house, and the chances of intercourse with the outside world were very few and slight, he seemed to throw away his quiet demeanour, his silence, and his every remnant of better feeling together.

He never again became quite so uproarious; it affected him differently. It seemed to confirm him in a certain heavy hopelessness that hung about him, and it was almost as if he drank from a positive desire to stupefy himself.

Catherine struggled to lift the weight from him; all in vain. Night after night she tried with untiring patience to rouse him, to keep temptation out of his reach, and to distract his mind. All these efforts were utterly in vain. He would not be roused; he only shrank away further into his morose, evidently wretched self, and sank into a sort of defiant sullenness towards her. And though she watched him intently and kept what guard she could on him through every one of her waking hours, there were no means by which she could keep temptation utterly out of his reach, since she could give no orders outside the house for his protection against himself—to do so would have been to proclaim the secret she kept so jealously. Her attempts to distract his mind were quite as hopeless.

Frank loved music, and in other days he had been very fond of listening to Catherine's songs and proud of her sweet voice. But now, when she sang to him, before the song was half-way through, she would suddenly become aware that he had left the room; and she would have to go after him, find him, and begin her weary coaxing and persuading all over again. She played cribbage with him, and taught herself chess with infinite pains because he had once said that he liked it. But he would only go through about half the game, then he would throw the pieces aside, and if Catherine left him for an instant, the evening would end as the evening before it, and the one before that, had ended.

Ever since the terrible evening which had been the beginning of this long fortnight, the incoherent words that her brother had spoken about Grace Arbuthnot had been in Catherine's mind. She thought of them over and over again. Could it be possible, she wondered, that any hopeless fancy for Miss Arbuthnot had taken possession of him? This thought once raised in her mind, various details came to confirm it. She remembered several occasions since Miss Arbuthnot's fall on which he had spoken of her, incidentally, apparently, and had seemed to notice her comings and goings. He had told her also of the walk he had had with Grace Arbuthnot to the Castle after he had helped her out of her difficulties in her search for water-lilies; and though Catherine had thought little of it at the time, his short, curt manner in the telling recurred significantly to her now. She learned by accident that the report of Grace Arbuthnot's engagement to Mr. Stewart-Carr had come to her brother's knowledge on that same day on which she herself had heard it. And that was the day the evening of which had seen his terrible outbreak.

Frank had been worse, she told herself, sadly, ever since Mr. Stewart-Carr's return. Since he had known Miss Arbuthnot he had been worse still, and this last fortnight had been the worst of all. He had sunk lower, it seemed to poor Catherine, than she had known that it was possible for him to sink. Nothing—no prayers, no longings, no entreaties of hers—could touch him now.

One long hour after another of the dreary days went by; and gradually one growing conviction shaped itself in her mind—the conviction that she and her brother must leave Moreford.

If it were really true that the thought of Miss Arbuthnot had helped to bring him so low, Catherine knew that days must come which would bring him lower yet. Miss Arbuthnot would one day be established at the Castle as its mistress, and it would be impossible, she told herself, for Frank to remain in Moreford then. In the excitement and emotion of such a position he would certainly get utterly beyond his own or her control, and Mr. Stewart-Carr would find it all out; and Catherine was resolved, with all the force of her strong, resolute will, that that last should never happen. Mr. Stewart-Carr should never know. She never questioned herself as to her reasons for this determination; all the thoughts that had been with her as she walked from Mrs. Wilson's cottage, after hearing there of Mr. Stewart-Carr's reported engagement to Grace Arbuthnot, had been burnt out of her by what had met her on her arrival at home. She did not even realise how strong an incentive was this resolution to her in the fight which her daily life had become.

It seemed to her that she was always meeting Mr. Stewart-Carr now; that he was beginning to be far too well aware of the work she did on the estate. If there were a piece of business to be done, peculiarly ill-suited to a woman, she was certain to meet him while she was about it. Much of the work that had become, from habit, a simple matter of course to her before he came, seemed to her now, in her consciousness of what he would think, if he could know who attended to it, unwomanly and difficult. She was haunted always by the fear that he should find out all she did, and why. But day by day she began to feel it more and more difficult to guard against this at all points. She felt her strength getting less, her power to keep her secret weaker. She worked early and late at all of her brother's work which he could not, or did not choose to do, she wore a cheerful face before the world, she kept everything going just as usual; but, behind it all, a terrible worn-out feeling was creeping over her—she knew that she could not hold out much longer.

She was thinking it all over one afternoon—she rarely thought of anything else when she was alone—as she walked slowly home from a long errand in the hot, scorching sun. She had just come to the conclusion that she must not rely upon her own fortitude any longer, and that the only thing to be done was to take her brother away from Moreford at once, and see if any hope was to be found in making a fresh start in a fresh place. Her heavy heart grew a little lighter in the relief of coming to any decision, and she walked with a less weary step as she tried to arrange how best to put this decision to her brother, and get him to acquiesce in it.

She was still a long way from the White House, and she left the road for a path on the grass by its side, under some elms, which, though the very trees were dusty and their leaves were drooping in the great heat, seemed more inviting than the white, glaring road. She had walked along in the shade for about five minutes, when she was startled by the quick, dull sound of a horse's hoofs on the grass. She turned round mechanically, saw that a man, riding a chestnut horse, was behind her, and prepared, equally mechanically, to move out of his way. But, before she could do so, the sound ceased. The rider had dismounted, and, twisting his horse's bridle over his arm, had taken a few quick strides that brought him up to her side.

"Miss Maidment!" he said.

Catherine turned very suddenly at the sound of the voice, and found herself confronted by Mr. Stewart-Carr.

"Did I startle you?" he said, anxiously.

"No, oh no!" she said, collecting her senses and recovering herself on the instant. "I heard your horse. But when I looked round I did not see that it was you."

"I hope you are not displeased to find it is?" he said, gravely; and in spite of his grave manner, something in his tone sent an odd little thrill through Catherine, and, though it did not revive, stirred faintly those thoughts that had been, apparently, burnt out of her life.

"Why should I be displeased?" she said, simply. "I am very glad to have a break in this long road. It is a longer road than I thought it was!" she added, with a slight smile.

"You have walked far?" he said, interrogatively.

She hesitated. She knew he meant to ask whether she had been at work. That feeling of dread, lest he should find out all the significance of her work, swept over her in a great wave, and for the moment she felt as if she could not answer him. The errand she had done was perfectly simple, and in its nature quite within a woman's power. But something, perhaps the slight thrill his first words had caused her, had disturbed her hold on herself; and it was with a curious consciousness in her tone, that she said, without looking at him:

"Yes. I have been to Fisher's."

"About the new fences?"

"Yes. He has delayed so very long in beginning them, that my brother thought something ought to be done. So I roused him a little, I hope. Fisher takes an immense amount of rousing, as you know." And she gave a little laugh that was a trifle unreal, as she spoke. "But he will really begin work on Monday."

"Has Mr. Maidment seen him about it, before?"

"I have," she said, slowly.

Mr. Stewart-Carr did not answer at once. He played with his horse's bridle, twisting it into awkward knots, as he walked by Catherine's side. Then he said, abruptly:

"Miss Maidment, pardon me. I ought not to say what I am going to, perhaps. You may possibly think it most uncalled for, on my part; but I have wished to say it to you for some days, many days, in fact. Do you not think you give yourself unnecessary labour, and rather—forgive me for speaking so plainly—spoil your brother by doing so much of his work for him?"

Catherine started. Her hand clasped tighter round the handle of the sunshade she was holding.

"Don't misunderstand me," he went on, very eagerly; "don't think for a moment that I underrate your powers, or that I fail to appreciate the perfect order in which everything is and has been kept. I know how excellent the help you give him is. But," he said, with a smile, "I have the greatest possible respect for Mr. Maidment's powers also. And it seems to me a pity that they should be, so to speak, enervated by too much help."

But no answering smile came from Catherine. She grew icy cold, and the hand that held her sunshade clung to it with a grasp of iron.

"If——," he began, in a thoughtful tone, "if your brother thinks that the work of the estate is really too much for one man, he has only to tell me and I would most gladly get proper assistance for him. Surely he knows that I would. What I so greatly dislike is the thought that the work falls on your shoulders—so unnecessarily."

There was a longer pause, and Catherine made herself look up, made herself speak.

"The necessity is greater than you think," she said. "I—my brother is very far from strong, and he feels the work really more than he can get through without my help."

"Then let me get a competent assistant at once," Mr. Stewart-Carr said, quickly.

"I am afraid that would be of no avail," Catherine said, quietly. She wondered mechanically as she spoke what had happened to her voice; it sounded so cold and so far-away. "I fear—indeed I am sure—that it will be necessary for my brother to resign his post here; he finds himself unequal to it. I have had no final consultation with him as yet; but he will, I believe, write to you on the subject without delay."

"Resign his post!" exclaimed Mr. Stewart-Carr in undisguised amazement. "Miss Maidment, I do trust your brother does not seriously contemplate such a step; I cannot tell you how I value his services, nor how distressed I should be to lose him."

He stopped short, and a perplexed frown came on his brow; he turned quite round to face Catherine, and stood still. He looked straight towards her but he could not see her face. She held her sunshade so that it was hidden from his eyes. "Miss Maidment," he said, very earnestly, "you cannot—it is not possible that I—that you have misunderstood me in any way—that this is a sudden determination taken by you because of anything I may have said, or failed to say. I express myself horribly awkwardly, always," he added humbly, almost deprecatingly.

Catherine raised her sunshade and he could see her face. It was white, and it looked thinner, somehow, than usual.

"No, indeed," she said, in a tone quite as eager as his own; "no, indeed, you must not think that. It is no sudden resolve. I—my brother has been really unequal to his work for some time; and there is no course open to him but to give it up, I assure you."

Catherine walked on more quickly as she spoke, and he, perforce, followed her example.

"I am deeply concerned to hear it," he said," and then he paused for a moment, thoughtfully. "Have you thought of trying a change, a rest for him, Miss Maidment?" he went on. "It sometimes works wonders. I could quite easily get some one to see after the work for a time—I'll do so to-morrow, if you will let me."

"You are very good," Catherine answered, with a little, almost imperceptible quiver in her voice, "very good; but, indeed, we cannot make any temporary arrangement. Don't think me ungrateful for your kind consideration—I am not, indeed. But it will be best for him to give it up."

Catherine was beginning to get terribly afraid of her voice; the long, hot walk, the strain of her whole position, and another thing that she did not realise, the still abiding presence of those thoughts which had seemed burnt out of her life, told upon her endurance. They had left the high road and entered a lane, and she rapidly made up her mind to end the interview by taking a short cut from there across the fields, which Mr. Stewart-Carr would be unable to follow on horseback. "This is my nearest way," she said, standing still again at the gate which would lead her into the first field. "My brother—Frank will write or speak to you himself. Good-bye," and she held out her hand.

Mr. Stewart-Carr took it; he held it for a moment or two firmly, looking into her face, which she could not well conceal from him now.

"Good-bye," he said, slowly. "I do trust your brother will reconsider his decision."

Then he loosed her hand, and Catherine passed through the small gate, and was immediately hidden from his sight by the hedge.

Left alone, Mr. Stewart-Carr did not remount his horse. He threw the bridle over the gatepost and stood leaning against a large tree that grew beside it, his arms folded, and his head bent. The lane was a very lonely one, and there was no great likelihood of the approach of any passer-by. But any one who had chanced to arrive would have been surprised at the expression on Mr. Stewart-Carr's face as he stood there alone. He looked very anxious, and deeply agitated. All the lines of his pleasant face were broken up by strong, unwonted emotion. He was thinking, and thinking very intently.

The village report of his engagement to Grace Arbuthnot was, like most reports of the kind, so premature as to be absolutely untrue. It was nearly a month since his first attempt to propose to her, during their interview about the fishing-rods, in his room; and though all the other guests except Captain Carnforth, who stayed on on one pretext or another, had left, Mrs. Arbuthnot's slight accident and consequent indisposition had kept her and her daughter still at the Castle. During this month, it is hardly necessary to say, many other opportunities of proposing to her had come in his way; but he had let them all go by, without attempting to use them, or attempting to alter much further the still extremely simple and friendly relations subsisting between Grace and himself. He could not tell why he had done this. He, indeed, had never asked himself. He had just gone on, from day to day, thinking every night, indefinitely, that he would propose next day, and thinking every morning that he would still wait. But not until this very afternoon, half an hour before, had the true reason of his apparent procrastination and delay taken definite shape in his mind. Now, however, he understood it perfectly well; saw it before him in the clearest possible light. And he only wondered, helplessly and half-contemptuously, why he had not realised it long before. He had known, for the first time, when she spoke to him of leaving Moreford, that he could not propose to another woman because he was in love with Catherine Maidment.

Little by little, as he stood there, thinking, it all grew clear before him. He knew how Catherine's quiet, gracious, womanly manner had impressed itself upon him at their first meeting. He remembered how he had left the White House that day with a strong feeling of attraction towards her in his mind; he remembered their interview in the library, he remembered the hot afternoon under the mulberry-tree, and he understood all at once, now, how it was that that afternoon had stood out so persistently in his memory through the month that had elapsed since then. He remembered all their many chance meetings. As if he were unconsciously obliged to recount them every one, one after another they recurred to his mind with vivid clearness. He knew now, that, as after every one he seemed to know her a little better, and the thought of her seemed more and more a part of his daily life, he had been growing all the time not only to like her, but to love her.

Mr. Stewart-Carr's love was characteristic. It had never been waked to life before by any woman. But it was there, below his controlled, ordinary self, deep and strong; a force the strength of which he himself neither gauged nor realised as yet.

Each moment, however, as he thought of her, there in the lonely lane, his love for Catherine Maidment rose higher and higher above that ordinary self, till he felt as if, then and there, in that hour, his whole life were being changed by it. Every line of her face, every tone of her voice, every gesture of hers, came before him with scrupulous exactness; and every detail seemed more perfect than the one before. So vivid was the picture his newly-arisen love created for him, of the woman who inspired it, that he suddenly let fall his arms, turned to the gate and looked over it, feeling as if she must be actually there.

But Catherine was entering the White House at the moment, with a very heavy, aching heart, little dreaming of the part she was playing in Mr. Stewart-Carr's life.

With his sudden movement towards the gate, the current of his thoughts seemed to receive a check—something cut across them and stemmed the tide that was rising so fast and so forcibly within him. He remembered Grace Arbuthnot. Before this hour, in which he had learned, as he told himself, what love was, he had believed that he could be very happy with her. He had intended, fully intended, to ask her to be his wife. He had asked her and her mother to his house with that end before him. He had so treated her as to give rise to reports—he knew of their existence well enough—that she was already engaged to him.

The thought came to him like icy cold water on a burning flame. Was he in honour bound to put away for ever the love he had only just realised? Was he, or was he not, bound to Grace Arbuthnot?

As he realised the whole position, he laid his arms along the top of the high gate and let his head fall on them, with a sigh that was very nearly a groan.

When he lifted it, half an hour later, there was no change in the heavy trouble and perplexity of his face, and the question was still as utterly undecided in his mind as when he first began to think it out. He looked at his watch hurriedly, and finding it was seven o'clock, mounted his horse and rode rapidly away in the direction of the Castle.

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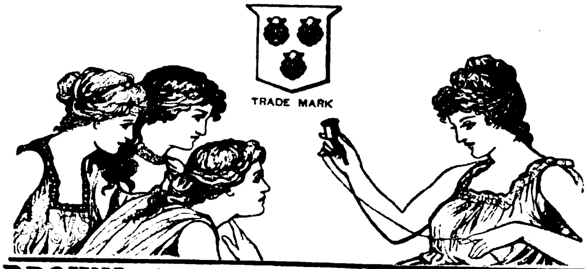

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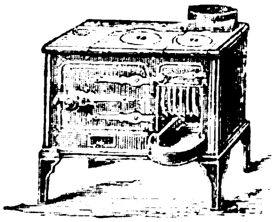

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By ESMÈ STUART.

Author of "A Faire Damsell," "Joan Vellacot," "Kestell of Greystone," etc. etc.

CHAPTER XI. A NEW RELATION.

Nan had been driven to Coleham in the wagonette by the coachman, who still stayed on at the Warren till his month's notice should have expired. When Miss Evans walked out of the office she stepped into the carriage and said, quickly, "Home," without looking at or thanking Mr. Blackston, who most politely shut the carriage door and made her a bow quite as low and deferential, be it said to his honour, as he could have given Mrs. Gordon had she been in Nan's place.

"Home!" Yes, it was home to Nan, too, for there she had passed the last fifteen years of her life. There, too, she had developed a mother's heart. She knew well enough that no one would ever claim her—plain, stern Anne Evans—for a wife. No one would surround her with loving care or find pleasure in her deep affection. No; she was too old, too ugly for that; but she had had children, dear adopted children, in Grace and Sibyl. No one had interfered with her as to their bringing up; no one had watched her to see if she treated them well or ill; but her heart told her she had done her duty, and more than her duty, when those young lips showered kisses on her cheeks, and those good, innocent eyes looked at her lovingly, without one glance to intimate that she was too ugly to love.

Once only, on her first arrival, Mr. Gordon had given her a command. He said:

"Miss Evans, I don't want those children to have anything to do with other children, and I don't wish you to make friends with any one about here. If you find this restriction unjust, or your life too dull here, then we must part."

He had found perhaps the only woman to whom these words could sound pleasant. She said, simply: "I wish to make friends with no one; I shall be satisfied with the children as my only companions."

"That is as I wish it. The world here has chosen to judge me, Miss Evans, and I mean to show it that I can live my life without it, and my household must also hold my opinion."

In that house Miss Evans had found the greatest happiness she had ever known; and now, suddenly, she found herself turned away like a stranger, and separated from her children by the words of a woman who spoke to her as if she were on quite a different level, and as if the happiness of girls with an unfortunate history were scarcely worth consideration.

Nan was unjust, we see; her first opinion of Mrs. Gordon had been unfavourable, and her nature was such that she would keep this opinion to her life's end. To the world she was a fierce, self-willed woman; it was only with Grace and Sibyl that the tiger-like propensities she inherited at her birth disappeared, and she became the "Nan" that Grace loved, and the "Nan" whose name Sibyl had learned to lisp so early.

Nan had often wondered about their mother; she must have been pretty, of course, and she had died young. Had sorrow killed her? Had her husband given her any more affection than he did his daughters? Not that he was ever unkind to them, but he left them entirely to Nan, and was quite satisfied if he never heard any complaints of them, or was never asked for too much money. Still, he gave them enough for their moderate wants, and to Nan her small salary, and to the girls their food and clothing, and now and then some little present in money—when he thought of it. But his horses and his wine parties—which meant gambling at cards—cost money, and money was always forthcoming for such expenses. Yet one great puzzle filled Nan's mind—why had he not thought of the future of these children? They were his, at all events, owned as such, in a way cared for as such; why had he never given one consideration as to what would happen to them if he died?

"Why had I never courage to ask him?" she now thought regretfully, though with this regret came the conviction that she could never have dared to enquire into the private affairs of the master of the Warren.

The five miles were all too short to arrange her tumultuous ideas in some order, and the nearer she approached the Warren the more nervous she became as to the right course of conduct. At last the top of the hilly road up to the Warren was reached, the carriage turned in at the gates, and drove rapidly up to the front door.

Sibyl was well enough to-day to come down into the old schoolroom, where, by a large fire, she was making herself extremely comfortable; Grace was reading one of Sir Walter Scott's novels to her. These novels were their one great pleasure; they read them, and re-read them, till the many characters became their friends, and they talked of them as other girls talk of their acquaintances or neighbours. Modern novels, that is, more modern than the great Scotch novelist, never stepped across the threshold of the Warren; lending libraries were unknown there, and there were no friends to lend them books. Now and then Nan bought them a book as a birthday present, but this was generally a book of poetry nicely bound, something they could keep and learn by heart.

Now Nan made a great effort over herself, passed one of her large hands over her broad forehead as if to smooth away any expression of trouble which might be there, and entered the schoolroom looking much as she usually did. Grace started up and at once came forward to meet her, with a smile on her face.

"Dear Nan, what a fairy you are! We never heard the carriage drive up, or perhaps we were too deeply interested in 'Ivanhoe.' Sibyl has just been saying she would like to have been a lady in the time of the Crusades; and—but you are tired, dear Nan."

"Come and sit near me and tell us what Mr. Blackston said," cried Sibyl.

"Nothing very interesting, my dears. What should he say—a man and a lawyer? All lawyers are more or less disagreeable."

"Not kind Mr. Blackston. He is so very, very courteous to us, and he has been just the same even when you were away. But what did he want you for?"

Nan looked round like an animal at bay. Only Grace noticed the unusual expression of her face.

"What was it, dear? Tell us."

"He wanted me to see a—lady, who wishes to befriend you."

This speech was a great effort to Miss Evans; but she said it so that her children might feel the blow less when it came.

"A lady!" The very words fired Sibyl's imagination. She was and had always been the one that craved for outside life—something new. "How kind of her! Will she come and see us? Who is she?"

"Yes; I fancy she will come. Her name is the same as yours—Mrs. Gordon. A relation of yours, I suppose."

"A relation of father's?" said Grace, her face flushing brightly with surprise; "will she come here? Oh, we must like her if she is related to father. He never mentioned a Mrs. Gordon to us, did he, Sibyl?"

"No; he never mentioned any relations. Once he said he was an only child. Nan, tell us, is she pretty?"

Nan could not bear to hear these girls even unconsciously looking forward to seeing Mrs. Gordon. She moved her chair impatiently, so that Grace saw that something was the matter, and added:

"What does it matter, Sibyl, darling, whether she is pretty or not? I dare say Nan never looked out for beauty. She said once that pretty people were not often nice. I dare say she had a nice kind face, hadn't she?"

"I didn't look at her much; you will see for yourselves. She—this Mrs. Gordon—thinks it would be better for you to leave the Warren at the present moment, and go to some place to learn more than I can teach you—to Germany, perhaps."

"How good of her to think of us like

that! For a little time I shouldn't mind, would you, Grace? Shouldn't we have fun, we three?"

"Would you mind very much, Nan? You would have us," said Grace, coaxingly. "And then the coming back would be nice."

Nan could not say the words. No, no; she could not. She only turned round half fiercely, half passionately, as she put her arm round Grace, and answered in a low voice:

"Of course, child, with you two I would go anywhere."

CHAPTER XII. VIEWING THE PROPERTY.

"ONE more night, and I have broken the blow only a little to them," thought Miss Evans as, unable to sleep or even to undress that evening, she paced her bedroom trying to think of some means of delivering her children from Mrs. Gordon's power. How was this possible when she herself was poor; when this woman would take everything and dole out a little with the condition that she was to see it well laid out? If these were her own daughters left to face the cruel world, what would she think, what would she feel—that is if the dead could feel the miseries of the living?

At last, when tired out, the angry woman lay down upon her bed and fell into an uneasy slumber. She dreamt that her children were out on the wide heath alone; she could see them, but she could not reach them or speak to them. Then she saw Sibyl, with her pretty golden hair flying round her shoulders, approach close to the edge of a black pit full of water. She called out to her to take care; she struggled to run towards her; she saw Grace trying to pull her back. Then she woke up trembling with fear. It was only a dream, thank Heaven; but Nan, in her excited state, took it for a warning. She must prevent them from being taken in hand by Mrs. Gordon; but how?

It was a hard task for Miss Evans to come down to breakfast as usual; but she was not a person to give in easily; besides, she, too, had noticed a certain spirit of lawlessness about the servants which her presence alone could restrain. The master was dead, and were they not quite able to hear the gossip of the place? Of course they heard it, and chose to think that they might do as they liked now till they went away. But no one ever was rude to her children in Miss Evans's presence. They positively dared not be so!

If Grace and Sibyl had had no "advantages," as Miss Evans had said, they had had what was better: a thorough and methodical person to teach them what she knew. Nan had lived before the days of examinations and eager thirst for higher education. Early left an orphan, she had been handed over to relations whose one idea was always how to get rid as soon as possible of the expense of keeping Anne.

Anne certainly had not troubled them long. At sixteen, she had gone to be a governess-pupil in a small school. With the work she had done there, the affronts she had endured, the snubbing or patronising from the "young ladies" (!) it is no wonder that Nan Evans grew up with a defiant hatred of the world, which had always been so anxious to put its heel upon her. After this school came private situations; but as she could not speak French like a Parisian, or Italian like a native of Florence, or play on the harp, or scamper up and down the piano, her situations were always with second-rate people, who could pay second or third-rate salaries, and make up with rudeness what they could not give in money.

All those past histories were memories not spoken of nor forgotten, because never mentioned, but all the same bearing fruits of bitterness. A chance advertisement had brought her to the Warren, and the owner, looking at her unlovely countenance and manner, said to himself: "This one, at least, will not seek for lovers, or be sought out by them." It was a mere chance on both sides, but bringing happiness, as we have seen, to Nan and her children. Nevertheless, Nan could give, and did give the girls a sound English education. History she delighted in, and made Grace delight in it also. No history was too long or too wearisome to be rejected by Nan; and, cleared up by her remarks and her wonderful knowledge of the subject, history was not dry matter, but dealt with living men and women, living principles, living hatred and heroism actuating the actors on the stage of the old world.

It must be owned, however, that Nan's French was curious; but such as it was she handed it on to her children. So all three had a strange pronunciation; but then they understood every word, and the dictionary was not a necessary book for them. So it was with German; for Nan could learn any language, but could pronounce none correctly but her own mother tongue.

This is the simple outline of the story of their lives, so simple that, to Grace and Sibyl, there would have seemed to be nothing worth relating; but all was changed now the day had come for Nan to hear Mrs. Gordon offer her six months' salary instead of notice.

Grace's first thought that morning was, "To-day we shall see a relation of father's, a relation of our own; how very, very nice it will be to have some one who must care for us!" and, with a brighter look than she had worn since her father's death, she hastily performed her toilet and went to wake up Sibyl with her usual kiss.

"Grace, is that you? I have had such delightful dreams; you and I were so happy, but I forget why."

"Perhaps it was because of our new relation, with our name, too—Mrs. Gordon—I wonder what her Christian name is? She will think you pretty, Sibyl, dear; but as for me——"

"Everybody must like you, of course, you stupid Gracie; but fancy how delightful it will be if she really arranges for us to go to Germany. I wish I could talk German; never mind, we can read it. It is strange that we have just finished Schiller's 'Thirty Years' War;' I wonder if German girls know it as well as we do? Won't it be delightful?" And Sibyl's spirits rose to a high degree, till Grace put in, more gravely:

"I hope father would have liked us to go. I am not sure, Sibyl. You know he never cared about our leaving home; he always said we had quite enough to satisfy us at the Warren."

"All the same, I want to see more people."

"All the same, make haste and dress, you lazy child; what will Nan say to us if we are late?"

But the sisters were not late, and a very pretty picture they made, even though their new black dresses were quite simple—heavily trimmed with crape. Mr. Blackston had settled that whoever came in for the money could afford to pay for the suitable mourning of the two girls. Sibyl's beauty only appeared in more striking colours, set off by the deep black; the golden hair was more like an aureole, and the pink cheeks, a little paler than usual, looked like the delicate colour of the lining of some exquisite sea-shell.

As for Nan she could hardly bear to look at them. She wondered how many more days she should be with them; but not one day sooner than she could help would she leave them—on that subject she was quite determined.

If Grace and Sibyl were in good spirits, the weather seemed to frown at their happiness; great clouds now swept across the sky, the frost was going, and a cold, fine rain was falling. There could be no going out for Sibyl, and Grace would not leave her. To-day, instead of the usual steady morning reading, which Nan never gave up, Miss Evans announced that she was going to some cottage a mile or two away on the heath, and that they must amuse themselves. She felt that she could not sit still, it was more than she could do.

"But it rains, dear Nan," said Grace, "let me go instead of you. Nothing hurts me."

"You? No, no; I must go myself."

If Nan said must, no one ever tried to alter her determination, so that Grace let her have her own way. Perhaps, too, the girls did not notice their friend's strange conduct as much as they might have done had they not been occupied with the wonderful and new idea that at this moment at Coleham, only five miles away, a new relation was staying, that she probably would come over and see them on this very day and settle all kinds of new plans about their life. If only Nan would tell them more about her personal appearance—but of course that was Nan's way, she always noticed strangers so little.

So when the sisters were left to themselves, instead of reading or working, they indulged in long "wonderings," which at that age are so delightful, especially when the future is bathed in golden light.

At Coleham, on the same morning, Mr. Blackston, seeing the day was clouding over, called on Mrs. Gordon and offered to drive her up at once for fear the weather should prove still more unfavourable in the afternoon. Mrs. Gordon accepted; she wanted to see her future home, but also she wished to get over the disagreeable duty of settling about "these unfortunate girls." It was all very disagreeable and uncomfortable; but her duty was to get them away as soon as possible, anyhow before Minnie and Beatrice became aware of their existence.

The country, even seen through heavy mist-clouds, was picturesque, it reminded Mrs. Gordon of Scotch hills, for

Scotland was the ancient home of the Gordons; then, too, the fir-woods, the yellow sandy roads, sometimes cutting through a hillock, and leaving a great yellow sandy bank bare, looked cheerful through the rain. There was no mud, no deep clay ruts, only the higher one ascended the better were the views, till towards the top, when nearing the Warren, the panorama was truly splendid, and the widow exclaimed:

"What a lovely country; how beautiful this must be in summer, Mr. Blackston!"

"It is a lovely country; even though we, inhabitants of Coleham, cannot boast of such views, lying as we do in a valley, yet we are proud of our neighbourhood. I wish those poor girls were not forced to——"

Mr. Blackston paused; he had forgotten he was addressing the present owner, but remembered it in time.

Mrs. Gordon was too well-bred to notice the pause, and she herself filled up the gap.

"Do you think Miss Evans will be able to find another situation soon? We must look out for her; but certainly her appearance is against her."

"I suppose it is—look on your right hand, Mrs. Gordon, there are the chimneys of the Warren."

Mrs. Gordon gazed out of the window with a new feeling of possession and importance in her heart—a feeling which, however, she carefully hid from her companion. All her hopes were realised, she had waited long for this; but now she was mistress of a home which could be left to her son, and mistress of an income which would make her future life a daily pleasure instead of a daily burden. Everything was as it should be. She could already see Minnie and Beatrice mounted on fine horses with a groom behind them, riding to the meet; she could imagine the pleasant parties she should give, surrounded by her daughters and her beloved Austin when he came home. There would be no more anxiety on his part to cost her as little as possible, no more self-denial for the girls if they wished to appear as well dressed as others of their station.

On his side Mr. Blackston was trying to invent a good story, trying to frame some excuse so that the girls might leave their home quietly, without the necessity of being told the real truth. He had never before had a mission to perform which he so much disliked. Yet, however hard law was, at this moment Mrs. Gordon represented the law, and Grace and Sibyl were outside it; besides, he himself was a representative of the famous legal body and he must do his duty.

It was Sibyl who first heard the sound of carriage-wheels, and called out to Grace to come and see the strange sight of an unknown fly.

"Grace, it is Mr. Blackston, I am sure, and it must be she, and Nan is not here. What shall we do?"

Grace turned pale; to them this visitor was an event as extraordinary as if the Queen suddenly honoured a private individual with an unexpected visit.

"Perhaps she will not ask for us," continued Sibyl in a disappointed tone, "when she hears Nan is out; but I half hope she will."

This eager desire to see "Nan" was certainly not felt by Mrs. Gordon; and when she was told Miss Evans was out, she secretly rejoiced at the news. She had a dislike to that stern female.

"You will like to see the girls," whispered Mr. Blackston; to which remark Mrs. Gordon answered at once:

"Yes, certainly; that is, if you think it would be best."

"The young ladies are in the schoolroom," answered James.

Mrs. Gordon felt a secret indignation in hearing "those poor girls" called "young ladies" in this house. When her daughters came they would be "the young ladies;" till then——

"We will walk up, then," said Mr. Blackston. "I know the room, you need not announce us. Shall I lead the way, Mrs. Gordon? I fancy we shall frighten them less if we go straight upstairs, they are so little accustomed to visitors."

Perhaps it was these words which made Mrs. Gordon imagine she was going to see two plain, shy, awkward girls, who would be too ignorant of the ways of ordinary society to be able to open their mouths; so that when Mr. Blackston, going first, after a gentle knock, opened the door, Mrs. Gordon was, for the moment, so surprised at the sight which met her eyes that she could not advance. Before her she saw two tall, well-grown maidens, dressed simply in deep mourning, but the sad attire could not hide their grace and ladylike bearing. What struck Mrs. Gordon at once, and that painfully, was that one of them was—yes, was very, very vans. As the vans come in they are weighed, the weights are entered on the notes the carmen bring, the notes stamped, and the van passes on if it can; but as by this time the yard is full, the van in all probability has to wait, and a good long line of vans in waiting is the result; but all in good time a move is made, and on the van goes with its stolid carman and cheeky boy—and here it may be observed that a carman's boy almost always affords an extremely fine specimen of London cheek. The notes mentioned above contain the weight and description of the goods, and the address to which they are consigned. If a carman has a load consigned to only one address, he is a "full load," and has but one note. If his goods are consigned to eight different people, eight different notes have to be in his charge, or in his boy's, who, perhaps, loses them. What happens if they are lost does not appear; but to-night a small boy appears at the window of the hut by the weigh-bridge and announces that he has come from the Cheapside receiving office with eight notes, and has lost them. He is quite certain he has lost them, and departs, having been cross-questioned on the subject. He turns up again with the utmost coolness in about five minutes. He has found them, of course in the most unlikely place, and one where we should hardly have thought he would have searched—his coat-pocket. The weigh-bridge office is kept pretty hard at work just now, with the entering the carmen's time and the weights of their loads, which are put down to the carmen who bring them, together with the time each carman left the yard to collect and the time he returns with his load. It seems, looking over the list, that a carman puts in enough time a day. Well, the hours are not short; but a great deal of time is lost in waiting for loads which are not ready when the van appears to take them; and what the carman particularly dislikes is the waiting to get into the yard now and unload, for he naturally wants to get off.

But let us leave the weigh-bridge office—which will want revisiting two or three times in the course of the next hour to see what progress is being made with vans—and come into the yard itself and see what is going on. At first we are quite enough occupied in taking care to keep out of the way of the vans and the horses; but, soon finding that they are not in a conspiracy—and everything [illegible] to run over everybody off them and see what sort of place this is.

The vans are all on our right, and on our left is a series of arches, fourteen in number, and it is in these arches that the actual unloading of vans and loading of railway trucks take place. Towards the front of each arch, with three exceptions, is a platform, technically known as a bank, which extends the whole breadth of the arch and reaches some little distance back. From the inner end of the bank stretches a platform, and on either side of this platform are the lines of metals on which the trucks stand to be loaded. In one of the three arches where this arrangement does not obtain, there is a road right down one side of the arch with a platform next it and the line of metals beyond that; in the other two the road also runs through, but there is no platform, and the waggons can go right against the bricks. These are mostly used for full loads, which, as before mentioned, signify loads complete in themselves all to one consignee.

But let us return to the banks. Against these the vans are backed, and the work of unloading commences. The men at work are as follows. A foreman for each three or four arches, and four gangs to each bank, each of which gangs consists of the checker, the caller-off, and three porters. As the goods are taken from the van they are separately weighed and checked by the checker, who is responsible that the goods received are as stated in the carman's notes, which are handed to him; that they are of the weight there set down; of the right description; and in good order. From him the notes pass to the invoice-room. The goods, when checked, are seized upon by the porters and whirled away; and here is about the most amazing thing—to an outsider. Of course, all the goods in one van are seldom for one destination, and they have to be carted all over the place, from arch to arch, to arrive at their right waggon; and that they all eventually do get to the right place is a triumph of careful system and orderly arrangement.

A list is hung up in each arch of the various places where the various waggons for different places are to be found; but still, looking at the tremendous number of packages, and the various places to which they are consigned, it does seem wonderful, if not impossible, that everything should go right. Here are sheets of tinware, cisterns, sewing-machines, a few carcases of sheep, pails, pockets of hops — some of these cause a difficulty, the address on the pockets not agreeing with the address on the consignment note; but off they go, if they have been sent wrong, a telegram will stop them to-morrow morning — packets of tea innumerable, and every description and shape of parcel, the contents of which cannot even be guessed.

One arch is given up to a firm with agents all over the country, which firm collects small parcels and makes them into large parcels by putting all for any one town together, the object being to save the carriage, the rate on a small parcel being so much more in proportion than on a large one.

Let us take a walk along the line of arches and see the work in full swing, and take care that we are not run into by a truck coming quickly round a corner. Here the porters are at work all along the line, unloading, wheeling the trucks, depositing their burdens by the railway trucks, loading them up, covering them with tarpaulins—and, in the case of some thin chests of tea which are bound for a long journey, putting them in a canvas case too —roping these down, while every now and then a move is made, and the line of trucks disappears one by one till the metals stand empty, soon to be filled by empty trucks, one by one, when work goes on again.

It is not a place to be recommended to a person with a headache or weak nerves, for the noise, to say the least of it, makes itself pretty apparent, and goes on without cessation. The rattle of the horses' hoofs outside, the trucks continuously going to and fro inside, the shouts of the men, and the occasional crash of railway truck against railway truck, do not tend to peace and quietness. But for all the seeming confusion and muddle, everything is really going on in perfect order, and work is progressing at a good rate.

But enough of this ceaseless rattle. Let us follow the trucks out beyond the platform and up to the outer air. At the end of the line of rails in the arches runs a line at right angles to them, down the whole line, and at the end of each separate arch line is a turn-table, and, in addition, along the line there are three more turn-tables, which lead to the lifts which are the connection between the two levels. All the moving of trucks here is done by hydraulic power, and if we are not careful, as the light is not too good in some places, we shall be barking our shins either on a capstan or a guide—a little post of steel, round which a rope may be passed to give the capstan a greater run. They lurk in the shadow, and as we don't know our way about—there! I knew you would do it, and now you've got no skin on that shin! As the truck is hauled out it is turned on to this line, hauled alongside to one of the three turn-tables, then turned again and run on to a lift, which raises it up to the upper air.

Let us see this lot sent up. There they are, standing four of them in a line, at right angles to where they were loaded, and on the left of the lift capstan. The rope is fixed on the far wheel, the waggon pulled along, brought up with a sharp turn, the rope altered from the original far wheel, which, as the turn-table is on our right, has become the near one, to the present far one, the capstan is set whizzing, the turn-table pulled round, the truck run on to the lift in about the shortest time imaginable. It is most fascinating watching one of these capstans; they seem to be possessed of almost magical power. There is no appearance of effort. Just press a knob and round the thing whizzes, and will pull along anything in reason. And they have their work cut out for them here, for over a thousand trucks are dealt with here every day, in or out.

Let us now take a journey in the lift and go up to the yard itself, where the trains are made up and started on their journey. Here the same hydraulic power is at work, and across the yard from each lift is a line of turn-tables, to turn the trucks into whatever line of rails is necessary. The hauling and stopping short, turning and sending on again, seems endless. But here is a train just going to start—the 9.25—and it perhaps only now suddenly dawns upon us that all this traffic must have a time-table, and that the trains must be got off just as punctually as the passenger traffic.

Here come the invoices, "tootle" goes the horn—they do not degenerate into shouts here, but give their "back her up," "ease her away," and such-like orders by the sound of a horn — and away goes the 9.25 on the first part of her journey. Before she goes the number of every truck is taken, and, as has been said, the invoices are brought out and either handed to the guard, put in the trucks, or fastened on to the doors. Come into the invoice-room, or shipping office, as it is called, for one moment. Here the carmen's notes are brought, and from them the invoices are made out; and as almost every description of goods is carried at a different rate, a clerk who knows all about invoicing goods at a railway goods invoice-room must know a good deal. We don't want to stop here long; the heat is something fearful. Perhaps we thought, up till now, that a composing-room in full work by gaslight was the hottest place going; but this invoice-room will give a composing-room a long start, and beat it hollow. The room is quite handy for the trains when complete and ready to start, so that the work can go on till the last moment.

Such is the work of the down-goods traffic on one of our main lines. Of course, being on two levels, there are no heavy goods dealt with here; that is attended to farther down the line. Here close upon two thousand tons are dealt with daily for the up and down traffic, and the work is also carried on at various other places, at one of which there are large bonded warehouses full of whiskey, and tobacco, and such-like things, the revenue on which helps to keep the country going, and where full loads are mostly dealt with. The limit of the making up of the through traffic is nearly on the outskirts of town, and to this station we will proceed one evening, and see the trains finally started.

Now this station is one of those places which are execrated by everybody who sleeps within hearing. Nervous people living in its neighbourhood say that the whistling of the engines and bumping of the trucks is too awful, and goes on all night. If they be given to exaggeration, they are apt to declare that in the summer they cannot keep their windows open if they wish to sleep a wink. With this in our minds—we live in the neighbourhood ourselves, by the way—we, of course, expect the yard to be a very Pandemonium of sounds, and think that if it were not for our innate curiosity we would rather stop at home. Then, too, what stories have we not heard as to the dangers to be met with in the goods yards! What hair-breadth escapes may we not expect! We think it right to take a tender farewell of our friends before we enter on what, perhaps, we expect to be a dangerous mission.

Arriving at the entrance we at first find ourselves in "banks" as in the City terminus; but we pass through that stage and find ourselves in the yard itself; and here we find trains again being marshalled in order by means of three sets of turn-tables right across the yard, which contains fourteen sets of metals. Here, where we are now, our old friend the hydraulic capstan is doing the job; but, if we penetrate further and proceed to the end of the yard, where it joins the main line, we find that the shunting is done by engines, and that, instead of being hauled along, turned on turn-tables, and sent along again, the waggons are shunted in proper form to the accompaniment of turning of points and dropping of signals. To this yard come—or, rather, are backed, for they have to go beyond it first—all trains from our City yard and all other places where our Company's goods trains may be made up. Here they are either broken up and the various parts shunted and picked up by some train ready to take them up and start, or they shunt off a few waggons for places to which they are not bound, and with one shunt pick up the waggons already marshalled ready for them, and start away themselves. Ten minutes is about the time taken from the arrival of a City train to the time when the complete train is ready to start. It is wonderful work, and being done in the dark, it seems almost impossible to get the waggons right; but the men seem quite calm and collected, and perfectly able to see everything in the dark just as well as if it were broad daylight. To see them take the number and destination off the little address-card on the waggon's side as it rolls past is a "caution." It is as much as we can do to see the card itself; as to seeing anything on it, we cannot even see that there is anything written on it at all.

It will give some idea of the large amount of traffic from this yard to set forth the time-table for a night. The trains run for some time with but ten minutes' intervals, and the list from nine o'clock to three includes twenty-five trains in all, and as the average load is forty trucks, it does not make a bad night's work. Now, if we take the list which has just been brought in for the forty minutes past nine we will find what a train is made up of. It is made up of forty-three waggons for fourteen different places.

Before we leave the yard we will see what we can from the signal-box, with its bright steel levers for signals and points; some of the levers which may be wanted suddenly—as in splitting up a train which has been uncoupled and pushed on by an engine, the different parts of the train requiring to be turned into different lines—being painted some special distinguishing colour. Here the two men control all the points, mostly from the oral order of the foreman in charge down below—while we are up here comes the order, hoarsely shouted up, "Turn her into No. 1, Bill"—and, in the time of fogs, entirely by word passed up the line of fogmen. Let us look out and see. It is a weird scene, viewed from up above, full of life and motion, and, above all, indistinct. The waggons flitting about, as it were, with no visible means of locomotion to be seen from here; the red and green lights of the signal posts; the moving white lights of the lanterns; the puffs of smoke from the engines; the indistinct figures of the men; and, above all, the constant movement and life go to make up a curiously picturesque scene. And the noise? Well, we are bound to admit that it is all wonderfully quiet. The whistles of the engines are few and far between, and seem even gentle when they do sound; the trucks seem to bang with a muffled sound; while the cries and shouts of the foreman hardly sound at all. In fact, instead of turmoil, all seems almost at rest as regards noise, and, whatever it may seem at a distance, a shunting yard for goods traffic is curiously peaceful. And the hair-breadth escapes? Well, there do not seem to be any; we have seen nobody hurt, and we are told that, although slight accidents do now and then occur, serious mishaps are very few and far between. The work out in the yard must be very severe in cold and wet weather; but the Company does its best for its workpeople in clothing them in warm garments and supplying them with good serviceable mackintoshes, and so mitigate the hardship as much as possible.

There is one more visit we must pay, and that is to our City station, late at night, to see some of the up traffic, which begins to arrive soon after midnight; so we will turn up at the station with the night shift at half-past eleven, to finish our railway wanderings. Arrived, and mounted on to the bank, what a change do we find from the busy evening time! Most of the banks are deserted, the gas is turned low, the lines of rails are empty, and there is a deserted air about the place. In only one or two arches is work going on, and the little noise there is seems quite out of keeping with the general peace. Soon only a few trucks remain to be cleared away from the metals, and, with that exception, before long the station is at rest and the men gone to breakfast—breakfast at midnight!—with the injunction to look sharp, and all is in readiness for the first trains, which are bringing American and Scotch meat, which is carried in ordinary trucks; in covered vans, where the carcases are hung up; and in refrigerators. But the first train does not seem to be in a hurry, so we will mount by the lift and see if there is any news of it up above. The lift seems to be also at rest, for it takes some time to attract the attention of the man in charge; but once attracted, the lift soon comes down, and up we go. But there is no news yet of the first trains, so there is nothing to do but wait. One of the foremen pulls out an evening paper and announces that there has been a slight accident down the line, and surmises that that may be the cause of the delay; so we go on waiting for the meat, which ought to have been unloaded, carted off, and in the market by this time. But time cures everything, and eventually the train comes in. It is soon seized upon, broken up, and the lifts are at work sending it down below. Meanwhile, on the low level life is generally waking up again. Men begin to appear, at first one or two, soon in larger groups; horses come on the scene apparently spontaneously; a foreman of carmen begins to get excited as to whether he has his gangs all full; bundles of straw and brooms rise up as if by magic; vans are swept, and their floors covered with straw, and all is ready for the first truck. Here it comes; a van is backed to it, the cases opened, the invoice seized by the checker, and the first side of beef is out almost before the waggon is quite at rest. Soon one line of rails is full, and the work is going on briskly; but it is only one train, and the next lags behind so much that the first is emptied, the vans all gone, and the trucks conveyed to the upper air again before the second train arrives. After that the meat rolls in merrily; and the arches where this traffic is worked—the ones where the vans can go alongside the trucks—have no lack of work now, and the air, as the trucks roll up, is full of the cries of "First one-'orse here!" "Now, then, hurry up with that next two-'orse!" They deal with as many as a hundred and fifty trucks of meat here in a night, and deal with it, all things considered, in a very tender fashion, for rough handling would bruise it and lower its market value.

After the meat the general loads roll in, nd all the arches are busy again, unloadg the trucks, and conveying the goods to he carts. Here, again, it seems wonderul that all the things can possibly get into he right vans, and that goods for Chelsea on't get conveyed to the Boro', or for the ity to the West End; but somehow or nother they all get into their right vans, nd in the course of time are carried off nd delivered at their various destinations, nd the banks are again ready to deal ith the down traffic.

Such is a slight sketch of the London oods traffic of one of our big lines, and stiff nough work it is; and if one thing strikes s about it more than another, it is the act that it is work dependent to a wonderul extent on the men who do the work. ndividual responsibility must count more ere than in many other forms of labour. irst the checker, responsible for the eception of goods; then the porter, reponsible for the goods being in the right ruck; then the capstan men, responsible hat the right truck goes up the right lift, nd appears where it is expected above; nd the van-men and foremen—well, if ll these men were not up to their work, nuddles would hardly be the right word or what would take place. But there is he traffic, going on day after day, and ight after night, never ceasing, and workng as smoothly as possibly could be.

To show, as a finish, what the work of ur railway is in the City yard, a few igures will not be amiss. During last year o less than five hundred and twenty housand tons of goods passed through, ne day's work being over two thousand ons; almost ten thousand was the daily verage number of consignments, and hirty-seven thousand the number of ackages; a thousand loads were carted, nd about four hundred carts and horses mployed every day, while the men emloyed—clerks, porters, men, and boys— mounted to over thirteen hundred. With hese figures we may take our leave of our ompany, convinced that nothing can go eyond them in the way of impressing our ninds with the size and importance of the oods traffic in and out of London.

MY FRIEND THE THIEF.

A STORY IN THREE CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER I.

He was an Oxford man, and the very ast fellow in the world to commit a crime; at least, we all thought so in the days when we were happy together at school and college. I should indeed have found it difficult at that time to suggest any situation which would develope the law-breaking instinct in my friend Leonard Rugby. He was eminently good-natured and adaptable; he had courage, kindness, health, and perseverance; but he was also very clever, and he contrived to invent and prepare the requisite situation for himself.

He married a very beautiful girl, who had a fortune of her own; and he was himself happily endowed with more money than he seemed likely ever to want, for he had no expensive personal habits. We all of us thought that the fates had been particularly kind to Leonard. They did not even put any difficulty at first in the way of his love-making; it was after his proposal had been accepted, that Gwendoline's relations objected to the scheme of life which he suggested for himself and for her. Gwendoline was, however, faithful to him, and quite resolved to forward the undertaking which she had helped him to plan. It was only necessary to wait until she was of age, when she would be at liberty to do as she liked with herself and her fortune.

I paid them a visit after they had been married about six months, and they seemed then to be very happy and hopeful. "I am only afraid that the life is a little too hard for Lina," Leonard said to me, with a touch of uneasiness in his voice. It struck me, however, that his wife was looking unusually well; it was on his own handsome face that the lines of a secret dread—a dread lest he had made a mistake, and begun what could not go on—were to be seen. Gwendoline's early home had been in the house of her uncle, a venerable professor, in an ancient university town. All things about her had been subdued into keeping with the suggestions of the place—learning, intellect, and cultured habits. I found her now in a remote settlement, without any servants, and with hardly any possessions which she did not hold in common with women of another class and kind.

It had been Leonard's dream and her own to found a new society which should not suffer for the faults of the old, nor be entangled in its evil customs. His idea could only be carried out in some unspoiled plot of earth, far from the ancient laws and the ancient temptations of humanity. Leonard looked for such a place, and found it. His settlement was on a cliff, and the cliff was cut in two by a gorge, through which a stream ran down to the narrow strip of shore. Behind it was a desert, and before it was the sea. On the stretch of land between these two it was his plan to sow corn, to rear cattle, and to live on the produce of his people's industry. All were to work alike, and to share alike. It was to be one of the Utopias of which so many dream, in which so many believe, but which so few who have anything to risk care to work into a practical experiment. Into this undertaking Leonard cheerfully put his own fortune, and was prepared to put his wife's.

"It isn't quite fair," I said to him; "you didn't start free of the old society after all. You have brought with you lots of things which neither you nor the men with you could have made for yourselves."

"We must have a start," said Leonard; "and these poor fellows had to see something tangible to raise their hopes at first."

"Have you got a good set with you?" I asked.

His handsome face flushed uneasily.

"There's only one really good workman in the lot, that's Joe Brown," he said; and then he laughed a little. "He has a poor opinion of our future. He said to me when he joined us: 'You mean well, and I'd like to stand by you, and see you out. One place is as good as another to me now.'"

"There's a quick-spoken man, who seems to have the control of everything. Who is that?" I asked.

"I suppose you mean Matthew Law. But nobody here has more control than anybody else."

"Doesn't character come in to contradict you? I don't suppose you can equalise that," I remarked.

"We can't do everything at once," said Leonard. "We have to work through inherited difficulties and differences."

"There are half-a-dozen very big fellows that I have seen lounging about," I observed.

"Lounging?" repeated Leonard, with a comical look. "Well, I suppose they do lounge. Nature, having provided them with an undue share of muscle, has a right to compensate herself by giving them a smaller share of perseverance than she gives to smaller men."

"So I should suppose. And who are the others?"

"Well, there are the Briggses—father and mother and several children—they are of a complaining sort, and rather shiftless; but they mean well; they had a bad time in the old world, and have lost spirit. Then we have one or two young people. We should have had more, but our regulations as to marriage made some of them unwilling to join us. We can only allow a certain proportion of marriages, or the community would cease to be able to support itself. We might have had more skilled workmen if we had refused to admit some of those big fellows—tramps and beggars they were in the old world—and such poor people as the Briggses. But I couldn't do that. If I had brought only those who were already working successfully for themselves, what good should I have done after all? It is not the successful we want to help. Even those I now have I should never have got together but for Matthew Law. The fellow has a most persuasive tongue."

"How do you divide the work?" I asked. "Do you take different sorts according to your different talents?"

"No," he said; "it's share and share alike—turn and turn about. I believe that's the way Matthew puts it. Of course, those who know how to do things have to show those who don't know—that doesn't count as work. We are only too glad to put the privileges we have had to the use of all."

"You, and your wife, and this Joe Brown, are, I suppose, the special developements who have to do the head as well as the hand labour. It falls rather hard on those who have been specially developed."

"They had too many privileges before," he answered, curtly; then he added, after a moment's thought, "I wish we had a doctor with us."

"You would be badly off in case of fever breaking out in the place."

"Lina did have two years' training as a nurse in a hospital, and would know how to help us a good deal," he answered; "but if she were ill herself! However, we must always risk something," he ended, cheerfully.

"I thought Harry Lloyd had promised to join you," I remarked. Harry Lloyd had been a good college friend to us both.

"So he has; and very glad I shall be when he comes," Leonard replied, heartily; "he'll help to make things a little easier for all of us."

I think that visit of mine did Leonard

good. He had been long without familiar talk with any one from his old life to whom he could confide his little anxieties and difficulties. They seemed all to have passed away before I left him, and everything was indeed full of promise in the settlement. Buildings had been put up for public and private use, according to the regulations of the community; corn had been planted, cattle had been bought, agricultural implements had been provided, and fences had been erected. Stores, also, of food and clothing had been laid in for some time to come, "until we have got into the way of making everything for ourselves," Leonard remarked. Nearly all the men that he had with him were ignorant, many of them seemed to me idle—Leonard said they were "discouraged"—so that it had been necessary to bring all the materials for the wooden buildings ready for putting up; and these were erected under the superintendence of the carpenter, Joe Brown. The expenses of the settlement, the purchase of outfit and land, the putting up of the buildings, the investment in cattle, implements and stores, had taken the greater part of Leonard's own fortune. I ventured to hope that his wife's would be left untouched.

"I don't think we ought to have it," said Leonard; "but when we are in working order we mean to enlarge our settlement and offer a new start to others from the old world. That's how Lina would like it to go, and I should like it too."

These were almost the last words he said to me before I left him.

CHAPTER II.

THREE years had passed away before I saw Leonard again. For the last two of these years I had been leading a life of adventure myself. I had gone from place to place without prospering anywhere. My last effort had been made at a newly-discovered gold-field; and I was one of hundreds who returned from that latest El Dorado with a sick heart, damaged health, and an empty pocket. I had no desire to go back to England a broken man, and I thought with hope of Leonard and his settlement. I was young and unmarried; under moderately favourable circumstances I should soon be quite strong again. Even as I was, I felt that I should be more a help than a burden in the strangely mixed community that I had visited.

I found a vessel which passed within a short distance of Leonard's settlement, and which consented to put me off there for a certain sum. When the place was reached, the agreement was carried out as quickly as possible. I was rowed to shore over a tranquil sea, and landed on a hot strip of beach with my handful of possessions—for they were literally only a handful. My bargain with the captain had used up my resources; but I knew that, even if Leonard did not consent to my joining his community permanently, he would lend me money to go forward when the opportunity came.

I think it was when the sailors had left me alone on the hot shore and were rowing quickly back to the ship, that a sense of my imprudence was first borne in upon me. How did I know that Leonard was still at the place? I had seen, as I approached, the wooden cottages on the cliff, each one-roomed only, because married people were not expected to keep their children with them—they were to send them, after the first year of their babyhood was over, to the common dormitory and nursery; and all meals were taken, all work done, in common apartments. The long, low public building devoted to the general use had been visible with the rest; a little smoke curled lazily up from its chimney, showing that it was not deserted. I was astonished, however, that no one came down the cliff-path to meet me. The visit of a vessel had been looked upon as an important event when I first landed there, and my welcome had been exhilarating. I was oppressed now by a sense of solitude and stagnation; a sort of dread came over me as I climbed the steep track to the top of the cliff. What should I find when I reached it? What horrible visitation had stricken the place into silence and indifference? Already the vessel which had brought me was steaming into the distance, and I knew that, except Leonard's community, there was no settlement within several days' journey. I had relied upon the hospitality of the place and had landed without any supply of food. As I toiled up the cliff I met no one and saw no one; but when I reached the top the door of Leonard's cottage opened and some one looked out of it.

I have said that the cliff was cut in two by a steep gorge, down which flowed the stream which supplied the community with water. This stream was nearly empty now. I thought that what was left of it had a foul and sickening smell. All the buildings, except Leonard's cottage, were on one side of the break, and a little wooden bridge spanned the gorge and connected the two edges of it. The piece of land originally set apart for building purposes had proved too small, and Leonard had willingly accepted the cottage which had to be erected in a more isolated and, therefore, more secluded position than the rest. It was put up on the further side of the stream, as an after-thought; but it was an after-thought which secured a little quiet and solitude for Gwendoline.

At first, I did not recognise the man who looked out of the door. He was changed by anxiety, grief, and privation from the Leonard I had known. I crossed the bridge to speak to him, and I saw a look of surprise and hope come into his face. He came forward quickly and grasped me by the hand.

"Thank Heaven, Rawdon, you have come in time!" he said to me.

"In time for what?"

"To bring the help we need. My wife——"

His voice broke for a moment, and he gave a glance at the open door behind him.

"She is ill?"

"I thought she was dying; but if we get fresh stores I know that I can bring her through. Did Lloyd send you?"

"I know nothing of Lloyd."

"No matter. Here you are; and the vessel that brought you will give us what we want to go on with, or take her away."

"I am afraid the vessel has gone."

I was sorry I had said it when I saw the look that came over the poor fellow's face. He turned it seaward, and then, without a word, he ran over the bridge and up a small height with a flagstaff on it. I understood that he wanted to put out a signal of distress; but the staff was broken, and somebody had taken away every scrap of canvas from it. It was, besides, too late. The vessel, which suspected no trouble, was already too far off to notice us.

"You do not mean to say," he said, "that when you landed here no one came to meet you; no one told you the trouble we were in!"

"Except you, I have seen no living thing."

"There is no living thing to see, except men and women," he answered. "Our cattle are gone; our corn has failed us. We have had fever; and the women are in the hospital. They have given up trying to do anything except nurse and cook. The men have lost heart, too, and are only waiting for relief to come. I am afraid that they play cards all day. But they might at least have watched; they promised me to watch."

His tone was too hopeless for anger.

"Who is there here now?" I asked.

"The best men left us a year ago, when we refused to alter the regulations and turn out those whom they called idlers. Perhaps they are idlers. Heaven knows! Can we help idleness more than sickness? I could not bring myself to send them back to crime. If we kept the best only, how should we differ from the old communities where the best men win and the rest go to the wall? But the fellows who went said that their industry and thrift were neutralised by the idleness and waste of the rest. So they left us, all except one or two who were staunch, I think, because they could not bear to show less courage than a woman. How could they leave while my wife stayed?"

"Where is Joe Brown?"

"He went, some time ago, to seek supplies from a settlement up country. He took the last of our funds with him. He has never come back; but we shall see him yet, unless he dies by the way. And that is likely enough, considering the country he has to get over."

"And Harry Lloyd?"

"He left us only a few days ago. He took our little yacht to try to reach the nearest place where vessels call, that he might get one to come and take us off. I thought he had sent you."

"There were some big and lazy fellows with you."

"They are big and lazy still. I think they will stick to us as long as we have any provisions left," he said, bitterly.

"There was a talkative man, Matthew Law."

Leonard's face darkened.

"It is he who makes our present trouble so deadly," he answered; "and in the absence of Lloyd and Brown there is no one to resist him." He told me then, briefly enough, a sad story of disaster, of the loss of cattle, the failure of crops, the outbreak of sickness. Further particulars I learnt from him afterwards. "We didn't seem to have many with us who would stand the test of a bad time," he said on a later occasion. "To work as long as they had strength for as little as they could live upon, was no better than what they had left in the old world; and nothing else would have saved us. Then, when typhoid broke out, they would not believe that our bad habits had anything to do with it, and the weather was so hot that hardly anybody would work at the drains to put them right. So the water supply got spoilt, and we went from bad to worse."

"I thought your sanitary regulations were so excellent."

"So they were. But we couldn't put them in force. Many of the men had been accustomed to let things go at home; and they just let them go here."

He told me that they had had a couple of bad seasons, and that he had made desperate efforts at the end of each to start the community afresh and make good its losses. Purchases had been made from settlers, who worked harder or managed better than Leonard's companions; and Gwendoline's fortune had been swept away with his own. To keep a community in idleness is expensive enough; but to let it play at business is far more costly. This was what Leonard had done. When the sickness came, Gwendoline had worked hard as a nurse. Mrs. Briggs—shiftless, complaining Mrs. Briggs—had shown a good heart and helped her when others failed. Then the sickness had attacked Gwendoline herself, and Leonard had nursed her through the worst of it.

"The fever has all gone now; but she is dying from weakness; and I cannot give her the things she needs. It drives a man mad to think of it," he said to me.

"But there is food in the place!"

"Matthew Law has possession of it now, and he deals us out rations. He has counted the days before Lloyd can get back, and divided it into so much for each person. He got the necessary resolutions passed after Brown and Lloyd went, and while I was with Gwendoline. We have 'to share and share alike,' sick and well, now," Leonard said, bitterly; "but then he is well himself."

"You do not mean that he and those other fellows eat food that your sick wife needs!"

"I wanted them to give up the whole of the tinned meat that is left to make beef tea for the sick; but they wouldn't do it. And I am alone. I can't make them. Briggs would help me, but he is a coward."

It struck me as a horrible thing that I could do nothing for him; that I had come only to add to the difficulties of the situation. For one moment I thought of offering to help him in an open rebellion against Matthew Law's regulations; but when I remembered the tramps—muscular, brainless, and heartless—I felt it would be useless. Then a happier idea occurred to me.

"Have you a boat left?" I asked him.

"Yes; but what's the good of it?" he answered.

"Let me take it. The vessel that brought me here was putting into an inlet up the coast for water. She might anchor there for twenty-four hours, the captain told me. If I can catch her up before she leaves I'll bring back help of some sort."

It was a poor fragment of hope that I held out to him; but it was better than nothing. We tried to get two of Briggs's lads to go with me to help in the management of the boat; but we found them too scared and stupid. They appeared to believe that if they left the place they might find it deserted when they got back, and be starved to death. So I went alone.

SQUARING THE CIRCLE.

It has been said that studies of currency problems, and religious mania, do more to fill the madhouses than any other human exercises. This may be so now, but aforetime there were "six follies of Science"—as Isaac Disraeli calls them—which had a marvellous capability for disordering the intellect. These were, the Quadrature of the Circle, the Multiplication of the Cube, Perpetual Motion, the Philosopher's Stone, Magic, and Judicial Astrology.

It is not to be supposed, however, that the pursuit of these "follies" has been wholly fruitless, for although the problems have not been solved, the efforts at solution have frequently resulted in valuable discoveries. It is something, of course, to have discovered the impossibility of solution; but, to take only one instance, a German chemist in searching for the Philosopher's Stone found a useful medicine, which now bears his name — Glauber's Salts. Some writers have affirmed the impossibility of proving the impossibility of the Philosopher's Stone, while admitting the folly of spending money and time in looking for it. Perpetual Motion, in the sense meant by the adepts, has, on the other hand, long been proved to be an impossibility; but not before one Hartmann, of Leipsic, had hanged himself in despair, after a life spent in studying it.

As to the Quadrature of the Circle, however, there are even yet occasionally found persons who believe in its feasibility; and mathematical "cranks" are every now and again turning up with some solution which is immediately shown to be fallacious. The problem is interesting as one of the oldest puzzles of the intellectual world; and we propose to give a brief account of its history, with the assistance of Holtzendorff and Virchow, who have dealt exhaustively with the subject in Germany.

But first, for the uninitiated, let us explain what is meant by the Quadrature, or Squaring, of the Circle. In Geometry, quadrature means the finding of a square equal in area to the area of a given curve. Now, to draw a square equal to the area of a circle, it is necessary first to draw a straight line which shall be equal in length to the circumference of the circle. The area of a circle is equal to the product of the radius and half the circumference. The root of the problem is the determination of the ratio of the circumference to the diameter.

It is because this ratio can only be expressed by an interminable decimal, 3·14159, etc, that a straight line cannot be drawn by geometrical means exactly equal in length to the circumference of a circle. So many persons pretended to have found a finite ratio, and failed, of course, before the test of scientific geometry, that in 1775 the Academy of Sciences of Paris and the Royal Society of London were compelled to advertise that they would not in future examine any paper professing to square the circle, trisect an angle, duplicate a cube, or demonstrate perpetual motion.

Nevertheless, unskilled mathematicians are still toiling away at the impossible, as they have been doing for some thousands of years.

The origin of the problem is almost lost in the mists of antiquity; but there is a record of an attempted quadrature in Egypt five hundred years before the exodus of the Jews. There is also a claim, according to Hone, that the problem was solved by a discovery of Hippocrates, the geometrician of Chios—not the physician —five hundred years before Christ. Now, the efforts of Hippocrates were devoted towards converting a circle into a crescent, because he had found that the area of a figure produced by drawing two perpendicular radii in a circle is exactly equal to the triangle formed by the line of junction. This is the famous theorem of the "lunes of Hippocrates," and is, like Glauber's Salts out of the Philosopher's Stone, an example of the useful results which sometimes follow a search for the unattainable.

The oldest mathematical book in the world is believed to be the "Papyrus Rhind" in the British Museum, professed to have been written by Ahmes, a scribe of King Ra-a-us, about the period between 2000 and 1700 B.C. This "Papyrus Rhind" was translated by Eisenlohr of Leipsic a few years ago, and it was found to contain a rule for making a square equal in area to a given circle. It was not put forth as an original discovery, but as the transcript of a treatise five hundred years older still, which sends us back to, approximately, 2500 B.C., when Egyptian mathematicians solved, or thought they had solved, the problem of squaring the circle.

The rule given by Ahmes requires that the diameter of a circle shall be shortened by one-ninth, and a square erected upon this shortened line. The area of such a square approximates the area of the circle, but, of course, is not exact, and is not even as close a result as that at which other geometricians have arrived.

The Babylonians, who were also great mathematicians, had a solution, to which a reference in the Talmud has been traced. The Babylonian method, however, was not a quadrature but a rectification of the circumference.

For the problem to pass from Egypt to Greece was natural enough, since Pythagoras, and other of the early Greek mathematicians, studied mathematics in the Land of Pharaoh. It is curious, however, that there is no mention of the Egyptian quadrature of Ahmes in Greek works, and Plutarch refers to Anaxagoras as the first to attempt the quadrature of a circle in Greece. He composed the problem in prison, about the year 434, and Plutarch says he did it effectually; but, unfortunately, the method employed has not been recorded. Thereafter followed quite a number of circle-squarers in Greece, including Hippias, who invented a curve which was both to trisect an angle and square a circle; and Bryson and Antiphon, contemporaries of Socrates, who are specially mentioned by Aristotle.

The Sophists, too, who were daunted by nothing, solved the problem in their own subtle way. They said that the squaring of the circle was to be achieved by finding a number which would in itself represent both a square and a circle. That is to say, it must be an even number for a square, and it must end with the same number as the root number from which it was produced by multiplication with itself, for a circle. Such a number they found in 36, which is an even number, and which ends with 6, the root number multiplied by itself producing the square. The number 36 then embodies the Sophist's solution of the problem.

The solution of Antiphon was more scientific. He divided the circle into four arcs, and by giving the points of division made a square. Next, he divided each arc into two equal parts and formed an octagon. From this, again, he constructed a dodecagon (a twelve-sided square), and argued that the process should be continued until a polygon is obtained with sides so small that they will coincide with the circle. Still, the result, as will readily be seen, will be only approximate, not exact.

After Hippocrates came Euclid, who avoided the problem altogether, and to him followed Archimedes, who is credited with having obtained the nearest approach to perfect solution. By an elaborate and laborious method of calculation, too intricate for our pages, he found that the ratio of the diameter to the circumference could not be less than as 7 to 21, nor more than as 7 to 22, but something between the two; and this computation he was content with, as close enough for all practical purposes.

It is since the exposition of Archimedes that mathematicians have called the number which should denote how many times larger is the circumference than the diameter of a circle—π, the Greek initial of the word "periphery."

The Hindoos seem to have turned their attention to the problem quite as long ago as the Egyptians; but in an inverted form. That is, they tried to form a circle out of a square, not a square out of a circle. Later, their mathematicians worked long and laboriously at the Archimedean method, and are said to have brought it to a closer result than even the Greek himself.

The Chinese, as a matter of course, were occupied with the problem ages ago, and for long they worked on the same basis as the Babylonians. Yet, for at least thirteen hundred years, as their mathematical treatises show, they have had an approximate result very nearly equal to that of Archimedes, which may be expressed in the figure $3\cdot\frac{7}{50}$, as the value of π. The numerical solution of the quadrature of the circle, it should be mentioned, depends on finding a figure which will express a value between 3·141592 and 3·141593: a feat which mathematicians now recognise as impossible.

Solution, however, has been also attempted by compass and rule, and, in the fifteenth century, Cardinal de Cusa, a renowned astronomer, claimed that he had found the square by that method. He was believed in for a time, until another mathematician arose to show the inaccuracy of his plan.

The same fate befell a number of other professors in the sixteenth century, one of whom, however, Simon van Eyck, obtained a closer approximate value than Archimedes.

Then arose the mighty Joseph Scaliger, who, without much knowledge of geometry, laughed Archimedes to scorn, and solved the problem in his own way, as duly set forth in his great work, "Nova Cyclometria," published in 1592. Joseph himself, however, was speedily turned inside out.

The next great circle-squarer was a Dane—Longomontanus of Copenhagen—who was so convinced of his success, that, in the preface to the work in which he set forth his quadrature, he offered thanks to God that he had been permitted, in his old age, to achieve what had baffled the ingenuity of centuries. The good Dane, however, was premature. To him succeeded Gregory of St. Vincent, who also published a formula which seemed so absolutely correct that no one could detect an error in it until the famous Descartes exposed its inaccuracies.

During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries a number of Dutch mathematicians laboured long and earnestly at the problem, and several seemed to come within sight of the promised land, only to be thrust back again by some lynx-eyed critic. The herculean work of Ludolf Van Ceulen was especially remarkable, for he worked out the Archimedean process to thirty-five decimal places. This stupendous calculation was engraved on the tombstone of the patient mathematician, who is said to have died happy in the result of his labours. This thirty-five decimal place computation of π is still called the "Ludolfian number."

The nearer approach to mathematical

exactness, however, did not really advance what is called the constructive quadrature of the circle. Another Dutchman, therefore, named Huygens, tried to work out the thing by a system of theorems, until he was attacked by our own James Gregory, who took upon himself to prove that the squaring of the circle by ruler and compass must be impossible. Thereupon, Huygens bent all his energies to proving, not the possibility, but the incorrectness of Gregory's proof of the impossibility. Ultimately, Huygens admitted that his own opinion was that the quadrature of the circle with ruler and compasses is impossible; but yet that he was unable to demonstrate the impossibility.

The reader will perceive the problem has now entered upon a new stage. It was not helped much by Hobbes, however, who, in order to support his famous quadrature, did not hesitate to repudiate the first principles of geometry; but a great advance in the numerical part of the problem was made by the invention of the differential and integral calculus. For one thing, the computation of Archimedes could be continued to hundreds of decimal places, and a sort of competition in the arithmetic of infinities set in. Thus Abraham Sharp, in 1700, worked out the problem to 72 decimal places; later, Professor Machin, of London, carried it to 100 places; and still later, Lagny, of Paris, obtained 127, Vega 140, and Dase, of Hamburg, got up to 200 decimal places. Even this stupendous calculation has been surpassed in our own time, for a computation is said to have been made to 500 decimal places.

A diversion from the usual method of the circle-squarers was employed, some thirty years ago, by Professor Wolff, of Zurich. He divided the floor of a room into equal squares, like a chess-board, and he took a needle, exactly equal in length to the side of each of these squares, which he threw upon the floor. The thing to be ascertained was the probability of the needle falling so as to lie wholly within one of the squares without crossing the lines of any of the other squares. Professor Wolff cast his needle 10,000 times, and obtained a value to three decimal places. But what a funny sort of German lottery was this—a learned, bespectacled professor throwing a needle day after day about his floor in the fond belief that he is thereby squaring the circle!

He did not manage, any more than Newton did with the calculus, to convert a circle into a perfect square. The scientists were in despair, not so much that they could not do what they knew to be impossible, but that they could not prove the thing to be impossible. Lambert, the Frenchman, certainly did prove that quadrature was impossible by the Archimedean process; but then he did not prove the impossibility of solving the problem by some other method. It was reserved for Professor Lindemann, of Freiburg, only some nine years ago, to demonstrate beyond cavil that the number π is not "algebraical," and that, therefore, it is impossible with ruler and compass to construct a square equal in area to a given circle.

Thus, then, the impossibility of the solution of a problem that has charmed and tormented the world for thousands of years, and the impossibility of which has been recognised by centuries, has been actually proved. Nevertheless, men will still continue to work as if nothing had been before attempted and nothing done.

Some clever persons in their efforts have even succeeded in proving—to their own satisfaction—that a part is greater than the whole. One Frenchman solved the problem by assuming that a circle is really a polygon with a definite number of sides.

A German, long ago, gave this very simple solution: Erect perpendiculars upon the diameter of a circle at its extremities; mark off upon the diameter an angle of thirty degrees, with the centre as vertex; find the point of intersection with the perpendicular of the line last drawn, and join this point of intersection with that point upon the other perpendicular which is at a distance of three radii from the base of the perpendicular.

Is this not very intelligible? The result, of course, is that the line of junction obtained is "approximately" equal to one-half of the circumference of the given circle.

Why has the problem so much attraction, even in these days of practicality? Something, no doubt, may be due to the old and popular delusion—a delusion of the character of that which some people still entertain with regard to the collections of three million used postage-stamps—that a great fund exists somewhere to be bestowed upon the fortunate person who shall first solve the problem of ages. Needless to say that no such fund is known either to the Queen, or to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, or to the President of the Royal Society, or to the French Academy. Is it fame that is the attraction? Well, certainly the man who could square the circle to mathematical accuracy would acquire abundance of fame—if no fortune. And yet what can that man want with money who is able to achieve the impossible?

CATHERINE MAIDMENT'S BURDEN.

A STORY IN TWELVE CHAPTERS.

By MARGARET MOULE.

CHAPTER IX.

Mr. Stewart-Carr rode his horse round to the stables, and dismounted there. He walked back very quickly through the gardens. The flowers were looking almost as if, after the heat and glare of the sun, they were resting now in its lowered rays. But their colours, though less vivid, were clearly outlined against the grey background of the Castle walls, and the stocks and mignonette were beginning to smell deliciously with the evening air. But Mr. Stewart-Carr observed neither scents nor colours. He entered the hall, laid his hat and whip in their accustomed places, and was preparing to go hastily upstairs to his dressing-room, when the door of the drawing-room suddenly opened, and Grace Arbuthnot came out and crossed the hall towards him.

"It is you," she said. "I thought so. May I speak to you for a moment?"

She was in her dinner-dress, a pretty silk frock of pale green, with a great deal of soft frilling about it; and it was, possibly, the soft setting to her face and shoulders, and the green colour, which was becoming to her, that made her look prettier than usual, and showed off the colour in her cheeks and the sparkle in her eyes. She stretched out one hand and played nervously with some carving on the balustrade of the stairs as she spoke.

"To me!" he said, looking at her in surprise. He was utterly at a loss to imagine what she could want to say to him. "What can I do for you?" he added, courteously.

"May I speak to you?" Grace repeated, fingering the bit of carving still more nervously.

He looked at her again, in greater astonishment. It was evident, from her manner, that she wished to speak to him alone. The request struck him as, to say the least of it, unusual, but he answered, instantly:

"Certainly. I am at your service."

He glanced round the hall, trying to decide whether he would take her to one of the easy-chairs or to the centre ottoman; but, as he glanced, a servant appeared and passed through the hall into the dining-room. He suddenly remembered that dinner was being laid, and for the next half-hour this passing would be continuous.

"Will you come into my room," he asked her—"where we looked at the fishing-rods?"

"Thank you," she said, quickly.

He led the way towards it. Half-way along the passage he stopped and turned.

"Mrs. Arbuthnot is not worse, I trust?" he said, quickly.

"Oh, no!" Grace replied. "She is so much better, thank you, that I believe we shall not have to trespass on your hospitality for more than a few days longer."

"It's not 'trespassing on my hospitality,'" he said; "don't, please, use words that are so meaningless!"

He opened the door of his room as he spoke. Grace entered; he followed, and shut it behind them. She looked around her in a perplexed, confused way; and then she suddenly sat down on a chair close to the table. He stood leaning back against the door-frame, waiting, in wonder that grew stronger and stronger, for her to speak.

There was an odd little pause, while Grace played with her handkerchief, which she had taken from the folds of her dress. At last, with her head bent down, she said, very abruptly:

"Mr. Stewart-Carr, you know Captain Carnforth very well, don't you?"

"Captain Carnforth!" echoed Mr. Stewart-Carr, with the rapid reflection that women were indeed incomprehensible, and that he had not the faintest idea what this particular woman could mean by such a query.

"I mean," Grace went on, tearing off little bits of the lace edge on her handkerchief, "you've known him a long time, haven't you?"

Mr. Stewart-Carr, hopelessly mystified, resolved to take refuge in plain statement.

"Yes," he answered, "I have known him for six or seven years. We met in Malta, first; yes, it is seven years ago, this summer."

"And," continued Grace, rolling the handkerchief into a minute ball in her hot fingers, "you know he's a very nice sort of man—an awfully nice sort of man, don't you?"

He stared at her uncompromisingly. For one moment he thought Grace Arbuthnot had suddenly gone out of her senses; then, in mercy to her visibly increasing confusion, he said, quickly:

"He is my intimate personal friend, and I have never known anything but good of him, if that is what you mean. But, Miss Arbuthnot," he said, breaking off suddenly, "may I ask what it is you do mean by these questions?"

Grace rose suddenly from her chair, and took two steps towards him. Then she suddenly sat down again, and leaning both elbows on the table, ran her hands up into her pretty hair, distractedly.

"Oh!" she said, with a little sigh, "why do men understand so slowly? I don't mean to be rude," she said, with a pretty glance up at him; "but don't you see? Oh! don't you see?"

"I don't," he replied, with straightforward directness. "I'm afraid I'm stupid, but I don't."

Grace tore her little handkerchief right across; then she turned round and looked up at him with a face and neck scarlet, from her brow to the edge of the frilling of her gown.

"I—I—he cares for me, he says," she cried, in a low tone; "and I—care for him. We're engaged," she added, desperately; "we were engaged yesterday."

Mr. Stewart-Carr caught hold of the handle of the door and grasped it firmly in his strong brown hand. But he did not speak, he made no attempt to help Grace. And after a pause, during which she seemed to collect her energies for a final statement, she said, looking at him pleadingly:

"He must tell mother, you know. He's going away to-morrow, and he must tell her, first, of course. I haven't told her yet," Grace put in, parenthetically and fearfully; "and mother doesn't much like him," she continued. "She'll say all sorts of things. She'll say she doesn't know him enough; and I thought—I thought——" Grace stammered with the haste with which she tried to get through her words. "I thought if you would tell mother that you know him so well, and that he's—as nice as he is, you know, she'd listen to you, and let us be engaged. I know she'd listen to you," Grace ended, breathlessly.

Mr. Stewart-Carr rallied all his forces, which had been scattered completely by her words, and came towards her. She was trying, in an aimless way, to put together the two pieces of her handkerchief, and looking hard at it as it lay on her knees.

He took her hand in both his, very gently. It was the action of a much older man, and yet it seemed to be the natural gesture for the man who did it at the moment.

"Miss Arbuthnot," he said, and his voice was as gentle as his touch, "thank you very much for telling me. I am so sorry I was so dense as not to understand sooner. I will say everything and anything I can to Mrs. Arbuthnot whenever you like. I will do all I possibly can; and I think you need have no cause to fear."

She looked up at him very gratefully, and he went on:

"I wish you every happiness, and I believe with all my heart you'll have it. Carnforth is one of the best fellows going."

"Thank you," she said, in a very low little voice. Then suddenly taking her hand from his, she put both hands over her face and burst into tears. But she checked herself again in a moment, and proceeded laughingly to dry the tears with the torn fragments of her handkerchief. "What an idiot I am!" she said. "I can't think what made me. But I was anxious, you see, and you were very kind. And now," she said, looking up at him with a piteous, mischievous little twinkle in her tearful eyes, "my pocket-handkerchief is in bits, and I can't get another without meeting mother or my maid."

Mr. Stewart-Carr looked about desperately, as if he trusted that a keen glance would evolve a clean pocket-handkerchief out of the surrounding air. "I'm sorry I can't offer you one," he said, distractedly.

She stood up with a gay little laugh. "There are none here, I imagine!" she said. "Don't mind, my tears are dry! I won't keep you any longer. Is my face all right?" she said, turning it to him for inspection.

"Quite," he said, looking at the pretty eyes from which the traces of tears had completely vanished. "You won't worry or fret?" he went on, earnestly. "I'm sure we can make things straight."

"You are very good indeed," she said, holding out her hand to him as she turned to the door. "Very good."

"I've done nothing," he said, simply; "but I will do my best." Then he opened the door for her, and they left the room together, Grace to return to the drawing-room, singing a little light-hearted song as she went; and he to rush towards the stairs, and ascend three steps at a time.

Mr. Stewart-Carr's manner that evening was unusual. He seemed almost excited; his quiet courteousness gave way to a cordiality which, though he had always made his guests feel it, he had never before so unreservedly displayed, and under his ordinary self-possession a kind of irrepressible buoyancy continually showed itself.

Grace, every time she glanced at him, became more and more confident of his persuasive powers; and, radiantly happy in that conviction, she caught the infection of his high spirits and laughed and talked brilliantly all the evening.

Captain Carnforth, who, at a word or two of invitation after Grace and her mother had left the dinner-table, confided instantly in his host, came to the conclusion that well as he had always thought he knew Mr. Stewart-Carr, he had never till now known how "awfully good" he was. Mrs. Arbuthnot, who, tired and rather fractious, had come down to dinner that day for the first time since her accident, left the drawing-room at ten o'clock in a thoroughly happy frame of mind with herself and all the world, and firmly convinced that the only thing wanting to complete her satisfaction was that Grace should marry a man who was, as she expressed it to herself that night, "quite the most charming man she had ever known."

Next day Mr. Stewart-Carr was as good as his word. He, having first arranged the time with Grace, sought out Mrs. Arbuthnot at twelve o'clock; but no one ever heard the details of that episode except the two immediately concerned. Grace had early that morning broken the fact of her engagement to her mother, to be met by considerable contempt and strong opposition, but she only knew that when Mr. Stewart-Carr came out of the drawing-room and sent her to her mother, the contempt and opposition were as completely gone as if they had never existed. Mrs. Arbuthnot could not have kissed her daughter more sympathetically, or sympathised with her more tenderly, if Grace had met her wishes, and had been going to marry Mr. Stewart-Carr himself.

Captain Carnforth, when he wrung Mr. Stewart-Carr's hand as they parted that same evening at the little country station, had come equally successfully through his own ordeal.

"I don't know how to thank you," he said, enthusiastically, as he got into the train.

"Ask me to the wedding!" responded Mr. Stewart-Carr, laughingly.

Two days later Mrs. Arbuthnot and Grace also left the Castle. During the days that followed their departure, Mr. Stewart-Carr's buoyant, excited frame of mind seemed to undergo a change. The reaction came to him.

Every tangible obstacle in the way of his going to Catherine Maidment and asking her to be his wife was now removed; but the first blissful consciousness of that fact was now suddenly succeeded by the acute consciousness of a hundred intangible obstacles, which, in the shape of doubt, hesitancy, and diffidence, rose up and stood in his path.

He told himself one day that it was not likely she would ever care for him—he was very modest and did not believe in any merits on his own part—the next, he made up his mind that he was certainly too late; a woman so sweet as Catherine was must have been asked the question he was longing to ask her, and must have been won by some other man, long before.

But on the third day, perhaps because his accumulated feelings of the two preceding days were beginning to make him feel as if the obstacles in his way were such as he could never overcome, he suddenly determined to turn and face them. He resolved that very afternoon, or never, he would ask Catherine Maidment to be his wife.

CHAPTER X.

The afternoon was hotter than ever, and Catherine Maidment, as she sat with her work-basket before her, in the quiet dining-room of the White House, was very glad she was there, and not out in the glaring sunlight which lay in such broad, hot streams over their garden and the park beyond.

Catherine had not stayed indoors, however, simply on account of the heat. There were two distinct errands she meant to have accomplished that day; one to a distant brickyard, to give an order for the purchase of some drain-pipes, which were wanted at once, for some draining that was going forward on the estate; and one to Fisher, the carpenter, from whom she had been returning when

Mr. Stewart-Carr met her a few days before. But she had let both wait, though both were pressing, and stayed at home, because she did not like to leave her brother by himself for so long a time as either of these walks would take.

Frank Maidment had been worse for the two last nights; it was because Grace Arbuthnot had left Moreford, Catherine thought to herself, wearily. This morning, the headache with which he came down had not, as usual, worn off after breakfast. He had spent a desultory morning in gardening lazily, keeping Catherine beside him to help him; and since luncheon, he had made several listless attempts to go on with it, interrupted by aimless wanderings into the dining-room. But they were more and more listless, and at length he had given it up, and, at Catherine's persuasion, had gone upstairs to his room to lie down, Catherine having first tried to make sure that all temptation was out of his reach. She had crept upstairs once more, half an hour after he laid down, and had found him asleep, quite peacefully and, apparently, dreamlessly. She knew, from terrible experience, that he was likely to sleep very long, and she came downstairs again, and took up her work, with a mind temporarily at ease about him.

It was very quiet outside and inside the White House. It was the hottest hour of the summer afternoon, and every living thing seemed silenced by the heat. Not a breath of air stirred the drooping leaves of the trees, and only the sound of a very distant sheep-bell broke the silence every now and then.

Inside the silence was still deeper. Margaret had gone into Moreford, and the only sound to be heard was the distant crackle of the fire through the open kitchen door, and the little click of Catherine's thimble, as she stitched a collar on her brother's shirt.

From the corner where she sat she could see the garden gate; but her head was bent over her stitching, and the sudden slight click of its latch—a sound so slight as to be only noticeable by contrast with the great stillness—made her start violently. She raised her head with her start, and saw Mr. Stewart-Carr coming through the garden to the door. Her first impulse was to prevent her brother from being awakened—partly for his own sake, and partly because she could not be sure of the impression his appearance might make to-day.

With a little shiver, arising from this last thought, she hastily put all her work into its basket, and going out of the room, met Mr. Stewart-Carr on the doorstep.

"I came out because my brother is not well," she said, hurriedly; "he is lying down, asleep, and I thought the bell would wake him."

"I am very sorry," he said.

"Do come in," Catherine continued; "perhaps I can tell him what you wanted, or help to arrange it."

"Thank you," he replied, gravely, following her quietly into the drawing-room. He sat down, opposite her work-table, before he spoke again. "I came to see you, Miss Maidment," he said.

"To see me!" Catherine said, with some surprise. "Oh, is it about Fisher? He is really most trying. I meant—Frank meant to go to him this afternoon again. But he has one of his worst headaches, and I had to send the servant out, and could not well leave the house. Frank will go to him to-morrow."

"No; not about Fisher," he said. But then he paused; and Catherine looked at him with a face that had grown white and very anxious.

His manner was strange, she thought. What could have happened? Could he possibly have found out anything? she asked herself, with a feeling of terror. But, though she collected herself again hastily, the strangeness of his manner affected her; and all her conversational ideas seemed to desert her, wholly and at once. Before she could recover any of them, Mr. Stewart-Carr suddenly rose, crossed the little space that had divided them, and stood before her chair. Catherine looked up at him with wide, wondering eyes; but, as she met his, something in them made her drop her own, and made her heart beat violently.

"Miss Maidment," he said, "I came, this afternoon, to ask so much that I do not know how to put it into words. The only thing I can do is to speak plainly, at once, at the risk of being abrupt and hasty. If I do not, I shall not be able to say it at all."

He paused for one moment, and glanced down at her; but Catherine did not move or lift her eyes, which she had fixed on her clasped hands.

"You must know, I think, what I am going to say," he went on, speaking very slowly from agitation. "I am going to tell you I love you. I do tell you so.

together, Grace to return to the drawing-room, singing a little light-hearted song as she went; and he to rush towards the stairs, and ascend three steps at a time.

Mr. Stewart-Carr's manner that evening was unusual. He seemed almost excited; his quiet courteousness gave way to a cordiality which, though he had always made his guests feel it, he had never before so unreservedly displayed, and under his ordinary self-possession a kind of irrepressible buoyancy continually showed itself.

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CHAPTER X.

THE afternoon was hotter than ever, and Catherine Maidment, as she sat with her work-basket before her, in the quiet dining-room of the White House, was very glad she was there, and not out in the glaring sunlight which lay in such broad, hot streams over their garden and the park beyond.

Catherine had not stayed indoors, however, simply on account of the heat. There were two distinct errands she meant to have accomplished that day; one to a distant brickyard, to give an order for the purchase of some drain-pipes, which were wanted at once, for some draining that was going forward on the estate; and one to Fisher, the carpenter, from whom she had been returning when

Mr. Stewart-Carr met her a few days before. But she had let both wait, though both were pressing, and stayed at home, because she did not like to leave her brother by himself for so long a time as either of these walks would take.

Frank Maidment had been worse for the two last nights; it was because Grace Arbuthnot had left Moreford, Catherine thought to herself, wearily. This morning, the headache with which he came down had not, as usual, worn off after breakfast. He had spent a desultory morning in gardening lazily, keeping Catherine beside him to help him; and since luncheon, he had made several listless attempts to go on with it, interrupted by aimless wanderings into the dining-room. But they were more and more listless, and at length he had given it up, and, at Catherine's persuasion, had gone upstairs to his room to lie down, Catherine having first tried to make sure that all temptation was out of his reach. She had crept upstairs once more, half an hour after he laid down, and had found him asleep, quite peacefully and, apparently, dreamlessly. She knew, from terrible experience, that he was likely to sleep very long, and she came downstairs again, and took up her work, with a mind temporarily at ease about him.

It was very quiet outside and inside the White House. It was the hottest hour of the summer afternoon, and every living thing seemed silenced by the heat. Not a breath of air stirred the drooping leaves of the trees, and only the sound of a very distant sheep-bell broke the silence every now and then.

Inside the silence was still deeper. Margaret had gone into Moreford, and the only sound to be heard was the distant crackle of the fire through the open kitchen door, and the little click of Catherine's thimble, as she stitched a collar on her brother's shirt.

From the corner where she sat she could see the garden gate; but her head was bent over her stitching, and the sudden slight click of its latch—a sound so slight as to be only noticeable by contrast with the great stillness—made her start violently. She raised her head with her start, and saw Mr. Stewart-Carr coming through the garden to the door. Her first impulse was to prevent her brother from being awakened—partly for his own sake, and partly because she could not be sure of the impression his appearance might make to-day.

With a little shiver, arising from this last thought, she hastily put all her work into its basket, and going out of the room, met Mr. Stewart-Carr on the doorstep.

"I came out because my brother is not well," she said, hurriedly; "he is lying down, asleep, and I thought the bell would wake him."

"I am very sorry," he said.

"Do come in," Catherine continued; "perhaps I can tell him what you wanted, or help to arrange it."

"Thank you," he replied, gravely, following her quietly into the drawing-room. He sat down, opposite her work-table, before he spoke again. "I came to see you, Miss Maidment," he said.

"To see me!" Catherine said, with some surprise. "Oh, is it about Fisher? He is really most trying. I meant—Frank meant to go to him this afternoon again. But he has one of his worst headaches, and I had to send the servant out, and could not well leave the house. Frank will go to him to-morrow."

"No; not about Fisher," he said. But then he paused; and Catherine looked at him with a face that had grown white and very anxious.

His manner was strange, she thought. What could have happened? Could he possibly have found out anything? she asked herself, with a feeling of terror. But, though she collected herself again hastily, the strangeness of his manner affected her; and all her conversational ideas seemed to desert her, wholly and at once. Before she could recover any of them, Mr. Stewart-Carr suddenly rose, crossed the little space that had divided them, and stood before her chair. Catherine looked up at him with wide, wondering eyes; but, as she met his, something in them made her drop her own, and made her heart beat violently.

"Miss Maidment," he said, "I came, this afternoon, to ask so much that I do not know how to put it into words. The only thing I can do is to speak plainly, at once, at the risk of being abrupt and hasty. If I do not, I shall not be able to say it at all."

He paused for one moment, and glanced down at her; but Catherine did not move or lift her eyes, which she had fixed on her clasped hands.

"You must know, I think, what I am going to say," he went on, speaking very slowly from agitation. "I am going to tell you I love you. I do tell you so.

And I ask you if you could ever love me—could ever be my wife."

He stopped very abruptly. His voice, during the last few words, had had a curiously strained tone in it; and his face, as he stood waiting, was pale and drawn.

Catherine did not speak. She turned round and hid her face, suddenly, in her hands, and her breath came in long, quick gasps. She was fighting desperately against the overwhelming sense of agitation which the sudden shock had brought her. Her self-control had been shattered on the instant, and her keenest consciousness was of the absolute necessity of recovering it.

Mr. Stewart-Carr could see the burning scarlet colour of her neck, could see her agitated breathing. He knelt down beside her.

"Catherine," he said, "Catherine, could you love me? Could you?"

Still she did not speak. He waited one moment, then he tried, very gently, to take her hands away from her face. As he touched her hands, Catherine felt her brain reel.

With his first words, all her liking for the man before her, all her attraction towards him, all the feelings she had argued down and turned away from, rose up and claimed their proper name. She knew that she loved him.

"Will you be my wife?" he repeated.

Then the thought of her brother came, and, like a heavy hand laid on it, crushed back all thought of herself, of her love, and made her longing to turn to this man, and tell him that she loved him, into a terrible temptation. She remembered that her life was not her own to dispose of, she had her brother's life to hold and guard for all the years they should both live. A picture of Frank, as she had left him lying asleep, suddenly came between her and the man who was looking at her with an intentness that she felt, even through the shelter of her hands.

"I cannot," she said, low and distinctly.

"You cannot care for me?" he said, rising.

"I cannot marry you, Mr. Stewart-Carr," she answered, firmly.

He looked at her for a moment, then seizing on the difference between her answer and his question:

"I don't want you to marry me yet," he cried. "I won't even speak to you of it again till you say I may. I'll wait as long as you can wish, if you will only give me leave to wait."

"You must not wait at all," came from Catherine's white lips. She had taken her hands from her face and had risen from her chair.

"I know you wish me to go," he said. "I understand. But at least you will tell me this: Is there any reason why you cannot marry me?" He hesitated a moment, then he said, desperately, "I mean—forgive me—but am I too late? Is there any one else?"

"No, no, no!" Catherine cried, the words following so quickly on his that they almost seemed as if she had interrupted him. Then she suddenly hid her face in her hands again. He came a step nearer.

"Catherine," he said, and his voice was very hoarse, "Catherine, couldn't you try to love me, then? If it took years I should not care, if you would only try. Say you will try—say you will let me ask you again."

"No," Catherine said, very firmly, and her tone was very different from the tone of her emphatic, impulsive denial of a moment before. It was self-possessed and strong.

"You mean you could never love me?" he said.

Catherine's momentary self-possession suddenly left her. She turned away, and clung with both hands to the back of her chair.

"If you can never love me, tell me so," he said, passionately.

"I can't tell you so," Catherine said; but so very low that he could scarcely hear her words. Then, as a sudden hope flashed over his face, she lifted her head and turned to him. "Oh!" she cried, "don't say any more to me, only believe me! I cannot marry you. I shall never marry any one."

"Never?"

"Never," she answered. Then she let herself fall into the chair, and looked at him with eyes of intense entreaty.

"Go," she said; "go. If you love me, as you say you do—go."

His face was very pale and his lips trembled. But he obeyed her entreaty and turned to go. He went slowly and heavily out of the room into the little passage and out of the house; while Catherine sank back in her chair white and exhausted.

Neither of the two had heard Frank Maidment's step in that passage a few moments before.

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BY RIGHT OF SUCCESSION.

By ESMÉ STUART.

Author of "A Faire Damsell," "Joan Vellacot" "Kestell of Greystone," etc. etc.

CHAPTER XIII. HOMELESS.

WHEN Nan came in from her long, lonely walk, she was not prepared for the reception she received.

"Nan, do you know, we are to travel, really travel in a fortnight. Why didn't you tell us? And you didn't say half enough about her."

This was from Sibyl.

"Dear father's own relation? Do you know, Nan, it is nice to have some real relations? I expect you even like that poor aunt of yours about whom you do tell us such curious stories."

Nan stood by, trying to gather what "that woman" had told her darlings; certainly not the one thing that must be told. She knew by the happy countenances that she had not told them that they were to be driven from the place of their birth, outcasts from it and from all relations. So, of course, this being the case, Nan's lips were sealed, too. Why should she tell them? As long as they were together she would bear the burden alone.

About her own prospects Miss Evans did not think at all, even though she had nowhere to go to, no money, no occupation, no friend to speak a word for her even; but that did not occupy her thoughts—only Grace and Sibyl, that was all. Why should she not follow them and watch over them?

This thought made her happier for a few moments, and then came the common-sense view of the case. How could she find employment at once, without friends, out in Germany? No; she must earn money in England, and that money should be for them, so that some day she should be able once more to give them a home which was now denied them by others.

No one was to know or guess the great restraint this woman put on herself during this first conversation with her children and during the following days. She heard them discuss little plans, settle what small properties they should take with them. She even allowed Grace to look over her own wardrobe and make little suggestions as to what was most likely to be wanted out there.

But all three had certainly somewhat exaggerated ideas of the arrangements necessary for "going abroad;" and a traveller to Fiji would hardly have given more thought to his outfit than did Grace and Sibyl to theirs.

Mrs. Gordon did not come again to the Warren; but she wrote a note to Nan, which this latter put at once into the fire after having read it, much to Grace's disappointment. It was short, and enclosed a cheque for forty pounds, with a few words of thanks and compliments. Only the one idea that Grace would want money prevented the cheque following the note into the fire; but not a penny of it would Miss Evans have spent on herself, no, not for the world.

Afterwards, Grace remembered how, those last days, Nan never left them; how she would sit for a long time gazing at them without saying anything, and how she seemed to move and act as if in a dream. Grace remembered this, and remembered too, how, because of their new excited feelings, they took so little heed of these loving looks and actions.

All too soon came a letter from Mrs. Gordon to Grace. It was enclosed to Miss Evans, as if the widow had not been able to persuade herself to write "Miss Grace Gordon." It was posted at Longham, and ran as follows:

"DEAR GRACE,—I conclude you have made all the arrangements for your journey. The weather has become so mild that I think you will not suffer from the cold. I hope you will find no difficulty on the way, as I have made every conceivable arrangement so that you should not be left alone. You must go by the two o'clock train to Victoria, and there you will find in the first-class waiting-room a lady, Mrs. Johnson by name, who is herself going to Fribourg, and will save you all further trouble. You will cross that evening. The school, where you are going, is known to Mrs. Johnson, and I hope you will try to be happy whilst you are there. I have given her a letter to deliver to you, which you can read quietly to yourself in the train, to explain a few matters which I think you ought to know, and which may come best from me as your father's cousin. I hope you will always apply to me if you are in any need of help or advice. Your sincere friend,—ELLEN GORDON."

Sibyl thought it a nice letter; everything that the elegant Mrs. Gordon did was right in her young eyes. Grace was puzzled by one or two passages in it. First, there being no mention of Nan in it, and secondly, the words about being happy in Germany. But, seeing that neither Nan nor her sister remarked on the letter, she kept her wonderings to herself.

And now the last evening had come, the boxes were packed, and Sibyl, tired out, retired early to bed, and with her golden head on her pillow she soon fell asleep.

When she fancied that Nan was in bed, Grace took her bedroom candle and crept silently to her father's room, turned the key, and then knelt down by the bed and tried to bring back the scene of the last hours of his life. Ah! If only he could have said more to her and told her what he would like her to do in the future, if only he had mentioned this cousin, this Mrs. Gordon, how much happier she would now be feeling! But it must be right, they would all come back soon and live on their quiet life at the Warren. It could not be very wrong to take one little peep at the world beyond, where Sibyl had always wished to go. Heaven would take care of them and bring them back.

Half praying, half thinking, the girl with the woman's heart knelt on a long time till, becoming a little afraid of the loneliness, she rose hastily, and stepped back softly to her own room. But passing Nan's bedroom, she was surprised to see a light still gleaming under the door. Was Nan ill?

"Nan, dear Nan," she called, softly, "what is the matter?" and Nan opened the door. Only then did Grace know that something very terrible must be going to happen. She uttered a little cry, as she said:

"Tell me, what is it?"

Then Nan drew her in, bade her sit in an arm-chair that stood by a smouldering fire, and then the tall woman knelt down by that slight child and sobbed forth:

"My child, my child! They say I must leave you, leave you both." Then she clasped her as if she would never let her go.

"You leave us; you, Nan! You are dreaming; and who says so?"

"She—that Mrs. Gordon—says so. I can't tell you now—I dare say she will—all the reasons that make this necessary; but one is, Grace, that you and Sibyl are not rich—you are poor. You will have nothing of your own, and I am no relation to you—no blood relation—but, child, remember I am your mother by the right of many years; if I leave you now it is because—Heaven knows there is no help for it—because all the time, though I have been searching for some means of escape, I have found none. But, whatever happens, don't think you are forsaken. I cannot change. I shall write to you, and you must write to me very often, and tell me all. Even if I suffer I must know. I have tried to spare you; but now—— Grace, Grace, have I killed you?"

For Nan found the girl's fair, soft arms bending forward. She had fainted in her arms.

CHAPTER XIV. IT WASN'T MINNIE.

WE must go back to the little home at Longham, and to the three Miss Gordons left to take care of themselves during their mother's unexpected absence.

Frances became so mysterious that Minnie and Beatrice had somewhat long "hair-brush talks," as they called them, as to the possible reason of their sister's conduct, and Bee at last ventured to whisper her private opinion.

"Minnie, I do believe we have lost all

our money, and mother is trying to find a way out of the difficulty. What shall we do if it is so? It is bad enough to be poor as we now are; but if we had nothing—— We could not go into the workhouse. Fancy the Miss Gordons in blue check dresses and white caps," and Beatrice laughed, though Minnie did not see anything to laugh about.

"How ridiculous you are, Bee; if we have lost our money some of the family must help us. I am sure they are mean enough; it will be a punishment for them."

"We have so few relations. Mother's are no better off than ourselves, and father's people are poorer. Besides, I don't care to be dependent upon other people, and I shall see what I can do to earn my bread."

"You, Bee! why, you are only just eighteen. What could you do? You never were clever."

"I can make dresses!"

"Make dresses," answered Minnie, in a voice of deep scorn; "you don't mean to say you would become a dressmaker?"

"Would it be worse than taking other people's money to live upon?"

"How silly you are; but I tell you beforehand, Bee, if you ever dream of doing anything so disgraceful, I shall disown you. I shall tell every one I have only one sister, and that will be Frances."

"But I should be your sister all the same, Minnie, and not a bit different than I am now, for I make my own dresses. How hard I worked at Frances' dress the other day!" Bee looked at herself in the glass, and smiled. She was remembering those happy minutes she had had when, surrounded by the ball-dress material, she had talked to Captain Grant; and Minnie did not know what that smile meant.

"That reminds me," answered Minnie, "I asked Captain Grant if he were going to that ball on Thursday, and he said yes."

"Did he?"

"Yes; so I want to look my best. I believe he really does like to talk to us. Naturally; there are so few real ladies at Longham."

"I don't think he cares much what people are."

"Beatrice! Why, I never met such a perfect gentleman!"

"Yes, he is. I wonder, Minnie, what he would think of me if I became a dressmaker."

"Bee, you are the most foolish girl I know. If you ever mention the subject to him I shall be very much annoyed."

"But, really, I should like to know what he would think right, supposing we lost our money."

"Anyhow, you are not going on Thursday. Well, good night. By the way, shall I wear my blue forget-me-not wreath or the white roses?"

Minnie certainly looked quite lovely in blue forget-me-nots, and Bee, with an effort, answered truthfully:

"You look very, very nice in blue, Minnie, everybody says so."

"Ah, well, that decides it. I don't mind telling you, Bee, that I want to look my very, very best on Thursday. Frances is so stupid now she spends her time in writing to mother. There is no getting her to talk about anything; she even insisted on enclosing my letter to mother to-day, saying she was travelling about. I don't believe it is any such thing. I hate mysteries; but if we really have lost our money, I would rather not know till after Thursday."

Thursday came, and with it the long preparation for Minnie's looking her "very best." Bee helped both her sisters, and when they drove away with their neighbour Mrs. Crozby as chaperon, she felt very much like little Cinderella. She spent a very dull evening, for there are times when a girl feels that she could be "the best" to the man she honours and loves, and Bee had nearly reached this state of feeling.

It was thinking so much that made her keep watch till her sisters came back, for Minnie shared her room, and then Bee heard the excited account of her sister's "loveliest ball." The blue wreath was taken off the pretty hair, and Bee was told "every one said that I was the prettiest person in the room."

"Did you dance much with Captain Grant," asked Bee, in a low voice, "and did he say that?"

"Yes, a great deal, he was so nice; but he never pays compliments, he is rather stupid about that."

"Did he ask after me?"

"Oh, yes, I suppose he mentioned you. Yes, I know he did. We were talking of likenesses, people's doubles, and he said that years ago he went to stay with some friends, I forget where, and in church he saw two sisters who were very nice-looking —he meant very pretty—and that when he saw us the first time, a month ago, he thought we must be those same two girls grown up. He said we were so very much like them—the same coloured hair and the same eyes. He even asked the names of the children, and he had an idea that they were also called Gordon; but of course that must be fancy. I had never heard of the place he mentioned, so, you see, somewhere we have our doubles."

The elder sisters were too tired the next morning to get up to breakfast, so Beatrice had a solitary meal, and feeling somewhat sad, instead of settling down to her needlework as usual, determined to take a walk. Their mother did not usually allow them to walk about Longham alone, but they might walk in the opposite direction on a road which led towards a small village. This road was very unfrequented, and when Bee wanted to get away from Minnie's little persecutions she took a good mile walk down the lane to wear off her aggrieved feelings. To-day it was a relief to walk on and on quickly, to try and get rid of her thoughts, which, put into words, were: "After all, it would be Minnie," and "most likely we are beggars."

She had not gone very far when she heard a step behind her, a firm, quick step, whose owner also appeared to be taking a constitutional. Beatrice did not look back, she knew the man, whoever he was, would soon overtake her; but she tried to see how fast she, too, could walk till she was stopped by his voice, saying:

"Miss Gordon, are you walking for a wager? I have been wondering how long you would keep up at this rate. I was surprised to see you out so early."

She had been thinking so much of him since their last talk that it seemed natural to hear him; but in spite of this she blushed a little.

"I wanted to begin the day with a good constitutional, now the frost has gone, and there is no more chance of skating."

Did he remember the talk they had had on that winter's day?

"I was very sorry last night that 'society' prevented you from coming to the ball. Is it never your turn, Miss Beatrice?" He half smiled as he looked down at her from his superior height.

"Yes; when I first came out Minnie allowed me to go pretty often. But now she has her choice; of course, the youngest must wait. It is quite fair."

"I should think the youngest would care the most for gaiety."

"I don't think I do care very much; of course, I like it, but unless one meets nice people it seems very much the same thing every time; and then—— Oh, Captain Grant, you men don't know the fuss it is to get one's ball-dresses ready, or to keep them in repair or to make new ones. If only we could have dress-coats like yours!"

"You would not look so——" He altered the sentence to "Our costume is always getting abused. I am glad to think ladies have not yet taken to them," and then the Captain laughed heartily; but Beatrice was in earnest.

"I do not mean that quite; but some girls just order their dresses and have done with them; but we are so poor, it seems always a fuss and a bother to keep up an appearance."

What would Minnie have said could she have heard Bee at this moment? The Captain, on the contrary, was thinking that one of the Miss Gordons at least could speak the truth. He had found that out before, and it was this that had made him single out the youngest sister.

"Couldn't you get a dress that would last the season, some good, strong stuff that wouldn't tear," he said, smiling; "or am I asking a very ignorant question?"

"Oh, yes, dreadfully ignorant; Minnie says a girl is thought so little of if she wears a dress more than twice at balls. And then suppose we lost our money, what could we do but make dresses, and that would be falling so low, Minnie thinks; besides, mother would not like it. But that is all we are fit for."

"But I hope such a misfortune is not likely to overtake you?" for Beatrice had spoken so earnestly, that Captain Grant began to fear this trouble had already overtaken the Gordon family.

"I don't know anything of money matters; but mother is away just now on business, and she and Frances looked so troubled about something, I think it must be that."

"And you have been trying to solve an imaginary difficulty."

"I couldn't live on other people, and there are so many girls who work for their bread, and why should not I, only I am more ignorant than most girls?"

Beatrice felt dreadfully childish, as if she were saying the most unladylike thing all this time, so that she could have cried with vexation; but the only comfort was that happily Minnie was not by her side! The next remark from Captain Grant surprised her so much, however, that she felt her colour rising.

"Perhaps, before all these misfortunes happen, you will have found a different home."

"Oh, no; perhaps Minnie will be married; but I am not clever nor pretty, at least"—she would be true—"not as pretty as Minnie."

"But suppose, Miss Beatrice, some one told you that he did not care for money or beauty, cared only for a woman who could be true, and who could learn to love him as he loved her, and yet that, rather than marry a woman who was shallow and cared for admiration and riches above everything else, he would remain single all his life. Could you say 'Yes' to such a man, even though he was very ignorant about the modern fashion of courtship and of making fine speeches?"

They were approaching the village; but there was a field-path just where they stood, leading to the church, situated a little way from the cottages. Beatrice instinctively opened the gate into the lane and walked on. She wanted to be out of sight of every one, because at this moment she had found out that "after all" it was not Minnie "but herself." Yet she could not bear to answer his question till she had thought it out for a few minutes. Captain Grant could not see her face, but followed her in silence. It was certainly a curious manner of receiving an offer, and what was still more curious was that when, as they neared the end of the lonely path, Beatrice turned round, not flushed now but quite pale, almost trembling. She held her hands tightly clasped in her muff, and stood a few steps away from the Captain, so that she could look straight into his face.

"Do you mean, Captain Grant, that you intend that question for me?"

"Yes," he said, speaking decidedly, "I do." He might have been standing in a witness-box, so straightforward was he.

"Only you do not know me enough, for I don't think that I am the girl you would wish to be your wife. We have been brought up as ladies, but ladies who can do nothing but make their own dresses, and there must be many other things necessary for your wife."

"Why mine more than any other man's wife?"

"Because you are so good," said Beatrice, in despair of making him understand. "You don't care about stupid things as other men do. I know you do not; I knew it when I first saw you, and since then I have felt we are not—I mean that I am not—what you expect a woman to be."

"You mean that you could not love me above everything else—you cannot love me as I love you."

"Yes, I could," said Beatrice, hiding her face in her muff, "I could; but that is the very reason why you mustn't think of me in that way."

He drew her muff gently down from her face, and kept it and the small hands inside it clasped in his own, with a firm grasp of possession, as he said:

"Beatrice, will you try me? Will you tell me truthfully if, some day, I am capable of possessing your whole heart? I will not blame you if you decide otherwise, I shall know you are dealing truly with me, and saving us both a long life of misery if we cannot enjoy a long, long life of happiness."

This was very unlike her idea of an offer, so much grander, so much wiser, so much truer, that Bee felt no longer a foolish, commonplace young lady, but a creature worthy of being placed on her trial for better or for worse.

"And will you let me see if I can become any wiser, any better for you? I could not bear to disappoint you, and we know each other so little," she said, rather sadly.

He smiled. "How shall we manage to learn to know each other?"

"Please say nothing more about that now. It is quite enough happiness to know that you care."

"Will that be truthful if we both care?"

"Please, please let it be so, because—— No, I cannot tell you; but I want you to think a long, long time about it, and also to become quite, quite sure," she answered.

"As you think best, Beatrice. I will trust you now and always."

UP THE RIVER IN FLOOD-TIME.

FATHER THAMES is by no means a floody river, and dwellers by his banks have not often to complain of capricious conduct on his part. Witness for him the poets of other days:

> No unexpected inundations spoil
> The mower's hopes, nor mock the ploughman's toil,

as "majestic Denham" sings; or again in the well-known line,

> Strong without rage, without o'erflowing full.

As for winter floods, and freshets in spring, they are to be reckoned rather as benefits bestowed by the river god, freshening up the pastures and giving fertility to the meadows, "o'er which," again to quote the majestic old poet:

> O'er which he kindly spreads his spacious wing,
> And hatches plenty for th' ensuing spring.

The really destructive and disastrous floods which at times spread distress and misery among the inhabitants of the low-lying districts about London, and which call so imperatively for further works of embankment, are not to be placed to the account of the river, but are, in fact, invasions of the ocean, which with an exceptionally high tide may do an immense deal of damage, while the river itself may be perfectly quiescent in the matter.

But at an exceptional season when long-continued rains have filled to the brim every rut and brook, and caused the quietest streams to burst their bounds, our river is a noble sight as it comes down in full majestic volume. With a high spring tide and an equinoctial gale to pile up the waters at the river's mouth, and such a banker as this in the way of flood water, there might be a tale of a flood which would throw other records into the shade. But happily the two first conditions are wanting, and except for the strength of the downward current and the brown earthy colour of the water, there is nothing to call special attention to the river as it whirls past the palaces and towers of Westminster and London. Chelsea fields are in no danger of inundation, and Chiswick meadows still rise well above the stream, and Kew and Richmond are in no danger of an overflow. We must travel higher up the river to appreciate the full force of the autumnal torrent.

By good luck a day opens out fine, snatched from clouds and tempests. Pleasant sunshine lights up the suburban groves, and plays upon the dishevelled orchards, and in the broad fields where yellow marrows lie piled in disregarded heaps, while huge entrenchments of seakale and celery give a faint perfume to the air suggestive of Christmas banquets in immediate prospect, and of the walnuts and wine of the festive season.

From these lowly fields the contrast is great as we come to the lordly avenues of Bushey Park. The gales have wrought some mischief among the ancient trees, and one or two noble trunks are lying prostrate on the sward; but they have not yet stripped the fine chestnut avenue, which is all ablaze with gold, from the reddest to the palest yellow.

Past the walls of Hampton Court, and across the green with its handsome old red-brick structures pleasantly illuminated by the sunshine, we soon come to the bridge—that ugly iron bridge which is so out of keeping with its surroundings. But here the old river is coming along with a whizz, the waters darting under the arch with a mighty swirl, and rising angrily at pier or buttress or outlying pile. And here the river has risen over trim gardens, and eddies and shallows encompass raised flower-beds still ablaze with colour, here a Mount St. Michel of geraniums, and there a sunny isle all glowing with chrysanthemums. The gravel paths are now so many watercourses, eels may wriggle into the wine-cellar, and swans peer in at the larder window. Half-way up the trim sloping lawn the brown flood is still creeping on; the rustic seat where lovers discoursed not long ago, is up to its middle in water.

Coming to Moulsey Lock, the river is seen in still greater force; a whirl of angry waters shows where the weir should be, but there is no fall to speak of, for the flood has obliterated all distinctions of level, and the lock might be thrown open without any effect upon the river's majestic march. Higher up there is nothing to show for the island but the trees, the branches of which are battling with the current and catching stray wisps of floating drift as it hurries by. Notice-boards, too, have a comical appearance, rising forlornly out of the stream, assuring the world that the vanished isle is private property, and prohibiting landing—in two feet of water.

Still higher in the back-water we come upon a whole street of house-boats, some of which are still inhabited, and with gay flowers still blooming, and curtains and hangings, give touches of summer-like gaiety to the reflections of the brown and turbid waters. Here is actually an adventurous crew of Amazons who have ventured forth upon the treacherous tide, perhaps under the stern necessity of exhausted supplies, and who are pulling back to their floating home with a skill and vigour which would entitle them to the freedom of the Watermen's Company, were female members allowed. Further on, the tow-path itself has disappeared beneath the waves, and an excursion through a gap in a hedge seems advisable; but even if the terrors of threatening notice-boards be braved, there is the more palpable danger of wire fencing all stuck over with sharp points. Your riparian proprietor would rather see anybody drowning than getting over his fence, and so there is a scramble across as best you can, till terra firma is reached again.

This experience of the tow-path suggests to us that the highway on the other side of the river might afford a better way of getting along, especially as this side of the river is closely barricaded with the palings of Hurst Park Racecourse, neatly garnished with spikes and prickly things in general. Here by good luck is Hampton Ferry.

> O'er the brown wave, a tiny sail appears.

It is the ferry-boat, which is running the gauntlet of the flood, with a lady on board and a fox-terrier. They spring ashore—the dog received in a hostile manner by the dogs on this side of the water—and the ferry-boat returns with another fare. There is wonderful skill about that ferryman; he has an assistant who does all the pulling with one oar, while the ferryman leans on his, and by judicious jibes, admonitions, and exhortations, so contrives to take it out of the other man, that we arrive safe, but exhausted—as far as the assistant is concerned—at the landing-stage. Here, sitting snugly in the lee of a shed, and anchored to some piles, are three men in a punt, engaged in fishing. One would think that the fish were all washed out of their holes, and too much bothered and worried to think about nibbling at a bait, even if they could see it. Still, the resources of the craft are inexhaustible, and perhaps these wily fishermen know of a place where the fishes all go when they are flooded out of their homes.

It is not everybody who knows Hampton, whose fame is obscured by its illustrious offshoot at Hampton Court; but it is a pleasant little settlement, although just now almost overwhelmed with dead leaves, and the trailing shoots of creepers. But it is high and dry above the river, and a deluge that would get Hampton under water would be almost Noachian in its proportions. But the highway after leaving Hampton dips into the flat, and again the river comes crankling in, filling up the ditches, and squirting through the drains, and showing in ominous patches by the roadside. Here are old water-courses opened out anew, meadows converted into islands, and a haystack perilously near the water-level suggests how exciting would be the sight were it solemnly to float away and begin a journey down the river.

Our forefathers, it seems, had some skill in planting villages and towns, if they did not look out for views and picturesque bits, and so we find Sunbury well out of the flood, with its shops and inns, and High Street, not concerning itself much about the river, it seems, although people look out of their back windows and exclaim that the water is still rising. But beyond Sunbury the road is under water at places, although the thoughtful provision of an extinct race of vestrymen has established raised pathways, which keep the pedestrian out of the floods. There is a wooden bridge high above a tributary stream which one would hardly notice in ordinary times, but which is now a brimming river, deep enough to drown you, and strong enough to carry your body away and deposit it somewhere in the ooze and slime of the river bed as a geological specimen for future ages. The crossing is called Hoo Bridge; but whether the river is the Hoo, or whether it has a name at all, or any history belonging to it, is more than we can tell.

Now we take the road that turns toward the river again and to Walton Bridge. And here, on the margin of the sloppy road, is the cart of a travelling tinker, with a lot of little ragged urchins paddling about in the mud, and materfamilias visible in the distance filling her pail at one of the brimming water-courses. But the shafts of the cart are turned towards London, and soon some court in Whitechapel or Bethnal Green may receive the wandering tribe. For the storms and rains that are stripping the trees and raising the floods, are driving the race of wandering performers of all kinds to their winter quarters sooner than usual.

Here we are standing upon Walton Bridge, which is a long, rambling structure, half iron and half stone, which, in a general way, stretches over a good deal of land as well as water, but which now barely succeeds in crossing what seems a wide lagoon, with distant shores.

And a pleasant view it is that stretches before us from the parapet of Walton Bridge. A broad, swollen mere, with green islands rising here and there, is bounded by gentle heights clothed in all the rich tints of autumnal woodlands. Through all this plunges the main channel of the river, rushing with tremendous force under the bridge, while the trunk of a tree, balanced against one of the protecting piles, swings to and fro with the force of the current that rises over it with an angry rush. Scattered among the waters of the lake, huts, summer-houses, boat-houses, show, half submerged, with rustic bridges over water-courses where now all is water. But the most exciting sight of all is of a huge barge, which a team of powerful horses are dragging up against the stream. The horses themselves seem to be splashing through the middle of the lake; but the line of the tow-path is just to be made out by the posts that rise here and there out of the flood. How they strain, those horses; and how the stream curls over the bluff bows of the barge! At the corner, where the channel turns, and the barge receives the full impact of the torrent, it seems even doubtful for a moment whether horses or river will prevail. If the barge goes, won't the bridge go too, for what could withstand the impact of that rude mass? If the bridge goes, we should go. So that the question becomes one of strong personal interest as the horses tug and strain, and the drivers shout, and the rope tightens perilously, and the old barge rolls and sways to the current. But the corner is rounded at last, and the tension of the moment is relaxed.

Walton Bridge is not at all the lonely place one might expect, little known as it is to fame. A good many people come riding this way, some with the military swing of the "vieux sabreur,"

> Captain or colonel, or knight-at-arms.

Phaetons, and pony-gigs, and the stately landau, come rattling over the bridge, which is the avenue to a pleasant and peopled region abounding in villas and mansions. But our way lies not in that direction, but along the shores of the present mere, where were green meadows a week ago; and so we proceed towards Halliford, which is one of the pleasantest nooks in this part of the river, for here is one of the finest curves imaginable, where the river, confined in narrow limits, fairly boils and seethes as its waters whirl round. And above we have a glimpse of the valley and shallow meres, marshes, and winding water-courses, just as the great Julius might have seen it when the eye of civilisation first rested on the lovely vale, now for one brief space restored to its ancient condition. Here, if anywhere, it must have been that Cæsar crossed the Thames, the legionaries wading through breast-high, and dispersing the natives who awaited them on the higher ground. The name of the hamlet implies an ancient ford, although none may exist at present, the channel of the river having probably changed more than once since those days remote, in its progress across the lake-like valley. The name, too, seems to have signified the Holy Ford, whether as leading to the abbey of Chertsey, venerated by the Saxon race, or in memory of some great baptism, when the heathen were converted wholesale into Christians by some saintly Augustine or Paulinus.

However that may be, here in the roadway is a peremptory notice from the lords of the manor of Halliford, that none shall erect stages or lodge their caravans on the waste of this manor, which looks as if the place were the scene of some popular observance, dating—who knows?—from the baptismal day above mentioned. But a pretty village, anyhow, is Halliford, with its screen of lovely foliage boldly commanding the river. The river, further on, seems disposed to dispute possession of the wastes of the manor with its lords; and here it is washing over the highway, while a flock of swans, and foreign geese as big as swans, are splashing, and ducking, and enjoying themselves, and seem a good deal more at home than the horses, who come splashing through, and seem to mistrust the whole affair, or than the ladies in their little pony-gig, who tuck themselves up so carefully, to be out of the reach of Father Thames his floods.

But here is a return fly to the station that will ferry us across dryshod; and so adieu to a bright and sunny, albeit watery, scene.

LIVING IN BOXES.

THERE is a proverbial saying, which always seems to bear with it a certain smack of constitutional law, to the effect that an Englishman's house is his castle. Castles in the good old days were—or at least were reputed to be—hard to get into, a characteristic which the house of the contemporary Englishman, according to the reports from the suburbs which alarm us every year at the beginning of the burglary season, does not share. On the other hand, it is sometimes rather difficult to get out of, that is, if the luckless tenant has been weak enough to sign an agreement, judiciously worded from the landlord's point of view, in the matter of structural repairs and drainage. However well an Englishman's house may have suited him, the approaching expiration of the lease always has a tendency to make him restless. Sometimes it happens to coincide with the exodus of old friends from the neighbourhood, or with the opening of a new tramway line, with its everlasting tinkling bells down the road; or of a Salvation Army barracks round the corner. Then doubts arise as to whether it will be wise to sign a new agreement, and more often than not a move is decided upon, in spite of the legendary horrors of such an incident. But if, in addition to the above-named mischances, there should have supervened a period of chronic unrest in the kitchen, alcoholic outbreaks and superfluous and distasteful "sauce" on the part of the cook, and flat rebellion from the kitchen-maid with regard to bell-answering and coal-carrying, coupled with the discovery of overcharge and underweight in the system of business pursued by the local purveyors, there will very likely be manifested a disposition to break for a time with housekeeping altogether; supposing, of course, that the particular family with which we are concerned is so circumstanced that it is free to go whithersoever it may elect, that the exigencies of bread-winning do not demand that paterfamilias should every morning eat his breakfast within an hour's journey of his place of business. In spite of the traditional attachment of English people to their homes, the prospect of a spell of life unfettered by household cares, is to many very alluring. With some, pleasant memories of the "Beau Rivage" here, and of the "Belle Vue" there, accumulated during divers summer trips on the Continent, arise and plead powerfully for a repetition of the experience. Others, who have never seen these glories, have read much about them, and have listened with envy to the accounts told by their more fortunate friends; and when the time comes when they are free to go where they list, they determine to follow suit. They have been told by their friends of the ridiculously cheap rate at which one may live during the off season at palatial establishments on the marge of some Swiss or Italian lake—half what it costs them in their stuffy suburban street, and no trouble—so, wearied by the cares of unsatisfactory tradesmen and the deceitfulness of servants, they determine to sell or store their furniture, and make trial of a spell of life in boxes. The trunks are packed and off they go.

As it has been before remarked, it is not every family that is able, or unanimous enough in its desires to embark upon an experiment of this sort. The family most prone to it will be found to be the widow lady with two or more mature daughters, or unmarried sisters who have hitherto kept house together. Where there is a male head of the family the business is not so easily arranged. He is very likely to revolt at the prospect of a couple of years of table-d'hôte dinners, and of public drawing-room conversation. He has a notion, moreover, that the men he will meet will be few, and of a not very satisfactory class; that his newspaper will be at least a day old when he gets it; and that, however obnoxious any particular place may prove to his taste, or his temper, or his health, he will be bound to stop on there, otherwise there will be an end of the economy which was to be the leading advantage of the new system. He is slow to recognise its much vaunted excellencies; but for this there is a reason. He knows nothing of that half-hour's interview every morning with the cook, of her utter want of original ideas in the matter of soup, and of the daily perplexity as to what the pudding shall be. These details, and the thousand and one other petty cares which the management of the simplest household involves, fall heavily upon his wife; therefore, to her the prospect of deliverance shines more seductively than it does to him. This fact, no doubt, goes far to explain how it is that, of the people one meets living in boxes, ladies form such a large majority.

The first half-year generally finds the adventurers well satisfied with the new order of things. The freedom from daily duty never seems so sweet as in that early time. The worries of home are yet fresh in mind, and serve to heighten the enjoyment of a life in which breakfast, lunch, and dinner come round every day without taking thought of them, like the quails and manna in the wilderness. Our travellers have not yet learnt that wearisome iteration is possible in the longest menu, and the days of distasteful dishes come round just as surely as the resurrection-pie days and the rice-pudding days recurred at school. The society of the drawing-room is also an agreeable change —at first—by reason of the contrast it presents to the society of a London suburb, or a small country town. It is true the clique flourishes, and bores abound, but the phase of life free from these delights is yet to be discovered. There are the people who fancy themselves and the people—a little less attractive, as a rule, these latter—who fancy you, and life is saved from anything like stagnation through the never-ceasing struggle to be taken up by the former, and to avoid taking up the latter. The talk is invariably of the most trivial character, and rarely errs through an excess of charity; but it is not on this account always distasteful to the neophyte.

But there will almost certainly come a day when a feeling of weariness will set in, which the perusal of the most pompously worded menu, and the discourse of the lady with the rasping voice — there is always one of this sort in the drawing-room—will only serve to deepen. The peculiarities of this and that fellow wanderer, which at first served to amuse, now become insupportable. Relations with the manager become strained on account of his omission to give a sunny room at the first opportunity, and his persistent overcharge for certain items which were to have been comprised in the pension, till at last, after much calculation, it is decided to ignore economy for a bit, and move on to some other haunt of the same kind offering superior advantages. The first few weeks of the change are almost invariably grateful; but the new installation will know nothing of the rapture of deliverance from the burden of housekeeping which marked the original one. Day follows day, the weak points of the new resting-place gradually come to light; the discovery is made that, after all, it strongly resembles the last one, and at last, in its turn, it is forsaken, and the camp again struck for reasons as before stated.

With every fresh move our adventurers bring into play the growing experience which they have accumulated during their nomad life. They know the earliest date at which summer hotels will take them in on winter terms, and swoop down accordingly, so as to enjoy a little bit of the fag end of the season, and then before the luggage is taken up the rooms are always inspected, and, as a rule, the price is knocked down. The pruning-knife is applied to the question of lights and service, and a bottle of ordinaire per diem is sometimes squeezed into the arrangement. The landlord, as he concludes the bargain, is apt to wonder what can have become of all the rich money-scattering English who used to range the Continent in his grandfather's time. Old campaigners keep a sharp look-out for the opening of new hotels and pensions. They have a fancy for testing the excellencies of these while the bloom is still on the furniture and appointments, while the table is kept at that preliminary standard of perfection which will so surely wane as soon as ever the house shall be full, and while the new broom generally is in going order. They also carefully catalogue merits and shortcomings of all the landlords and hotel managers of whom they have experience, and no small part of their drawing-room conversation with others in similar case is made up of imparting this experience of their own, and imbibing fresh facts concerning fields yet untried in return. And the landlords no doubt keep a sort of character register of their guests, in which such entries as the following might very well be found:

"General and Mrs. MacNab.—Large appetites; have a way of abusing the hotel to new-comers, and carrying off the English newspapers to their bedroom. Good pay, but give a lot of trouble and do not fee the servants. Mrs. and the Misses Percy Robinson.—Rather quarrelsome with the other guests, and always want to sing hymns in the public drawing-room on Sunday evenings. Don't take wine, but seem to drink whisky—which they buy of the English grocer—in their bedrooms."

The end of the second year's wandering usually brings a crisis. Either the spirit of citizenship reasserts itself, and the vagrants return to British respectability and the ownership of a houseful of furniture and the payment of rates and taxes, having found as much loss as profit in their new scheme of life, or the Bohemian tendency gets permanently the upper hand, and the horde of vagabond English is recruited by another family.

With regard to the saving of money, and making a limited income do its utmost, no doubt the Bohemian has the best of it; but there are heavy items to be written on the other side of the account. The adoption of this easy-going, unfettered line of life means the shirking of many obligations which, though they may seem commonplace and trivial enough at a first glance, are of no mean importance as a discipline. The troubles which people shake off when they take to living in boxes will be found to consist very largely of duties, and a life void of duty is certainly not a wholesome one. Many years ago the battle of parliamentary reform was fought over the body of the "compound householder." Not a few citizens then heard of the existence of this person for the first time, and were informed that he was a tenant who lived in a house in respect of which the landlord paid the rates and added them to the rent. The controversy turned on the question as to whether a person who abnegated the direct responsibilities of a ratepayer was to be allowed the parliamentary suffrage. We all know that the compound householder won, and has since called within the charmed circle of the franchise other multitudes who are even less concerned than himself with rates and their payment; but I recall the fact to demonstrate how strong a feeling there was in the air that the genuine payment of rates went far to make the capable citizen, that the shirking of a duty, even though it was only nominal, should not in any way be scored to a man's credit. If the compound householder had been disfranchised for his offence, what social penalty would have rightly been inflicted on our wanderers in boxes? They have evaded all the duties of citizenship, and, in addition, they spend their incomes amongst foreigners instead of spending it at home. They do not, moreover, in their own individualities, escape the evil effects of their changed method of life. A comparison between the present condition of the Browns, who renewed their lease and stopped on in Westbourne Park, and the Robinsons—once just such another family—who at the same time gave up their house and took to living in boxes, will not be found to be to the advantage of the latter, and will explain my contention. The Browns there is no need to describe in detail. They are nothing more nor less than fair representatives of that great sober middle class, which used, once upon a time, to be a ruling force in English national life. Brown, now retired from business, spends a good part of the morning over his newspaper, and in the afternoon takes his flagstone constitutional, wet or dry; as, even in retirement, there are lingering reminiscences of the theory in the household that the house should be left to the women-folk for a part of the day. Mrs. Brown, now as ever, finds ample occupation in her duties of the exchequer, and the girls, besides supplying the decorative element in the establishment, do a good turn of district visiting, and are great at bazaars and at concerts for the people. All of this trivial round the Robinsons have cast behind them, and when I met them last it certainly struck me that they were not improved by the new method of spending their days which they had taken up. It is to be presumed that they find a charm in their never-ending migration from one hotel to another; but it is to be doubted whether they are happier than the Browns. In former days Mrs. Robinson's conversation—like Mrs. Brown's at present—took over much of its colour from the varying price of household necessaries, and the misconduct of her servants; but it was certainly more wholesome, and almost as amusing as her present somewhat highly-flavoured discourse anent the eccentricities—chiefly matrimonial—of her hotel acquaintance; and in her former life in Westbourne Park, even though her trust in human nature might have been almost wrecked by the chronic mendacity and deceitfulness of cooks and parlour-maids, and by irregularities in tradesmen's books—always a little wrong in the tradesmen's favour—she could hardly have had experience of a seamier side of society than the one in which she now lives and moves. The Robinson girls were always looked upon as something above the average, good-natured and fairly intelligent, but now no one, after listening for five minutes to their discourse about the people with whom they foregather, would say that good-nature is one of their strong points; and, if they have gathered any fresh store of intelligence, this increase has come about by the sharpening of their wits over themes which they might well have left alone. They will have picked up chance acquaintances by the score, but probably not one real friend, and not half-a-dozen who can give a fixed address. Amongst these there will almost certainly be a sprinkling of ladies whose husbands are vaguely stated to be in India, or railway engineering in Asia Minor, or gone to look at cattle ranches in the Far West of America; to say nothing of dubious bucks who talk largely of their social doings in London during the season, without ever venturing to approach the metropolis. With such people as these their leisure hours—and there are many of them between sunrise and sunset — are spent; hours which, in their prosy, well-kept home, were filled by a round of duty which at least did no harm to anybody. Now, living in boxes, all this is changed. Everything is done for them; their hands are very often idle; and it is to be feared that congenial work is too often found for them by a well-known old-established employment agency of somewhat sinister reputation.

MY FRIEND THE THIEF.

A STORY IN THREE CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER III.

When I landed again there was once more no one to meet me. I climbed the cliff to Leonard's cottage and knocked at the door. He opened it and came out.

"I see," he said, "that you have had no luck."

I had had no luck and no food, but of that I said nothing. It was enough that I had missed the vessel, and I saw in the face of the man before me the recklessness that comes of despair.

"I knew," he said, "that you would have been back before if you had got help."

"And Lloyd?"

"He has not come; nor Brown. No one has come. I have only been waiting till you got back."

"What to do?"

"To go to Matthew Law. I have had enough of it. Stop here with Gwendoline while I am away."

I was startled at this, and I begged him to do nothing rash.

"It will only make matters worse," I said. "Wait a bit and I will come with you." I sank exhausted on the ground as I spoke, for I had come to an end of my strength. He looked at me without apparent sympathy, but with quick apprehension.

"You're starving," he remarked. "I didn't think of that before."

He went indoors and brought out a piece of coarse cake, and when I pushed it away, he said:

"You needn't scruple. She can't touch this sort of thing. It's very little that she wants—if only those fellows would give her their share of the best. This is good enough for them and me." As I still hesitated, he added: "You'll be no good to us without food."

I recognised the truth of this, so I ate and was refreshed. Then he asked if I would go in and see his wife.

I did as he asked me; but when I saw the pale, worn face, and heard the sweet, faint voice of the woman I had known so full of radiant beauty, I sat down by her bedside and hid my face in my hands. I suppose it was hunger and weakness that made me so foolish. Leonard did not remonstrate, and when I lifted my head again he was not there.

But Gwendoline talked to me, with a strange sort of weary hopefulness. Leonard was too anxious, she said; she had all she needed and would soon be well again.

"If he can only be persuaded to be quiet," she murmured; and then she asked, with a sudden anxiety: "Where has he gone now?"

"Perhaps to get rations. If you like I will go after him."

I followed him across the bridge to the settlement; but I arrived too late to prevent the mischief that was being done there. I found my friend in the custody of two tramps—so I always thought of them—and with Matthew Law standing in righteous indignation before him.

"What's the matter?" I asked, as quietly as I could.

"He has been stealing," answered Matthew Law; "he has broken into the public stores with an axe, and was making off with food."

"Well," I said, "under the circumstances, I think——"

"You are a stranger here," said Matthew Law, "and have no right to interfere. He helped to make the laws himself, and he's got to keep them, or bear the penalty."

"What is the penalty?"

"To be locked up until we can call a general meeting and decide how to deal with him."

"It's true," said Leonard; "I've been a great fool—as always. But I didn't think these fellows had the pluck to touch me."

"I was bred for a prize-fighter," said one of the tramps, with a grin that was not ill-natured. I noticed as I looked at him that he had a black eye, and was otherwise considerably damaged by his struggle with Leonard. "The law stood in the way of my getting an honest living, so I took to the road till you brought me here."

"I was a fool," Leonard repeated.

"Look here," I remarked, as amicably as I could, to Matthew Law, "it's no use bothering about the law just now. His wife's ill and you must let him go."

"Has that ever been a reason for letting a criminal go—that his wife is ill?" asked Matthew, doggedly. "Send one of the women to her."

"Go to her yourself, that's a good fellow," said Leonard; "and don't let her know what has happened."

For one moment I looked at the three men whom I now regarded as our natural enemies, the muscular tramps and the plausible orator, all idlers and parasitic alike, but I decided that to attack them would be useless. The prize-fighter alone would be too much for me. I should only get myself put into custody with Leonard. I decided to go back to Gwendoline.

I told her that Leonard would return later; that he had been unable to get the rations he desired, but a general meeting would be called directly, and probably they would be voted to him. This also I tried to believe. In the meantime I began to prepare some food from the miserable materials at my disposal. I had scarcely begun before the door opened and Leonard walked in. He had removed all traces of the recent struggle from his face and clothes, and he carried a dead bird in his hand. Gwendoline uttered a cry of pleased surprise.

"Oh," she said, "have you given up the meeting?"

"The meeting," said Leonard, quietly, "will take place later. As I had the fowl I thought you had better not be kept waiting for it." He gave a glance at me which I can only describe as controlling.

"It was wise of you," I muttered.

"But you might," he said to me, with tranquil reproachfulness, "have had some water and a pan ready for me. You knew I had gone to get something to cook."

"The water is there, and the pan," I replied, briefly. Then I left them, feeling that now my place and my use would be outside.

I found, however, that the place I meant to take was already occupied. Joe Brown stood there still and silent as a statue, as if, in fact, he had grown there and never been anywhere else. At his feet was a bundle which had been wrapped in an immense red handkerchief; it was open now, and I readily guessed that the fowl had been taken out of it. He lifted his head and looked at me.

"Will she get better, do you think?" he asked.

"Now you have brought her food," I answered, "I suppose she will."

For a few moments neither of us spoke again. Then I asked:

"What are you waiting here for?"

And he answered, looking me full in the face:

"For the same reason as you."

"Do you know what he has done?" I said, nodding to the cottage to indicate Leonard.

"Stolen food for his sick wife and been clapped in prison for it. Broken out afterwards, and half killed a man in getting away."

This last piece of information was new to me.

"Did he tell you?" I asked.

"I met him here," he answered, "and he told me, and I gave him the fowl."

"What are we to do now?" I went on, just to get at his fuller mind.

"You can please yourself," he replied, gruffly; "I mean to stop here and keep the others off, if they are fools enough to come."

I had heard enough to satisfy me, and I asked no more questions, but began to look into our position for myself.

We stood at a little distance from the cottage, at the edge of the gully which dropped steeply and darkly between it and the enclosure where the other dwellings stood. It was crossed by a wooden bridge. Without this bridge a difficult climb down and up would be necessary to reach the cottage from the other side. We both looked at the plank, which we felt was our strong point of defence; but we said nothing, and before we spoke again, Leonard came out to us. I noticed at once that he had a pistol in his hand. He walked to the spot where we stood, looked at the bridge, and remarked:

"I wish you would run round, one of you, and get me a saw."

"You needn't bother," I answered, "we'll do it for you."

"It's all right out here," said Brown; "you'd better go back to your wife. Hand me over that pistol first."

Leonard hesitated.

"I'll use it," said Brown. "You need not be afraid I won't. I'll shoot one, two, three of them if they won't take warning and stop on the other side," he ended, grimly. I looked at him with interest, for I knew that he had joined the community on the condition that capital punishment should be abolished at once and for ever. Leonard gave him the weapon and went indoors.

We loosed the plank on the further side, and sawed it across on the nearer, where it was more firmly fastened. Then we drew it up the bank. We made haste at our work, but haste was not necessary, for no one came to interfere with us.

As we looked across the ravine to the settlement, we saw no sign of any public meeting. All things were quiet, and again the place seemed deserted as when I came to it. We heard the splash of the little stream among the rocks far below us; and on the beach the sea began to moan as if the trouble of the land had at last reached it. There seemed some hopefulness in the sound, for it had for many days stretched about the place in a shining calm, shutting the people in with their own despair.

For some hours, however, the air had been cooler. Clouds had gathered and promised rain, but no rain had fallen. Now in the greyness that followed the sunset, before the rising of the moon, I seemed to feel the certainty of change, and to see the end of the long drought. But it would come too late to save Leonard's settlement. If he could save his wife it would be enough, and he would be content to go back to the old world and the old laws, there to struggle for himself and her. He had nothing left except his own strength wherewith to resist the world or to help it.

I had a strange talk with Joe Brown as we sat there, and the hours went on, so that a feeling of security grew upon us. He told me many things of himself, his life, and his opinions, which I have never forgotten. He was only a workman, with a gift of rugged utterance, but he had gone through sad experiences, and these had left him at the end of his life alone, and with a strange indifference to his own fate.

"It's the sins of others as she's suffering for," he said, with a nod of his head towards the cottage. "Talk of equal shares, indeed! If she'd had only half her own divided share of what she and her husband brought here, there'd have been plenty for her now. But others have wasted, and so she must starve. We can't be equal in folly and idleness; but we've got to be equal — it seems we agreed to that—in what comes of them. Nay, we're not equal there even, for others have kept out of the trouble that she went into, and so they're well while she's sick. It isn't equality, this isn't; it's the best suffering for the worst. I reckon it is so mostly in life, but I can't see my way to giving a hand to keeping it on. I'm not here for equality, I'm not. I'm here to help those who mean well and try hard, and think of others as well as themselves. Matthew Law and his regulations won't get no obedience out o' me, now he's thrown over them as did most for us."

The moon had risen now, and was fighting its way through the clouds; from a gap the Southern Cross shone clear upon us, and there was a silvery patch growing wider on the darkness of the sea. I laid my hand on Brown's arm and pointed, for the white sails of a yacht had caught the gleam, and I could see that she was rounding a point towards us.

Neither of us spoke. We waited silently to see what help was coming. When the yacht cast anchor and a boat was put off I rose and scrambled down to the shore alone, while Brown kept watch by the cottage.

It was Harry Lloyd who was the first to spring out of the boat to meet me.

"I have had delay and bad luck; but I came across friends at last, and I have brought food for a time—but it is for the women and children and sick only; that is the condition. The men must look to themselves."

"Put your stores on shore," I answered, "Brown and I will see to them afterwards. But Gwendoline and Leonard must go away if your friends will take them."

There was no difficulty in carrying out this arrangement. Lloyd helped us to take Gwendoline down to the boat, and neither she nor her husband made any objection to the abandonment of the settlement. Leonard, indeed, could think only of her, and she was obedient to his wishes. I promised to undertake Leonard's responsibilities to the community, in order that the helpless ones might not be abandoned to the tender mercies of Matthew Law and his friends, and I entered upon the task with a good deal of interest. I had Brown to help me, and Lloyd would have stayed also if I had desired it; but we thought this unnecessary.

So we said good-bye to the two who had brought us here, and who took back with them only shattered dreams and broken fortunes. The yacht sailed away like a vision of the night woven out of moonlight and sea; but it left in our hands very substantial stores, and in our hearts a great relief. Our watch was over now, so we ate a good supper and then turned into the cottage to rest.

In the morning we went across to the settlement. We found our task there simpler than we had expected. Matthew Law had disappeared the night before, and two of the tramps with him. A third one, wounded by Leonard, was now in hospital. Law had helped himself to a sufficiency of stores and started up country, preferring this measure to a continued struggle with us.

Those who were left behind were the helpless and disheartened. They opposed nothing that we suggested, and received with thankfulness the food we brought them.

Having now all in our hands, we did the best that we could for all. Under the influence of cooler weather and better food the sick got strong and the tramp recovered from his wounds. I hope he is using, somewhere or other, the strength which came back to him, and not wasting it on a doorstep or by a roadside. The day after Leonard left us the rains fell, the watercourses filled themselves once more, so that, with a very little effort, we flushed the drains and cleared them. When the sick were well I called the community together, and offered to take them away on the vessel which Lloyd had promised to send for them, and which must now arrive very soon; or to stay and begin again with any who were willing. I told them that though they were poor the land was their own. They had discovered by experience what was the average harvest to be got from it, and if we lived below the average the good years would make up for the bad, and we should have no famine. They would have to work harder and fare harder than hitherto, but they had their buildings and their tools; no man could meddle with them; and the troubles of one would be the troubles of all. I was inclined to make the attempt; and I put the matter as favourably as I could.

"Nay," said Briggs's wife, "I'd raything be wheer we shouldn't all be i' trouble at wanst; there was workus and parish relief wheer I coom fra', if there was nowt better, and yo' could get t' doctor when yo' wur sick."

Her opinion was echoed by the rest.

So I helped the community to get away, and it was dispersed, Joe Brown alone having expressed a willingness to remain with me.

Lloyd declares that the failure of Leonard's experiment was inevitable. "The human race can no longer get on without specialists," so he is pleased to say; "and special developements require special conditions. A level equality is incompatible with these."

Whether he is right or not I cannot say. Leonard always refuses to argue the question with him. Gwendoline recovered, but she has not a very easy life. Leonard works hard in an ugly provincial town, and I am afraid they are very poor. But they never complain, and it is always a pleasure to me to spend a night in their shabby little house whenever my wanderings take me near it.

THE FRENCH FRONTIER.

It is impossible for the visitor to any of the chief eastern or north-eastern frontier towns of France not to mark, with a sort of admiration, the energy with which French engineers are striving to render the forts entrusted to them as nearly impregnable as such things can be. Very interesting, too, is the zeal displayed by the instructors of the younger soldiers of France. One sees these lively, red-legged lads hard at exercise on every open space contiguous to their barracks. It is either muscular drill—a comical series of bodily contortions, or marching, skirmishing, running, or the more ordinary motions of troops under arms. But whatever it is, an attractive enthusiasm pervades the men. They may not be as straight in line as a German regiment on a similar occasion. Discipline, too, is likely to be a trifle laxer. But if one may judge from appearances, these French youths would, at their country's bidding, go merrily and gladly to death at the cannon's mouth or the cold bayonet thrust.

Among the frontier towns, Givet, on the borders of Belgium, is one of first-rate importance. It has a remarkable situation by the Meuse, where this river has begun to lose something of the beauty which characterises it by Dinan, and also higher up between Fumay and Charleville. Broad green meadows skirt the stream on both sides. In the distance are the last villages of Belgium, and on the left bank of the river a fine old château in the middle of a hamlet, which could not fail to be occupied without delay in case of an outbreak of hostilities between France and Belgium.

Givet holds the key to this part of the river and the adjacent territory. Its fort is a most imposing structure on a rock about six hundred and fifty feet above the Meuse. At the base of the rock are the barracks and drill-grounds. New barracks have been built, more than five hundred yards in length. This alone is enough to whisper of the spirit which rules at the War Office in Paris. Vauban himself is responsible for much of the work at Givet; but even Vauban can be improved upon, and the great eighteenth-century engineer had, of course, no idea of the far-reaching guns which in our day have revolutionised the art of fortification. The pedestrian who approaches Givet from the Ardennes and the right bank of the Meuse may wonder at certain little erect stones by the roadside while yet he is a considerable distance from the town. With patience, however, he may decipher their inscriptions sufficiently to learn that the big guns of Givet are ever turned in this particular direction, and that, vast though the intervening space may seem, they are warranted to carry so far.

Its soldiers and citadel apart, Givet is a pretty little town, with a picturesque bridge over the Meuse, and old grey stone houses which offer a cool retreat from the warm sun in summer. One may find the peaches ripe here a week or two earlier than in towns many a mile farther south. It has, however, no particular existence when severed from that huge, frowning rock which broods over it. It is the military who support the town even as they enliven it, whether by their brisk clatter over the painful cobbles, or by their impromptu camping in the public places, with bed and baggage, as if they were already on the eve of a serious campaign.

From Givet to Sedan need not be a long journey, with good luck in the matter of trains. It is at any rate a very interesting one. The Meuse, for miles of the way, runs in a deep glen, with towering wooded hills upon either hand. Here and there is a bright little red-roofed town, and the blue-gowned townsfolk who enter the trains have portly frames and nut-brown faces, which argue that their district must be a very healthy, as well as a beautiful one. Good humour, too, is omnipresent among them. They have much to say in an unrestrained way about the crops and the trivial events of their lives; and while talking they look heartily at their various companions, as if these could not fail to please them, or feel an interest in their domestic vicissitudes.

After Mezières, however, the scene changes. We are still in the Meuse valley; but the hills have gone far away. The green meadows seem infinite in extent. The herds on them comprise cattle by the hundred per meadow. But the district is not an exclusively pastoral one, either. For fellow-travellers, one has broad-shouldered men, with the stains of coal, and tar, and oil about them. This is, in fact, one of France's iron manufacturing districts.

Thus one comes to Sedan, in which many of the ironworkers have their homes. It may seem rather a bald ending to the romance which belongs to this famous frontier town. But really romance is a word for which there is no exact definition; and one need not be a whit less eager to make acquaintance with the place of the downfall of the third Napoleon, just because it is a town from which a hundred or two puddlers go daily to their work with season tickets.

The river here makes a huge bend to the north, and subsequently as abrupt a return to the south; the neck of this loop being severed by a canal for the purposes of traffic. It was this artificial island which the Prussians turned to such practical use when they wished to isolate the French troops after the surrender of the town. One does not, of course, nowadays easily discover traces of this event in 1870 among the long grass and flowers, and the various oat patches and cabbage-beds of these spacious Meuse meadows. But here and there, and in the village churchyards, are little iron crosses which tell quite sufficiently how wives were widowed, and parents bereaved of their boys, on or near this spot. There never was a town with such admirable battle-fields close to it. For a pitched combat, on equal terms, the great areas on either side of Sedan bordering the Meuse are unrivalled. But in wet weather they lose their attractiveness, and in an overflow of the river they are, of course, quick to suffer inundation.

The first few days of September will for long be an anniversary of humiliation for Sedan. True, it may seem that France has by this time found a species of consolation in the philosophic shoulder-shrug, and the reiteration of the sanguine but not wholly veracious maxim that "all things come (or return) to the man who (or the country which) can afford to wait." Certainly, if any nation in modern times has shown recuperative vigour, it is this land of France. One sees it in all directions; and, most of all, one sees it in the phenomenal extension and embellishment of this very town of Sedan, which one-and-twenty years ago was a poor provincial little place, but which now has streets and villas fit for the best suburb of Paris. This, too, in spite of the long occupation by the Germans, and the demolition of the greater part of its fortifications!

The air of Sedan is unmistakeably martial. By rising early, one may generally rely upon seeing a considerable body of troops at exercise in the broad meadow over against Wadelincourt. It is quite exhilarating, this flashing of swords and gleaming of bayonets in the crisp morning air. The gallant officers of Chasseurs are, too, a somewhat impressive sight as—later than the rest — they urge their fretful steeds through the streets to join the others. One can sympathise, at such a time, with the indictment of over-daintiness and dandyism which has been brought against them. They do not seem to have so much as one hair of their moustaches out of place. "Elegant" is not a word expressive enough to define their general appearance. White kid gloves and cigar add new graces where there seemed room for none. These gentlemen are, in fact, types of the "beau sabreur" of the story-books.

At Sedan there are not the numerous appalling testimonies to the murderous nature of the war of 1870–1, that the villages round Metz still offer to the eye. Here, in the watershed of the Moselle, the fields are still sown with graves. The little white crosses with simple inscriptions meet one everywhere on the uplands to the west and south-west, and are common objects elsewhere within six and seven miles of the city. Bones may occasionally be seen on the newly ploughed land, and it does not need the somewhat callously proffered information of the blue-smocked peasant to teach one that the bones are those of Germans who died in forcing French positions. These French positions by Metz ought, in reality, never to have been lost. It is wonderful how little foresight and strategic ability the French generals seem to have exercised. Whether Bazaine was or was not a traitor is not a question for us to determine off-hand; but certainly Metz had good reason to be dissatisfied with him and suspicious of his plans. It is inexplicable, too, that at Sedan, on the thirty-first of August and the first of September, the Prussians should have been able to use the same tactics which proved so fatal to France by Metz, on the eighteenth of August by St. Privat and Ste. Marie aux Chênes.

Many Frenchmen make sad pilgrimage to Sedan during the early days of September, even as at Gravelotte, by Metz, on the sixteenth and eighteenth of August German officers may be seen laying memorial wreaths upon the graves of their brother officers or their relatives who lie buried among the oats and wheat of this extensive battle-field.

Of the various sepulchres of Sedan that date from 1870, none is more grim than that of Bazeilles. The peasants of this pretty little village, some two miles from the town, still have a lively recollection of the horrors of that fatal first of September. It was on the thirtieth of August that the Bavarians began to burn their homes; but the final overmastering assault was two days later. The French Marines, who held the village, long resisted their assailants; but gradually the weight of numbers began to tell. They were driven from house to house until the scene of Alphonse de Neuville's picture, "Les Dernières Cartouches," was enacted in the last building towards Sedan. This house has suffered the fate of the Château of Hougoumont, by Waterloo, and other places of the kind. It is now a resort of tourists from all parts of the world, and an exceedingly valuable little property. In the lower room you may drink cognac or coffee, as in a tavern; thence, when recruited, you may enter a larger chamber, decorated with muskets and swords, battered helmets, buttons, bullets, cartridge-cases, and charred heaps of things; and afterwards ascend to the room upon which De Neuville's picture and the valour of the Marines have conferred a certain measure of immortality. The bullet-holes are still in the walls; the long-bodied clock which stood here in 1870 still stands here, also the worse for Bavarian rifle practice; the wardrobe in the picture was in the room then and is here still. The imagination readily conjures up the scene. The central figure in the picture is the wounded officer in command of the detachment of Marines. It was with this man that De Neuville afterwards visited Bazeilles, and made the preliminary studies for his "Salon" success.

One signs one's name in a visitors' book at Bazeilles as at Oban or Chamounix. The other day the signature which preceded the writer's was that of a Frenchman, who appended the wish that, should the world ever be gradually bereft of its human inhabitants, the last man living might cry: "Vive la France!" A sufficiently harmless and futile freak of patriotism! The reverse of 1870 has taught France much, and it will be odd if such an intelligent nation does not profit by the lesson. Modern Frenchmen are, as a rule, less self-confident than were their fathers. It is so much the better for them. They will, in future, rely less upon their traditional valour, and leave less to chance.

The greatest local hecatomb of the dead lies in the cemetery of Bazeilles, where the fighting was concentrated and deadly. It consists of a series of cellars built in the ground, and dimly lighted by gratings. One passes through the middle of the vaults with the railed chambers upon either side; to the right lie the assembled bones and débris of the French; to the left are German relics. The laconic device "Français," "Allemands," is quite sufficient.

There is not much order in the arrangement of these sombre treasures. In some cases the bodies lie whole, a gruesome mass of dried flesh, bones, and clothing! For the most part, however, the skulls have become detached in disinterment, and they are now used as borders to the ground allotted for the other remains. One marks, with curious sensations, how lifelike in a way are the expressions of which a mere skull may be capable. Some of the mouths are wide open. It needs no professional wisdom to know that these poor fellows died in a pang of pain. Here, too, is a withered arm, the flesh still adherent from the elbow downwards; and the fingers are curved inwards with a convulsive clutch. Legs, still booted and spurred, may also be seen, and many a long, vague shape that can be nothing but the trunk of the warrior still clad as when he died, but with an added thick outer vestment of mire, the result of several years' burial. Among the bones are occasional tall crosses of wood, set with no great precision, some leaning against the whitewashed walls, and others half recumbent. The crosses with the French remains do not appear to carry any inscription. Those on the German side, on the other hand, bear words emblematic of German piety. One would not willingly from this infer aught derogatory to the national mind of France. It is merely the fact. But the first few days of September add a certain grace to these dull walls of the dead in the presence of wreaths of honour from many a town in France and from Germany also. Some three thousand dead lie here.

There is much of interest in Sedan and the neighbourhood, even without the melancholy associations of 1870. The new buildings of the town argue that it means to have an eventful future. One marvels where the inhabitants to people these fine houses will be brought from. So, too, with the stately Collegio Turenne, for cadets in war. This bears date 1883. The effigy of a youth, reclining at the foot of a cannon, with shot and shell round about him, fitly adorns the pediment of this edifice. It ought to have a certain patriotic influence upon the young collegians, even as the statue of Turenne himself (a native of Sedan) ought yet further to stimulate them along the paths of martial success.

To most people the Château of Bellevue, some ten miles from Sedan, will be suggestive of strong, even pathetic memories. It stands on a gentle eminence, with the meadows by the Meuse at its base, and Sedan well in view beyond. Hence the Prussian leaders watched the progress of part of the battle of the first of September, and directed the movement of their troops. They could not see all the conflict, however, for the hills to the north break into snug, wide dells, in which lie the villages of Daigny, Givonne, and others, and it was just here that the strategy of the Teutons made greatest havoc with the plans of MacMahon and his officers. In popular language the Prussians "made rings round the French"; and, as they tightened the circumference, they gradually forced the French upon the devoted town precisely as they did also at Metz.

The glass vestibules on either side of the turreted façade of Bellevue had notable occupants on this first of September, 1870. Here, too, Napoleon the Third slept on the eve of the battle, and, during the last night when he could even only in name call himself Emperor, read "The Last of the Barons" in bed. The book was found by the bedside the next morning, turned on its face. The following day the Emperor made that blameable statement which, of itself, was enough to revolt France against him for ever, namely, that it was not he who had desired the war, but that France herself had forced it upon him.

In this château, too, the Emperor and the King of Prussia held their brief memorable interview; and Bismarck, in impatience, trod up and down the gravel walk in front of the house. Nowadays the château, though thoroughly habitable, is more often than not kept locked and tenantless. The owner does not make the public free of it. If you ring the gate bell the loquacious old gardener, with a broom in his hand, will come to say "Bon jour" to you, and to tell you such history as he knows about it. But he cannot contravene his orders. Yet it does not matter very much. One can appreciate Bellevue perfectly, without setting foot inside it. That night of the first of September, with thousands of bivouac fires in the meadow beneath it, and rumours of great events in the air, must have been worth passing in the castle.

Givet and Sedan are but typical examples of the other border towns of France since the great defeat of 1870. All down the line the same activity, intensity, and determination prevail. Some of the soldiers here on guard confess their impatience with their political rulers. They have waited in readiness for a score of years—and still they stand waiting. But others, safer and less rash, know that something yet remains to be done ere the fateful declaration of war (no matter upon what pretext) is made. If a visit to this part of France teaches the stranger nothing else, it makes plain to him that it is not without good cause that periodically a nervous thrill pervades the Continent in connection with these two potent neighbours and open enemies. It seems as certain as anything human can be that sooner or later the time of new trouble will arise on the frontier. One can only hope that it will be late rather than soon.

CATHERINE MAIDMENT'S BURDEN.

A STORY IN TWELVE CHAPTERS.

By MARGARET MOULE.

CHAPTER XI.

"MR. MAIDMENT? In the library, did you say, Fenton?"

Mr. Stewart-Carr raised himself a little from the depths of his chair as he spoke. He was sitting in the smoking-room at the Castle in the twilight. He had gone to that room on his return from the White House three hours earlier, and he had sat there alone, until Fenton came to announce to him that dinner was waiting. At the man's words he had dragged himself out of the arm-chair he was sitting in, gone straight to the dining-room without changing his morning dress, made the merest pretence at dining, and come straight back to the smoking-room. Twice during the evening Fenton had come to the door with lights, and each time his master had sent him away again. And now, at nine o'clock, he entered rather tentatively to announce Frank Maidment's presence.

"Ask him if he will come here," Mr Stewart-Carr went on. "And, Fenton, you might light up now," he said, with a short, heavy sigh. "Maidment—at this time of night! What in the world can he want?" he muttered to himself as the man left the room. A moment later Fenton reappeared and announced formally: "Mr. Maidment."

Mr. Stewart-Carr got up quickly.

"Good evening, Maidment," he said, shaking hands. "Sit down, will you? Fenton will bring a lamp directly."

Frank Maidment answered the greeting briefly and sat down. Fenton re-entered with a large shaded lamp, which he set down on the table, and was proceeding to close the windows, when his master dismissed him hastily.

As Fenton set down the lamp its light had suddenly fallen for a moment full on Frank Maidment's face, and Mr. Stewart-Carr had seen it. It was white, haggard, and drawn; but the startling effect it had on Mr. Stewart-Carr was not due so much to the physical aspect of it as to the expression. On every line of it was stamped a concentrated, almost agonised look of resolution and intensity of purpose, which had never been on Frank Maidment's face before. The set, resolute look gave him a sort of unapproachable dignity of manner, which was very strange; and about even his movements hung something unwonted and unfamiliar.

"Is anything wrong, Maidment?" Mr. Stewart-Carr said, looking at him intently, as the door closed. "Man alive!" he added, as Frank leant his elbow on the table and rested his head on it, "are you ill?"

"No," he said; and his voice was determined, too, though it was hoarse. "No, I am not ill."

"What is it, then?" Mr. Stewart-Carr said, quickly.

"It is this," he answered; "this: I can't set anything right; but I can tell you what is wrong."

He spoke as if he forced every word from himself with difficulty; and he stopped short when they were spoken. Mr. Stewart-Carr gazed at him in speechless amaze.

"Maidment," he said at length, "you aren't yourself. You are ill. Let me get you some brandy."

"No!" Frank Maidment said, in a voice that was a startling contrast to his low, hoarse tones. It re-echoed loudly through the quiet room.

"Speak, then, man, for Heaven's sake! What is it?" Mr. Stewart-Carr said, hurriedly.

Frank Maidment took his elbow down from the table and clasped his hand round the arm of his chair.

"I heard what you said this afternoon," he said, very low, but very distinctly.

"What I said this afternoon?" Mr. Stewart-Carr repeated.

He did not in the least understand Frank Maidment's words; but something in the other man's manner was making him feel that what he was going to learn was terrible to hear.

"To Catherine," Frank Maidment went on. "I was in the passage, and I came down to find her. I had been asleep, and I didn't know you were there. The door was open, and I heard you ask her to marry you. I heard her refuse you." He paused one moment; but Mr. Stewart-Carr did not speak. He could not; he could not analyse what he had heard. His mind was filled by the same indefinite sense of something to come. "I came to tell you the truth; to tell you why she won't marry you. She cannot marry you because she has a drunken brute of a brother to look after."

Mr. Stewart-Carr started forward in his chair.

"Maidment!" he exclaimed; "Maidment! What in Heaven's name do you mean?"

Frank Maidment faced him deliberately. His grey eyes were steady—steadier than they had been for weeks—and there was a sudden flash in them as he gazed at the other man without speaking. At length he said—and his voice was hoarse no longer, but very clear and penetrating:

"I mean this. Catherine has me to look after. I am a drunken brute. If you did not know this before, I tell you it on my—— I tell it you with my own lips."

Mr. Stewart-Carr did not speak; did not move his eyes from Frank Maidment's face. It was as if he could not.

"Good heavens, Maidment!" he said at length, in a choked voice, "good heavens!"

Then suddenly he gave himself a kind of jerk—a gesture that expressed indignation with himself, and, rising hastily, he went across to where Frank Maidment sat and laid his hand on his shoulder.

"Maidment," he said, in the tone one would use to soothe and calm a man who is not quite master of his senses at the moment—"Maidment, all this is some dreadful mistake of yours. You are ill; you are indeed, in spite of all you say. Let me take you home. It's the heat that has knocked you over, you know; and you'll be all right in a day or two."

Frank Maidment shook off Mr. Stewart-Carr's detaining hand and rose too.

"Mistake!" he said, very bitterly, "there's no mistake. I wish to Heaven there were. I am not ill. I have not got sunstroke. I am as well as I ever was, or shall be. Every word I say to you is true; and the mistake is yours. You have believed in me and thought me worthy of trust when there was nothing to believe in, and I am worthy of nothing. I am—a drunkard."

Mr. Stewart-Carr gave an involuntary start. Not so much at the words themselves as at the tone in which they were said. It was so terrible in its ring of utter, hopeless despair. Frank Maidment's face grew, if possible, whiter as he saw the start. But he did not pause, he went on steadily, still standing and still facing Mr. Stewart-Carr.

"It is true — it has been true for three years. It is for me Catherine spends and sacrifices her life. Because I am utterly incompetent she does my work, and because she thinks she can take care of me she sends you away when she loves you—yes, I know; I heard it, I know everything. She thinks she can keep me going somehow; by giving her life for me. But though I'm despicable and brutal beyond words, I'm not quite so low as that. And when I heard her speak I made up my mind to come to you and tell you—the truth."

His voice grew very hoarse again, and he turned his face away. "Marry her! Marry her! Marry her!" he cried. "I have dragged her down with me. I know it. Oh! I know it! I have told you the truth now. Marry her and take her away, and make up to her for all that I have done to spoil her life."

He sat down again suddenly, and let his head fall on his arms on the table.

Mr. Stewart-Carr stood beside him in silence. There was no sound in the room but the ticking of a little clock on the mantelshelf. The man who had told the truth and the man who had heard the truth were both absolutely motionless. Mr. Stewart-Carr tried in vain to grasp one of the thoughts that flashed through his brain. Then he let them all go, and wrestled and fought desperately against the conviction which steadily put everything else aside, and came nearer and nearer to him. It wore the guise of truth, and all his efforts could not send it away. It came close; he knew it for the truth. He knew that this terrible thing he had learnt was true. He went up to Frank Maidment and touched him on the shoulder, with a touch that was almost as tender and gentle as a woman's could have been.

"Maidment," he said, "Maidment, look up."

Frank Maidment did not move. Mr. Stewart-Carr made his touch stronger, though no less gentle.

"Maidment, listen to me," he said, in a low, insistent, but intensely sympathetic tone. "You yourself will make up to her for whatever you may have done. I do not know how best to put it to you. But when a man can make a tremendous effort like the one you have made to-night, he has stuff in him which will make him start afresh."

"Start afresh!" echoed Frank Maidment, without lifting his head. "Never here."

"Will you tell me all about it?" Mr. Stewart-Carr went on, unheeding. "You have told me enough to let me ask this; and I think—if you would——"

"Tell you all about it?" Frank Maidment interrupted, raising his head with a weary, exhausted gesture. "Yes. I'll tell you all about it. It's very simple. It was before Catherine came to live here. I was terribly dull and lonely—and I——"

He broke off suddenly. He was again leaning his head on his hand, supporting his elbow on the table. Mr. Stewart-Carr was beside him, and in his face was a great comprehension and sympathy. Frank Maidment glanced up at him as he broke off; his features twitched convulsively as he met the other's eyes; then he went on rapidly, almost as if he were glad to say the words that came so fast.

"I—I took to it, you see, little by little. Catherine did not know when she first came. I kept straight for a bit, so that she should not. But one day things were too strong for me. I let myself go. I was a drunken fool again, and she saw what sort of a brother she had. She's stuck by me—Heaven bless her! She's helped me—well, you know for yourself how she's worked for me! She would have given her life to keep me straight. But she couldn't; and—well, things went on and on. I was screwed one day, and then kept straight for a week. Then I was worse, and then straight again for ever so long. No one knows in Moreford; Catherine kept me from that; though, who knows?—it might have been better for me if they'd all known, if you'd known, long ago. Then you came back, and I was horribly ashamed of myself. All the work you congratulated me on wasn't mine. I owed everything to a woman. And you yourself made me feel worse."

"I made you feel worse?" Mr. Stewart-Carr said, as he made a long pause.

"Yes, you; when you came home. I knew I had lost everything since I saw you last, self-respect included. And there was a horrid contrast between then and now, between you and me, that sent me two or three steps further down the hill. Then I got another shove down that same path," he stopped, and laughed cynically. "I saw one of your guests—you know I saw her—I mean——" he hesitated again, and seemed reluctant to pronounce the name that was on his lips, "I oughtn't to name her, even. But I mean Miss Arbuthnot. I could have cared for her. I made a fool of myself about her. And then, when they said you were going to marry her I knew how great a fool I'd been. I knew what an awful space lay between me and—any one sweet, and good, and true, like her. And then I chucked it all up; and I've been going it pretty hard ever since, I believe. I don't say any of this to excuse myself," he added, after a moment's pause, "not that. It's been my own doing from first to last. But you asked me to tell you all about it, and I have. I never did before to a living soul. Not to Catherine even."

Frank Maidment rose abruptly, and looked about for his hat.

"I'm going now," he said. "You'll see after Catherine, won't you, when—— I mean, you won't let my doings stand between her and happiness?"

He turned towards the door with the words.

But Mr. Stewart-Carr seized his arm.

"Maidment," he said, and his voice was choked and husky, "don't go; let me say this—you'll let me help you? It seems to me that I am more than half responsible for—for what you tell me; and I shall be grateful if you'll let me help you—grateful all my life. You will?"

"Nothing can help me," he answered, heavily; "there is no help on earth."

"There is—indeed there is. There is hope, and there is a way of getting at it."

"Yes, there is a way," Frank Maidment echoed, in a curious tone; "that is true."

Mr. Stewart-Carr was too intent on gaining his attention to notice the intonation with which he spoke.

"Well, take it—look at it, man!" he said, very eagerly. "I've known people get right again who were worse than you—far worse."

"Impossible!" Frank Maidment replied, without a light in his eyes, or the faintest change on his drawn, white face.

"Nothing of the kind," the other said, emphatically. "Look here, Maidment: to-morrow we'll go up to town together. I believe I know the sort of man—just the very man—to go to. He'll give you something that'll do you loads of good. Then we will go off somewhere for a change—you and I, and—your sister; if she would come," he added, more slowly. "I'll put some one in here, you know, and you'll come with me for a run on the Continent for six months or so, or a year, and forget all this for good; and these years will be as though they had never been when you get back."

"You're very good," said Frank Maidment, looking at Mr. Stewart-Carr with steady eyes. There was a look in them which the latter remembered with bitter, helpless regret hours after, when he knew its meaning only too well. "Awfully good. But it's a lot of trouble for you; and I think there might be a simpler plan."

"There's nothing simpler, my dear fellow," said Mr. Stewart-Carr, very eagerly.

Every one of his most generous impulses was stirred, every sympathy was awakened by the man before him—the man who had made this tremendous effort, and confessed all the shame and guilt of his life. He had liked Frank Maidment greatly always, and by the last hour's experience that liking had been quickened into warm, firm friendship.

"I shall come and see you to-morrow about this," he continued, as Frank Maidment moved further towards the door. "Maidment," he went on, with intense earnestness, "you never shall regret your confidence to me. Believe me, we can get things straight between us; and, believe me, there is hope."

"Thank you," Frank Maidment answered, simply. "You have been very good to me."

Then he left the room, Mr. Stewart-Carr accompanying him. At the open front-door, he turned round. Mr. Stewart-Carr grasped his hand and wrung it.

"Good night," he said.

"Good-bye," Frank Maidment answered, and went slowly down the broad steps. At the foot of the short flight, however, he turned, and went very quickly back again—back to the man standing at the top in the lamp-light.

"You'll take care of Catherine?" he said, with an odd, wistful look in his grey eyes. "You'll make her happy?"

Then, unheeding Mr. Stewart-Carr's "So will you," Frank Maidment grasped his hand again—in silence, and went out into the darkness of the summer night.

CHAPTER XII.

Before the middle of the next day all Moreford was ringing with the news that Mr. Maidment had shot himself.

No one at first knew any details; none of the eager enquirers after facts could tell each other more than this: that he had gone out the evening before; that Miss Maidment had sat up watching for him all night; that she had searched for him as soon as the first daylight broke, and that in the grey dawn he had been found—found lying under one of the park trees, dead, shot through the temple, with a revolver lying beside him, fallen from his dead hand.

As the hours went by, more details began to be added thereto; and by noon, all there was to know was known. Some workmen, crossing the park to work, had found him, and even to their eyes it had been plain, instantly, that he was beyond all hope, and that there was nothing to do but to take him back to the house he would never enter again in life.

They had lifted him and placed him gently on a gate that had been hastily taken off its hinges; one of the men impulsively throwing off his coat and folding it up, placed it as a sort of pillow for the white, dead face. "He was an uncommon good sort," he muttered as he did it. And then two of them had been sent on first to break it as best they might to Miss Maidment. She had met them at the garden gate with a face as white as the dead face itself. She was perfectly quiet, and scarcely spoke in answer to what they brokenly and awkwardly managed to tell her. "She was standing there still, and as white as white, when we brought him," one of the men said, describing it afterwards; "and," he added, with unconscious pathos, "they was liker each other, then, them two, than they was when he was alive."

Catherine had only leant back against the door for a moment's support as they carried what had been Frank Maidment in the early morning sunlight through the little garden, past the scattered garden tools which his own hands had been using the afternoon before; and then she followed them, steadily and unfalteringly, into the house.

Three hours later, Mr. Stewart-Carr came hurriedly through the garden, and when Margaret, with her eyes red and swollen with crying, opened the door to him, he asked, in a voice utterly unlike his own—a voice all changed and unsteady with emotion—if he could see Miss Maidment. Margaret took his message upstairs, and came back saying that Miss Maidment could not see any one. "She told me to say she was sorry, sir," the old woman added; "but she could not—not to-day. My poor child," she sobbed, suddenly breaking down with passionate weeping, utterly regardless of Mr. Stewart-Carr, "my poor child—they was both my children and they was like my own—and he lies as peaceful as when I laid him in his cradle. And Miss Catherine—Miss Catherine; it's fit to break one's heart to look at her. Oh, I beg your pardon, sir," she said, suddenly remembering him and drying her eyes hastily on her coarse white apron; "I beg your pardon, sir; you'll excuse me, sir."

But Mr. Stewart-Carr had leant his arm against the stone door-post, and hidden his face on it.

"There's nothing to beg my pardon for," he said, still more unsteadily, as he raised it hastily. "Will you tell your mistress I will write to her; and will you let me know if I can do anything for her?"

He went back to the Castle and wrote Catherine a note, begging her to let him do anything he possibly could to help her; and begging her, also, to let him see her later on.

Catherine answered him at once. She promised to let him know as soon as she could see him, and to claim his help at once, should she need it.

On that very evening she claimed it, or rather, Margaret did so for her. The awful strain of the day gave way suddenly, and Catherine sank helplessly on her bed as she tried to undress.

Margaret put her to bed like a little child, and then, remembering his words of the morning, sent for Mr. Stewart-Carr.

He came at once; he took everything into his own hands, carried out every arrangement, and went through every detail of those terrible days, in Catherine's place, while she lay wandering and unconscious in her own room.

It was a week before she came back to consciousness again; and three weeks before she was strong enough to come downstairs. On the first day she did so, she sent a pencil note to Mr. Stewart-Carr. "I am well enough to thank you now," she said; "will you let me?"

He answered it by going to her that same afternoon. Till he actually got it, he had hardly known how much he had been expecting and longing for that summons, and as he set out, all his thoughts were of seeing her again.

But as he reached the White House, the thought flashed across him of the first time he had been there, the first time he had seen Catherine at all. It was not yet five weeks ago, the park wore the same summer beauty, the little garden was unchanged, the same flowers were there, the same clematis was blooming over the door; but in his life and hers everything was changed, and the man he had come there then to see was lying in his grave. He recalled himself with a heavy sigh, and opened the gate hastily.

Margaret took him, not into the dining-room, but into the drawing-room. He had never entered this room before; and perhaps the fresh surroundings emphasized for him the change in Catherine herself. He had expected her to be altered; he had told himself that she would, of course, look very ill; but still, when he saw her, the sight gave him a great and sudden shock. She was leaning back in a low wicker chair, and a soft white wrap was round her shoulders.

Her face was terribly thin, and so white that her large grey eyes, by their contrast with her pallor, had become the most conspicuous feature in her whole face.

Across her forehead, sorrow and pain had set a line that time would never wear away, and though her mouth was no less resolute than it used to be, there was, as she saw Mr. Stewart-Carr, a little uncertain movement of its curves that was very strange and unwonted in Catherine.

But she looked, in her weakness, even sweeter than she had looked in her strength, and as Mr. Stewart-Carr came up to her, he was filled with one great longing—a longing to carry out Frank Maidment's last words to him, and take care of her for ever.

But he had much else to say to her now, and he checked himself resolutely as he returned her greeting, and sat down beside her in the chair she indicated.

"I do thank you more than I can say," she began, faintly. "I do not know how to put my thanks into words. I—what could I have done without your help?"

"Don't say one word of the kind," he said, earnestly; "don't hurt me by thanks. It is I who am grateful to you for letting me help you."

There was a little silence. He looked at her uncertainly. Then he said:

"I wanted to tell you something. I have wanted to tell you it ever since—since—but I do not feel sure that you are strong enough to hear it?"

"I am strong enough for anything," she said, quietly. "Is it—is it of Frank you want to speak to me? Because, if so, don't be afraid. You will not hurt me."

"Yes," he answered, gravely and gently, "I want to tell you that I know all that you know about his life."

"All I know!" Catherine repeated, in a low tone; "all I know! What do you mean? What can you mean? Do you——"

But she stopped short, and hiding her face in her white hands, pressed them and her head suddenly down on to the cushions of her chair.

"Tell me," she said, in a trembling voice.

He rose, and coming nearer, stood before her.

"I will," he answered, and in short sentences, broken often by emotion, he told her, in the tenderest words he knew, of her brother's last action on earth. He told her everything, down to the last words about herself. And when he ended, Catherine did not move or speak. She was crying, bitterly and passionately, and the silence was only broken by her choking sobs.

"Oh, Frank! Frank!" she cried, "Frank, I would take better care of you if I could have you back! Oh, Frank! I loved you so! I love you so!"

Mr. Stewart-Carr knelt down beside her as he had done once before.

"Catherine," he said, very gently, "will you let his words come true? They were his last words here. May I take care of you?"

She did not lift her head, she only sobbed still more passionately.

"Don't," she said, brokenly, "don't ask me yet. He is gone. I can never be with him any more while I live, and he was so good to me, so often. And he thought of me last of all. Oh, Frank! Frank!"

Mr. Stewart-Carr touched her hair very softly with his hand.

"He asked me to," he said; "and, Catherine, I will take care of you—Heaven knows, and perhaps he knows, that I will—if you will only say I may."

"Not now! Not now!" she sobbed. "Don't ask me now!"

With an unselfishness as great as his love, he went away, and left her with the memory of her brother.

Frank Maidment's last hours on earth were not lived in vain, for, a year later, Catherine married Mr. Stewart-Carr.

Once, after their marriage, they went back together to Moreford to say good-bye to it, and to look at Frank Maidment's grave, and then Mr. Stewart-Carr took his wife away for ever from every bitter association, and took care of her.

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BY ESMÈ STUART.

Author of "A Faire Damzell," "Joan Vellacot," "Kestell of Greystone," etc. etc.

CHAPTER XV. DISAPPOINTED.

"THE worst of a ball is that one feels so stupid the next day," said Minnie Gordon at luncheon-time, yawning repeatedly. "Frances, what letters have you had this morning? You are so close."

"One from mother. She hopes to come home as soon as possible, and sends her love to you two. She says she will remember your hat as she comes through London. The other letter is an invitation to a dinner party at the Towers to-day week—Mrs. and two Miss Gordons. You don't like dinner parties, Minnie, so Bee had better go."

"I don't see why poor Bee should do all the disagreeable things," said Minnie, gently. "I will go this time, for you don't like dinner parties either, Bee, do you?"

"Not generally, but I should like to go to the Towers. Captain Grant's aunt and cousin are to be there."

"How do you know?"

"Captain Grant told me so some time ago."

"You never mentioned it."

"No," said Bee, blushing in spite of herself, and in spite of having made a strong resolution to be quite natural.

"Well, we can't any of us go if mother is not back. Will she be back by then, Frances? We have been alone ten days already, and Christmas will soon be here. I suppose she does not mean to spend Christmas alone. I can't bear mysteries. I wish you would tell me what is the matter?"

"Nothing," said Frances, rather crossly.

She was longing to tell her sisters; but her mother wished everything about the Warren to be left a secret till Grace, Sibyl, and Miss Evans were well out of the way.

"What made you go out so early, Bee?" asked Minnie. It was no use teasing Frances, who could hold her own, and did not allow either of her sisters to interfere with her.

"I wanted a good walk. I did not sleep very well."

"Oh, Frances, why did you refuse to dance with Mr. Newton last night? He looked quite miserable."

Mr. Newton was an engineer not over rich, but who yet possessed enough talent to be looked upon as a rising man. He had long admired Frances Gordon. She had a certain liking for him, but as he was not rich she never would encourage him too much. Frances had long ago set before herself and Minnie the foolishness of marrying poor men, and, with more conscience than Minnie, did not therefore wish to draw them on too much.

"I gave Mr. Newton two dances; that is quite enough. Mother says it is unladylike to dance too often with a man who is nothing to you."

This was a hit at Minnie, who had certainly danced with Captain Grant a great deal. She believed that it was for the sole pleasure of her company, so that when he talked of Bee the other sister never guessed the truth.

"Captain Grant said he would call this afternoon; I forget the excuse he gave," said Minnie, laughing, and not at all angry at Frances' insinuation, "and he hoped we should be at home."

"I hope you told him that mother was away. I wish, Bee, you would come and settle the colour of the velvet for our new bonnets. We must set about trimming them to-day."

"You will make mine, won't you, Bee?" said Minnie, eagerly and coaxingly. "It will be better if one hand makes them. You and I always dress alike."

Bee hated making bonnets, but remembered that if some day she had to work for her living she might have to choose this trade, so that she had better grant Minnie's request. Besides, she felt so happy; any amount of drudgery would have seemed light now. He, Colin Grant, did not despise her. Perhaps, if she did her best at home she might be better able to do her best for him. About one thing she was determined: she would not marry him, and then let him find that he had made a mistake; he must know her faults before she allowed him to spoil his life. Bee was wonderfully humble, more humble in her own eyes than was really quite necessary; but Minnie had always impressed her with the idea that she was the stupid one of the family. If only Austin were here! Austin was so kind to her, so good to them all; but then he had never spent much time at home. He had worked so hard, and never wasted any time, in order to be a help, and not an expense, and to spare the slender means of his mother. Austin was the one member of her family to whom Bee could look up; he never seemed to think of himself, he was more like Captain Grant.

Her home life was so selfish, so small, so entirely egotistical; yet Bee felt that there was a better life, a better motive, somewhere, if only she could find them. But how happy she felt to-day; he really wanted her, only he fancied her better than she was; and then, if she were poor, ought he to marry a poor wife? Here Beatrice tormented herself whilst her fingers made up velvet bonnets, and Minnie lay on the sofa declaring that she had "never been so tired in her life;" and yet there was sweetness in her torments.

Towards tea-time Captain Grant came in; but other visitors were in the room, so that Minnie seized upon him, and Bee, who was always tea-maker, could not do more than look up at him for one minute as he held her hand; but that was enough for them. She meant to say with her eyes: "I am trying to find out whether I am good enough," and his said: "I shall never change my mind." Love was a simple, wonderful thing for them—a new revelation.

People talked round her, discussed other people—unkindly for the most part—but Bee noticed that whenever Captain Grant spoke it was to defend any one whom he might know among those who were being pulled to pieces. Again Bee thought: "He is not like us; we are always criticising our neighbours. I do it too, I know, and yet he can't bear to hear any one abused. I shall never learn that, I am afraid." But she began trying this very afternoon.

At last, when the room was not quite so full of Longham people, Captain Grant came round to Bee. Minnie had been monopolised by a curate, who was supposed to have said that "the second Miss Gordon was an angel upon earth," which showed plainly, had he only known it, that he was but partially acquainted with Miss Minnie Gordon, and not at all with angels.

"What have you been doing since we met, Miss Beatrice?"

His manner was as respectful as if he had not this same morning called her Beatrice without the "Miss."

"Making bonnets," answered Bee, laughing happily this time—and perhaps it was that natural laugh that had first taken the Captain's fancy, making the owner of it afterwards creep into his heart. A girl who can laugh happily can have nothing very bad to hide, so he thought, and, perhaps, being a little grave himself, he was all the more inclined to like high spirits.

"Ball-dresses and bonnets?" he said, smiling.

"Yes; I told you that was my only talent."

"Do you never read?"

"No one here reads except Minnie; but I don't care about novels."

"And other books?"

"Would you like me to read serious books?" asked Bee, in a low voice.

"Serious books—no! But there are many others. Histories, travels——"

"I will begin if you like," she said, humbly, "and see if I can. But if I find I can't? We were so glad to shut up our books directly we came out. I told you I was ignorant, and you see I am; but I will begin to-day. What shall it be? Something about India, where you have been?"

Minnie interrupted further talk. She thought her sister had had the Captain long enough by her side; she was jealous of any attention not paid to her, and this evening Bee suddenly perceived this. What was to be done? It was too dreadful to think of being a sister's rival; but then, as after all it was not Minnie but herself whom he cared about, Minnie must be told, to save further complications.

When Captain Grant rose to go, Bee slipped a little folded paper into his hand. "Read it by-and-by," she whispered; and when he stepped out of the house, Captain Grant opened the little note as if it had been made of some very precious stuff.

It was quite short.

"I have changed my mind already, though I cannot tell you why. Will you ask mother if she thinks I shall be good enough for you? Or if you have changed your mind, please never mention the subject again. I shall know why.—B. G."

The next morning Captain Grant called again, this time it was to see Miss Gordon; and he was not shown into the day-room, where he wished to go, but into the drawing-room, where there was no fire. Frances sailed in presently, nice-looking, dignified. But she expected it was Minnie he wanted. What had he come for?

"Will you kindly give me Mrs. Gordon's present address?" he asked, simply.

Frances wrote it on an envelope, and Captain Grant put it into a pocket-book without looking at it.

"I expect my mother back very shortly," said the eldest Miss Gordon.

"I am very glad. Then perhaps she will come and see my aunt at the Towers? My father says he wishes to have a real old-fashioned 'Merrie Christmas.'"

"Indeed!"

Frances was thinking that her mother intended to move to the Warren as soon as possible, so that the Merrie Christmas might not be spent at Longham.

Captain Grant was a little afraid of Miss Gordon, so he took his leave very soon. Bee heard his step, and in her anxiety cut Minnie's bonnet where it should have remained whole, so that Minnie's wrath descended on the younger sister in no sparing measure.

"You are stupid, Bee! I wonder what mother will do when we are married, and you are left alone with her?"

No answer. Bee was as patient as Griselda to-day.

But two days later all the three Miss Gordons had a letter from their mother. The one to Frances being, as usual, on business matters, she did not communicate its contents. Minnie was late for breakfast, so Bee read hers first.

"My dear Child,—This evening's post has brought me a letter, which I hasten to answer, so that you and Captain Grant may both be made happy. I was so surprised that my youngest daughter should be the first to wish to leave us; but I feel thankful that you will have a thorough gentleman for your husband, dear Bee, and that in future you will have no reason to trouble yourself about money matters, as I have done all my life. Minnie must tell you the other great news. I had half fancied dear Minnie would have been the first to leave us; but such things settle themselves, and now there will be no need to consider ways and means. You have my full consent, dear Bee, and may you have a long life of happiness. I don't wish you to be married until you are quite nineteen. Youth will never come back again. But make the engagement public at once if you like. Such things are better known directly. Your loving mother,

"Ellen Gordon."

Everything was as prosperous as possible now with Bee, and yet she felt sorry that she was not to have a time of secret trial; sorry that her Colin should not be quite sure of her before there was a public engagement; only her own feelings must give way for Minnie's sake, who must not be allowed to believe what was not true.

"Will you read this, Frances?" And Bee handed her mother's letter across the table to her sister.

Frances was astounded.

"You, Bee! Why, I always thought he liked Minnie. You sly child!"

"Don't say that, Frances, because I thought the same myself till a few days ago, but I am not half good enough for him. Oh, no, not half!"

"What nonsense you are saying! Girls do not marry for that; however, I am glad mother approves, only it is a pity it is not Minnie."

"Why?" Bee was a little hurt.

"You are more useful at home; besides, she is older."

"Then it ought to have been you."

"Me! I wouldn't marry Captain Grant for all the world, he is so sanctimonious. I beg your pardon, Bee, but I mean he is not to my taste."

The lazy Miss Gordon now appeared, so the two sisters relapsed into silence whilst Minnie opened her note.

"Guess, Bee, what the mystery is. Oh, Frances, why didn't you tell us? How very, very delightful!"

Bee seized the note—it was short enough, and soon read:

"DEAREST MINNIE,—Frances must tell you all, only I must be the first to announce to you that I have come into a property belonging to a cousin of your father's. The house is charming, but rather far from the town. There is very good society. My joys have all come at once, for I have just had a charming letter from——but you can guess. Your loving mother, "E. G."

"You might have told us," cried Bee and Minnie again.

"Mother has had a great deal of tiresome business to get through—it was not all pleasure."

"And how much a year?" asked Minnie.

"The affairs are rather in a muddle at present. This cousin was a very undesirable person; still, there is enough money to keep up the place well, and there will be some over, too."

"Austin need not work so hard, then," said Bee, her mind reverting at once to her brother.

"That will not hurt him."

"Fancy, Bee thought we had lost our money, and that she had better turn into a dressmaker."

"I asked Captain Grant if he would think it very low, and he said no," said Bee, blushing painfully, but laughing too.

"You asked Captain Grant?"

"Why not? now—we—are engaged," and Bee handed her mother's letter to Minnie.

Bee had made a desperate effort to bring out this piece of news, but she was not prepared for the anger of her elder sister.

"What do you mean, Bee? You engaged to Captain Grant — you? How very, very deceitful you have been; I call it most horrid of you. And since when, I should like to know? I suppose you managed it so as to avoid being poor, and that you might leave us to bear all the trouble of it."

"Minnie!" said Frances.

"You may say Minnie; I don't mind anything, if only people are open and straightforward, and Bee has been very proud and deceitful. One thing is, I am sure her engagement will never prosper," and Minnie rushed out of the room too angry to breathe the same air as the deceitful Bee.

"What shall I do, Frances? If you knew all you would see that I am not underhand; it was only two days ago that he said anything, and then——"

"Finish your breakfast, child, and don't take any notice of Minnie. I dare say Captain Grant will be here soon."

But Bee was sad, nevertheless, and the first bloom of her joy was brushed off by Minnie's selfish anger.

CHAPTER XVI. A LOVERS' TALK.

THAT interview with Captain Grant was certainly curious, that is, according to the usually received ideas of lovers' meetings. His ideas about women differed also from those of other men; for though, in his Indian life, he had met many various types, yet he had not lost his own ideal of what a woman should be. When he heard of unhappy marriages he was as grieved as when he heard of the death of one of his friends. "Something that might have been beautiful is spoilt," he would say. But then he knew well enough how men, often the best men, sometimes make mistakes, not because they do not think about the future, but because they are so incapable of judging a woman. Youth and loveliness may dazzle them, and they often invest the soul with the perfections of the body.

Beatrice felt terribly shy when at last the Captain made his appearance, which he did not do till late in the morning. Minnie had not reappeared, so that she and Frances were working alone in the dining-room. Bee met Captain Grant as he entered the hall, and said, very demurely, because the maid was present:

"Would you mind walking to the village with me? We have a fire only in the dining-room, and Frances is there."

"I was particularly wishing to go to the village," he said, gravely, too, but there was a happy light in his eye.

Bee ran away, but remembered just as she reached her own door that her sister was there. However, as she could not go out without her hat and jacket, she knocked humbly, feeling very much in disgrace, and received the short answer to come in.

Minnie was putting a chest of drawers tidy, and would not notice her younger sister; but Bee saw a hard look settle on the pretty face. She could not bear to make Minnie angry, and going up to her before leaving the room, she said, humbly:

"Minnie, won't you wish me joy? I know I am not good enough for him; but if he thinks so, I must try to be."

"I'll wish you joy if you like, though I can't believe such conduct as yours ever does succeed."

"You are mistaken, Minnie; indeed, if you understood, you would know it is not as you think."

"I do not want to understand anything about it. I know quite enough, thanks, Bee."

There was no use saying more, and Bee went out quite sober and sad for a first walk with a lover. Not that she behaved much like an engaged girl of eighteen; but though she did not know it, Captain Grant was secretly contrasting her favourably with others whom he had known in similar circumstances.

"May I ask, Beatrice, why you gave me that little bit of paper?" he said, when they had left the last Longham house behind them.

"No; I would rather you did not ask the real reason," she said, shyly; "but one was that among sisters it is so difficult to keep even a secret that one has a right to keep, and yet to be true—and you want me to be that, don't you?"

For all answer he took her hand—the hand that was by no means useless—and clasped it firmly and quietly in his own.

"Yes, above all things, be true; and then, though in this instance I do trust you, and, Heaven helping me, Beatrice, I shall always trust you, yet I could not accept your love unless I told you my past history. I was engaged once before—to—— Never mind particulars. It was in India. Her father was a colonel, and her beauty secured her many admirers. I was among the number, and my devotion—or persistency, perhaps—carried the day. I became her accepted suitor, and I fancied that I could then make her what I liked. She was young—younger than you are; but her character, early developed in that climate and in that society, made her a woman in thought before she was so in years. She found out that though I loved her deeply, I yet had singular ideas about the woman who was to be my wife. I could stand no flirting and no trifling, and she—— I did not make allowances for her youth, and once or twice I spoke strongly when some little things in her conduct pained me. I was wrong, perhaps, in my manner of dealing with her; but I loved her with all my heart, Beatrice. I cannot tell you how I suffered when one day she said that she saw she could never be happy with me, and that we had better part. In three months she married a brother officer, and their after history has been one of my greatest sorrows; and yet, had she been my wife, I don't know how I could have borne it. If I felt the pain for years, I can truly say that I lost all the love I had once had for her, or I should not now be seeking to win your affections. Only, Beatrice, can you understand now why I wish you to think well before you are willing to forsake your home for me? She thought me too serious, and I shall not blame you if you think the same, and if you tell me you cannot care about me enough to give up much for me."

This story, told so simply, touched the newly-awakened woman's heart. Some one had not recognised the worth of the man she had at first sight so much respected, whom she loved so deeply now; some one had rejected the prize she thought too good for her. That moment decided her; her whole heart went out to her Colin. He became "her Colin" now. Never should he suffer again through a woman, if she could help it.

Perhaps her hand pressed more trustingly on his arm; perhaps, looking down on her, the man, who was nearly double her age, saw the look of perfect trust and love in her young, sweet face, for all at once his own doubts fled, and he, too, was satisfied—nay, more than satisfied—that he had not made a mistake.

"Oh, Colin, if you will try me, and trust me, I don't think you will ever find me different—though I shall never be good enough for you. I can't help feeling a little glad that she did not appreciate you, though I can't bear to think you suffered. You never shall again—that is, through me."

No, he fancied he never should.

"You shall have my confession, too," said Bee, laughing through a few tears.

"When I was about eight years old, a distant cousin of ours, a middy, came to stay with us; and when he went away he kissed me. I used to fancy that when he came home he would ask me to be his wife; and I kept a very lively and tender remembrance of him for many years. I would read about the places where he went, and——"

"And when he came home?"

"He never has," said Bee, laughing; "at least, he never has been to see us again."

"But if he comes?"

"I am afraid it will be useless; he will have kept me waiting too long."

Among other things—for all that lovers say should not be recorded—Captain Grant asked, rather abruptly:

"Can you tell me, Beatrice, who your mother is staying with near Coleham?"

Only at that minute did Beatrice remember that she had heard that morning of their new fortune.

"You have not heard! Mother has come into a property. Isn't it strange? Just when I was fancying we had lost all our money! I don't seem to care at all about it now. But that is selfish of me. The house is called the Warren. The owner wasn't very nice, I believe."

"I don't remember the house, but years ago I stayed at that place."

Somehow Captain Grant would not mention to Bee that it was there he had seen the two girls who reminded him so much of the Gordons.

"I am glad. It will seem nicer if you know it. You will come there and stay with us. Frances says it is a nice house, all amidst a lovely heath-country. What a change it will be for the three Miss Gordons! But I am most glad for Austin. I do long for you to know him; he is something like you; very unlike us. He is really good. Some friend of his—a tutor he had when he was a boy—made him so, I think. Mother didn't like it at first; she said it was putting foolish ideas into his head; but since he has turned out so well, and never been any trouble to her, she does not say anything about it. He now and then talked to me, as I was the only one who would listen to him. Minnie and Frances can't bear what they call 'cant.' But it is not cant with Austin; it is something that makes him act differently from others. I do hope," added Bee, looking up into Captain Grant's face—a handsome face, with the stamp of a gentleman and a Christian on it—"I do hope that some day he will find some one to love him; but not some one like—the one who made you suffer."

"You must help him; sisters can do so much. Ah, Beatrice, I never had one; my wife must be all to me—sister, and mother, and friend. My father longs to know you better, dearest. I have told him everything. He fancied that I meant your sister Minnie when I said Miss Gordon. She was very much admired on the ice, and I was obliged to talk to her about you when you were not there."

Bee wished secretly he had not done so!

"I am glad you cared for me before your fortune came. I know it would really make no difference; but if it had been the other way, you might have had to ask a dressmaker to be your wife."

"But always a lady, darling. How can a woman's occupation make her different from what she is? If men could recognise that, they wouldn't run so much after heiresses. But you must come home; you will be tired."

Beatrice would not let Captain Grant come in to lunch, much to his disappointment; but Bee wished to spare him, and she dreaded the Captain seeing one of the Miss Gordons in a bad temper. Happiness was very visible on her face, and she could not chase it away.

A REAL MUNCHAUSEN.

It is a curious fact that from the earliest time of history up till very late days, the principal subjects for romances and adventures have been found in the lives of celebrated outlaws and criminals. How many tales, poems, and plays have been furnished by Robin Hood and his merry men! What glamour of romance has been woven round the escapes and adventures of Jack Sheppard and Dick Turpin! And, to come to later years, out in Australia the favourite hero of countless romantic escapades has been a first-class criminal—Ned Kelly the Bushranger! Taking this to start with, perhaps no great surprise will be felt when we take up a book* which tells the story of a life which contains as much romance as can be wished for, during which Jorgensen was "Monarch of Iceland, Naval

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* "The Convict King," being the Life and Adventures of Jorgen Jorgensen, retold by James Francis Hogan. Ward and Downey.

Captain, Revolutionist, British Diplomatic Agent, Author, Dramatist, Preacher, Political Prisoner, Gambler, Hospital Dispenser, Continental Traveller, Explorer, Editor, Expatriated Exile, and Colonial Constable." This is a goodly list, to be sure, and Baron Munchausen himself could hardly furnish a better.

The book is re-written from Jorgensen's own autobiography published in the "Van Diemen's Land Annual" for 1835 and 1838, and it must be premised that, occasionally, as has been the case with other and more distinguished people in writing their autobiographies, his account of his misfortunes and difficulties hardly agree with the real truth.

Jorgensen, as his name would imply, was a Dane, having been born in Copenhagen in 1780, and as a boy was filled with a longing for a life on the sea. In due time he was bound apprentice on an English collier, on which he served for four years, becoming well acquainted with the art of navigation, and, moreover, learning English. At the age of eighteen he made his plunge into foreign climes by going out in a whaler which was sailing for the Cape of Good Hope. Thence he made a short voyage to Algoa Bay, and on his return he joined the "Lady Nelson," a small surveying vessel which, with the "Investigator," was bound to Australia to ascertain whether there really existed straits between Van Diemen's Land and Australia. Having settled this point, the expedition returned to Sydney, and in 1803 returned, under Captain Bowen, R.N., to assist in establishing a settlement on the Derwent in Van Diemen's Land. Little did our friend think how much more he was fated to see of Van Diemen's Land.

The present site of Hobart Town is thus described: "The spot on which the Bank of Van Diemen's Land and the Hope and Anchor now stand, was then an impervious grove of the thickest brushwood, surmounted by some of the largest gum-trees that this island could produce. All along the rivulet as far as the present site of the Upper Mill, was unpassable from the denseness of the shrubbery and underwoods, the huge collections of prostrate trees, and the dead timber, which had been washed down by the stream and strewn all around. These had in parts blocked up the channel, and many places that are now dry and built upon, or cultivated in fruitful gardens, were then covered with rushes and water."

Having founded the settlement and served on two smaller surveying expeditions, Jorgensen left His Majesty's Service and went to New Zealand in charge of a sealer; and after this he returned to England on board a whaler, which was driven three thousand miles out of its way and obliged to put into Otaheite for provisions. He arrived in England in 1806 and returned immediately to Copenhagen, which he found in the midst of a bombardment by the English. In 1807 he was placed in command of a Danish vessel of twenty-eight guns, which was to make reprisals against the English. Jorgensen was successful in capturing eight or nine ships, and then was himself taken prisoner after an engagement lasting three-quarters of an hour.

This capture led to the most wonderful event of Jorgensen's life—his short reign as King of Iceland. The inhabitants of that place were in a semi-starving condition, for the island being a Danish possession, and there being war between England and Denmark, the ordinary supplies from England were cut off. However, permission was granted to a vessel to sail with supplies, and Jorgensen took charge, though it is not quite clear how a prisoner of war on parole could leave the country. The voyage was a success, and another, with two vessels this time, was immediately undertaken on its completion; but on the arrival of these vessels they were not allowed to land their stores, a proclamation to that effect having been issued by the Governor. Jorgensen would not go back, so he determined to go on as far as he could; and on the day after his arrival—it was a Sunday—he landed with twelve sailors, marched up to the Governor's house, walked in, found Count Tramp, arrested him, escorted him on board ship, and in fact started a snug little revolution all by himself, on his own authority, during church-time.

The people, believing him to be backed up by the British Government, and, moreover, wanting the supplies he brought, naturally submitted cheerfully.

Jorgensen now began issuing proclamations right royally, full of "We, Jorgen Jorgensen," and went in for being a monarch who believed in popular reforms. Among his measures were trial by jury, free representative government, relief from some taxes, the deficiency being made good on the importation and exportation of British goods, and an increase in the salaries of the clergy. He also relieved the inhabitants from all debts due to the crown of Denmark, and took measures for the defence of the harbour. Selections from one of his proclamations will show the royal style he adopted:

"Reikevig, July 11th, 1809.

"In our proclamation dated the 26th of June, 1809, it was requested that the nearest districts should, within a fortnight, and the more distant within a certain limited time, send in representatives to consult as to what was best to be done in the present exigency. We find, however, that the public officers have far from facilitated such a meeting, and we are therefore under the necessity of no longer resisting the wish of the people, who have earnestly solicited us to manage the administration of public affairs. . . It is therefore declared,

"That we, Jorgen Jorgensen, have undertaken the management of public affairs, under the name of Protector, with full power to make war or conclude peace with foreign powers. . .

"That the great seal of the island shall no longer be respected, but that all public documents of consequence shall be signed by my own hand, and my seal (J.J.) fixed thereunto. . .

"The situation we now are in requires that we should not suffer the least disrespect to our person, neither that any one should transgress the least article of this, our proclamation. . . We therefore solemnly declare that the first who shall attempt to disturb the prosperity or common tranquillity of the country shall instantly suffer death without benefit of the civil law.

"All sentences and acts of condemnation must be signed by us before they can be executed. "JORGEN JORGENSEN."

Jorgen most certainly did not suffer from modesty or a retiring disposition. But his reign did not last long. His own account of the end is that he went to England to try and conclude a commercial treaty, and was arrested for having broken his parole, an English man-of-war which had called at Iceland having brought back false representations and prejudiced the British Government against him; but it seems more likely that he returned to England, having been forced thereto by the commander of the man-of-war, who considered that the revolution might compromise England, Jorgensen having started from England, and apparently being under English protection. However, back he came, and, as before said, was arrested and sent to Tothill Fields Prison; and thus ended an extraordinary episode—a bloodless revolution.

This imprisonment led to Jorgensen's ruin, for the intimates he made there eventually brought about his downfall. After a short imprisonment, he was released on parole, and his Tothill Fields friends soon found him out, and he was quickly initiated into the mysteries of gambling, and became a confirmed gambler. It was not long before he was reduced to utter destitution; and, becoming possessed with a spirit of wandering, and procuring, somehow or other, a little money, took passage to Lisbon—again not seeming to have held his parole in much regard. More gambling reduced him to entering as a seaman in a British gunboat, and in 1813 he was invalided home, and soon found himself in London once more. Supplies which he received from his friends in Copenhagen, were soon lost again by his old fault; and his gambling this time ended in his arrest for debt and his committal to the Fleet, where he remained two years. In this seclusion he employed himself in writing, amongst other things, a tragedy suggested by the execution of the Duc d'Enghien, and a statistical essay on the Russian Empire.

Jorgensen had a way of tumbling on his feet, for now he not only had his debts paid, but received funds for a foreign secret diplomatic mission from the Government. The money was enough to take him abroad, and it was arranged that, when across the sea, he might draw upon London for reasonable travelling expenses. But again his propensity for gambling was too much for him; the money which had been advanced to him was soon gone; and he had to work his passage to Ostend as a common sailor in a sailor's garb. Once across, as soon as he could persuade the bankers that he was the right man, despite his clothes, he could draw for further expenses, and go upon his journey. He saw the battle of Waterloo, reached Paris, and concluded his mission; received a further mission to Warsaw, and of course again lost the money advanced to him, and had to go forward as best he could without money. By cool, barefaced impudence and false pretences, he seems to have not only got on pretty well, but to have been quite a personage in some places through which he passed. He tells how he was introduced to a Grand Duke with whom he had some pleasant conversation; with Goethe, too, he claims acquaintance; Niebuhr and Burnsdorf he also honoured, and finally he reached Berlin, where he won a small prize in a State lottery, with the result that gambling once more set in, and Jorgensen stayed a long time instead of proceeding on his mission, whatever it was. When he did start, he fell among thieves, was fleeced, and gave up all idea of reaching Warsaw, and resolved to return to London; and to avoid certain small debts, started without going through the form of applying for a passport, the want of which must have taxed his ingenuity pretty stiffly. He tells us that, notwithstanding his shortcomings, he was favourably received by the Foreign Office on his return to London, and handsomely rewarded. They must have been freer with their money in those days than they are now.

The next three years (1817 to 1820), although he formed the determination of emigrating, were spent in gambling, more or less, till eventually he was arrested on a charge of having pawned certain articles of furniture belonging to his landlady. He was tried, and sentenced to seven years' transportation; but instead of being sent beyond the seas, he was placed in Newgate, and that, not as an ordinary prisoner, but as assistant in the hospital. Here he remained twenty months, when he received a pardon on condition that he quitted the kingdom within a month from his release.

He tells us a good deal about Newgate, and makes the assertion that no one who was in Newgate while he was there, for crimes and misdemeanour, was innocent. One of his prison acquaintances was a captain of a slave-ship, whose notes on Madagascar were arranged in prison with Jorgensen's help. He also tells us how in those days money was a useful thing in a criminal trial, and gives a long account of a case in which it bought a man off from a charge of embezzlement. His reflections, too, on the effect of punishment as a deterrent, and on such like subjects, are sound, and stamp him as a shrewd thinker.

Jorgensen then was released from Newgate; but once more falling to his besetting sin, overstayed his month, was betrayed to the police, re-arrested, tried and sentenced to death for violating the condition of his liberation. This sentence was commuted to transportation for life. He, however, was in his old position in the hospital at Newgate for three years after this sentence, before he was sent to the hulks to be sent out in the first transport for the colonies. It was in 1825 that he went on board the hulk; and he tells us that, when "a convict passes over the gangway of a hulk, he is searched for money, or other articles of value. He is then taken below, and entirely stripped; is subjected to an ablution; has his hair cut off, and a prison dress put on; irons are placed on his legs, and next morning he is sent to hard labour in the dockyard. A very few, as a matter of great favour, are permitted to wear a slight bezel on one leg, and are exempted from dockyard labour. I was one of those thus privileged."

Jorgensen does not seem to have been as happy in the hulks as he might have been elsewhere, and was only too delighted when orders came for him to proceed to Van Diemen's Land in the "Woodman," which was carrying convicts to that colony. On board the "Woodman" he was placed in the hospital as dispenser and assistant —thus again falling on his feet, as a man thus employed had privileges which made his lot much easier than that of the remaining convicts. During the voyage, fever took possession of the ship. Several convicts, and, in addition, the surgeon succumbed, leaving Jorgensen in command of the hospital. By good luck he cured the sick, and brought his ship to the Cape with a clean bill of health. Here a new surgeon was put on board for the rest of the voyage, which was ended in May, 1826; and Jorgensen gives us the following description of his feelings:

"I, who had visited the scene twenty-four years previously, when no white man occupied a single spot in Van Diemen's Land, and when all around us was a wilderness, felt myself strangely moved by the changes that time and colonial energy had brought around in my absence. Along the banks of the river I observed a long series of farms and pleasant-looking cottages; but it was when we reached the harbour on the following morning that my astonishment became truly great. It has fallen to my lot to visit many colonies and settlements on this globe, and if I had not witnessed the amazing transformation now disclosed to my view on the site where Hobart Town reared its novel and beautiful aspect, I could have formed no conception of it from any published description, and I should have rejected the truth as an exaggeration."

Once landed, Jorgensen took service

under a Government official, but not liking the place, applied to be transferred to the service of the Van Diemen's Land Company. After some time, the transfer was allowed, and in the Company's service he remained, being occupied in exploring expeditions, during which dangers and difficulties were continually cropping up from blacks and bushrangers. Once the escape of his party from starvation was very narrow, and a great deal too close to be comfortable. In 1827 he received a ticket-of-leave, which enabled him to seek what employment he liked, instead of being assigned to a particular master as before. The employment he took was the editorship of a newspaper in Hobart Town, which he held for some time, and then was appointed by the Government to the post of constable in the field-police, and assistant clerk to the police-magistrate in the Oatlands District. In this capacity his travels over the island recommenced; and he tells us that the life suited him so well, that he was scarcely ever more happy in his life than at this time. And he seems to have done his work well, waging fierce war with the bushrangers, and keeping their depredations down to a small amount. In 1829 he took part in a great effort to drive out the blacks, the plan being to drive them into a corner of the island, and then ship them off to a small neighbouring isle. The plan was not successful, the scrub being too much in favour of the natives; but they received a fright which kept them in better order than before. It was just before this expedition that Jorgensen received his pardon; and he tells us that it was a long time before he could recognise himself as a free man, so used had he become to being a prisoner; and he found when he was a prisoner he was much more willing as a policeman to incur risks than when he became a free agent again, when life was a matter of importance to him.

Here Jorgensen's autobiography ceases. He lived till his sixty-fifth year, and died in Hobart Hospital in privation and obscurity. The book which furnishes this article concludes with extracts from his published works, which have been mentioned, and shrewd enough his opinions are. Take this opening passage from "The State of Christianity in the Island of Otaheite":

"If men who settle among the heathen for the purpose of introducing Christianity would, in the first instance, not open their lips at all about the superior merit of our religion, or depreciate that of the country in which they reside, they would find much less opposition. Let them begin with showing the natives all the good-nature and friendship they can; let them endeavour to instruct the natives in useful art and social centres."

The old gambler and convict was by no means a fool. Books on religious subjects seem to have been his greater care, although two tragedies of his are to be found in the British Museum.

Thus we will leave Jorgen Jorgensen, and wonder what sort of career his would have been had he never been initiated into the excitement of gambling. Would he have been a good citizen, or would the spirit of adventure have broken out anyhow? Perhaps he might have become a great explorer. Anyhow, whatever he might have done, it is certain that he could by no means have led a more adventurous and varied life than he did from the crowning point of his career as King of Iceland, down to his final employment as colonial policeman, and his death in the hospital.

THE MANSION HOUSE.

In the full tide of City traffic stands the Mansion House, a building so familiar to Londoners that not one in a thousand stops to give it a second glance, or speculates as to its origin and history. Indeed, it would be dangerous to devote any particular attention to architectural surroundings when working through what is probably the busiest and most dangerous crossing in the world; and once landed on the pavement the general rush and turmoil drive everything else out of the head. Yet the scene is interesting with all its bewildering throng; the Bank, with its dull, if ornamented, dead wall, suggesting imprisoned gold; the Exchange, with its lofty portico and glittering grasshopper; and the Mansion House, heavy too, and dingy, which somehow seems to fit into the scene and complete it. It is in the fitness of things that the Lord Mayor should have his palace in the centre of the life and bustle of his commonwealth. When the byeways of the City are quiet and deserted, and the main thoroughfares are traversed by only an occasional omnibus or cab, the Mansion House may be blazing with festive lights, while Royalties and

Ministers of State, Judges, and Bishops, and the great people of the land, are driving up in long procession to its hospitable portals.

Another aspect of the Mansion House is as a centre of philanthropic or social movements. If there is some widespread calamity, flood, or famine, or destructive pestilence, in whatever corner of the world occurring, to the Mansion House the eyes of the sufferers are turned, and a Mansion House fund is often the readiest and the best administered form of aid. In solid, substantial movements of social improvement, too, the Mansion House is often a moving power. Is it a meeting that is wanted to make things go? What can be more promising than a meeting in the Egyptian Hall with the Lord Mayor in the chair? Here are letters of regret from Dukes and Marquises enclosing substantial cheques, here is a Cabinet Minister to propose a resolution and an Archbishop to second it. All this is the hall-mark of successful philanthropic movements, and loosens the purse-strings of the wealthy as nothing else can do.

Again, we have the Mansion House as a Court of Justice, where the Lord Mayor sits in his capacity of Chief Magistrate of the City. The justice-room of the Mansion House is not like an ordinary police-court. It is more comfortable, for one thing, and although the cases are of the same description, yet there is a pleasing absence of the wretchedness and squalor which often hang about the metropolitan courts. It is noon, we will say, and the Lord Mayor has just taken his seat on the bench, and there is a rush of people up the steps that lead to the portico, a rush which is vigorously stemmed by janitors in the doorway, janitors who wear the livery of the Lord Mayor instead of the ordinary policeman's blue. The Court is soon filled, and the general struggle of feet and murmur of voices is stilled by the voice of the usher as the first case is called on. There sits the Lord Mayor in his robes and with his gold chain of office, in a handsome carved chair, which bears the appropriate City motto: "Domine dirige nos." Behind him is displayed the sword of justice affixed to the oaken canopy, and below are the officials of the Court in their handsome oaken pews, and beyond a considerable crowd of solicitors and others having business at the Court. There is a convenient kind of pulpit for witnesses close to the magistrate's left hand, and the dock for prisoners stretches beyond with its iron-spiked railings.

Although it may be Monday morning, there is a commendable absence of the ordinary night charges. People rarely come into the City at night to get drunk and kick up a row; such cases where they do occur generally come from the bridges, or from the very outskirts of the City. The crowd of people, too, who fill up the public part of the Court are well-dressed and respectable, with a sprinkling among them of nice young women from shops or warehouses who are probably there as witnesses. The prisoners, too, appear to be of a superior order, not ragged or dishevelled, but superior practitioners in their various lines; for it requires a good deal of skill and address, as well as a creditable appearance, to "pinch a bit," as the saying is, in the City. Although there is a shock-headed fellow in the dock who has run off with a box of soap from a shop, yet here was possibly only a means to an end, namely, to make himself more presentable for his next exploit. But what do you say to this quiet, ladylike little woman, with the pale, sickly face and sober costume; would you give her credit for the nerve and address to come into the City and take in a shrewd City solicitor? Yet she has done it, and with such ingenuity and knowledge of the world, and all exerted to secure a single gold piece, that you can't help thinking how fine an intellect has here gone astray. But she has no kind of fight to make on her own behalf, and can only murmur that she could not see her children starve. The children are real enough, and the physical weakness and pain; she gets a merciful sentence, as sentences go, and disappears.

Literally disappears; she was here a moment since, and now she is gone, shot through a trap-door it would seem into the gloomy regions below. The effect is startling, though the means are quite simple. Some one raises what seems to be the leaf of a table, and a concealed staircase is revealed, leading to the cells below, where convicted prisoners remain till Black Maria comes to carry them off to their doom.

Among the crowd in waiting there may be discerned a considerable number of foreigners, dark and small, such immigrants as often excited the wrath of our forefathers in days gone by. For they are Flemings from the Low Countries, with their Low Dutch gabble, and there have been blows and injuries among them, and a general fracas in workshop and factory, which my lord has to settle the rights of. This he does, without any excessive penalties, after an interpreter has been sworn in, and a good deal of guttural Dutch, or what is Dutch to us, expended over the matter.

But talking of gutturals, here are some fine athletic young countrymen among the bystanders, who exchange every now and then a soft musical word in that reputedly guttural—but really very otherwise—language, namely Welsh.

"Wass it not the Lord Mayor's name was Mr. Effans?" asked one, of a bystander.

"No, not yet," is the reply; "the new Lord Mayor will be Mr. Evans."

Coming events cast their shadows before; these sturdy young Welshmen have come far just for the pleasure of seeing their countryman seated here in State. But they are a week too soon.

While this is going on behind the scenes, the Court has descended from judicial to mere administrative business. There appears a little band of citizens who have "neglected and refused," so runs the well-known form, to pay their rates. The neglect is pardonable, and the refusal generally amounts to, "Haven't got the money," and the harmless, necessary citizens depart with a little more time before them to work up ways and means. Then the interest deepens considerably, as there appears in the dock a slight and rather gentlemanly-looking young man in spectacles, while a gentleman announces, with aplomb, that he appears to prosecute for the Governor and Company of the Bank of England.

The mind involuntarily reverts to "Old Patch," and his long and adroitly managed contest with the Bank of England, whose notes he continually forged and uttered, only to be discovered at last by an accident. When discovered, "Old Patch," alias Mr. Price, finding that the game was up, hung himself in the prison cell to escape a similar fate in a more public situation. All this happened more than a hundred years ago; and again the Bank is attacked by a secret foe, and from a hidden source a stream of forged notes has begun to well forth. Now the question arises, have they reached the source, or only some fortuitous branch from the main stream?—a question which excites considerable interest in those who gaze at the quiet man with the inscrutable face, who listens so quietly to the evidence piled up against him.

As the case goes on, sunshine breaks over the City, and is reflected from the walls of adjacent buildings, casting a strange glimmer and glitter over the scene. An opening door every now and then lets in the various sounds of the great hubbub outside in the busy streets, in the busiest of their moods, and then that turmoil is suddenly cut off as the door closes, and there is nothing to distract from the stern progress of the evidence as it is being got into the depositions.

But there are two great points of interest in the scene: the inscrutable face of the prisoner in the dock, and the cause of his incarceration, a pleasing-looking document, which is handed about with many precautions—no other than the incriminated five-pound note. But at last the Court rises, as courts must rise, for refreshment. A gleam of interest comes into the face of the pale prisoner. He represents, in a deprecatory way, that he has had a fatiguing drive—he does not mention the vehicle, but no doubt it was Black Maria—and a long fast, and he hopes that he, too, may be allowed a little refreshment. That is allowed, and our inscrutable friend will lunch with the Lord Mayor under circumstances in which nobody will envy him.

But we may take advantage of the occasion to take, by the Lord Mayor's kind permission, a hasty glance of the surroundings among which his lordship holds his state during his year of office.

A door from the justice-room leads into the chief corridor—or gallery, as it may be called—which opens from the main entrance to the Mansion House, a handsome but hardly pleasing apartment, well warmed and lighted, and hung with exceedingly elegant glass chandeliers. There is an abundance of gilding, of mirrors, of velvet hangings, and rich carpets; and no doubt on occasions of high functions, when the Lord Mayor receives his guests, and the gallery is lighted up by the silks and satins of Court gowns and the brilliant uniforms of guests and functionaries, with the fathers of the City in their robes and furs, the place has a sufficiently splendid appearance. Such a scene is reproduced in a beautiful tapestry panel, from the Royal School of Tapestry at Windsor, which now adorns the walls. The subject is the reception of the Queen at the Mansion House, in her Jubilee year, by the then Lord Mayor. The portraits are excellent, the figures well grouped, and the whole is a fine specimen of modern tapestry. It is matched on the other side by a panel from the same workshop, which depicts the reception of Queen Elizabeth by the Lord Mayor of her period; and as the costumes of the age in question lend themselves better to pictorial illustration than the garish uniforms of to-day, the effect is altogether better; while the toning down of the colours, due rather to the effects of hot-water pipes than to the lapse of time, is perhaps an advantage.

Out of the gallery a door leads into the Lord Mayor's parlour, otherwise called the Venetian Parlour, a small but well-proportioned room with a fine ceiling, and with plenty of gilding and heavy mouldings, which does not justify its name by any direct evidence of Venetian influence. Then there is the Long Parlour, as it is called, which is used as the State dining-room, except on occasions of high functions, when the Egyptian Hall may be found richly adorned for the banquet, and the tables spread with many hundred covers.

The sight of the Egyptian Hall relieves the mind from a certain apprehension. There is nothing Egyptian about it. The colossal ugliness affected by that peculiar people has no place in the Mansion House. The hall is really a fine one, somewhat dark and sombre in its appearance by daylight—or rather by the want of daylight—a defect not to be attributed to the City atmosphere, but to the fact that it is badly lighted by a narrow window of stained glass at each end. Yet the dusky light is pleasant enough, especially after the heated glare of the streets in summer-time; and on the occasion of public meetings it gives an effect of mystery to the proceedings which is rather impressive. The effect is aided, too, by the acoustic properties of the hall; voices are heard as hollow murmurs, or sibilant whispers, while a clarion-like delivery is repeated in ringing echoes among the lofty columns. But the hall lights up well; and when there is question of the clatter of dishes and the ring of glasses, when the tables are loaded with plate and the bare corners of the room are filled with palms, and ferns, and exotics, then the old hall looks its best, and the echoes that ring about the place are rather pleasant than otherwise.

So far it has been a question of the Lord Mayor and of the function in which he is chiefly concerned; but it must be remembered that the Lady Mayoress bears a considerable part in all that goes on at the Mansion House. Here are her State drawing-rooms, all adorned in a kind of light amber satin and gold. These are pleasant rooms enough, although, as their mistress is only in occupation for a year, and has no incentive to display her own taste in their adornment, they have the stiff, unused appearance of State apartments in general.

A rumour, indeed, has run its course through the City, and has been echoed in the daily press, that the Mansion House in its present locale is a monument already marked for destruction. It is solidly built enough, indeed, to last for ages; its enormous walls ensure a pleasant quietude within, although in the midst of the full chorus of the City's roar.

Although a project for a new and magnificent "hotel de ville" upon the Thames Embankment has been, so to say, in the air for some years past, yet there it is likely to remain as an architectural dream of the future, failing the advent of some high-spirited and adventurous Lord Mayor, who may be ambitious to leave behind him the fame of another Whittington, in the embellishment and beautifying of the City.

As it is, the Mansion House has no great savour of antiquity about it. Its foundations were laid in the year 1739, and Sir C. Gascoigne, in 1753, was the first Lord Mayor to inhabit it. Before then, the Lord Mayor lived in his own house during his year of office, and gave his entertainments either at the Guildhall or at the hall of his own livery company.

Dance, the City architect—whose one success was Newgate Prison, which reflects in its façade the gloom and terrors of a prison—was the architect of the Mansion House. The site was one of the City markets, known as the Stock Market, which was the chief fruit and vegetable market of its time, resorted to by the gardeners with their stores of flowers and herbs. Here the City dames resorted in the mornings with their maids, who carried the great market baskets, to lay in their household stores. For here were also stalls for fish and flesh, while a row of trees on the east and a trickling fountain gave freshness and verdure to the scene. Close by was the ancient church of Woolchurchhawe, and there, in the days of Charles the Second, stood an equestrian statue of that monarch, originally designed for

Sobieski, the conqueror of the Turk, in which he was represented as triumphing over Sedition in a turban, prostrate under his horse's feet. Here, also, were the City stocks for the punishment of petty offences, and it might seem as if these gave their name to the market. But this is hardly the case, as there was an old stone house called the Stock, adjoining the market, which is mentioned in deeds of the period. Samuel Pepys chronicles, in 1668, the tenth of September: "The stockes now pulled quite down: and it will make the coming into Cornhill and Lumber Street quite noble."

Quite noble, certainly, is the appearance of the scene from the portico of the Mansion House, the sun lighting up massive buildings round about, and giving a gay and festive air to the kaleidoscopic glitter of vehicles and throng of people that are hurrying to and fro. Here is the Lord Mayor's coach, with the four prancing horses, the dignified coachman, and resplendent servants. It is a distinct element of the scene, and carries the mind back to the long succession of centuries that have witnessed this civic state.

But of the long array of Lord Mayors—as far as the Mansion House is concerned, we have only to deal with the more modern instances—Beckford will be remembered, who "cheeked" King George in the very presence chamber, and Brass Crosby, who sent the messenger of the House to prison, and was himself conveyed to the Tower. There was a stirring scene at the Mansion House, you may believe, when the citizens saw their own chief magistrate haled off to prison, and the angry mob would have captured the Deputy Sergeant of the House and hung him there and then but for the active interposition of his prisoner. Jack Wilkes, too, was a notable figure at the Mansion House; and of different fame is Sir William Curtis, the reputed author of the famous saying about the three R's—Reading, 'Riting, and 'Rithmetic, now so potently to the front. As an encouragement to 'prentices and young men in the City, we have examples of Lord Mayors who have risen from the ranks of labour. Sir William Staines, 1800, had been a bricklayer's labourer; Lord Mayor Shaw, in 1806, had come a penniless lad from Kilmarnock; Alderman Kelly, 1837, began life in the City as errand boy; and many other instances may be quoted. Of literary Lord Mayors there is no great record, but Samuel Birch, 1815—of the great and ancient firm of pastrycooks in Cornhill—was a writer of songs and dramas which had some success in their day. Birch was known in the City as Pattypan; and earlier we had Mash-tub, in the person of Coombe, the brewer, a mighty gambler, who disputed at hazard and faro with Beau Brummel and the heroes of the Regency. Sir Matthew Wood, too, will be remembered, the great champion of Queen Caroline, who was a druggist in Falcon Square.

But the Lord Mayor's coach has driven off, and the Lord Mayor's servants are waiting to close the door; and it is an easy descent from the dignity and pomp of the Mansion House to the whirl of traffic in Cheapside.

ON BEING A FATHER.

This really seems to be about the most responsible position a man can occupy in the course of his little pilgrimage on the planet Earth.

From the moment when the neat, white-capped nurse descends to the husband in the dining-room—who, according to the rules of precedent, must be assumed to be walking up and down the room in a state of extreme anxiety, with his hands in his trouser pockets—and says, with a bright face, and in a sort of congratulatory tone:

"If you please, sir, the baby's born, and it's a boy, and both are doing as well as can be expected."

From that moment, I say, the father realises that he is a very different being from the thoughtless bachelors around him, and even from the men who are married but have no children.

Thenceforward, he is concerned less about his own welfare than about that of his small pink-and-white son and heir. If he have but the ordinary feelings of a father, he would rather lose a couple of thousand pounds on the Stock Exchange than the little, restless atom upstairs who is supposed to be his facsimile in miniature.

This is one of the reasons why it seems such prodigious folly to marry very early.

It is not only natural, but extremely right, that one should, at the beginning of life, be anxious mainly about oneself and one's chances, whether of self-improvement, enjoyment, or emolument. It is the time to expand and become as proper a man as possible. A measure of selfishness is then a duty to oneself: it is the seed sown for the harvest of the by-and-by. One may even be licensed to commit a certain number of simple follies, which would be very indecorous in the future, but which are educative rather than otherwise in the springtime of life. If they involve unpleasant consequences, so be it; we can afford then to meet the bill, and laugh while acquitting it. It is a warning, if nothing else. Anon, we shall no doubt become more sapient.

By this worldly and sensible track the average man arrives at the goal of marriage. He is old enough to know that things are not always what they seem. He is not likely to be seduced into any of those fatal indiscretions which tend to break up a home as easily as one cracks a stick of barley-sugar. He has seen and enjoyed enough of life on his own account. It is now time to find his pleasure in more generous sources—in the happiness of his wife, and the gradual growth and unfolding of the mind of his offspring. If to these private joys he can add the satisfaction of knowing that he is a valued member of society, and a patriot in his devotion to his native land, he may, upon the whole, consider that his cup of contentment is as full as it need be.

Upon the other hand, think of the condition of the man who takes a wife as soon as he comes of age. He is really a boy, and not a man; and not a whit less of a boy after than before his marriage. The pity is that he should thus bar himself from the legitimate developement which was his lot until he traversed it by his impetuous marriage. But, once married, he is like the traditional child suckled upon gin.

For a little while, no doubt, he goes about the world holding his head high, and much elated. It seems a fine feat to have got a home of his own at his time of life. How he pities, or affects to pity, forlorn old bachelors of four or five-and-twenty, who pass their time with cards, pipes, and childish games in the open air! They smile when they meet him, or talk of his promotion to the number of the Benedicts. But their smiles are smiles of envy. If they could, they would do as he has done. They lack money, or courage, or public spirit; and so they must tarry in single wretchedness until they have prospered adequately in each or all of these particulars.

Presently, of course, the scene changes. The young wife chafes even as the young husband chafes. She finds her lord and master wanting in all or most of those solid qualities which she feels innately are part of the endowment of a full-grown man—such a man as ought to be at the head of the home. He is as empty-headed as she is. The discovery of this is not likely to foster in her much of that wifely esteem which does often take the place of a vanished or weakened affection.

Nor is he at all behindhand as a critic of the dear companion of his simple joys. He has begun to feel the silken threads of home as if they were solid fetters of steel. No longer can he speed hither and thither about the land at will, as in the old time. The blood is hot within him; he yearns for perpetual motion even as when he was in his teens; in common with other young men of his own age, he has a hundred aspirations which he desires to satisfy. But it is out of the question—he is married. He has to rule his life by a code of conduct different wholly to that of the bachelor. He must not do this, he must not do that. "Plague upon it" he is tempted to cry a hundred times a day, "would I had never been such a fool as to marry!"

Perhaps the hardest trial of all lies in the fact that he finds sympathy nowhere. If he is out of humour with his poor little wife, perhaps not even on speaking terms with her, he will have to make heaven his confidant. Experienced Benedicts to whom he opens his heart do not regard him as a being upon their plane, and do not attempt to comfort him. They view him as a young fool. His sufferings, sad to say, afford them not a little entertainment. Moreover, they know full well that he must untangle his own knot, that it is a ravel of which no one else is likely to have the clue. If he succeeds, well and good: he will gain their regard. If he fails, well, he fails, and that is the end of it. The world will, it is probable, continue its course even if the poor young "fool," in a fit of remorse and passion, blows his wife's brains out, or casts himself into a river.

Nor will our unfortunate friend obtain many sincere condolences from his bachelor companions, or the more amiable of his wife's sex. The former will shrug the shoulder at and chaff him. It is as sweet to their human nature as it is to the more accomplished Benedicts to perceive that he has made a false step. So this is the outcome of that great event upon which he plumed himself so cavalierly! Well, conceit has had a trip, and so much the better. That is what they are prone to say. Nor if they are honourable men will they venture to try to abate the youth's disgust with conjugal life by making much or little of the conduct of his wife. In the name of manliness let him face his bargain as best he can.

The years that the prudent bachelor devotes to experience and observation the immature Benedict consecrates to petulance and complaining. It is really a pitiful sight to see him with a baby in his arms. What is the infant like to learn from such a father? Few, very few, are the men who can, like Lord Eldon, marry at nineteen or twenty, and succeed.

"I find," says Nathaniel Hawthorne in one of his letters, "it is a very sober and serious kind of happiness that springs from the birth of a child. It ought not to come too early in a man's life—not till he has fully enjoyed his youth—for methinks the spirit can never be thoroughly gay and careless again after this great event. We gain infinitely by the exchange, but we do give up something, nevertheless."

"Great event" is a phrase a bachelor would never think of applying to the birth of a child. To borrow Charles Lamb's words, when one considers "how little of a rarity children are—that every street and blind alley swarms with them—that the poorest people commonly have them in most abundance—that there are few marriages that are not blest with at least one of these bargains—how often they turn out ill and defeat the good hopes of their parents, taking to vicious courses, which end in poverty, disgrace, the gallows, etc.," one is prone rather to think a baby one of the most trivial and dubious of achievements. Yet the natal notices in the newspapers are enough to prove that it is not really so. Those bold words: "On the twentieth inst., the wife of John Smith, Esq., of a son," mean a vast deal to father Smith and his wife. Further, they are a sort of circular letter from John Smith to his friends, which may be construed something after this manner:

"MY DEAR FELLOWS,—Now that I am a father, and especially of a boy, who will no doubt tread in my footsteps, I feel constrained to turn over a new leaf. Henceforth, you must think of me rather as the solid corner-stone of a household than as the vine against the wall, which flourishes its shoots in the teeth of every breeze, and only sticks against the bricks where it has a mind to stick. I shall no longer bet, nor stay out after seven o'clock, nor travel anywhere without my wife (and John, junior), nor omit going to church on Sundays, nor subscribe to those various little bachelor societies about which I think the less said the better; nor think of anything which does not bear immediately upon my business profession and the duties of a husband and a father. A time will come when you, too, will feel as I do, and till then forbear to judge me. I know you think I am stiffening into a heavy old fool; but wait awhile, my dear friends. Two of you have got to be sponsors to our dear little babe, bear that in mind, for you will hear more of it ere long; and so, for the present, I take my leave,

"JOHN SMITH (a Father)."

You may think yourself, as people go, by no means so inestimable a sort of man, until you come to reflect that you are responsible for another human being who will probably by-and-by present you with a positive picture of yourself, having the germs of your many vices and your few virtues very clearly infused into it.

That, it seems to me, is one of the reasons why the married man is so very—laudably, of course—scrupulous about his behaviour when he owns a little mortal some eighteen inches long—bone of his bone and blood of his blood. The dear fellow forgets that the child has already received its essential individuality, an individuality due largely to the nature of the father before he became a father. True, he may do much to prevent the evolution of those too-human qualities which lie waiting for their season under the plump little body in the cradle. He may even, with the aid of his wife—hardly without it—train up the babe in the paths of extraordinary sanctity, in spite of the evil inclinations latent in it. But he cannot, by any stretch of fancy or endeavour, do away really with the influence of his original and subsequent nature—before marriage. The effects are there, though they may, for a time or for eternity, be neutralised.

To some of us it is no doubt a relief to give our faith to the teaching of the learned who tell us that a man owes his nature as much to his grandsire as to his father. This doctrine of atavism seems to take a vast deal of responsibility off our shoulders. So also does the notion that a boy must get all his training from his mother first of all; secondly, from the public school, and perhaps the university; and last and chief of all, from the world itself, into which, once his education may be said to be finished, he cannot too soon be turned adrift.

Of course, however, one cannot really shirk the situation. If the little boy in the cradle, which it pleases us to kick to and fro—half in pride and half in contempt—when we set foot in the nursery, is to be under obligation to his father's father for his character, what about the little man's children, when he comes to years of discretion and manhood in his turn?

We ought to face the liability, though it be so remote, and even problematical. But it is as if one were to begin to worry about the necessity of meeting a bill at twenty or thirty years' date as soon as it was signed. Surely a most decided feat of supererogation!

As Hawthorne says, there must be a great deal of uneasiness, and even melancholy, contingent upon the birth of one's first child. It ought to be still worse when the tenth comes into the world. That, however, it seldom is. The novelty of the achievement is by then quite worn out. The accomplished father no longer sits with his chin in his hand, and makes resolutions of an exemplary kind, all having as their aim the perfection of the puling, indeterminate little mortal upstairs, who wakes at such uncanny hours in the night as if to give papa abundant opportunity of conning over his uncomfortable past, and tossing about in an imaginary attire of sackcloth and ashes before he can fall asleep again. Not a bit of it. He is concerned chiefly, if not solely, with the increase in his expenses which the ninth or tenth little Smith implies; with the trial of searching for new godparents of a reputable kind; and with the domestic shifts whereby he may be preserved as much as possible from the inconvenience that attends upon such a quiverful of olive-branches.

It is the first step that tells, in the composition of a family, as in the making of a career, and much else. So the conscientious parent is apt to think more gravely of his position as father of one boy than as father of ten boys, and perhaps even more gravely than human nature in its most refined phase would wish him to. I wonder whether the Emperor of Morocco allows a single thought of his paternal responsibilities to interfere with the placid pleasure of his life. It seems improbable. He has a multitude of wives; and if he can call all his children by their individual names, it is as much as may be required of him. Here, too, the somewhat agreeable doctrines of the Mahomedan religion come as a bar to the anxiety which waits upon most Christian parents. His various boys will run the race that has been appointed for them, in complete independence of their father's strivings. They will live for their appointed time, do their appointed works, and then die in the hour which has been prescribed for their departure to Paradise, and the presence of the Prophet.

One of the most obvious duties of a father is to do what he can to give his child or children some kind of a heritage. He ought not to leave nothing but debts behind him; and yet this is not infrequently done. If he be insolvent, surely his last moments ought to be a trifle harrowing, and especially if neither his wife nor his children have the least idea of his pecuniary difficulties. They may almost be excused if they fail to hold his memory in honour when they discover that his death means for them a sudden and humiliating step from affluence to poverty.

Doubtless many an embarrassed bachelor dies quite peaceably for all the burden of his debts. His creditors may get what relief they can from his trivial effects, the execrations they will offer as a tribute to his memory. He does not mind very much if the world suffers a little for his presence in its midst. At any rate, he has not been a source of suffering to wife and children.

In Corsica, and certain other countries but half or a quarter Christianised, the child receives heritages of a profoundly exceptionable kind. The mortally-wounded sire, the victim of a vendetta, who bids them bring his little boy to him, and then dabbles the child's fingers in the blood of his wound, and makes the infant tongue repeat a horrible oath of vengeance, is even worse than an insolvent father. It is difficult for us to judge; but it seems as if none but lads with more of the brute than the human being in them, could help at times wishing they had been spared such an inheritance as this. A Corsican would not, of course, admit that it is so. He would cherish his vow as a sacred promise, and at the first opportunity would fulfil it.

This paper may be concluded with a

brief reference to an obsolete custom in the sister island of Sardinia, which the profane bachelor may think well suited in its application to the unwise Benedicts. It is as fine an illustration of worldly gratitude as one may discover in a day's march.

It was a habit, then, with the Sardes to put their parents out of the way when they fancied the old folks had lived long enough. One does not know exactly whether or no the parents had a voice in the matter. We know only that the gentle sons were wont to set their progenitors by the side of a ready-made grave, knock them on the head, and tumble them into the excavation. After a while, it was usual to call in disinterested undertakers, who relieved the sons of this painful task. So it continued to be until Christianity and other civilising agents put an end to the custom.

Legend, which tells us thus much, does not proceed to say how the bachelor Sardes were disposed of. The inference is that they were not interfered with; but had the satisfaction of living on until Nature cut their threads. For one can hardly conceive of a stalwart bachelor of some threescore and ten sitting tamely by the side of his grave and waiting for a nephew to knock him upon the head. The nephew might yearn for his uncle's inheritance; but that might be the very reason of the uncle's distaste for a violent death, even though at the hands of his heir.

Giacomo Leopardi, in one of his "Pensieri," has the following suggestive words: "Examine into the lives of celebrated men—men illustrious for their deeds and not their writings—and you will find very few really great men who did not lose their fathers at an early age."

Reflection upon this ought, I suppose, to console most orphans. But it could hardly apply to the Sardes, who, with a little management, might have relieved themselves from the tyranny of a parent whenever they pleased.

In those days, being a father must have been a pleasure somewhat mixed.

BETWIXT YESTERDAY AND TO-DAY.

A STORY IN FOUR CHAPTERS.

PROLOGUE.

HE liked her, found her a pleasant-enough companion for his idle hours, and she—she loved him.

Hilda Boyle was one of those somewhat rare women—a woman without attractiveness. It was not that she was so exceedingly plain; it was not that any deformity disfigured her; but in some way, mysterious and undefinable, but very patent, all the magnetism that attracts a man to a woman was wanting in her. Where women lacking both her advantages of mind and person succeeded, she failed; while Nature, with a refinement of cruelty, had endowed her with as loving a heart as ever beat. A word of sympathy, a caress, were a positive necessity to her who so rarely received them. The very lines that added sternness to the face, the tight clasp of the lips that was so cold, the reserved manner which put one at such a distance, were but, little as one would have guessed it, the marks left by a lifetime of patiently-endured heartache.

CHAPTER I.

OVERHEAD the moon was shining in all its glorious radiance, as it slowly sailed across the cloudless blue-black arc of heaven, while here and there a tiny star tried to match its twinkling light against the long silver beams.

The sea, lined and streaked with the silver light, lapped softly, lazily against the stone-built pier, which stretched far out into its peaceful waters.

Not a breath stirred the air; not a wave broke on the beach; only from afar, mellowed and softened by the distance, came the murmur of the breakers on those dangerous rocks that gave Cragsleigh such an unenviable reputation.

Half-way up the pier a band was playing, and around the gas-lit pavilion stood the crowd of seaside holiday makers, who infinitely preferred listening to the latest waltz from a comic opera, or to a cornet solo with variations on a music-hall ditty, to the contemplation of the sea in its glorious majesty with the mantle of night drawing around it.

So the two figures, leaning over the wooden railing, which was fixed above the granite masonry at the far end, were alone—quite alone. They talked little; sometimes one hazarded a remark, sometimes the other, but more often they were silent, and since silence is only possible between near friends and strangers, and they had met every day for the last fortnight, they must have been near friends.

"How still the sea is to-night," the girl said at length. "One can hardly fancy it storm-tossed and tempest-driven."

There was nothing in the words, there was everything in the soft low voice, everything to him who has ears to hear; but mostly we walk through life with wax-stopped ears, lest, perchance, we might, hearing, understand and be as the gods for wisdom.

"Yes," he answered, with quiet, unmoved matter-of-factness; "but if you had seen it raging, and dashing against these very stones, as though it would tear them out of their bed"—and he struck his stick against the granite wall around them—"you would know that the sea is a very lion to roar, after all."

"True," she answered, absently. Her eyes looked wistfully out to where the light rose and fell across the heaving sea. "Yet," and she spoke with a dreamy intonation, as one tired with the subtle tiredness of contentment, "I shall always remember the Cragaleigh sea as the emblem of peace and rest."

"I think I shall too," he acquiesced. "We workers, Miss Boyle, need a little peace sometimes. Don't you find that you always link your holiday reminiscences with cloudless skies and a suspicion of the land where it was always aft·rnoon?"

"Yes," she answered, simply, while a faint flush came and went on her cheek as he acknowledged their comradeship, "but that was perhaps because I enjoyed them best."

"You prove my case," he cried, quickly, pleased with a man's love of power, that, even in small things, the strength of the argument should be on his side.

"Do I?"

She was content to have it so. She turned her face to him. Once more the moon threw its bright light upon it. It was as an open page to read; but he saw nothing. Surely the dust must have been in his eyes as well as the wax in his ears, or he must have understood!

Up the pier the band was playing the last item on the programme. There was a final crash, a final shriek of the violins—then silence.

"Where is Hilda?"

"With Mr. Carlmore at the head of the pier."

"At last!"

There was something decidedly unpleasant about the speaker's words; something unpleasant, too, about the voice; harsh as it was in sound, jarring in ring.

"Yes, at last," repeated her companion, but in milder accents. "Come, let us look them up," she added.

"Wouldn't it be wiser——"

"No, no," interrupted Mrs. Slingsby; "such things always come to a head more quickly with a little judicious obstruction. A man makes up his mind all the more quickly for having the girl taken out of his hands a time or two."

"Very well."

Mother and daughter sauntered slowly up to the dreamers.

Hilda was still gazing out to sea, while George Carlmore was speculating idly what manner of future might be in store for the woman before him.

It did not concern him; no, not in the very least. He was particularly certain of that. But she interested him much in the same fashion as a rare beetle interests a collector; but hardly as keenly.

He was a student of men and women. As he, in his half-mocking manner would have said: "It was his stock-in-trade"; and he was perfectly aware that he had chanced upon an unusual specimen. He fully admitted her individuality; nay, more—he appreciated it, and in a dim way had an inkling that there were undercurrents of exceeding depth and strength in her nature. That there was more of shadow than of sunshine in her life with its uncongenial surroundings, and its soul-isolation, he shrewdly suspected. She carried something of this in her face. More than once he had been prompted to perform little acts of thoughtfulness by the pain in her eyes; but it was from very much the same feeling as that which caused him to relieve an animal in pain, and quite as impersonal.

Love and Hilda Boyle in conjunction had, hitherto, never crossed his mind.

"Well, have you two finished star-gazing?" Kate Slingsby's high-pitched voice broke in on the stillness, as a false note breaks in upon an exquisite harmony.

Hilda winced. Something more than the mere words jarred upon her, and George, too, felt himself ruffled without being conscious of the reason.

"I always have been accused of day-dreaming," the girl said, and she made a nervous little gesture of apology, as though to prevent his dwelling upon the ill-timed remark.

"Have you?" he answered, in his most benign manner.

"I don't believe in mooning, myself,"

explained Kate, shrilly. "Hilda would be a great deal better if she were more like other people."

Carlmore looked down at the florid face, and at the mass of untidy hair, which were visible enough in the moonlight, and a "God forbid" rose to his lips, as his eyes wandered back to the wistful eyes and the intellectual profile of the girl by his side.

"Hilda has her style, my dear," put in Mrs. Slingsby, mindful of the main chance.

"Oh, of course, of course!" amended Kate, seizing her cue.

The moonlight was merciful—it left the flush that rose to the girl's face invisible; but for the moment she stood motionless and silent in a very agony of shame, understanding the manœuvre, hardly daring to hope that he had not understood it too.

He did nothing of the sort. He was busy with something else. He was speculating again. How was it that this girl came to be so different from her surroundings? It presented a nice little problem to him, and he would very much have liked to unravel it. It was clear that she owed neither her refinement nor her intellect to them. Then it struck him, as a kind of side light, what exceedingly unpleasant connections they would be.

"Enough to make a fellow think twice," he mused. But his solicitude was all for some other fellow.

He looked at her again. So calm, so still, with her great, grey eyes, and her cold manners. Yet had he not seen the icicle thaw? If she could warm into such life under a little congenial companionship, what would she——

He paused in his meditations.

"Yes," he thought, "I should like to see her in love."

Poor blind fool!

Hilda walked home in a dream. All along the promenade, up the little lodging-house staircase, one thought kept repeating itself in her brain.

At the door of the sitting-room she paused.

"I am tired, aunt; good-night," she faltered.

She could not, would not enter to hear them tear away the veil from before her holy of holiest.

Mrs. Slingsby received the statement unquestioningly. There were times when a certain good nature supplied in her the place of tact. It was Hilda's way, and if she liked it well and good, but it was not hers.

Not so Kate, however.

"Well!" she insinuated, "you still people do know how to take care of yourselves when anything good comes in your way, it seems, after all."

Hilda's grey eyes contracted for an instant into two bright points of light. She half opened her lips to reply; then, as she drew up her supple figure, she turned hastily away.

"We needn't be so hoity-toity though we have caught a young man all to ourselves," sneered Kate, on whom the veneer lay but thinly.

"Hush, Kate," interposed her mother. "Hilda is not like you, dear. Few can take things as you can."

Then, having appeased her daughter, and again mindful of the main chance, she called after the retreating figure:

"I'll bring you something warm up to your room in a moment or two, dear."

"No, no." Hilda turned—as much vehemence in her manner as she was capable of—"I want nothing, thank you, aunt."

Nothing—nothing but to be alone.

"Oh, yes," cheerfully insisted Mrs. Slingsby, in high good humour, "we must do something to bring the roses back before to-morrow."

"You are very kind," murmured the girl, wearily; and she wondered how long it would be before she might hope for solitude.

"Not at all. There, go to bed, my dear," returned Mrs. Slingsby.

"You see what it is to be a person of importance," cried Kate after her, unable to forego a little taunt.

"Kate!" reproved her mother again.

At length Mrs. Slingsby, after many fruitless endeavours, had been persuaded to withdraw, and Hilda was left to the solitude she craved. She drew aside the white curtain, opened the window, then, kneeling down, rested her arms on its ledge. A soft breeze touched her cheek; the murmur of the sea came up to her; her eyes sought the great blue above her as though its stillness might help her to realise what was this—this something that overcame her. At first, no clear thought seemed possible. Where another woman would have blushed, she trembled, and for the first few moments her whole frame shook in short, convulsive throbs.

What was it? What did it mean? A speck of bright light caught her eyes, the echo of a firm, springing footstep. She leaned forward to watch until the figure, with its lighted cigar, passed from her sight.

She knew who it was. Had she been in doubt — and she never was even for a moment—the opening and shutting of the little wooden gate belonging to the cottage garden next door, would have decided her.

She drew back her head.

The trembling fit had passed away; her eyes once more sought the sky.

"I love him!" she said, softly.

The inarticulate tumult of her heart had found words at last. Galatea had come to life. She knelt on, breathing, palpitating, hardly able to credit the thing which her lips had uttered.

The church clock tolled the hour; it chimed a single stroke again; and still she never moved.

"I love him!"

The words ran riot in her brain, and filled all her being with a vague, delicious joy. At last, when another half hour had well-nigh winged its flight, the first perplexing doubt presented itself. With a long sigh she gave place to it. She had been in Paradise, and lo! even there was the serpent!

"Does he love me, too?" she asked of herself.

But the heavens were silent. There came from them no clear voice to pour assurance into her ear.

Quietly, systematically, with all her habitual method and coldness, she passed the events of the last fortnight, since the day she had first met him, in order before her. Her passion of a few moments ago might never have been, so calm was she.

Yes; here a look—there a tone. Stay! Was she so calm, after all? How her soul stirred within her!

Had he not sought her out, talked to her of his aims, appealed to her for sympathy, relied on her for comprehension?

Surely, surely this must be love. No other man had ever turned to her, singled her out, set her apart, as he had done. Daisy had admirers in plenty; even Kate had not been without her share; only she had stood alone, only she had been cut off from this great gladness.

There had been moments when her heart welled forth its silent protest, when the dreariness of her lot appalled her. It was not that she craved for "love," as the term is generally understood. A man because he was a man had no special interest for her. But what she did ask was a little sympathy; some one to talk to of the things that filled her life, some one on whom she could rely. She could not remember either her father or her mother. She never had a sister. Kate, with her mental horizon bounded by bonnets, and a somewhat unrestrained sense of admiration, was worse than useless. Daisy was her only refuge; and even Daisy, bright-eyed child that she was, could not minister to her intellectual requirements. It was this void that George Carlmore filled. She had thought of him as a pleasant friend—might, perhaps, have continued to do so until the end, had not Kate's insinuations kindled another flame in her heart.

To-night she forgot all this pain. Softly she closed the window; softly she crept into bed.

She had tasted of the fruit of Life, and how sweet it was! And the after taste?

Well! sufficient for the day is the evil thereof.

CHAPTER II.

It was fully daylight when Hilda awoke. She sprang from her bed, and, drawing up the white blind, looked eagerly out; then she shivered, and drew back a little. She suddenly discovered that she was very cold.

It was one of those grey mornings which so often follow a glorious day of sunshine. Everywhere the light pierced, everywhere it lent a steel-like shade to the landscape. The sea was no longer a soft, shimmering bed, ready to rock the tired wanderer to rest on its bosom; it was hard, grey, pitiless as it dashed on the beach with a sullen roar. Far out, quite at the opening of the bay, there was no heaving water to hide the rocks; instead, they lay bare, their sharp points and steep sides fully exposed to view, whilst, firmly wedged between two great masses, were two or three long spars, bearing silent witness to what had been and what was not. Even the plain, unornamental pier had been touched with the enchanter's wand last night, but it looked grim and bare enough as the girl turned her glance upon it.

Presently her eyes wandered to Woodbine Cottage. There was a strange mixture of eagerness and unwillingness about her glance. She would like to have looked upon it when the sun was shining; yet what could the daylight matter to it? It could not rob the honeysuckle of its sweetness, the rose-briar of its fragrance. True; but even it looked cold in this grey light.

Hilda left the window. The chill had crept from her limbs into her heart. Last night the one supreme fact—she loved him—had sufficed; to-day her heart clamoured for fuller knowledge. She was not one of those women who could take to themselves the undignified attitude of winning the man they love. It would have revolted her—nay, have been impossible to her. Her distrust of self would have stepped in there and have prevented her, in the same way that it stepped in now and prevented her seeing the situation clearly. The question of his love rose up before her and demanded a reply. Oh! Last night, carried away by her own emotion, she had been prepared to answer "Yes," to-day she hesitated; yet to hesitate was torture. Pitifully she went through the examination anew. Each remembered trifle came before her, and then—was it instinct, or only self-distrust?—a whisper came to her that there was sadly little to build upon.

She could not believe it. Like a star of hope was the remembrance of her aunt and Kate. They had no doubt; they must know. It was only she, who was so ignorant—what did she know of a man or of his ways?

With her absolute honesty, she acknowledged how few were her opportunities of judging. She had told herself, over and over again, that she was not as other women. She had hardly dared to hope that her hands would gather the precious fruit; and now, when it seemed in her grasp, she could not fold them and pass it by.

She lay down again, still pondering the question, in her heart growing more distrustful, each moment less certain. If only, she told herself wearily, she had a little of that self-confidence, of that world-and-all-things-in-it-are-made-for-me feeling, that so amazed her in other girls, it would be easier. But her self-analysis left her no loophole. She knew herself as she was, cold-mannered, warm-hearted, powerless to break down the barrier of reserve. The picture did not want a single characteristic—constrained, shy, unresponsive. She remembered them all.

Suddenly a new terror presented itself. Yesterday—it seemed to her that her whole life dated from then—she had met him, without consciousness, but to-day!

She covered her face with her hands.

"It was cruel! cruel!" she moaned.

The words forced themselves from between her clenched teeth, a bitter feeling of despair surged in her heart.

"Oh, Kate! Aunt," she wailed; "why did you tell me?"

How could she meet him, greet him, touch his hand, be decorously indifferent, yet sympathetic, with this secret before her? None of a woman's sweet dissimulation had been granted to her. There could be no putting of one's self aside—that was beyond her power. She would be awkward, shy, unresponsive, and he would mistake—perhaps be hurt.

She buried her face in her hands, two great tears gathered in her eyes and slowly trickled down her cheeks. The burden was very heavy upon her.

The meeting was not long delayed. George saw her wandering up and down the narrow strip of garden and came out to speak to her. He put his hand over the low fence that divided the two gardens.

"Good morning," he said.

She looked up at him, and in her eyes how good he was to look upon.

"Good morning," she faltered, and then because she felt she must say something, she added, hurriedly:

"Daisy is coming this evening."

"And who is Daisy?" he asked in indulgent tones.

"My cousin," she answered; and, she might have added, but of course she did not, "the one bright spot in my life until I met you."

"Oh!" His tone did not evince particular pleasure; he could not see how a younger, therefore more pronounced edition of Kate, could add to his enjoyment.

It chilled her, the lightest suspicion of disapprobation on his part was henceforth to trouble her. She clasped her hands nervously together and blundered out:

"Yes, my cousin. Kate's youngest sister, you know. I am sure you will like her, every one"—with an appealing glance—"likes her."

He never noticed the glance. What did the second Miss Slingsby matter to him? Why was he to like a young woman against his will?

"I am sure you will like her," Hilda repeated, more and more overpowered by her nervousness.

"I don't know about that," he told himself, irritably.

He took a few whiffs from his cigar, while she stood still, slowly plucking the leaves from a rose, her whole being one torture of consciousness.

"Did you like 'Faint Shadows'?" he asked, after a pause.

It was his work, and however sure a man may be of the perfections of his own creations, he likes to hear it endorsed by some one else.

"Yes," she faltered. "Thank you for lending it to me."

Yesterday she would have added a word or two of appreciative admiration; a sentence of trenchant criticism. They would probably have differed, but there would have been something stimulating in the difference. To-day she was tongue-tied.

"I thought it might have interested you," he began, coldly, irritated by her apparent indifference.

"It did," she gasped.

The words she wanted would not come.

"Shall I give it back to you?" she added, saying the very last thing that she had meant to say; for had he not implied that the volume was for her, and had she a more prized possession?

"If you please," he answered, coldly, without an effort to conceal his displeasure.

The colour left her face. George was examining his cigar in moody silence; there was to be no help from him. The lump in her throat swelled and grew, in another moment she must choke or cry, the tears were already close to her eyes.

She would save her dignity, whatever else were lost.

"Aunt is waiting for breakfast, I think," she said. It took all her strength to keep her voice from faltering.

"Don't let me detain you," he answered, ceremoniously; "good morning."

Not a word as to future meeting, not an allusion to the probability of their finding themselves on the pier at the same hour. Hilda turned away, her face as calm, her manner as deliberate as ever, but in her heart was the bitterest pain that even she, who had sat in the school of pain for many a long day, had ever known.

She walked straight on, through the rickety French window into the little dining-room. There was no hesitation about her movements. She was not one of those people who require preparation for an ordeal; she would rather do a disagreeable thing then and there and get it over.

Now to face Kate, who she foresaw would be bristling with innuendo, was something more than disagreeable. Still, as she told herself with a touch of grim humour, after one has been broken on the wheel, the thumb-screw must seem a very second-rate sort of affair, and this was about the proportion her meeting with Kate bore to that with Carlmore.

Both Mrs. Slingsby and Kate were seated at the breakfast-table when she entered. Kate's mouth was drawn down with a perplexed curve; her forehead had an unusual crease across it. She held an open letter in her hand.

"Good morning, aunt," said Hilda, in her steady, grave voice.

At the sight of her cousin, Kate's brow uncreased itself.

"I have it!" she cried.

"Well, dear," responded Mrs. Slingsby, encouragingly.

Hilda waited in silence for what might follow. It was clear that for the moment, at any rate, she was forgotten. She drew a long breath. Not until she measured it by the standard of her relief, at this trifling postponement, did she realise how she dreaded the ordeal.

"Hilda," commenced Kate, after a moment's deliberation, "do you know Daisy is coming this evening?"

"Yes," assented the girl in her unmoved voice.

Yet was it not her own gleam of sunshine? There was never a sunflower turned its head to the sun with greater joy than her poor heart turned itself towards this bright child; only the sunflower opens her great yellow crown in token of gratitude, and she could not so much as smile her pleasure.

"I thought you would be glad," continued Kate, sharply; "but perhaps——"

"I am," interrupted Hilda, hastening her words for fear of what might come next; "only you see I have had a letter from Daisy myself. So your news does not exactly come in the light of a surprise."

"Oh," murmured Kate, sweetly. She was in the mood to accept the olive branch. "I understand; and you see," she continued, "mother" (who, as it happened, had no word in the matter at all) "and I thought you would not mind having Daisy to yourself for one evening. The Hewitts have asked us to go over for a night. Tom" (with a conscious simper) "is at home again, and—well" (with an exaggeration of maidenly embarrassment) "we used to be very good friends. You won't mind Daisy for one evening, will you? Indeed I thought you would like it."

"I should," Hilda replied, as she absently lifted her empty cup to her lips, and set it down again.

In her heart she was asking if Kate's simper and her own misery of consciousness were one and the same thing. She felt that she would prefer to think they were not.

"What a queer girl you are," exclaimed Kate. "I don't believe you care a rush for anything. I thought you would be delighted. You used to be almost fond of Daisy."

Almost.

"Do you want me to meet Daisy?" Hilda asked, ignoring the taunt.

"Yes, if you will be so kind, dear," Mrs. Slingsby interposed.

"I don't doubt that you can find a companion," added Kate, whose memory had been jogged by her mother's smooth tones.

"At what time does Daisy's train get in?"

Kate held her peace, defeated for once. There is nothing so baffling as a person who will not understand.

"At—" began Mrs. Slingsby. "Dear me, where is the letter? Didn't she tell you?" turning to her niece.

"No; but let me help you to look for the letter. Did you open it in your room? Let me see if it is on your dressing-table."

Hilda felt that a moment's solitude would be a positive mercy.

Kate, however, produced the missing epistle from her pocket.

"At five-fifteen," she said; "and we," hastily turning over the pages of the railway guide, "go at four-five."

Then followed an animated discussion on costume, in which Hilda was constrained to take her part for fear of what might be said if she did not.

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CHAPTER XVII. GOOD-BYE.

When Grace woke up she found herself lying on Nan's bed, without being able clearly to remember how she got there. With a great effort she raised herself up; then, all at once, a flood of painful recollection swept over her. She felt that she did not yet know the worst; and even though she could not frame her fears into words, they remained with her.

Nan had only said that she and Sibyl were poor, and that they must be separated from her. Certainly she had only said that; but then came the why. What was it that made them poor, when the Warren still remained standing! Their father had been able to afford servants and many other things.

Grace looked round the room, and suddenly recognised that Nan had never been to bed. Where was she? All round the room there were signs of departure. She saw several boxes, ready packed, standing there corded and strapped.

What did all that stir mean? But then Grace recovered herself; she must not be selfish; she must think about Sibyl. She, Sibyl, must know nothing about this new trouble; she must be left in ignorance, and Grace must try to look as if nothing had happened. So she hastily dressed herself, and went softly out of the room, and then, seeing no one, she wandered out into the garden. It was not very early, but the household had taken life easily of late, and Grace was glad enough to roam about where no one could witness her misery.

Part of the grounds were left to their own sweet will, and here the heather and furze grew luxuriantly. This morning frosted cobwebs were glistening with beads of diamonds as they hung stretched between heather branches like fairy sails. Here and there were fir-trees, planted in picturesque clumps, beneath which last year's cones lay just as they had fallen, half buried by the brown, dead spikes.

Grace loved all these innumerable things of Nature. She and Sibyl had long ago invented childish games for themselves with these cones and skeleton leaves. They would pretend to keep a shop, and these would be their wares. The cones were oysters, and their tight, obstinate little cells had to be opened in order to draw out from thence the black seeds, each so beautifully fitted with its light, delicate wing, wherewith to fly away when their prison doors should be open. Sometimes cones were picked up already empty, for Nature herself had opened the prison door, bidding the seeds fly away and begin their new life on earth. Grace remembered so well how the little larch cones had been her especial favourites, and had been the most treasured in their games; but all these things appeared now to belong to a happy period which would never, never come back again. In those days the cry of the two girls had been, "When we shall be grown up," and now Grace murmured from the very depth of her heart, "If only we were children again; if only time would fly backwards!"

At last this soliloquy was interrupted by Sibyl's clear, merry voice, that recalled her to the present.

"Gracie! Gracie! Where are you? Come in to breakfast. And here is Dr. Smith waiting to say good-bye to us."

Grace made a great effort, and walked back towards the house. She had seen but little of the good Doctor since Mr. Blackston had been so frequently at the house. But now she remembered that he had asked her if she and Sibyl would come and stay with them. Why had she not accepted the invitation? Why had she believed at once in Mrs. Gordon? Now misfortune and Mrs. Gordon seemed to be synonymous.

The dining-room presented quite a cheerful appearance to-day; a huge fire burnt in the old-fashioned fireplace; the sun shone brightly through the windows. At the table Nan was making tea, and appeared, as usual, stern and quiet; but Grace's one glance sufficed to show her that she, too, had suffered, and had made up her mind to hide her pain.

"For Sibyl's sake I will not be less brave than Nan. I must be all to Sibyl now—her mother, and Nan as well—as well as her only sister."

"So you take things easy this last day, Miss Grace?" said Dr. Smith, shaking her hand as if he would shake it off. "I never expected to find you at breakfast. Why, I have been out for hours!"

"Everybody was late," said Sibyl, laughing. "Why, even Nan did not come to wake me this morning. But Grace has been up a long time; she must have got up before I was awake. When we come back, Dr. Smith, you will see how we shall be reformed. The Germans are such early risers, Nan says."

"Humph!" said the Doctor. "I've no opinion of those Germans; a drinking, smoking, short-sighted set of fellows. Every tenth man wears those conceited-looking eyeglasses or pedagogist spectacles. I shouldn't wonder, Miss Sibyl, if you come back wearing spectacles."

"No, indeed! Why, I should prefer seeing nothing to wearing such ugly things;" and Sibyl cast a look at one of the old-fashioned mirrors which hung in a corner of the room, and gave to everything and everybody fairy-like proportions.

Sibyl certainly saw a pretty picture, and she had no intention of spoiling it with spectacles!

"Did you see Mrs. Gordon, Dr. Smith?" continued Sibyl, who was very talkative this morning. "She is so pretty and so nice. She thinks we ought to see the world a little more than we have done; but Nan and Grace do not seem to care at all about it."

"Humph!" said the Doctor; but this exclamation meant a great deal with him. He half feared that Miss Evans must know all he did, though he was ignorant of her not being able to accompany the sisters. His mind was so much disturbed that he did not care to linger chattering with Sibyl; her unconscious merriment jarred upon him, because he was so sorry for her and so angry with Fate, especially Fate under the guise of the late James Gordon, "that selfish brute" he politely called him to himself.

"Well, good-bye, children," he said at last. "I beg your pardon, I should say young ladies, as I see plainly by Miss Sibyl's face."

"We are nearly grown up," said Sibyl, tossing her graceful head.

"I wish we were still children," sighed Grace, but her words were so low that no one noticed them, and when the Doctor went out of the room Miss Evans followed him.

"A bad business, eh, Miss Evans?" he said, when he and that lady were well out of hearing. "If they were deprived of your care they would indeed be badly off. Tell me about their plans."

"Their plans, poor children, they have none! They are as ignorant of the cruel world as new-born babes. No, this idea is Mrs. Gordon's plan, a heartless—a cruel one," answered Nan, fiercely. "She dismisses me, and the girls go alone."

"Dismisses you? They go alone?"

"Yes."

"Why do you let them go? Why, you are better than a mother to them."

Miss Evans looked up with a look of intense perplexity.

"Don't say that, Dr. Smith. How can I do otherwise? We have none of us any money."

"Is it true then? Did he leave nothing for them? And is it quite certain that—that——"

"She has everything; Grace and Sibyl have nothing—nothing, not even a name."

"Good gracious!" said the Doctor, almost silenced by the misfortune. "I never heard such heartlessness; but Mrs. Gordon ought to adopt them as cousins, or, at least, pension them off. It should not be brought home to them like this, and they don't yet know it."

"No, I cannot tell them; she will."

"Look here, Miss Evans, if ever there was a woman who inspired respect and admiration, that woman is yourself. For your sake, as well as for that of those poor children, I say, come all three of you to my house."

"It is too late; besides, you are not rich, and do you think she would allow them to live near to her?" There was a pause, then, with an effort, Miss Evans added: "It will come right. Perhaps some day I shall be able to forgive Mrs. Gordon. No, you can do nothing, Dr. Smith, but if I might write to you in case of necessity it would be a comfort."

"Of course, write to me whenever you like. Are you sure I can do nothing, nothing whatever?"

"No, it would not be right. Mrs. Gordon wants to wipe out the very remembrance of these children, who have—I say it if the law does not—a right to this place, and a right to James Gordon's money. Yes, certainly, in the eyes of God."

It was a woman's view of the question, and the Doctor only answered it by a firm grasp of the hand, and a hopeless shrug of his shoulders. Then he took his leave, and it was time for them all to depart.

To leave the home was as nothing, compared to losing her children. Nan lived through this last day as if she were in a dream—no, a nightmare. Grace sat close beside her during the train journey, and kept her hand in hers; but both understood that they must spare Sibyl as long as possible, and Sibyl was so much excited about all the novelty of travelling that she did not notice the sad looks of her companions. It never entered her head she was going to leave Nan for ever; why should it?

Nan meant to stay with them till the last minute, so from Waterloo she drove with them to Victoria, and then at once went to the first class waiting-room. Sibyl looked about her, and felt just a little nervous amidst the hurrying multitude and the general bustle of the station, so new to the country girl; but with the nervousness was a delightful feeling of being at last in the world and sharing some of its excitement. As for Grace, her feelings were far different. It seemed to her that she was entering a tomb, and that she and her sister were going to be buried alive. Nan's face was getting sterner and harder, in fact more impenetrable than ever.

"Sit down here, Sibyl," she said, "and look after these rugs; do not move till we come back. Your travelling companion has not yet come. Now, Grace, follow me, and we may find her outside."

Grace obeyed, and when they were alone, she seized Nan's hand.

"Nan, Nan, are you sure you spoke the truth last night, or were you only frightening me? No, you would not do that; but tell me that you are coming with us; say yes. I did not dare to ask you this morning, for fear you should again say no. You look so sad; but what will Sibyl say? Tell me all; there is something more I ought to hear, I know there is."

Nan looked up at the great clock above her head, and she saw that there were yet ten minutes before Mrs. Johnson need make her appearance. Suddenly Nan took a new resolution. She would tell Grace the truth; would it not be kinder than letting her bear the blow alone?

"Yes, Gracie, my darling, there is something more; but I would rather that my lips should not tell you. I would rather the hateful words came from her."

"Mrs. Gordon?"

"Yes."

"But, Nan, darling, I think differently. What your dear lips spoke would not sound hard to bear. Yes, yes; tell me the worst, whatever it may be. I think I can bear it."

And Nan told her all she knew; and when she had done speaking, Grace looked up at her with ashy white lips and scared eyes. There was an expression in her face which Nan had never seen before; but the girl raised her head proudly, she was not altogether crushed.

"Nan, you mean to say that we have no right to our name. Our father said so! It is very hard to believe it; I am not sure that I do believe it; but if they say so—well, then—yes, Nan, give us your name. You have been our mother, you will not cast us off because of that, will you?"

"I cast you off! Why should I? A thousand times no, Grace; take my name, and God is witness that it cannot be borne by any of His creatures more pure or innocent. My child, my child, you must be brave; you must trust Him still. There is more than we can understand, but He is just; He cannot let you suffer."

"I will write and tell Mrs. Gordon, Nan. I will forget the name; but I did love it. Never mind, I loved yours as much. Oh, if I could have had a few more days, just to prepare Sibyl! She is not like you or me. She will rebel, I know she will; she is so proud, so high spirited."

"Yes, I have feared for her all along; but, listen, Grace—the time is nearly up—I give her to you now. You must take care of her. I have no fears for you; but she is so pretty, so easily led. I have led her till now; but I dare not think of the effect this may have on her. Still, you must, you can, be all in all to her. Her safety is in your hands, Grace; I give her to you as a solemn charge. Bring her back as she goes — good at heart, so trustful and loving. Only it may be these very qualities will bring her into danger. Heaven knows how I have prayed that you may fall among friends."

"And if some day, Nan—if some day I—we are in great trouble, and I want you more than I can say, then——"

"Then write, telegraph, anything you like. I will sell my watch — anything — to come, Grace. Look, the time is up. I see a lady looking into the waiting room; we must go."

The ten minutes were gone, and yet those ten minutes had been loaded with years of misery for Grace.

In after times she never could watch a station clock without thinking of this terrible conversation at Victoria, and the ten minutes during which Nan, their adopted mother, had hurriedly crushed, as it were, all her youthful spirits, her very youth itself, and flung it away for ever.

But, in spite of this, she asked Heaven to bless Nan that day, for Grace knew that the blow had been softened when Nan had made up her mind to inflict it herself. This her last act of love was perhaps the greatest she had ever performed.

At the door of the waiting-room an elderly woman, with a perpetual smile on her lips, accosted them.

"I am looking for Miss Evans, in charge of two young girls. Am I speaking to——"

"Yes, I am Miss Evans, and here is Grace; Sibyl is in the waiting-room."

CHAPTER XVIII. PARTED.

MRS. JOHNSON began to ask numberless questions, all relating to the journey. Had the girls procured their tickets, had they got travelling-bags and some sandwiches? Dear Mrs. Gordon had especially told her to enquire about all these things.

Grace sat down in the waiting-room like one stunned, she did not speak, and seemed to hear or see nothing that was taking place around her, so it was Sibyl who answered all the questions with evident pleasure. What a merry party they were going to be, how very delightful Mrs. Johnson seemed, and how thoughtful about their comfort.

Poor Sibyl was utterly incapable of judging character, and was utterly ignorant of the ways of the world; for brought up as she had been, how could she possibly judge her fellow-creatures? Mrs. Johnson at once took a fancy to the lovely girl who was so willing to chatter about her luggage, and so she begged her to come with her to see the luggage labelled, thus leaving the others alone.

"Nan," whispered Grace in a low voice, "tell that lady about our name; let us begin at once, it will be easier in the end. Oh, I want to forget everything—everything, and we can begin afresh in this foreign country; yes, I will try to forget the past — but, oh, I think it will kill me."

"Kill you! nonsense, child," answered Miss Evans, trying to brace herself up and Grace as well. "Remember what I have told you, and when I have got together a little fortune, Gracie, you will come home to me, a real home; just think how happy we shall be even if we have not much to live upon."

This idea was bracing, Nan was right, Grace even smiled very faintly.

"Yes, but we two can work, we will not take her money longer than we can help it—we must earn some for ourselves—and then out there at Fribourg, where we are going, we may get some teaching; only I must keep with Sibyl—we must not be separated."

"Yes, indeed you must; and look here, child, put this in your pocket-book, it may be useful;" and Nan thrust some banknotes into Gracie's hand.

"No, Nan, it is yours—you will want it as much as we do."

"Take it, I would not touch a penny of it."

Mrs. Johnson and Sibyl were seen approaching, the latter looking quite radiant.

"Tell her about our name," repeated Grace, nervously. "Oh, the time is coming when we shall be alone; what will Sibyl say?"

Nan did not know—had never known—what it was to spare herself, so she walked straight up to Mrs. Johnson and said, sternly:

"Sibyl, go to your sister. May I beg a word with you, Mrs. Johnson?"

Mrs. Johnson was all smiles at once, feeling how superior she was to this curious-looking old maid.

"Are you a relation of Mrs. Gordon's?" asked Nan, abruptly.

"Not, not a relation; a friend, an intimate friend I may say; my brother-in-law is her legal adviser.

"Then most likely you know the history of those girls?"

"Ah, yes, a most unfortunate history; yes, indeed."

"What is going to happen to them when they get to this German place?"

"I have letters with me to take to a lady who keeps a school; till everything is settled they will stay with me at the hotel."

"I hope you will be kind to them, that is if it is in your power;" and Miss Evans tried to soften her voice. She would have done anything in her power for those two, nay, have gone down on her knees if she could have fancied that would have availed.

"Of course, of course; such interesting creatures these poor young girls appear to me. The youngest is so pretty—so charming."

"They are like other girls, I suppose," said Nan, stiffly; she hated all pretence and undue expression of sentiment.

"Yes, but of course there is something particularly—what shall I call it?—touching when beauty is left without natural guardians; sometimes those — I mean, sometimes there is an inherited tendency——"

Nan would have fired up only there was no time to waste, the train was beginning to fill and she had one more thing to say.

"It has been considered better that they should drop the name of Gordon and take that of—Evans. Their mother's name is unknown. Evans will do as well as any other."

"Ah, yes, of course, such a good name, too—yes. Oh dear, I am afraid we must see about our seats. Will you say the last good-bye to your young charges whilst I look out for a corner seat?"

Nan was gone already. She found Sibyl looking frightened and terrified, for Grace was trying to tell her, in a poor and bungling way, that life was not all bright because Nan was not going with them.

"Why are you not going, Nan?—you must come," cried Sibyl, regardless of the people about her, and throwing herself crying in Nan's arms; "don't, don't leave us." She had none of Grace's self-control or power of bearing up against trouble.

"Hush, Sibyl dear, you must come—now—it was better you should not know sooner. You can write to me, and you will begin a new life; who knows, it may be a happier one."

"No, no, I have been so happy;" but now Nan placed the girl's arm within hers and drew her forcibly towards the train. Grace followed on the other side of Nan, quite quiet and quite tearless, for she was trying not to think of herself—she had tried to tell Sibyl that they were going to take Nan's name in future, and Sibyl refused to understand, refused to believe in all this sudden earthquake that had suddenly shaken the foundation of all her thoughts and of her very life.

Porters and guards are not usually sentimental persons; there was the usual third bell, the "Take your places," and the banging of doors. Grace kept her calmness and did what was right, whilst Sibyl only cried, nor was she pacified by Mrs. Johnson's soft words.

"Dear child, hush, pray hush! Quiet yourself, people are looking at you. You will surprise the officials. A display of feeling is so very undesirable. Will you take a little eau-de-cologne? There is nothing like that to quiet nerves."

Sibyl nearly dashed the bottle away from her, and only repeated:

"Nan, Nan, don't leave us. What does it all mean?"

Nan herself felt that the sooner this painful scene was over the better. She said, in her quiet, authoritative voice, that had always calmed Sibyl's youthful passion:

"Sibyl, say good-bye to me—I am going;" and for a moment the beautiful child-face, stained with tears and looking terribly woebegone, was lifted up and received the quiet kiss that meant more than many words; and then Grace, too, was kissed, and heard a low, tremulous "God bless you, my Grace, and take care of yourself and Sibyl;" and without waiting for the last whistle, or the last "all right," she hurried away from the platform, out of the station, and straight along into the street. She took no heed as to which street she took, only she felt she must walk on and on for fear of being compelled to rush back and to follow her children. There was a big heart under that stern exterior, and the unprepossessing face hid noble feelings; but few knew it, fewer cared, for Nan, too, was homeless, and, what was far worse, she was deprived of what she loved, deprived of all that made her life worth living.

She had left her luggage at Victoria Station. Sometime or other she meant to fetch it away in a cab and go to her aunt's house, the aunt she had been nursing, who had a little house of her own in a quiet street near Eaton Square. But unless Nan were necessary to her welfare she was not likely to hold out a helping hand to her. Money was to her like her life-blood; her niece had none of her own, but she was strong and capable of working for it—she had no intention of giving her any. At present she did not even know that Nan had left the two Gordons, for the stern woman had kept all her troubles to herself; she was not one to ask sympathy of those who had all her life avoided giving her both money and love.

When Nan had nearly tired herself out she gradually came back to her senses, and then made long journeys to various governess register offices. The well-conditioned "ladies" who kept these establishments looked at Nan in a rude, curious, almost scornful manner. She had nothing externally to recommend her, they said to themselves, and her manner was even less prepossessing than her looks; besides, she was so very anxious about terms. The terms must be high; the recommendations she could offer were excellent, but she wanted money. "Ah, an old miser," thought one "lady," "a terrible creature to get into a gentleman's house."

At last she found an opening that sounded promising. At an office she heard of a position of trust with an invalid lady whose daughter was not quite like other girls, and wanted a firm, strict person over her.

"You look just fitted for that," said the lady, a little shortly; "and besides, the remuneration is high. I have sent several ladies already, but they found it too hard work, none of them would stay there."

"I like hard work," said Miss Evans, quickly. "If the lady will have me I will take that situation."

She took down the address, and once more trudged off. This time the road lay in the direction of Eaton Square; so she determined, after the interview, to claim her aunt's hospitality for a night.

The invalid lady was at home—indeed, she was always at home, and always expected her companion to be at home with her. The present unfortunate person who held that post eyed Miss Evans curiously as she was shown into a sitting-room.

"Have you come about this situation?"

"Yes," said Miss Evans.

"Well, I wish you joy. I am leaving directly some one else is found. Such a fussy, tiresome woman I never came across before; and as for the child, she is a perfect idiot. She'll never find a lady who'll stay with her."

The companion laid a stress on the word "lady"; but Nan looked straight at her as she said:

"I would rather not hear anything against the lady I wish to serve. Here is my card."

The companion tossed her head and flounced out of the room in a very unladylike manner; and Nan stood up, nerving herself for an interview.

"I will try to serve her faithfully, as I must have the money for my children's sake."

Mrs. Augustus Lyne, having tried three companions in three months, was weary of interviewing them, so she was not very gracious to Miss Evans; however, the new applicant was so unlike the generality of women who came to offer their services, that from very contrariness she accepted her. She liked the few words Nan employed, as much talking made her head ache. As for Nan herself, she felt almost happy as she heard the words:

"If you can come at once, Miss Evans, I will try you; a month's trial, of course, and I hope the salary is sufficient. I can't bear entering into particulars; but I told Mrs. Legrand to explain all that to the persons she sent me."

"Your terms quite satisfy me," said Nan, shortly; "and I can come to-morrow, if you like, or when you have received answers from these references."

"Well, you can come to-morrow; but, of course, if the answers are not satisfactory, you must not consider yourself engaged."

"As you like."

"Well, then, come to-morrow; I shall be thankful to make a change. Good day to you." And she wearily rang the bell to have Miss Evans shown out.

For the first time that day Nan realised how utterly weary she was; indeed, she could hardly manage to drag her weary feet to her aunt's door. Here happily she spent a lonely, quiet evening, for her aunt sent word she was too ill to see her, and she hoped she really meant to stay only one night, as visitors upset her nerves.

In spite of all this, Nan slept well, and woke up full of new courage. Whatever vexations Mrs. Augustus Lyne made her endure, they should be borne in silence, in consideration of that high salary. Every penny of it not absolutely necessary for clothes should be saved for her children, and for the future home for them.

It is enough to say that Mrs. Augustus did make Nan suffer, but that her half-witted daughter found for the first time some one who was just and kind to her, and for this reason clung to her new friend with pathetic devotion. And Nan was extremely kind to her; she said to herself:

"Perhaps some one will also be kind to my children in that foreign land. Oh, Heaven grant that it may be so — my children."

FROM BLOOMSBURY TO STRATFORD-ATTE-BOW.

AUTUMN is the congenial season for travels about town, which any one can undertake with the provision of a very moderate amount of small change, and no further amount of packing and preparation than is involved in filling the tobacco pouch or cigar case, and putting on something comfortable in the way of hat or cap. Now, in summer the streets are as hot and arid as an African desert, while in winter they may recall the desolate wind-swept steppes of Central Asia. There is nothing to be said against a London ramble in spring, if you can get a fine day without an east wind; but while you are waiting for that, lo! spring and summer are past, and autumn is here. The harsh outlines of roof and chimney-pot are half veiled in a softened haze; streets open out indefinite vistas of mingled radiance and gloom; great blocks of buildings loom forth with a grandeur to which they cannot pretend in full and clear daylight.

For such travels the most suitable means is the outside of a tramcar. An omnibus has too much of noise and bustle about it; it is all very well if you have a definite destination. But it does not suggest stopping-places and divergences, and the table of fares is a pitfall for people who have not made up their mind where to go. But your tram is leisurely, and as the initial risk in entering is only a penny, no anxiety is felt in essaying a new route. Then there is the feeling that the tram is the vehicle of the future as well as of the present. Before long, probably, when the electric fluid is established as a motive power, the tram-line will extend and ramify all over the kingdom, and people will be able to journey from London to York, we will say, in this humble, agreeable way, if they have the leisure and the humour for the transit.

It must be owned that London is disappointing in its trams, and far behind most of the great cities of even our own kingdom in facilities for crossing from one end to the other of the town. The shopkeepers of our great thoroughfares regard the promoters of the tram-line as a Pawnee Indian might the pioneer of a highway through his favourite hunting-grounds. It is perhaps a mistake on the part of the former, for, for every customer it takes away the tramcar will bring two or three new ones; while the alternative of an underground line really does deplete the districts it passes through, to the advantage of the great business centres.

Hitherto the line of tram communication has crept no further westwards than Bloomsbury, excluding isolated lengths such as those to Kew and Richmond and to Acton. It is not every one who knows that you can get from close by the British Museum to the farthest east and beyond, along the tramway. It makes a good starting-point for a trip to the "ultima Thule" of London, so being on the descent from Oxford Street to Holborn one bright but hazy October morning, here goes for the tram.

By Kingsgate Street, out of Holborn, lies the way; and Kingsgate Street will be ever noteworthy as the residence of Mrs. Gamp. Nor is the street altered out of recognition; a barber's pole is still in evidence, which might denote the shop of Poll Sweedlepipes, and any of the majestic, matronly figures we meet in the locality might stand for the immortal Sairy. But the name of the street has also its strictly historic side. Here was actually the King's gate—speaking of the days of the Stuarts—a substantial wooden gate, with a padlock, through which His Majesty entered his private road to Theobalds. And this private way no doubt had once been the Roman road from the west of England to

Colchester, which skirted London without actually entering the city.

There at the King's gate is now waiting a tramcar, yellow, and not lovely in its aspect, but commodious enough; and presently we start, whistling and jingling, along the Theobalds Road, which has borne that name ever since the Jameses and Charleses jogged along this way to Theobalds or Newmarket. On the left we catch a glimpse of the vista of Lamb's Conduit Street, with Captain Coram on his pedestal, and the solid, sober frontage of the Foundling Hospital terminating the view. And on the other side next moment we look over the garden wall of Gray's Inn, a quiet, sunny spot, where children are playing on the grass and nursemaids resting on the benches, with here and there a gray-headed old man, and a gardener or two sweeping up the dead leaves. Then a quick glance in the opposite direction gives us a glimpse of a little opening called the King's Mews, which is also an historic spot; for up to the reign of Henry the Eighth here were the mews for the King's hawks and the stables of the King's horses. These were destroyed by fire in Harry's reign, and the whole establishment was removed to Charing Cross. But somebody's horses are still there, with rows of little, old-fashioned stables, and dwellings over them; and horses have champed and clanked at their mangers, and grooms have gone on hissing at their work, and the clatter of stable buckets and harness has gone on, doubtless, hereabouts ever since the days of the Tudors. Jockeyfields, again, recorded on an obsolete wall-tablet, recalls the once horsey character of the neighbourhood. From these antiquities we quickly emerge into a quarter of the newest—Holborn Town Hall and Gray's Inn Road. Ah, what a transformation of the once familiar shabby old Gray's Inn Lane. There is nothing to suggest the cinder heap at the top, which was cleared away, they say, to help the rebuilding of Moscow; or the little hucksters' shops and shy little newspaper shops. Instead of all this we have a fine wide street, with handsome, business-like erections on either hand.

After a moment's delay in the busy cross traffic of the Gray's Inn Road, the tram sweeps along the new and broad Clerkenwell Road, before which the old tangle of lanes and rookeries has vanished into space. In vain we recall the memories of little Oliver Twist, with his armful of books; of Nancy, jingling her keys and bewailing the loss of her little brother; or of Fagin lurking round the corner; or of the Artful lounging along the kerb. For the whole character of the region is altered. Yet the names of Great and Little Saffron Hill still strike the eye as familiar, and are still the residence of a populous Italian colony, and the headquarters of the great organ-grinding business; while an almost obliterated tablet on a brewery wall recalls the fact that Liquorpond Street—not unknown in the brawling annals of the Restoration—once existed here. Now we have the gloomy valley of the Fleet, emphasized by Farringdon Street and the Underground Railway, with wreaths of steam and the rumble of trains issuing from the bowels of the earth. Here is the Clerkenwell Sessions House, placed on what is really the noblest site in all London, with the prison van waiting at the side door. Next we have a glimpse of the old gate of the Knights of St. John, one of the last relics of Tudor London, with its associations with good old Sylvanus Urban and ponderous Samuel Johnson.

The roof of the tram affords us a pleasant peep, over a high blank wall, of the roofs and pinnacles of the old Charterhouse, and of the trees in the old playground once known as the Wilderness, with Wilderness Row looking straight over at the high blank wall aforesaid. Here was the "Pardon" burial ground, devoted to criminals and vagrants, for whose souls masses were said by the Carthusian Friars. The shouts and laughter of boys at play may still be heard, for the Merchant Taylors have taken the place of the Charterhouse scholars, and one may think of the venerable bedesmen in their long cloaks, and of Colonel Newcome among them, when suddenly the scene changes and we are stuck in the middle of the bustling carrefour, where Goswell Street intersects our course, which suggests Mr. Pickwick, who lodged there with Mrs. Bardell. Now we are in Old Street—really old—for we are still on the track of the Roman road, and this little bit of it probably owes its continued existence to a colony of artificers who built their huts along its site. From ancient days, hereabouts, has been the chief seat of the London artificer. These streets, teeming with life, are vivid also with industry. The home and the workshop go together. Workers in gold and silver; the makers of the thousand odds and ends necessary to civilised existence here do chiefly congregate. Great is Old

Street, full of a dull, careworn, yet hopeful struggle for existence. How the streets swarm with children when the mid-day bell gives the signal for their release from school! They are the masters now of all, as they bustle round full of importance on their manifold errands. Boldly against the street line stands out the dark façade of the great lunatic asylum of St. Luke's, with gloomy windows half blocked up, and some covered with massive gratings; yet with glimpses here and there of the efforts made to brighten up the ancient madhouse into something less suggestive of iron chains and strait waistcoats.

Opposite, again, opens out Bunhill Row, where Milton spent his last years, and that leads past the "Campo Santo of the Dissenters." The City Road forms another great carrefour, where the din and whirl of traffic is great: the tramp, tramp of the crowds that come and go; the jingling of tramcars; the rattle of omnibuses; the roar of great waggons. A brass band in the distance adds to the confusion of sounds. Yet close by, in quiet retirement, we have John Wesley's original chapel, built among the fields, the house that he lived in, and his last resting-place. Another crossing shows Hoxton High Street on one side and the Curtain Road on the other—a curtain which hides the site of the earliest of our theatres. Here would be a fit spot for a memorial of Kit Marlowe; a fit inscription for which would be the verses that summarise his history:

A poet was he of repute,
  And wrote full many a play.
Now strutting in a silken suite,
  Then begging by the waye.
He had also a player beene
  Upon the Curtain stage;
But brake his leg in one rude scene
  When in his early age.

About here the great industry is cabinet-making. The traffic is in chests of drawers, in wardrobes, in overmantels. The most elaborate pieces may be seen in course of construction in little back shops. The furniture of a palace, of an hotel, of a four-roomed cottage—all is one to Old Street. Only send your carts and horses and there is the furniture ready for you. Modest-looking shops will take your order for a dozen of drawing-room suites, without turning a hair in the way of astonishment. Old Street works also for exportation, and does not fear the foreigner on his own ground.

Now the line of thoroughfare we have followed so far shows signs of ending altogether in a strange kind of arcade of small shops and old-fashioned houses devoted to the bird-fancying interest. Narrow ways and gloomy streets lead into the heart of dense, obscure quarters, where industry and unremitting toil are housed in wretched, crowded streets, while there the burglar finds a home, the escaped convict a refuge, and the assassin an obscure retreat from the pursuit of justice. With this we are suddenly upon Shoreditch, with a fine Town Hall at the corner, placarded with announcements of concerts, and exhibitions, and temperance meetings — a centre of light and leading in all this maze of population.

The tramcar rumbles quickly on, choosing its own track among a labyrinth of lines converging and diverging at the crossways, and away we go past Columbia Market, where a cluster of model lodging-houses rise conspicuously from among the general level of lowly roofs. On one side we have Bethnal Green, on the other Hoxton, with Kingsland beyond—a dense mass of houses, with hardly an architectural feature to distinguish one block of buildings from another. Here we have poverty, innumerable children, smears of small dwelling-houses, with here and there pleasant, old-fashioned almshouses; gas-works and factories form conspicuous features of the scene, chapels and mission-halls are scattered here and there; but everything is of the same dull, leaden hue, everything rubbed, and worn, and smeary.

But there is a change as we rumble into Mare Street, Hackney. For here is a street which has a character of its own to maintain. Mare Street is Hackney just as Upper Street is Islington, King Street Hammersmith, or High Street the Borough. It has had its great houses, its mansions, its villas, but these have come and gone, but Mare Street was there before them, and still remains to carry on the business. It is not exactly like any other street you may have known; that is all you can say; for the points of difference elude description. Something of the ancient spirit of Hackney shows itself in the numerous chapels that are aligned on the street. An older Hackney, too, shows here and there in fragments of grand old red-brick houses peering over the smart shop fronts of the modern period, and carved doorways and latticed windows are elbowed out of the way by rows of recent buildings. Other great streets may boast of long vistas of grand architectural effect; but the charm of Mare Street, which may jostle with them all for length, is its curving, winding nature. Straighten it out, and the effect might seem insignificant; but as each succeeding curve may reveal something more imposing than the last, expectation and curiosity are kept up, even if, eventually, they are left unsatisfied.

Anyhow, there is a modern Town Hall of quite a grand appearance, with a space of green round about it, studded with shrubs and flower-beds, and beyond that there is a railway bridge which spans the road, but makes no effort towards the beautiful. Yet the bridge forms a kind of portal which introduces us into Hackney proper, for just beyond, a turn of the street reveals the grey old church-tower, worn and aged-looking, and quite of the country build, suggestive of the green fields and the dignified rural neighbourhood which once surrounded it. There are many pathways through the churchyard, which is crowded with respectable and even dignified monuments of the dead, and this churchyard has held some noble dust. For a time it was the burial-place of the Percys of Northumberland. Here, too, lies the last of the long line of De Veres, Earls of Oxford. Among the records of the dead the grey church-tower stands in a lonely, melancholy manner, itself only a monument of the past, for the church attached to it was pulled down in the last century, and a mausoleum of a dull funereal character contains the bones of the illustrious dead who had long found a resting-place within the sacred enclosure. A pathway among the tombs leads to the ugly but roomy church of the eighteenth century, of which you can only say that it makes no pretence to beauty and boasts only of its so many sittings. But there is a handsome space of sward all round with seats, where a few weary, careworn people are resting in the sunshine.

All round stand old-fashioned, roomy, red-brick houses, which suggest the academies for which Hackney was once so famous—those girls' schools with their galaxy of pretty maidens, which made such a show in the old parish church, that Mr. Samuel Pepys was fain to devote a Sunday to the sight.

Great, too, was Hackney as a nursery of Nonconformist divines, of a school almost as high, and certainly as dry, as the most orthodox episcopal brand of the period. But Hackney is also high and dry, and by position should be one of the healthiest suburbs of London, and, indeed, Clapton, which is still higher and drier, represents health and wealth most conspicuously.

What a pleasant, breezy place is Clapton Common, with a pond in the middle, where ducks are swimming, and where some girls, who seem to have inherited the comeliness characteristic of the neighbourhood, are amusing the big St. Bernard by their futile efforts to throw a stick beyond the reach of his powers of wading! Big, tall, old-fashioned, red-brick houses surround the common, and what a fine view there must be from the upper windows of those that command a view of the still essentially noble valley of the Lea! From the common there are glimpses where the roads dip down steeply towards the vale; hazy distances, the gleam of hills and forests in their purple fastnesses, the wide stretch of marsh and pasture radiantly green, and all charming and suggestive, but only snatched here and there by glimpses.

The sight suggests a wish to reach the green valley that opens so invitingly, and on the way back to Hackney Church, behold a little omnibus appears labelled for Lea Bridge, with just one place vacant alongside the driver. That is no longer vacant now, and away we rattle down devious streets, and then across a green flat intersected with paths, and diversified by tall chimneys, factories, and works of various descriptions. How many years ago is it since Lea Bridge was a favourite and quiet spot, with an inn that was an angler's resort, with a placid reach of the river winding past? Well, there are taverns still, and boats to let by Lea Bridge; and the river still takes its graceful curve round the clump of aspens that still rustle and whisper in the faint breath of the autumnal breeze.

On the further side of Lea Bridge a tramcar is waiting that suggests further exploration. Twopence to the Forest! Who would not seek the Forest when there is a chance, for twopence? So we roll quietly along through the green fields. It is a little Dutchland hereabouts, gardens and nursery-grounds mixed up with mills and factories; here cattle feeding, and there tea-gardens with lamps and summer-houses, and little winding walks, but with a touch of melancholy in the falling leaves, and the announcement of the last entertainment of the season. Everywhere, too, rows of houses are springing up, and dotted about among the fields.

We jog along till we reach an important crossway with an important public-house at the corner, which gives its name to the little settlement, where shops have sprung up, and which anybody will point out as "Baker's Arms"; and here there is a cross service of buses and trams, for this is Hoe Street, with a railway station at one end of it, and quite a little crowd is waiting for one vehicle or the other.

But we pursue our way through a pleasant country, where the soil seems to grow houses so thickly that they are springing up even in streets or rows like so many cabbages or scarlet runners. Some of these new streets are pleasant enough, with red-tiled roofs and eighteenth-century gables, but more are of the ordinary yellow variety of small dwellings. Here and there an old manor house or mansion stands among its own dishevelled grounds, with windows broken and a huge board to announce the place for sale as "ripe" for building sites—ripe and ready to fall is the gloomy old barrack. Now we are at Whips Cross, a name that suggests horn and hounds and the merry days of the Epping hunt. Here are more shops with mixed announcements for the benefit of passers-by: "Soda and milk," "Horses taken in to graze," "Stop here for a good cup of tea," "The best pull-up for carmen." Beyond the houses the forest opens out, starting with a noble three-cornered green, where cows are grazing—a scene worthy of Cuyp, as the sun breaks out warmly from the clouds and illumines everything with a rich golden glow. Finally the car stops in the midst of a pleasant forest scene, as wild as you please, with plashy swamps and rough glades, and ancient trees branching against the sky, with everywhere paths and tracks, along which people tramp, and are constantly turning up, as if for a rendezvous of forest outlaws. Hence we might ramble through wild forest for six or seven miles, although it would be found thin at places, with daylight showing through its sides, and the inevitable rows of new villas rather spoiling the illusion. But our business is with the town and not with the forest, and the same tramcar trundles us back to Hoe Street, where another tram is waiting to carry us in a different direction.

The way is pleasant enough among the scattered houses of Leyton, with old weather-boarded tenements tumbling to pieces among new, smart buildings of the present age. Then the tram-line ceases among a network of railway-lines, and an omnibus is waiting to carry us on for the same fare. But this time we may conclude that we have drawn a blank from the revolving wheel, for we are soon in the midst of smoke and smother, and presently dive down a narrow street accompanied by a procession of some hundreds of workmen, who are moving solidly for the gates of the railway works. The hundreds swell to thousands before we are through the press, for we have arrived at Stratford-atte-Bow, which is a very fair representation of a Midland manufacturing town. But Stratford Broadway is worth a visit, with a green and some stately old-fashioned houses, an immense church of handsome proportions, a town hall, from the balcony of which a brass band is just now flaring a general invitation to visit the Fruit and Flower Show which is for the benefit of the West Ham Hospital, which, as is generally known, is a most excellent and beneficent institution, serving a neighbourhood where accidents are rife, and where there is ever-increasing need of hospital accommodation among a vast working population. But the promenade side of the Broadway is devoted to handsome shops. There is the broad roadway with its traffic of all kinds, and where trams arrive and depart incessantly. Smart young officers of merchant ships may be seen hereabouts with their sweethearts, revelling among the excellent pastry for which Stratford Broadway ought to be famous. Country people, too, resort to the shops and make a promenade of the broad footway. It is the emporium and mart of the great region of docks, gas-works, and marshy flats, and of the solidly populated regions of West Ham and Stratford itself. There is nothing so bright and stirring anywhere round about for miles as Stratford Broadway—the glow of its nightly illumination shines far out at sea in the imagination of the sailor homeward bound; and the toiler in the dull workshop or by the glaring furnace has the thought in his mind, before the week is half through, of Saturday night in the Broadway with the sweetheart or wife as the case may be.

But beyond this human nature will no farther go. The cosmorama must close for the day, or the brain of the observer will become mixed with an inextricable confusion. Else there is Bow on the homeward journey, and Mile End, and ever-varied Whitechapel. But these are all familiar enough, and they leave no distinct impression except as deepening the sense of the immensity of London life, the heights and depths of which no traveller can hope effectually to explore.

THE CAREER OF TOWN COUNCILLOR.

I ONCE heard a very respectable wholesale grocer exhorting his little son to follow the paths of rectitude, not so much for their own sake—though I doubt not he loved virtue in the abstract—as for the sake of the proud position of Mayor and Alderman which he might thereby attain.

The boy, a bare-legged little mortal, with elegant fringe to his white unmentionables, stood open-mouthed to attention.

"You are an Alderman, ain't you, pa?" asked the child.

"Yes, George, of course I am."

The boy was then seized with a paroxysm of dancing.

"Oh, those lovely dinners! those lovely dinners!" he cried, over and over again. "Yes, pa, I'll be an Alderman," he said by-and-by, when he had calmed a little.

He remembered the unctuous descriptions that his papa had given to his mamma of the various feasts at which he had been called upon to be present in his official capacity.

I dare say the little boy is already on the Town Council, with his thoughts and affections still dinnerward.

It is the easiest thing in the world to distinguish a Town Councillor from an ordinary citizen. He carries his head high, of course; but that is by no means all. There is a briskness and a sense of power about his movements quite unmistakeable, as he strides up the main street of the town. He looks at the police, the roads and gutters, and much else, as if he had them all under his sole charge. The people touch their hats to him, and he smiles complacently as he nods back. He is a great man, no matter if only in a small way.

Perhaps he is stopped half-a-dozen times in the course of his walk up a single brief thoroughfare. If he has the time to spare, there's nothing he likes better than a genial little gossip in the open air. How he throws his head back and roars at a joke! If any other man were to laugh half as loud in the public street he would gaze at him, and then look about for a policeman in order that he might give him in charge as drunk and disorderly. Then he puts his broad hand on his interlocutor's shoulder in so fatherly a way. "My dear sir," he begins, if he has any particular information to impart; after which he whispers, with such a flourish of hands, and tantalising uplifting and drooping of the eyebrows, that the half-score of citizens at their doors are two-thirds crazy with unsated desire to know what is in the wind. For aught they can tell, it may be the beginning of a new tax. Surely they have an interest in that. However, they are kept aloof from the secret, to their extreme disgust.

The Town Councillor loves to make a parade of mystery. He looks grave and omniscient when he is only discussing the price of eggs.

Of course his importance reaches the very highest possible degree when one fine autumn day he receives a deputation of his brother Councillors, and consents to put on the mantle of Mayor for the ensuing year. You should hear him tell his wife of the satisfaction he feels in this honour. It is the one thing he has lived for. He is the happiest man on earth; almost too happy, indeed, considering that the borough taxes are already at seven-and-sixpence in the pound, and there are a hundred more inmates of the workhouse than there were a year ago. Yet he cannot help it; for the time all thought of others is out of him; he can think only of himself as supreme magistrate of the town. If only his poor mother could see him in his robes! But there, she has been dead these twenty years, and so it is impossible, unless she looks down from heaven upon him for the purpose.

How his worship swells with honest pride as he proceeds in state to the parish church on the Sunday after his election! The townspeople by thousands are in the streets and squares on the way. He could wish it were not Sunday, that they might be under no restraint in the matter of cheers, which they cannot fail to wish to pour forth upon him. Still, it is no small triumph to see their faces. Some he recognises with peculiar sensations. Yonder sullen fellow by a lamp-post, dressed in ill-kempt clothes, with a red nose and a bleared, fish-like eye, used to beat him at Latin and Greek and mathematics in the grammar school forty years ago. But for all his learning he has never been able to climb up the ladder of the mayoralty. Others of his early friends and acquaintances he marks with a quick eye, as he struts loftily after the gilded mace, with a jingle of the valuable gold chain of office round his neck. He makes no sign, but he sees them nevertheless.

Anon, the obeisances of the various subordinates who escort him to his seat are particularly delightful; and so is the peal of the organ, which breaks forth as his worship's foot sounds upon the grating of the aisle. The congregation all turn their eyes toward him—old and young, beautiful and plain. He is the one object of the thought of seven or eight hundred church-going souls!

It is a rare moment, to be tasted in memory over and over again in the after-time. He knows, from a remembrance of his own youthful days, what is going on in their minds while they stare at him. True, there are sure to be some irreverent scoffers among them, who gaze only to criticise—to find fault with his nose, his expression, the cut of his whiskers, his deportment, and his very attitude as he stands to pray, with his face bowed into his hat. But these are the minority. For the most part, he is on a pedestal of glory in the minds of the congregation. The mothers—bless their hearts!—are perhaps whispering to their large-eyed, hopeful sons that some day—who knows?—they too may be as great a man. The young men of a sober turn are puckering their brows in the strength of their resolution, sooner or later, to mount upon the throne of justice and government which he now occupies.

Of course, there are trying moments even for a Mayor. He cannot be sure of the affection of all his subordinate colleagues. He is stung frequently by the satire of this or that Councillor; puzzled frequently when he is called upon to express his valuable opinion upon a subject about which he is fatally ignorant or indifferent; distressed beyond measure when he fails to reply with grace to the gracious speeches which are directed towards him at banquets and civic meetings; vexed to find that he cannot help being at discord with some one, though he devote his best energies to deft trimming, and though he beam upon the world at large with ever so hearty a smile of genuine benevolence.

All the same, as time goes on, he wears well into the situation. He gets to love the mayoral chair as much as he loves his home lounge. He has accustomed himself to call his spouse "Lady Mayoress" instead of plain "Matilda." At first it was a playful jest, but as the months went by it became an established custom. And, at length, when his year of office is ended he is as loth to discontinue the custom as to give up any other cherished old habit. He feels it a real sorrow to have to step from supremacy into comparative obscurity in a moment. Yet it is much to be able to say that he has had his official "fling."

It is as interesting to trace the Aldermanic ascension as to mark the gratification of the Mayor in his chair of state.

The beginning is often very lowly. Many a spark of ambition has been unexpectedly struck in the humble schoolroom or tavern chamber to which the candidate has summoned his supporters, and to which others besides his supporters have come, to tease him and try his mettle. It may be the candidate's first appearance as a public character. If so, there will be much that may disagree with him. He will stand in mortal need of buttressing by those of his party who are guilty of urging him to the front. He will be tempted to sigh for a little cognac to cheer his heart's cockles, instead of the pure water which glitters coldly at him from the neat bottle by the elbow of his staunch advocate in the chair. It is one thing to sit at home at ease in the midst of an admiring family, and there declaim about the evils which fatten like a cankerworm in the heart of the council chamber. The candidate's wife may have her private opinion about her husband's abilities; but of course she will not betray him. As for his sisters, and cousins, and aunts, their applause will be rapturous. The dear creatures are so full of generous impulses that they do not care to trouble themselves about the substance of John's remarks.

But it is quite another thing to face a couple of hundred hard-featured, bearded, and horny-handed electors, who are by no means disposed even to be impartial in their judgement of him.

The most trivial misadventure at such a time often proves calamitous. The anxious expression of the candidate's face may provoke his audience to laughter. A hair out of order in his head will serve equally well, or rather equally ill. The tone of his voice may strike a false note in his hearers' minds. If he is fat, that is an argument of his lethargic nature. He is not the man for them, who have grievances to be redressed. If he is thin, some one suggests that he has enough work upon his hands to keep himself in the land of the living. Even his accomplishments are put in the scale against him. His cultured accent is attributed to conceit and high falutin. His enemies charge him with insulting them by speaking Latin, when in truth it is only his English that they misunderstand. A bright necktie is an indication of extravagant tastes. Rings on the fingers are proofs of the same. The man who is so liberal of his own cash upon unnecessary expenses is not likely to be very careful of the town's expenditure. Therefore, he is not the man for them.

Nor does the candidate's success depend wholly on his own platform address. The person in the chair is of some importance. This gentleman is commonly chosen from among the electors as a delicate concession to their feelings. But the electors have their own views of the matter. They purse their lips, for example, when Ebenezer Jones, drysalter in a very small way, rises to open the meeting; and they are firmly resolved, whatever they may think of the candidate, that they will have no respect for anything that Mr. Jones may say to them.

I call to mind one occasion when such a chairman was quashed from the outset by a cruel accident. The meeting was held in the district Board school; and the schoolroom was, after the manner of such places, ornamented with maps, moral texts, and coloured prints of useful domestic animals. A brown ass, in the attitude of braying, was hung upon the wall behind the chair, and at such an elevation that when the chairman rose, in a state of immense nervousness, and began with his "ladies and gentlemen" (no ladies being present), the ass was, as it were, mounted upon his cranium.

This was irresistible. The Philistines screamed with pleasure. To the chairman's horror, even the candidate's backers laughed broadly, or chuckled into their large hard hands. Twice the poor gentleman essayed to speak, changing colour like a chameleon. Then he asked of his supporters, in a forlorn aside, what was the matter. But he could obtain no comfort in that quarter. His want of success was by them ascribed to his personal deficiencies, not to anything extraneous. They repented that they had set in the chair so mediocre an individual, and one who was so distinctly persona ingrata with the constituency. Poor Mr. Chairman in this case eventually withdrew from the room in wrath bordering upon convulsions.

At meetings of this kind no small amount of tact is demanded from the chairman. He may be a man who has hitherto elbowed his way through life, with no regard for any one's ribs except his own. This new situation will then be apt to test him upon quite fresh ground. Homely eloquence is all very well, but the most Doric of allusions and similes will be likely to give offence to some one. On a certain occasion, when the candidate was very lean, but with superb cerebral developement (if the size of his head really meant anything), the chairman, in a fit of witty inspiration, confided to his audience that he liked to see men big here (touching his skull), and not here (pointing to his abdomen). The next moment, the chief supporter of the candidate, an Alderman of twenty years' standing, left the room, pushing his stomach before him, as the French say, and turkey-red with indignation.

It is trifles like these that largely influence the course of municipal elections.

But the enjoyment of the evening culminates when the candidate himself, for the first time, gets upon his feet to address his constituents. Unless he have beforehand taken lessons in self-possession and elocution, or be well looked after by Nature in this respect, his overthrow will be as much more disastrous than the mistake of his chairman, as is the fall of the pillar of a house than the fall of a coping-stone. The audible criticism from his opponents, to which he has perforce to submit, are not of the stimulating kind. These gentlemen draw their comparisons from no dignified source. If the opposition candidate be a man of means and energy, and not above bribing a little organised body of his backers, these will even go so far as to make mouths at our friend, or put the thumb to the nose in his honour. Though he have every word of his speech off by heart, it is then as if he had not learnt a syllable of it. The jibing faces and the discouragement in all eyes save those of his few earnest supporters, freeze him to the core. He would give the world to know what to do with his hands. His trousers, he feels sure, bulge at the knees, and what can be more unsightly than that, or less likely to prepossess electors in favour of a candidate? However, pricked on by despair, and notwithstanding a conviction of his own imbecility, the unhappy man flounders forth an utterance of some kind, hoping against hope that, the ice once broken, all will go smoothly.

Now, assuming that he has come safely, and with no marked discredit, through this part of his programme, and has sat down in a perspiration of gladness, to the music of his friends' cheers, it is possible he conceives his work is over. He fancies, perhaps, that thenceforward the path of honour is plain and straight, and in a beatific vision he already sees and hears himself addressed as Mr. Councillor Tapes, Your Worship, and Mr. Alderman Tapes, in due succession.

Alas for his dreams! It is, in fact, quite otherwise. It may have been policy in his opponents to allow him to speak out his ideas undisturbed, that they might afterwards the better convict him out of his own mouth. If so, the disenchantment is soon like to be very bitter. In any case, there is something unpleasant to follow; and of this he is speedily made aware.

It is commonly supposed that there is nothing more irksome to a diffident man than cross-examination in a court of justice; unless, indeed, it be a declaration of love. It may be so. Imagine, then, how our candidate is likely to enjoy being put to the question in public by five or six keen-witted electors of the opposite side, who have come to the meeting on purpose to badger him.

When the first of these inquisitors steps to the front, amid a tumult of applause, Mr. Tapes shrinks visibly.

"Mr. Tapes, what I wants to know is what's your view of liquor? Is a poor chap to 'ave 'is pint on a Sunday same as weekdays, or ain't he? That's one thing. Another is: 'Ow's the rates to be got down? 'Ere are us chaps in this part of the town working not 'arf time, with bread up and frosts a-comin' every night as is, and six or seven in a family, all to keep and provide for on ten or eleven shillings a week, let alone rates and rent. Now, what I sees is that it ain't possible, and I wants to know what you sees to it."

This is a specimen of the complaints for which Mr. Tapes is expected to offer a satisfactory and enduring remedy offhand. The combination of real and sentimental grievances in the petition of the complainant is most artful. It is a trap to catch the candidate; for if he satisfies his inquisitors in one particular, it is at the cost of failure in another particular. If he poses as a philanthropist, to whom pots of beer and gin-drinking are inventions of the Evil One for the ensnarement of bodies and souls, he falls as an enemy of the working man, to whom the solace of the public-house is dearer than any municipal candidate. Again, if he boldly says that he will certainly reduce the rates the moment he is in the Town Council, he has to confront the next of his interrogators, who, passing the back of his hand across his mouth in a waggish way, and with a wink at his fellow conspirators, straightway rises and asks, "respectfully," how Mr. Tapes intends to lower the rates without bringing the town into disrepute, and reducing wages and the supply of municipal labour.

Perhaps a third conspirator then tries to draw the candidate into a side issue, which may involve him in fresh trouble.

"Mr. Tapes," he says, "it ain't no good talking about rates and such-like unless men are made good Christians. Fellows may say being Christians or not ain't nothing to do with Town Councillors. Well, I think different. A Councillor is a man, in my opinion, who 'as on 'is 'ands the welfare of all the folks in the town. Now, if welfare don't mean 'religion,' I don't know what it do mean. And so, Mr. Tapes, what I wants to know is, if you be or you baint for the disestablishment of the Church?"

Here the candidate may well sigh, or surreptitiously scratch his head. Of course his backers will declare with a whirl that such questions are out of order; that a Town Councillor has no concern with religious sects and questions of national interest; that he is in short only a superior sort of broom to keep the streets of the town neat and in repair at moderate cost.

But the organised opposition play their game of dialectics somewhat cleverly, so that the odds are, before the meeting is dispersed, they have landed Mr. Tapes in a dilemma, from which he has thought to escape by saying something he would give very much to be able to recall before it appears in print. There will be a show of hands at the end, and the chairman, reckless of arithmetic, will pronounce that every one is in favour of Mr. Tapes. But the candidate himself will go home feeling a little sad. He has four or five other meetings to attend, and if they are all as trying as the first, it will go hard with him. However, the end crowns the labour, and he is quite consoled when at length he becomes Mr. Councillor Tapes.

CELESTIAL PHENOMENA.

THE aurora borealis is one of the most striking and splendid spectacles in the heavens. In the temperate latitudes it appears as a faint, beautiful yellow light, like the morning or evening twilight. It generally rises from a kind of dark cloud, or collection of vapours, which runs along from the north to the east and west. Sometimes it is perpetually changing its altitude, and seems to roll like a sea in a storm. The luminous matter immediately above the clouds is pretty steady and uniform. But from this there are streams that dart up towards the zenith with great rapidity. They are suddenly extinguished and renewed, and continually shift their places. They often resemble the tail of a comet; sometimes they extend to the zenith, forming a beautiful canopy of luminous wreaths, like the curling of flames that meet at the top of an oven.

The height of an aurora borealis varies; some have supposed it to be fifty to seventy miles above the surface of the earth; some have supposed it to be a thousand miles, whilst others have made it one hundred and fifty miles. The duration of this light is generally in proportion to its intensity and extent. Sometimes it continues only for a few minutes. It is frequently observed, in a greater or less degree, during most of the night; and, in some instances, it has lasted several days, and even a week, without interruption.

From observations made by the writer, the phenomenon occurs more frequently at the time of the equinoxes, when the tides are highest, than at the solstices, when they are lowest. But the period of most frequent occurrence seems to extend through the spring and fall months, and to have very little correspondence with the annual tides. The months most favourable are April and November, and the least favourable July and December.

In the northern districts of Siberia an aurora borealis gradually increases in size, until it comprehends a large space of the heavens; it rushes from place to place with incredible velocity, and finally almost covers the whole sky up to the zenith, and produces an appearance as if a vast tent was expanded in the heavens, glittering with gold, rubies, and sapphire. However fine the illumination may be, it is attended with a hissing, crackling, and rushing noise through the air, like the discharge of fireworks. The hunters in these regions are often overtaken by these lights, and their dogs become so terrified that they lie down on the ground until the noise has ceased. The same phenomena have been witnessed at Hudson's Bay, and by the Greenland whalefishers. Something of the kind has been perceived also in lower latitudes. Mr. Cavallo declares that he has repeatedly heard a crackling noise proceeding from an aurora. Mr. Maine, the electrician, states with great confidence that, at a time when the northern lights were very remarkable in England, they were attended with a hissing or whizzing sound. Dr. Belknap, in his account of these lights as they appeared in New Hampshire in 1719, says: "In a calm night, and in the intervals between the gentle flaws of wind, an attentive ear, in a retired situation, may perceive it to be accompanied by a sound like that made by a silk handkerchief rubbed along the edge by a quick motion of the thumb and finger." But one of the most remarkable circumstances attending this phenomenon is that it sometimes does not appear for many years. It is but little more than a century since it has been so frequent and conspicuous as to attract any considerable attention. No appropriate name was given to it by the ancient philosophers, and no very distinct account of it is to be found among their writings. Seneca, in treating of thunder and lightning, speaks of the air being inflamed by motion, and being converted into fire; but whether with any reference to the aurora borealis, is not certain. We have accounts by historians of luminous appearances in the heavens under the name of comets, or the more general one of portents, which answer much better to an aurora borealis than to any comet of modern times. Justin relates that a comet appeared about one hundred and twenty-two years before the Christian era that filled about one-fourth part of the heavens with its light, and that it occupied four hours in rising and setting. About one hundred and fifty years before we are told that a comet was seen, which spread itself like a forest over a third part of the heavens. We think, therefore, that the aurora borealis was known to the ancients, but was confounded with other phenomena, all of which were indistinctly described, and often probably much exaggerated.

Still, it is very surprising that after the revival of letters, and after the spirit of observation and enquiry had begun to be awakened, we meet with no record of any such phenomena, till about three centuries ago. The earliest account in English relates to one that appeared in 1560. From this time they happened frequently for about ten years. For the next forty years there are none on record. From 1620, for two or three years, there were several remarkable ones, and then no more for eighty years. This brings us down to the commencement of the eighteenth century, during which they have appeared at regular intervals. The aurora borealis in Europe is not only of rare occurrence, but is, for the most part, incomplete, feeble, and imperfect. As we approach to the polar circles we are greeted with this light almost as regular as with the light of the Milky Way, and it is as welcome as that of the moon. Maupertuis, who, with several others, went to measure an arc of the meridian on the confines of the frigid zone, continued to prosecute his nice and difficult work by the aid of this light long after the sun had left him. He says that it is sufficient, together with the light of the other heavenly bodies, for most of the occasions of life.

Various theories have been advanced to account for the origin of these lights. The most plausible theory seems to be that which gives to the northern and southern lights an electrical origin. The appearance of the light itself is very similar to that which is produced by sending the electric fluid through a portion of air rarefied to the same degree as that in the upper regions of the atmosphere. The rapidity of the motions that are observed in the light and beautiful streams that play from the horizon to the zenith, and dart through this space in a few seconds, answers to no power with which we are acquainted so well as to electricity. The rustling noises have been expressly compared to those which attend the passage of electricity through the air.

In 1806 the whole of Dover Castle was brought over and placed on the Ramsgate side of the hill situated between the two places, and the image was so strong that the hill itself could not be seen through it. In 1798, at Hastings, the French coast, which is forty or fifty miles distant, was as distinctly seen as through the best glasses; as the cliffs gradually appeared more elevated, the sailors and fishermen pointed out and named the different places they had been accustomed to visit, such as the Bay, the windmill at Boulogne, Saint Valery, and other places on the coast of Picardy. From the eastern cliff one gentleman saw at once Dungeness, Dover cliffs, and the French coast all the way from Calais, Boulogne, on to Saint Valery, and, as some of the fishermen affirmed, as far as Dieppe. The day was extremely hot, without a breath of wind.

On another occasion, the town of Dieppe became visible, though sixty miles distant.

A few years ago, a boy observed at Flambro' "fields, and hedges, and houses, over the sea;" but they had gradually melted away. This interesting spectacle is very rare in this part of the country. The boy was filled with amazement at what he had witnessed; but, unfortunately, could give no accurate description of the scene.

It is well known that places fifty or sixty miles distant have, by the phenomenon of the mirage, or refraction of the atmosphere, become distinctly visible. It is, therefore, not impossible that on this occasion the coast of Denmark actually became visible to the boy. It would have been interesting to have ascertained the fact, if fact it were, that Flambro', for centuries the stronghold of the Danes, had in the latter half of the nineteenth century been visited, in optical illusion at least, not by the ravaging Viking, bent on plunder and slaughter, but by the very land itself, with its fields, its hedgerows, and its houses, the property of its peaceful inhabitants. The vast expanse of ocean intervening between Flambro' and Denmark seems to make this improbable; but during the summer of 1885 a pretty mirage was seen at sea from Oxclosund, in Sweden. It represented two tree-clad islands, on one of which were buildings with two monitors steaming off the islands. There were at the same time two Swedish monitors cruising in the Baltic a few degrees further north. The report from which this statement is taken does not give the names of the islands, nor state their exact distance from Oxclosund; but "a few degrees" cannot be understood to mean less than three, which would be two hundred and ten miles. In June, 1885, the inhabitants of Blackpool, in Lancashire, distinctly saw the Isle of Man, with five of its hills, clearly visible for half an hour, although the distance is between sixty and seventy miles. A peculiar feature of this mirage was that, while the island was clearly seen, the views in the other directions were more limited than usual, Barrow not being visible.

Falling or shooting-stars were formerly little noticed, but in consequence of several observations have become objects of much attention. From observations made at Breslau and other places, the height of some shooting-stars has been calculated at five hundred English miles, and the rate at which they move not less than thirty-six miles in a second, which is nearly double the rate of the earth's motion round the sun. If a deduction be made to one-half of this rate per second, in order to allow for the illusion occasioned by the motion of the earth, the real motion would be eighteen miles per second, which, with the exception of the earth, would still be more rapid than that of any of the principal bodies of our system. It is singular that their general direction should be contrary to that in which the earth moves in its annual orbit. The shooting-stars in America in 1833 succeeded each other at such short intervals, that it was impossible to count them, and the most moderate calculation fixes their number at hundreds of thousands. They were so numerous, and showed themselves in so many quarters of the heavens at the same time, that the attempts to estimate them were only rough guesses. At the observatory at Boston their number was considered to equal one-half of the flakes which fill the air in an ordinary fall of snow. When their numbers were diminished, six hundred and fifty stars were counted in fifteen minutes, in a circumscribed part of the heavens, which did not comprise a tenth part of the visible horizon; and these did not amount to more than two-thirds of the whole number seen, which was at least eight hundred and sixty-six. If the whole hemisphere could have been surveyed by one observer, the number seen would have been eight thousand, six hundred and sixty, or thirty-six thousand, six hundred and forty per hour. As the phenomena continued more than seven hours, the number of shooting-stars visible at Boston was upwards of two hundred and forty thousand; and it should be recollected that the basis of this calculation was taken when the intensity of the phenomenon was diminished. It was visible along the whole of the eastern coast of North America, from the Gulf of Mexico to Halifax, from nine o'clock in the evening to sunrise, and in some places in full daylight at eight o'clock in the morning. In 1799 a similar phenomenon was observed in America by M. de Humboldt, in Greenland by the Moravian Brethren, and in Germany by various individuals; and the period of its appearance was also the night of the twelfth and thirteenth of November. In 1832, in Europe and some parts of Asia the phenomenon was witnessed; and, strange to say, the date was still the night of the twelfth and thirteenth of November.

On the thirteenth of November, 1835, a large and brilliant meteor fell near Belley, in the department of Ain, and set fire to a farmhouse. In the same night of the thirteenth of November a shooting-star, larger and more brilliant than Jupiter, was observed at Lille. It left on its passage a shower of sparks precisely similar to those which follow a skyrocket.

The chronicles of almost every age and country record the fall of meteorolites. The Chinese and Japanese note down with great care everything connected with the appearance of these extraordinary phenomena. The Chinese actually made catalogues of them, believing they were connected with contemporary events. There is no occasion for laughing at this oriental superstition, since there were not wanting, nearly a century ago, philosophers in enlightened lands who declared the impossibility of stones falling from the atmosphere at all. One of the most remarkable cases of antiquity is that mentioned by Pliny, in his natural history. This stone fell near Egospotamus, in Thrace, about four hundred and sixty-five years before the Christian era. Pliny informs us that it was the size of a cart, and of a burnt colour. The Greeks believed that it had fallen from the sun, and that the philosopher Anaxagoras had predicted the exact period when it should arrive on the earth's surface. According to the historians who have recorded the event, its fall was predicted by a meteoric appearance of a very unusual character. We are told that a large fiery body, like a cloud of flame, careered through the heavens with a vague uncertain motion. By its violent agitation, several fragments were projected from it in various directions, sweeping with a tremendous velocity. On examination after its fall, no trace of combustible matter was found, and the stone, although large, did not in the least correspond to the dimensions in the meteor. Various other instances are recorded of the fall of meteoric stones in ancient times; but we prefer giving an account of the better authenticated cases which belong to a modern date.

On the seventh of November, 1492, between eleven and noon, there arose a furious storm at Ensisheim, in France. The sky was inlaid with sheeted flame, and loud thunder "pealed in the blood-red heavens." There were other sounds of a strange confused description, arising probably from the rapid passage of the falling body through the atmosphere. Presently a large star was seen to fall in a field of wheat, and, on examination, it was found to have sunk between five and six feet into the ground. Its weight was about two hundred and sixty pounds. It was considered at the time a miracle, and the meteorolite was accordingly, by order of the King, suspended in the Church of Ensisheim, all persons being prohibited from touching it. This was unquestionably a prudent prohibition, and contributed to the cause of its preservation. It is now in the library at Colmar, but has been considerably reduced in weight.

The celebrated Gassendi informs us that on the twenty-ninth of November, 1637, about ten o'clock a.m., while the sky was perfectly serene and transparent, he saw a flaming stone, apparently about four feet in diameter, fall on Mount Vaision, an eminence situated between the small towns Perne and Guillaumes, in Provence. This stone was encircled with a zone of various colours, like a rainbow, and accompanied in its fall with a noise resembling the discharge of artillery. It was of a dark metallic colour, extremely hard, and fifty-nine pounds in weight.

In the month of June, 1668, two stones, one of which weighed three hundred and the other two hundred pounds, fell near Verona. The event took place during the night, and when the weather was perfectly serene and mild. They appeared to be all on fire, descending in a sloping direction, and with a tremendous noise.

In July, 1790, another case occurred at Barbotan, a place in the vicinity of Bordeaux, which is thus described by Lornet, a respectable citizen, who witnessed the phenomenon: "It was a very bright fire-ball, luminous as the sun, of the size of an ordinary balloon, and after inspiring the inhabitants with consternation, burst and disappeared. A few days after some peasants brought stones which they said fell from the meteor, but the philosophers to whom they offered them laughed at this assertion as fabulous. The peasants would have now more reason to laugh at their philosophers." One of these stones, fifteen inches in diameter, broke through the roof of a cottage and killed a herdsman and a bullock. After reading the above statement, we cannot refrain from wondering at the slow belief of the philosophers as to the heavenly origin of these stones. Where was the body to come from, a body of the dimensions described, which was capable of breaking through the roof of a cottage and committing such deadly havoc, if it did not come from the atmosphere, aye, and from an immense height, too!

The following shower of meteorolites is not only remarkable in itself, but because, though slighted by many eminent philosophers at the time, it ultimately led to the conversion of most of them. This phenomenon occurred in August, 1790, near Juillac, a small town of France. About nine o'clock in the evening, while the air was calm, and the sky cloudless, a fire-ball was observed proceeding with amazing velocity from the south to the north, and in two seconds split into portions of considerable size, like the fragments of a bursting bomb. Two or three minutes after a dreadful explosion was heard, like the simultaneous firing of several pieces of ordnance. The concussion of the atmosphere shook the windows in their frames, and threw down household utensils from their shelves, but there was no sensible motion under foot. The sound continued for some time, and was prolonged in echoes for fifty miles along the mountain chain of the Pyrenees; at the same time a strong sulphurous smell was diffused in the atmosphere. The fragments of the exploded meteor were found scattered in a circular space of about two miles in diameter. Some of them weighed eighteen or twenty, and a few, it is said, even fifty pounds.

On Tuesday, the 26th April, 1803, about one o'clock p.m., the weather being serene, there was observed from Caen and other places a fiery globe of a very brilliant splendour, and which moved in the atmosphere with great rapidity. Some moments after, there was heard at l'Aigle, and in the environs of that town, a violent explosion, which lasted five or six minutes. This noise proceeded from a small cloud, which was at a great elevation in the atmosphere, for the inhabitants of two hamlets a league distant from each other saw it at the same time above their heads. In the whole canton, over which this cloud was suspended, there was heard a hissing noise like that of a stone discharged from a sling, and a great many mineral masses exactly similar to those distinguished by the name of meteor-stones were seen to fall. The largest of all those that fell weighed seventeen pounds and a half. The number of all those which fell was computed about two or three thousand.

In the same month and year as the preceding fall a fire-ball struck the "White Bull Inn" at East Norton, in England, and left behind it several meteoric fragments. Exactly twelve months after the above a stone fell with a loud hissing noise at Possil, near Glasgow. These fire-balls have continued to fall at intervals up to the present time, doing more or less destruction. In 1840 a great stone fell at Shahabad, in India, burning five villages and killing several people.

With respect to the origin of these remarkable stones, various unsatisfactory conjectures have been formed. Some have supposed them to be merely projected from volcanoes. This doctrine, however, is untenable, first, because the phenomena have sometimes taken place at immense distances from volcanoes; secondly, nothing ever thrown out of the safety-valves of the globe has, in its composition, borne any resemblance to meteoric stones. Some have maintained that their origin is to be ascribed to the combination of gases in the higher regions of the atmosphere. In chemistry, many cases might be enumerated where two gases combine and form a solid substance. This theory, therefore, involves no impossibility, but there are almost insuperable difficulties opposed to its probability. Indeed, scientific men have not only differed in their speculations on this subject, but have been singularly cautious in offering any, a clear proof that they had not themselves been perfectly satisfied with any solution of the problem hitherto. The fact, however, that stones have fallen from the atmosphere is now an established philosophical fact.

BETWIXT YESTERDAY AND TO-DAY.

A STORY IN FOUR CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER III.

At last she was free, free to be as miserable as she pleased.

She wandered listlessly down to the pier. The sky was still overcast; a sharp wind blew in from the sea; she leaned her arms on the wooden rail, and looked into the sullen, grey water below her.

Yesterday—oh, was there not a whole lifetime between yesterday and to-day?—they had sat together, and he had read Browning to her—that strange, fearful story of a woman's weakness and of a man's unsparing vengeance. They had talked of it, differed over it, and liked each other the better for differing. She had taken her stand then as an equal on intellectual ground, while to-day she could only falter a commonplace.

She thought of the cold, calm woman who smiled when a smile was needed, who paid so dearly for her littleness; and then she forgot Browning, and her thoughts wandered back to herself again. She looked eagerly up the pier. If only he would come! She would take her courage in both hands, and ask him to read to her again, perhaps.

She gazed up the road. Suddenly her heart quickened its beat. Far up, quite at the far end, walking so leisurely, was a figure she could not mistake. Would he come? She strained her eyes to watch him. She wondered if he had ever walked so slowly before. Or had the promenade doubled its length? She could almost count her heart-beats as he turned the corner. Was he going into the town? He began to descend the steps. Was he coming on to the pier? She thought he was.

It shall be the omen of your happiness, her heart said to her. If he comes, he loves you, if he comes not, he loves you not.

She had time to reject the idea twice, as childish and unworthy, before he reached the last step; but in spite of her efforts, it still retained its hold on her mind. At the foot of the steps the path divided: one way led to the beach, another to the pier. Hilda held her breath as she saw him stand for a moment, apparently irresolute; then, as he moved to the right, the blood came surging over her, whirling through her veins. She could hardly see; there was a mist before her eyes. He was coming nearer, nearer; he was close to the gate in another instant. Something seemed to have given way. Everything was whirling round her. It was only her supreme self-command that prevented her from fainting. She sat down. The pier, its occupants, the sea, the sky, everything was shut out from her, and in their places, dancing before her eyes, sounding in her ears were the words, "He loves me not." She had never thought of the old fisherman, whose tiny boat was always run up under the pier.

She waited a moment—a moment that might have been ages, so far separated did it seem from the preceding one, and then she saw the boat put out to sea almost from beneath her feet. Old Cole was rowing, George was steering. He did not look up, while she watched, until they disappeared a mere speck on the horizon.

It was late in the afternoon. Kate, bearing Mrs. Slingsby along with her, had already taken her departure, amid much bustle and excitement, and after plenty of parting injunctions to Hilda.

The girl watched them go, and then, as the cab turned the corner, she mounted to her own little room, and stood for a moment or two looking vaguely around her. It was such a long time before she need set out to meet Daisy. Should she lie down? The bed looked cool and tempting. She threw herself upon it. But in another instant she started up, and began to dress.

She fastened a light scarf around her neck, and prepared to leave the room. It wanted more than an hour to train time. What should she do? Her eye fell on George Carlmore's book. She took it up. She would read part of it over again; she would go and sit on one of the seats overlooking the sea. She walked quickly out of the room, down the stairs, and into the street; but before she reached the seats her mood had changed. She felt that to sit still and read what this man had written of women would be unendurable. She would walk up and down; perhaps the regular motion would calm her. She felt that to be a creature of impulse was to court pain.

She began to pace to and fro—not quickly, but with even steps; and as she looked at the church clock, standing out high above the houses, she determined that, let the effort cost her what it might, she would not pause until the great hands pointed to the hour of five.

On, on she went, the strain becoming worse; the longing to stop and take one peep into the volume under her arm grew keener every moment. Her eyes sought the dial again and again; all the way down the promenade, while it was in front of her, they never left it. How slowly it moved! Why, it took her less than three minutes to walk the whole length. Three minutes. She——

"Miss Boyle!"

The girl started and looked up quickly. The voice, still more the face, told her that George had forgotten his displeasure.

She drew a long breath of relief. Some of her accustomed self-possession came back to her.

"Have you had a pleasant sail?" she asked in that intensely calm voice of hers.

She had forgotten all about her resolution. She forgot, too, to watch the hands of the clock.

"First class," he answered, in the manner of a man who feels well-disposed towards all the world, as in truth he did at that moment, having spent a very pleasant morning, and afterwards lunched exceedingly well.

He sauntered along by her side, while she was silent, feeling that in the joy of his presence all her pain was swept away.

"And what have you been doing with yourself?" he enquired, with the easy condescension of his superior manner.

"Nothing," she answered, vaguely.

"Nothing!" he retorted indulgently; "and now? Still nothing?"

"Is this nothing?" she asked, holding up his book. "I came out to read a chapter over again."

She hated herself for the half truth, but how could she tell him the whole?

At the sight of the blue-bound volume his face brightened.

"Then you did like it?" he asked, eagerly. After all, he was very proud of this his first success; and not at all above fishing for a little praise.

He took the book from her hands and began to turn over the pages. It was so glorious to feel that this was his, all his, that it was peopled with creatures of his brain, conceived by him, limited and set down by him.

She let her eyes rest on his face for a moment with a quick, penetrating glance. The question aroused the whole of her intellectual faculty. The shrinking, timid, love-sick girl was gone, and the highly-developed, cultured woman reigned in her stead.

"I like some of it," she answered, cautiously.

"Is not that but faint praise?" he asked, quickly, a shadow crossing his face.

"No, no!" she corrected. "I think it is all wonderfully clever, and part of it noble; but——"

"Well!"

"You are not fair to women."

"Why?"

He would like to hear her view, one often sees things in such a different light by looking at them through other people's spectacles, and he knew her well enough to expect something original, not that he intended to change his own opinion by one hair's breadth. He had thought it out for himself, not borrowed it from any one else, so it must be right.

She was silent; so after a moment he asked the question again.

"You think a woman so easy to sum up," she answered. "You dash her off with half-a-dozen lines and call the picture 'love or nothing.'"

"Well!" he said, wondering. It was exactly what he had done.

"Do you forget that love fails some women; that for some women the fruit never ripens? Oh! it is a beautiful thing I know, but I don't like to think that there is nothing else for them."

She stopped suddenly. George Carlmore regarded her with undisguised amazement. The excitement had brought a tinge of colour to her cheeks, her eyes were shining, her lips quivering. The coldness and impassiveness were gone—she looked almost beautiful. George felt himself strangely stirred as he gazed into her face. It was characteristic of the man, that now, when she had just told him that love was not the end of all things to a woman, he felt a sudden inclination to teach her her mistake.

He looked again into her face; he bent forward.

"Come," he said, a subtle alteration in his voice, "let us go and sit on the beach, and you"—as he held out his book to her—"shall tell me where I am wrong."

She bent her head. The strange wonderful afterglow of her emotion was still upon her. The words had come, she knew not how or where. They hardly applied to her feelings at the moment. But there is often a strange period of excitement about women, especially those whose faculties might rise to higher things, and whether this excitement leaves them morally raised or lowered is just the test of their womanliness.

The glamour was over Hilda now, and George Carlmore was that glamour. She could not see how small he was; it had pleased her to set him before her as a king, and her own imagination, unwittingly, supplied the deficiencies. She was quite prepared to surrender herself, to follow where he led.

"Come," he said.

They turned. Clear on the night air rang forth five strokes from the old church tower.

Hilda stared; just for one moment the desire to let Daisy go almost overpowered her, and then, mindful as ever of her duty, she thrust the temptation from her.

"I can't," she said, in her grave, resolute voice, that held in it no intimation of what the decision cost her. "I must meet Daisy."

"Daisy?" he repeated.

"She is coming at a quarter-past five, and I must go to the station."

She looked up at him; then, as the frown deepened on his face, all the nervous constraint of the morning overcame her. She wanted to show him in some little way, such as a self-respecting woman may permit herself, that she was sorry for the interruption; but it was all impossible; while, to do him justice, it would have been hard to read anything but indifference from her manner.

He was bitterly annoyed. That she should prefer this vulgar little cousin to him! Who was she that she should presume to lecture him about his women, when her own choice in the flesh was so radically bad? For with a vain man's intense unreasonableness he had quite made up his mind about Daisy. The very mention of her name irritated him. She would want to introduce him next.

Suddenly he recollected a dinner engagement.

"Good afternoon!" he said, quickly.

"Good afternoon!" she echoed.

They parted.

Hilda will always look back with a shudder to that short walk to the station. The refiner's fire was indeed heated to the uttermost, and her soul was burning therein. She made her way mechanically to the platform, and as the train steamed in, and the bustle of the porters and passengers commenced, she wondered if she were indeed the Hilda of old, or only her outward semblance. She looked around; it seemed a thing that must be done; and even when she stepped forward, and bent to kiss an eager, upturned face, this feeling was still strong upon her.

"Hilda," exclaimed Daisy's clear, childish voice, in startled accents, "how ill you look!"

The words were like a stab to her; but the voice had its effect. She began to remember, as she herself had implied a little while ago, that there was other love on earth, although the love of man might fail her. She gave Daisy's hand a grateful little squeeze.

"Where is mother?" enquired Daisy, as her eyes scanned the figures on the platform.

Hilda explained.

"Poor Kate! So that is it, is it?"

"Hush!" murmured Hilda, involuntarily.

Daisy opened her eyes.

"Why?" she enquired.

"I am sorry for Kate," Hilda felt bound to explain; "and I do think such things are hard enough to bear without any one sneering at them."

Daisy examined her cousin's face narrowly for a moment.

"I dare say you are right," she said, a trifle impatiently. "But are you sure that Kate's is the real thing?"

Hilda turned away. The porter was waiting for directions; and by the time they were given, the subject had dropped. Still, Daisy felt that in some way Hilda was changed.

"What is it?" she asked herself.

Meantime, as a headache was the one thing apparent, she insisted on seeing her to bed at an early hour; and Daisy's was a loving peremptoriness well-nigh impossible to resist.

CHAPTER IV.

The next morning the sun shone forth in all its splendour—clear blue sky above, clear green sea below.

Hilda felt better under its influence. After all, she told herself, she had much to live for.

She finished dressing quickly, and went into the dining-room, where the French window stood open. From the garden floated in the sound of voices—merry, happy, light-hearted voices.

There was Daisy's laugh; she recognised that. She recognised, too, a deeper, fuller voice. She stepped through the window. Yes, surely enough it was Daisy and George Carlmore. She was laughing at something he was saying. What a sweet little thing she was! Hardly a woman—yet not a child, certainly, with her blue eyes, her golden hair, and her captivating little ways.

George evidently approved of her; he was leaning over the hedge, an unusually alert expression on his face.

She had never seen that expression there before. Just for one moment her heart throbbed madly; then her womanliness came to her aid. She walked on, her light footstep hardly sounding on the soft grass.

"You? Oh, Hilda!" Daisy exclaimed.

"Yes, dear, I am here," she answered, quietly, as she took one of the girl's hands in hers.

"How cold you are!" Daisy went on; "your hand is like ice."

Hilda drew it away.

"I am always a chilly mortal," she said; and she shivered a little. Then, for the first time, she raised her eyes to Carlmore's face. "You two have introduced yourselves, I think?" she said, gravely.

"Yes," he answered, briefly, almost sullenly.

He felt a curious resentment against poor Hilda. This Daisy was so different from the picture he had drawn of her in his mind's eye, and it suited him better to lay the blame on her faulty description than on his own perversity.

Daisy held up a kitten.

"Oh, we have introduced ourselves!" she said; "and Kitty here is answerable for it. I wanted Kitty, but Kitty did not want me; so she put the hedge between us. But Mr. Carlmore came and represented Fate. So Kitty is now trying to make herself comfortable in my arms instead of on the long grass."

Hilda looked down at the girl, and her face gained that expression of protecting tenderness with which older women watch the younger ones spread their wings and prepare to fly.

"And then," Daisy went on, "Mr. Carlmore said he knew mother, and that you had told him I was coming. He is going to take us in his boat. Won't it be fun, Hilda!"

For the last time the tempter knocked at the door of Hilda's heart. Was this blue-eyed baby going to take him from her? She jumped at the conclusion with a quickness born of jealousy. Would she love him as she would have done, give him intelligent appreciation as she—— Nay, he never was hers. The fight was over. She raised her pale, unruffled face to his with a gesture of enquiry.

"Miss Daisy says she likes the sea," he explained, stiffly. "Will you come, too?"

"I will come and take care of you, Daisy!" she cried, with such a sudden increase of animation, that the girl looked up quickly.

"You dear old thing!" she exclaimed, joyously. "Why, I declare you are quite excited. And when Hilda is excited," she rattled on, turning to Carlmore, "you may expect the heavens to fall."

He looked up to the sky above them with a gesture of mock alarm.

Daisy laughed.

"Did you often go out? Who went with you, Hilda? Kate does not like the sea, I know," she went on, quite innocently.

For a moment George looked embarrassed; then Hilda, womanlike, came to the rescue.

"No one, Miss Inquisitive," she said, lightly. "This will be my first sail."

"And you used to be so fond of the water?"

"Was I?" she said, quietly. "Well, you know yesterday is not to-day."

There was more gravity in her voice than the subject warranted.

Mr. Carlmore, who had entirely recovered himself by now, bent forward to make some arrangements. Insensibly his voice took a softer key as he addressed Daisy. Hilda drew back a little; her part in the matter was so small.

"At three, then," Daisy's voice fairly rippled with glee.

"Yes, at three. You won't disappoint me?" he asked, almost eagerly.

"Certainly not," she replied.

Miss Daisy made the family's arrangements by the right of long custom. Mrs. Slingsby asked nothing better. Hilda, as a rule, was quite willing, only Kate sometimes demurred; but it must be admitted that when the two wills clashed hers was generally the defeated one.

"Au revoir," she said to him. "Hilda," the breakfast having suddenly come into her mind, "you can't think how cold everything will be."

She linked her arm into her cousin's, and pulled her gently away.

"Good-bye," called Carlmore after them. "Three, please remember."

But he felt pretty sure that he should manage to see this "dainty maiden"—as he mentally christened her—long before then.

Daisy nodded her head to him; but it was Hilda who answered:

"Good-bye," she said, in a curiously hollow voice.

She gave one long glance at him, then she turned resolutely away.

She bade good-bye to her dream, afterwards, in the solitude of her own room, and she confessed it all — confessed that it had been a brief delirium, that her soul had been sent into the fire. How would it come forth? As gold, or dross?

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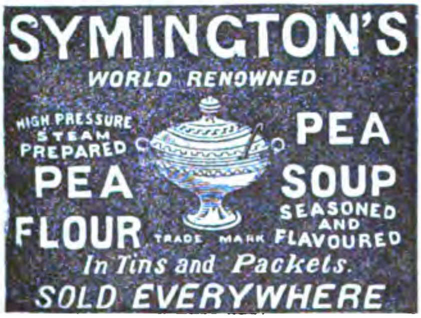

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A Weekly Journal

CONDUCTED BY

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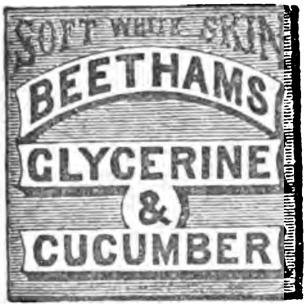

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CHAPTER XIX. BUILDING CASTLES.

The happiness that filled Mrs. Gordon's breast as, three weeks after her departure, she took the train for Longham, may well be imagined! Everything had prospered beyond her expectations—the expectations she had nursed for years, fearing to tell her children of them lest they should be disappointed in the end—and no disappointment had come upon her. The house, and property, and the income were all hers, indisputably hers.

The servants at the Warren had all been dismissed, and a stranger put in just to keep the house clean and aired. Mrs. Gordon would have liked to know where Miss Evans was; but she had disappeared, though Mr. Blackston said he believed she had found another situation. Grace and Sibyl were far away in a German town enjoying the discomforts of a German school. Mrs. Gordon did not care to think much about them; but when she did so, she settled that she had done the kindest thing possible. They would be far away from all the painful associations, they would learn German at her expense, and they would not be likely to come back to England to injure the sweet innocent minds of Minnie and Bee for many years. Not that she wished to hide the truth from the world. Why should she? She had done nothing to be ashamed of. She had found in her own house two poor girls whose very existence was a reproach to them, and she had sent them to finish their education abroad, paying every penny of their expenses. She believed the school to be a good one, for Mrs. Johnson, "the kindest person imaginable," was acquainted with some one who had once been there, and her legal adviser had said that he understood it was kept by a very respectable German lady.

Mrs. Gordon thus reviewed her conduct, and could find nothing wherewith to reproach herself.

But, returning mentally to her own family, this sudden influx of wealth would, she knew, enable them to take their right position in the fashionable world by right of money as well as birth.

Austin might look about him and find a neighbouring heiress, or, at least, choose a girl with some fortune without being thought anxious to recruit his own. Now that everything was settled, Mrs. Gordon rather wished to have him at once back with her; but his unfortunate engagement would prevent his return till the autumn at least, for Austin was a man of his word, and she knew that nothing short of her falling ill would make him fail in his engagement to young Jones, or throw up what he had undertaken.

Mrs. Gordon called Austin Quixotic; for though aloud she always upheld the principles which actuated him, yet for herself she always found excuses, and good excuses too, which released her from doing what was disagreeable and inconvenient or militated against the carrying out of her plans. She knew well enough that though she could influence her daughters, she could not move Austin when once his mind was made up on a certain course of action. For this reason she was very glad that he had been out of the way during her first settlement of the Gordon affairs; yet, though her only son often thwarted her, she nevertheless clung to him and loved him more than all her daughters put together.

She had now another source of secret pleasure in Bee's engagement. She had meant the Captain to marry one of her daughters, and she had expected it would be Minnie; but on the whole, it was fortunate that his choice had fallen on Bee, as Minnie could now make a far better match, and with her beauty and her improved position she might even—— Here followed a lovely castle in the air, where Minnie was seen, exquisitely dressed, walking hand-in-hand with a baronet and possessing a large house of her own. Of course this little plan was very, very private, for Mrs. Gordon hated common worldly people and match-making mothers. But when she came down from the clouds, she felt quite prepared to welcome the first son-in-law with undisguised pleasure. First, because he was of good family and altogether eligible; secondly, because he would have plenty of money by-and-by; and thirdly, because, in the present, he had enough to marry on without the widow's cruse of oil being wasted by too early division.

"It is a pity he is a little too old and too grave for Bee. However, thank Heaven, it is all for the best."

This exhibition of religious thankfulness was accompanied by Mrs. Gordon's sweetest smile and most resigned expression, for she felt sure that every one would praise her able management.

When the widow alighted at the door of the small villa, she felt that she had done good to her family as well as to herself.

The three Miss Gordons were at the door to receive their loving parent, and two of them felt an increase of affection because their mother had ably carried out her mission. They were richer, and, therefore, must be happier. Bee alone did not share their sentiments; but this was because Colin Grant loved her. Sordid motives and Colin Grant could not occupy the same space at once, so the sordid motives gracefully made their bow and retired from Beatrice's heart.

"Dear Frances, you have been overdoing yourself; you are quite thin," said Mrs. Gordon. "And as for you, Minnie, darling, what is the matter with you? You all want me, I see, except Miss Bee, who, in my absence, has found some one to take my place."

Beatrice blushed, and looked down thoughtfully. She was very unlike a happy engaged maiden. The truth was, she could not bear the subject mentioned before Minnie, who, since her outburst, had satisfied herself with taking no notice of her younger sister, and treating her as if she had done something to be ashamed of.

"Mother, do tell us exactly what the house is like," asked Minnie. "Does the neighbourhood seem likely to be a pleasant one?"

"The house is beautifully situated; but, after reflection, I thought it better that we should not go there till the spring."

"Not at once?" said Minnie. "Must we stay in this stupid neighbourhood all the winter?"

"I thought it would be nicer for Bee to stay here at present, for, of course, she wants to see as much as possible of her dear Colin."

"Please don't consider me, mother," put in Bee, quite unaccustomed to be looked upon as important. "I am sure Colin would not like to put out any of your plans."

"Anyhow, there will be no more slaving away at one's clothes," added Minnie, who, however, cared for no other occupation when she was indoors, so the release was not of much importance to her.

"And then I hope Austin will come home," said Bee, who longed to tell her brother all about Colin. She knew that those two would appreciate each other.

"Dear boy! I don't know. He writes so kindly about it all; but he fancies he is bound by his promise to stay with this young Jones. They are going on to Germany after Rome. Austin has such exaggerated ideas of duty. He says that, as Jones must learn to speak German, they mean to go into a real German family where no English is spoken. It sounds terribly dull; those German fraus are so stupid."

"How strange we never knew about this cousin!" said Bee, slowly. "I wonder if he guessed we should have his house? Did he, mother?"

"He died very suddenly," replied her mother, and then turned the conversation in such a marked manner that the girls understood the subject was not to be discussed.

Captain Grant had been invited to

dinner, and came accordingly in good time, finding no one to receive him but Mrs. Gordon. Bee had purposely left them alone.

Mrs. Gordon knew exactly how to behave to a future son-in-law, though this was the first time she had been put into such a situation Indeed, she was much less embarrassed than the Captain himself, who stumbled over his remarks in no very brave manner. However, he had nothing to fear, so his shyness was wasted. Mrs. Gordon was only too glad to label him as belonging to the family, and very soon made him feel at his ease.

"You must come here as much as you like," she said, sweetly. "Remember, this is your home in future as well as Bee's. I am much afraid you will find her still a child, but time will mend that; and I have tried to keep my dear children from all knowledge of the wicked world."

"A child in truth and honesty. What could one desire better?" murmured the Captain, wondering why Heaven rewarded him so much, for he honestly thought that Mrs. Gordon was the embodiment of all that was most beautiful in a Christian mother. No wonder that Bee was so perfect with such a guide! The worthy Captain was quite incapable of reading a woman's character except so far as it appeared on the surface; but happily for him, his future wife was wise enough to see that his standard was a far different one to that of her own family.

"I must congratulate you," remarked Captain Grant, when Bee had been sufficiently discussed, "on your new property. Curiously enough, I once stayed in that neighbourhood, and thought it lovely; and more curiously still, I mentioned it to your daughters as the place where I once saw two girls that reminded me forcibly of them."

"Indeed!"

Mrs. Gordon stooped to pick up a stray pin. How much she wished that the Captain had not visited that spot!

"Curious, wasn't it? But of course they could not have been relations."

"One does occasionally come across curious coincidences," said Mrs. Gordon, and then, happily for her, Frances made her appearance, and the conversation was turned; but Mrs. Gordon felt an uncomfortable suspicion—nay, a certainty—that her future son-in-law had somehow seen Grace and Sibyl when they were younger. Coincidences were curious, and sometimes tiresome; yet she hardly knew why she should object to the Captain hearing the "story," except that, like Austin, he was a Quixotic man. Don Quixote may have killed chivalry, but he left behind him a very troublesome virtue to take its place, which has been named after him to remind us of his inconvenient good nature.

Bee was quite content to sit silently by her Captain, to listen to his stories about India and the men who had done noble deeds, and whose acquaintance he had made. Minnie, in private to Frances, voted him "an awfully slow bore, always harping on India." She did not take the trouble to notice that these stories invariably turned on somebody's heroic deeds, and that there was never any spice of malice and slander in the Captain's conversation. No wonder that the Gordon family found him slow! Mrs. Gordon in secret shared Minnie's opinions, for she liked the spice of society malice better than the milk of human kindness; but of course she hid her opinion and listened in the most interested manner to her future son-in-law's conversation, taking pains to recall mutual acquaintances, and to appear extremely glad to hear about them and their affairs.

If the Captain was happy, it was because it never entered his head how much he was put up with for the sake of his money and his position; and in his case it would have been folly to be wise, so the good officer enjoyed his courting time, and after dinner he indulged in more than one innocent make-believe. He suddenly recollected that there was a book he had specially noticed in the other room. It was about India. Would Bee mind fetching it for him, because he was holding Minnie's wool? Then, directly she was gone, of course he solemnly told the other ladies that he felt sure Bee could not reach down the book without help, and that he had better go and give her the necessary assistance.

"How I hate lovers in a house!" remarked Minnie, yawning, after one of these episodes, which only amused her mother, "they destroy all one's comfort; it aggravates one's temper to witness continual spooning."

"Wait till your time comes, dear Minnie," replied her mother.

"I hope it never will come in that form, for really Beatrice has utterly changed since her engagement. She does nothing but study the map of India, and repeats the Captain's endless dull stories as if they were full of wit. It is fortunate he did not fall in love with me, I could not have stood it for long."

"Why do you listen to her? I never do," said Frances. "Mother, what about new furniture for the Warren—will there be much wanted?"

"What there is, is somewhat old-fashioned; but that style is coming in again. How you two will enjoy all the arranging!"

"Mrs. Crosby has been extra civil since she heard the news," said Minnie. "People seem to think us so interesting now without our taking any trouble about it. The glow of Mr. Bush's gin-palace has paled before our property. How foolish people are!"

This was true; but Minnie much enjoyed the folly of her neighbours when exhibited in this manner, and her scorn of it was merely verbal.

A more interesting conversation was going on between the lovers in the other room. Alone with Bee, the Captain dropped India and its dependencies, but spoke of his future home, of his early remembrances, and especially of his mother. He wanted Bee to know her through him. She had been so clever, so good, so high-minded, and some day Bee was to carry out all the ideas she had cherished. The poor should have model cottages, such as those of which his mother had often drawn out plans, and then the women and children of the soldiers should have their joint care.

"I want to build cottages for old soldiers, Bee. You see, they like talking to army folk. They can never have the same feeling for civilians; the regiment, and the special wars, and the grand blunders we officers made, all this is their delight."

Bee listened and drank in this new life, which was always to turn on the welfare of others and not round themselves; and she wondered why, all her life before now, she had thought so little of others, little guessing in her humility that the unselfish work she had done at home had now brought its own reward, that it had made her able to appreciate some one who possessed a far higher standard than those about her.

Of course these conversations ended by Bee's declaring that she was quite unworthy of Colin's love, and Colin reiterated the contrary, when the lovers remembered that they had pretended to fetch a book, and returned to the drawing-room with a great show of interest about somebody's travels, as if that had been the subject of their long conversation.

Nobody was taken in by their little farces, while Minnie laughed them to scorn, and saw no beauty in the honest soldier's love story. Mrs. Gordon saw the advantage of the man's position, and Frances tried not to think at all. Once upon a time, when she had been quite young, she had refused an offer from a man she loved because he was poor; but she meant to stifle regret, and so she always set about it in a business-like manner, little guessing that regrets are like things you throw into the waters of the Dead Sea—they will rise to the surface and will not sink.

CHAPTER XX. THE CURATE OF LONGHAM.

The Towers was so named from its possessing two imposing castellated towers, one at each end of the building, like toy castles in boxes. Each tower contained one delightful octagonal room, one of which was fitted up as the Admiral's workshop. This good man had the mania for turning and carpentering left to him as a legacy from his more energetic days. He might usually be found busily employed in turning stools, croquet-mallets, dumb-waiters, bread-plates, pegs, and a host of other useful and useless things which were sometimes difficult to dispose of, for the Towers was already full of his handiwork, giving one a feeling that everything about the place was of a circular shape. "A little wooden present from the Admiral" was quite a joke at Longham, and the worthy man's visiting acquaintances might be recognised by these wooden mementoes.

He was a tall, fine, good-natured old gentleman, very proud of Colin, and never tired of telling exploits in which Colin had figured, to which the latter objected, but bore them with patience for his father's sake. Admiral Grant had been devoted to his wife and was still devoted to her memory, so he expected every woman, worthy of the name, to be a reflex of the departed; but finding, alas! that few reached this model of perfection, he came to the conclusion that the human race—in the female line—had sadly deteriorated. When the Admiral's stories were not about Colin, they turned upon his own nautical experiences, and the beginning, "when I was a boy," was received with a stifled sigh by the Longham men. "The poor old fellow has Colin on the brain and is a bore of the first water," said they; but then aristocratic blood flowed in his veins, so that fact diluted much of the spite of the ladies. Moreover, the Admiral had a cousin who was a Bishop, and the Bishop now and then appeared at the Towers. In the eyes of the Longham church-going people a Bishop was not a clergyman, but something far more presentable.

It must be owned that Longham had no very exalted opinion of the English Church, as represented by their own Rector, who cared more for his creature comforts than for church services, and was willing to keep a curate to do all the work. In spite of this, Longham Church was crowded on Sunday morning, for the residents went to church as regularly on Sunday as they went to business on Monday. To have taken to irreligious ways would have scandalised Longham. Society could not do without that Sunday morning meeting-place; the ladies could not have discussed the bonnets in the week, and those not in society could not have known what distinguished guests were in their midst if they had not seen them during the morning service.

The present Curate of Longham was in love with Miss Minnie Gordon with a secret love, which was the joy and the misery of his life. The Rev. Nathaniel Philips was really a good preacher, far superior to his Rector, whose series of platitudes had not even the usual connecting links generally received by the hearers in lieu of arguments.

The church was too small to receive both rich and poor within its walls, so, naturally, the poor were left out and the rich outvied with each other for seats, there being a graduated scale of payment according to position. The better you could see the pulpit the more you paid for this privilege. It often surprised Mr. Philips how willingly his parishioners paid for listening to a service they cared nothing about, and yet how grudgingly they gave if the plate were passed round for the poor.

"Put down my name, Mr. Getham, for fifty pounds. I suppose you will ask the Fishers?"

When the list came round, Mr. Bush altered his figures from fifty pounds to a hundred pounds because the Fishers had given a hundred pounds. It would never do for the firm of Fishers to be thinking it could outbid the Bush firm! Both givers were quite indifferent as to the object for which their money was asked; it had something to do with a reading-room for the poor, but this in the minds of the Bushes and Fishers was entirely useless.

Those in Longham who had no "firm" interests had, on the other hand, to keep well with society, and if they sometimes were absent from service, they made up in the matter of dinner parties.

"Jones may put down his name once in a way for a hundred guineas," said Mr. Robinson one evening while at a dinner party (of course Jones was not there), "but you won't find this wine on his table, and his dinner parties are like Christmas, they come but once a year."

The display and the good cheer at some of these entertainments was a most fruitful subject of conversation among the less wealthy of the inhabitants.

The poor little Curate, who had been suddenly landed in the midst of this Longham society after having lived all his life in rural seclusion, felt that there was something wrong about the spiritual state of Longham; but what could he do? There was no ill-feeling about him personally, all classes felt entitled to ask the Curate to dinner, and all did ask him. When Mr. Philips retired to the inner chamber of his thoughts, he quite shuddered to think of the many dinners he had eaten since he came to Longham. He felt that he was like Benjamin, and had seven times too much food put before him, and this feeling was doubled when he read of the needs of some East End London parish.

"Good heavens!" sighed the poor Curate, "if some of these men would give the price of one of these dinners, what a boon it would prove to St. Simon-in-the-Gutter where poor Dawson is working himself to death." But in his heart he knew that there was not the remotest chance of one of his own parishioners doing so. The Fishers had not turned their interest towards the East End of London, so, of course, the Bushes would not dream of it at present, as there was nothing to be got by such a course.

Certainly it was Mr. Philips's duty to be all things to all men in his parish, but yet he found that his very graciousness only led him into greater difficulties.

He was received by all with open arms, but he must not pretend to preach to his hosts; and, indeed, being a gentleman, Mr. Philips could hardly have discoursed on the folly of feasting when he himself dined at the rich man's table.

Every now and then the Curate's sensitive nature felt quite crushed and bruised when some new host, as the wine was passed round, would call out in the jovial tone habitual at Longham among the prosperous:

"A capital sermon, Philips, you gave us last Sunday; 'pon my word we shall see you a Bishop some day, lawn sleeves, and all the rest of it!"

"The rest of it will be swallowed up in the lawn sleeves," exclaimed a guest, alluding to the diminutive stature of the Curate.

"Why not say a comfortable Deanery, apron and gaiters?—that is more the costume fitted for you, Philips; 'pon my word, a dapper little Dean you would make! Good dinners and nothing to do."

Of course Mr. Philips smiled and denied any wish to don the clothing either of a Bishop or a Dean; and then, poor fellow, he remembered the "capital sermon" had been about the blessings of poverty and the reward of meekness.

He had pleaded for the poor, and now, as they all partook of a sumptuous dinner, these rich people complimented him on his capital sermon.

He did not expect much praise, nor was he conceited enough to think that his words would stir the heart of any rich Longham resident, and make him give up his regal fare and choice wines; but what made him wince was that his words, spoken from the depth of his heart, were looked upon as a piece of ingenious rhetoric or a neat mechanical exercise, to be called good or bad according to the success of its rhythm and its sounding periods.

Now and then Mr. Philips was seized with the desire to do something terrible, such as boldly to appeal for money to build a new church with free seats, or even to ask for a large sum for St. Simon-in-the-Gutter; but then he recollected in time that if he made such an appeal his Rector would strongly disapprove, and would call his ideas "new-fangled notions" which sooner or later led in a High Church direction.

So, instead of converting Longham, Mr. Philips had fallen in love with Miss Minnie Gorden. At all events the Gordons were gentle and kind, and they did not praise his sermons to his face, and in church they looked most devout. Alas! even in this quarter Mr. Philips was doomed to disappointment. The first time he felt enough at his ease with the Gordons to mention something about encouraging a better church feeling at Longham, Miss Minnie stared at him a little and then said, smiling, and very gently:

"Oh, yes, people do wear outrageous bonnets here on Sundays; but some of them have such bad taste it is hopeless to try and teach them any better."

Alas! he was again misunderstood. What cared he about bonnets, and taste, and classes? He had preached so eloquently about "no respect of persons." He himself wished to call all men brothers if only the world would let him do so; but Longham soon showed him that his theories were only for the pulpit and must not be introduced into private life.

So Sunday after Sunday Nathaniel Philips preached to his Longham congregation with earnestness and as much heart as he had left; but since the affair of the dinner he had never been able to preach a "capital sermon" with the same fervour. Now he rather addressed the poor who, at the end of the church, slunk into the very few free seats left for them. Perhaps the seed might take root in poor soil and bring forth some wild fruit. Mr. Philips had once read a legend of a great preacher who, lifted up with pride as he saw the crowds hanging on his words, had been allowed to behold a vision. In his dream he saw the Throne of God, and one poor beggar who had sat on the pulpit steps praying that the preacher's words might be accepted, and for the beggar's sake the prayer was granted.

Unfortunately there was no chance of a beggar being able to penetrate so far as the pulpit stairs in Longham Church, they were at the far end, and if they were at all deaf they could not hear the sermon; besides, had one strayed up to the pulpit the pew-opener would soon have evicted him, so the Rev. Nathaniel raised his voice, painfully hoping that the beggar at least might hear him, if the rich man despised him and his sermons. But our hopes are often realised in an unexpected manner; so it happened that it was no beggar who first shed balm into the Curate's wound, but no less a person than Captain Grant, the only son of worthy Admiral Grant, whose gout was always troublesome on Sunday mornings.

Mr. Philips remembered so well the first time he saw Captain Grant's earnest face in church, with a far nobler expression than could be seen on most of the rich men who settled themselves to listen to a capital sermon. The Curate was so much surprised that he actually forgot several of his best sentences composed on purpose to impress the expected beggar.

Soon after the Captain left a card for Mr. Philips at his lodgings, and an invitation to dinner soon followed.

The Admiral had not before taken much notice of the Curate. He preferred a muscular Christian who would take an interest in his turning-lathe, and who had more presence and more inches in his measured stature; however, as Colin wished it, the Curate was bidden, and came. Nathaniel Philips felt at once the difference of his reception. He was not only a curate, but a man and a gentleman, and, above all, a clergyman; and when the Admiral had retired to the octagonal room, the Captain rejoiced the Curate's heart by remarking:

"I wanted to thank you for your sermon last Sunday."

"Indeed!" stammered Nathaniel. "So few care."

"Is it so? I thought, on the contrary, that you had a very attentive congregation."

"Ah, yes, very attentive." But the Curate knew now how impossible it was to explain the difference between attentive and retentive.

"Attention is everything, to begin with," said Colin.

"Do you think so?" and the Curate felt how little the Captain knew about the matter.

"Well, yes. When I was in India I sometimes preached to our men. Don't be surprised; it was because there was no one else."

"But you did not dine with them afterwards?" said the Curate, with a sigh.

"Why, no, certainly; you know the mess is select."

Colin thought the Curate just a little odd, but certainly a worthy fellow, as his sermon had shown.

"Yes," said Nathaniel, "yes, that makes all the difference; you find out then how much your sermon is appreciated. Longham is polite enough to listen on Sunday, but I do not think it makes the least difference to them on Monday."

Colin understood now, and really laughed.

"I see! You look for results, and find none."

"They are all very kind—too kind; they would willingly ruin my digestion with good dinners if I did not sometimes make a stand against them."

"Give them time," said Colin, shortly; but there was something which inspired courage in his words.

"Thank you; your kindness does me good. But I don't think the Longham people will ever appreciate me. Perhaps if I could go down a coal-mine and stay there with the miners for three days without food, when I came up again they would perhaps listen to my teaching; but—there is no coal in this district."

"On the other hand," laughed Colin, "you might be called a fool for your pains! One never can tell; so it's best to take people—and yourself—as you find them."

Since that memorable evening the Curate had found life easier to bear. He had made one firm friend if no other; only it was rather hard when that one friend was constantly to be seen entering the earthly paradise, alias the villa, which contained Miss Minnie Gordon.

The Curate tried to stifle the seeds of jealousy which, in spite of himself, would take root and bear fruit in the shape of hours of sad broodings, till one day Captain Grant himself brought back the lost though empty happiness to the Curate's heart by saying:

"You must wish me joy, Philips. I don't know if you have noticed, or——"

"Oh yes, I have," stammered Mr. Philips.

"Then you can really wish me joy, because——"

"Yes, I do," interposed the poor man, "I really do. I hope you will believe me."

"Believe you! Why not?"

"I thought, perhaps, if you had noticed—I mean if I had——"

"I was sure you would not disapprove; besides, it will be very much for your interest, I hope, in the future. We shall let you carry out all your plans, and we must buy the living for you. I am sure——"

"No, indeed you must not do that; in fact, I do not mean to stay here after you are married to—Miss Minnie Gordon."

"Miss Beatrice, you mean. I cannot marry two Miss Gordons."

The Curate's heart gave a bound; the horizon once more became golden; but he tried to hide his feelings, it must be owned, at the expense of truth.

"Oh yes, of course I mean Miss Beatrice; and if you really think that I can do any good here——"

"Of course I do; and I promise you, my dear Philips, that we will never ask you to dinner. I know that is what you dread the most."

More denials and stumbling excuses followed on the part of the good little Curate, who then left the Captain's presence with a light step. After all, he might still worship Miss Minnie with a good conscience; but how blind the Captain must have been to overlook the loveliest and the best Miss Gordon!

A FORSAKEN WEST INDIA ISLAND.

WHEN, as we lay in the harbour of Saint Pierre, Martinique, we announced our intention of passing an entire fortnight in the adjoining British island of Dominica, the speech was received with surprise and derision by our fellow-passengers. We were assured that we should be ready to commit desperate deeds from sheer ennui in a couple of days. The blackest pictures were drawn for our benefit of the horrors of the solitary boarding-house which would be our home, and most particularly we were warned that we should have no "fun" or amusement of any kind. The last contingency seemed to be the most emphatically impressed upon us, and we could not help wondering that in these days of culture and the worship of the beautiful, "fun" and amusement should be deemed such essentials of enjoyment by intelligent travellers. For our own part a temporary escape from "fun" was a main object of our wandering off upon a track which, from a tourist point of view, is, strange to say, almost untrodden. When Japan the Romantic became merged in Japan the Modern and Go-ahead, we cast our eyes hopelessly elsewhere in search of some pleasant spot where a man, wearied with the heat and strife of business and pleasure life at home, could find a haven of refuge.

Half derisively an adviser said: "Try the poor old played-out West Indies." We took the hint, and the result of our exploration so far was wonder that such exquisite gems in the British Colonial diadem should so long have escaped the eye of the ubiquitous British traveller. Still, in Jamaica, in Trinidad, in Barbadoes, we were in the midst of an active, bustling world. We wanted complete rest and quiet, and in the search thereof made the trip of the Lesser Antilles or Northern Islands.

"After all," we remarked, as the shore boat landed us and our belongings at the tiny pier of Roseau, Dominica, and we passed along to the Custom-house through a crowd of laughing, chattering, gesticulating natives, "after all, the place seems to be lively enough."

Our experience at Tobago and St. Kitts, and other small islands, should have taught us that this liveliness was but the ephemeral result of Mail Day; but we had come so thoroughly prepared by the tales of fellow-passengers for absolute lifelessness and quiet, that this fortnightly parade of Roseau's energy startled us.

Accommodation for visitors at Roseau, Dominica, is, as elsewhere in the West Indies, extremely limited, and of a simple, unpretentious kind, which tourists who expect to find "Metropoles" and Fifth Avenues everywhere, would call rough. A syndicate has been formed of which the object is to plant first-class hotels about the West Indies. Dominica is one of the selected islands; but until the Dominican hotel is a fact, the traveller must depend upon Mrs. Ogilvy's Boarding House, which, in the absence of rivals, is known as The Hotel. Here he will get a clean, airy bedroom, an abundant table, and the best of attendance for eight shillings a day; and the man who expects more than that in the West Indies will verily be disappointed. Roseau, like Basseterre in St. Kitts, Scarborough in Tobago, Kingstown in St. Vincent, and St. George's in Grenada, and like the average London landlady, "has known better days."

The town is well planned in the block system; there are broad streets, and it has a market-place, an English church, a Roman Catholic Cathedral, a Court-house, a fort, a Government House, and a Savannah. But no sound of wheels is ever heard in the broad streets, which are paved with the roughest of cobble stones, and, except in one or two cases, overgrown with grass

The houses are for the most part the merest shanties of wood, raised from the ground upon piles of stones, although here and there one is reminded of better days gone by in the presence of a sturdy old house of good red English brick, with white casemented windows and curiously-twisted iron balustrades. The stone-work of the quay is falling into the water, and, except when steamers arrive, its repose of long years is rarely broken by the sounds of active life. One jetty has already been abandoned on account of its decrepitude, and the other promises to follow suit at no distant date.

It is saddening to wander about the old town so hardly fought for in days gone by, so hardly won, and so gallantly kept, and yet there is that charm about it which hangs about decayed places, the charm of Winchelsea, and Rye, and Sandwich, and of the dead cities of the Zuyder Zee, a charm which, selfishly perhaps, one would for romantic reasons hardly wish to see broken by the irruption of active, busy life, although the change should mean prosperity and wealth.

Sometimes, at Roseau, it is hard to realise that one is under the ægis of the Union Jack, for the language chattered around us is an undistinguishable French patois, and the women, who swing past with their bright turbans and their long-trained garments, are own sisters to those we have seen in Martinique and Guadeloupe. So rare is the appearance of a strange white face in the streets that we are soon conscious of being the objects of general attention and curiosity, and ere our sojourn is ended we are made aware that more is known about us and our business than we know ourselves. But this, to humble individuals unaccustomed to be distinguished in any way above the mass of bread-winning, pleasure-hunting aliens in the greater metropolitan world, is by no means a disagreeable sensation, and we soon get so accustomed to be stared at, pointed at, whispered about, and, it must be added, laughed at, that we take no notice of it.

So we wander about the quiet little old place in perfect enjoyment of the untainted sunshine, the quiet, and the novelty of all around us. We go to the old fort, now used as a police-barrack, with its surroundings of brilliant crotons and flowering shrubs and majestic trees, as little suggestive of the storm of battle and bloodshed which raged around it, and over it, and into it, in the old stirring days, as can be. We saunter under the mango-trees and amongst the rose-bushes in the adjoining little public garden which stands high on the cliff and overlooks the lifeless ocean. About half-past four in the afternoon, when the sun's power begins to wane, there is an actual reflection of life and animation about this old garden, for hither come the children of the white residents of Roseau for recreation, in charge of their black nurses. They are poor little atoms, these Anglo-Saxon children, weedy of limb, large of eye, and waxy pale of complexion, and their sport about the fountains and the shrubs is of a very mild sort, which is about as much like the hearty, wholesome romping of home-bred children as their great lolloping bedizened nurses squatting about the pavement and gossiping are like the Mary Janes of Britain's isle, or as their playground is like Kensington Gardens.

From the gardens we cross the grass-grown road to the Court-house, the local temple of justice, and the forum of the representatives of the people. It is an old-world building of some pretensions, entered through an iron gate over which are suspended the initials of Georgius Rex; but it cannot be described as a proper object of pride to the wandering Briton. It is absolutely uncared-for; there are warts and eruptions and scars and blisters all over the stuccoed walls. Some windows have jalousie blinds, some have none, some are simply boarded up. Railings, gates, and doors, have palpably never known the touch of paint-brush since the days when George was King, when the fine island-ladies came thronging in to dance with the fine young officers of the garrison, when the meeting of the Island Assembly was a very important and formal function, and not, as is too often the case now, a squabble between local grandees about pounds, shillings, and pence, to which a polished English gentleman, nominally President of the island, but with hands tied fast so far as action is concerned, is obliged to listen.

Purple bougainvillia, frangipanni, and creepers innumerable are doing their best to give a picturesque appearance to the dilapidated old place, and to blot out the wrinkles and scars on its face with their brightness and grace; but Roseau Court-house is none the less a disreputable-looking object; and one could almost wish that any other flag but the Union Jack was floating over the adjoining tennis-ground.

Below the Court-house is the Savannah, an open grass space, bounded on one side by an old cemetery, on two sides by dilapidated shanties, and on the fourth by the Coast Road. Here the young blacks play cricket—but not with the skill and science of their Jamaican brethren; and here of old time the troops drilled, and the "buckra folk" played cricket. But there are no troops now, although the relics of barracks and forts still exist on the top of the Morne Bruce, and the "buckra folk" don't play cricket, or anything else, so far as we could see.

On the other side of the Court-house, beyond the above-mentioned tennis-ground, is Government House, spacious and comfortable, if not imposing, and next to Government House stands the Anglican Church.

Our visits to West Indian churches constantly remind us of the old City churches of London. Many of them retain the old-fashioned high pews, and the "three-decker" pulpit arrangement; all have galleries; and some, notably those at Port Royal and Spanish Town, in Jamaica, have fine organ-lofts of carved oak.

The walls are invariably covered with memorials, and these memorials speak eloquently of the palmy old days when the West Indian Islands occupied their proper position amongst the brightest gems of the British Colonial diadem, and when people at home did know something more about them than that they grew sugar and bred yellow fever. Soldiers, sailors, governors, merchants, and planters are memorialised; and the visitor cannot fail to be struck, as in the London City churches, by the extraordinary standard of virtue accredited to men and women who died in the not particularly virtuous eighteenth century, and by the universal lamentation occasioned by their deaths. Roseau Church is comparatively poorly off in this respect; but the character of its memorialised dead is sufficiently high. But, as an institution, the Anglican Church of Saint George is not to be named with the Roman Catholic Cathedral in the town. Dominica is British, but the manners, customs, language, and religion of its black population are almost entirely those of France; and out of the twenty-eight thousand blacks in the island, twenty-six thousand are in the fold of Bishop Naughton.

Besides the Cathedral, there is an orphanage, a house for Sisters, and a school; and the influence of this consolidated, wisely and liberally-directed power is not to be measured by the mere numbers of those who profess Roman Catholicism. The Cathedral itself is just like thousands of Roman Catholic cathedrals all over the world; but not easily can be forgotten the sight it presented on Easter Sunday, when it was filled to overflowing with black women, all dressed in their best, and, therefore, their gaudiest, and all attentive and devout, except when they took off and put on the tight French shoes in which they had compressed their great wide feet in obedience to the universal West Indian fashionable code, which ordains that no claim to be considered Somebody can be entertained from the black "lady" who goes to church on Sunday in bare feet.

We were indebted to the kindness, the geniality, and the hospitality of Bishop Naughton for many happy hours of our stay in Dominica; and amongst other thoughts which were suggested to us by an inspection of his schools and orphanage, was the conviction that, with a little more of his bonhomie and broadmindedness, our own Church workers in distant parts might advance quicker and effect more than they do. At any rate, in Dominica there was the fact of a large community being not only held in control, but made loving and respectful by the tact and energy of two or three men—the Roman Catholic Bishop and his assistants.

Behind the town stretch the mountains, the particular glory of Dominica. It is difficult to say in what their charm especially consists; whether in their ever-varying outline, or in the richness of the billows of foliage with which they are covered to their very summits, or in the valleys which gently part them—valleys smiling with glowing sugar-cane, and with plantations of cocoa, limes, and oranges—or in the ravines which abruptly split them—ravines of which the sides are brilliant with the various hues of tree and shrub, and with the blaze of flowers and orchids—whilst through valley and ravine rush the mountain streams, clear and cold, over fantastically-heaped rocks to the sea. We were familiar with the tropical luxuriance and beauty of Trinidad; we had ridden about the wooded solitudes of the Jamaican Blue Mountains; we had gone into ecstasies over the colouring and the daintiness of Japanese scenery; but never had we so often stood open-eyed and open-mouthed, drinking in view after view, and trying to realise that such exquisite beauties of form and colour, such grandeur, and such vastness, and such variety was fact, and not imagination.

One question we always asked: "How is it that people at home have not found all this out?"

In truth it is unaccountable that such magnificent scenery should so long have existed within such easy distance of home, without having attracted any notice or inspired any notable pen until the days of Mr. Froude. But we shall come to something equally unaccountable in due course.

One must ride everywhere in Dominica. In the days of the French occupation, fine paved roads traversed the island from sea to sea, and neglected fragments of these roads may be traced on many an estate; but the British rule has been throughout characterised by sluggishness and indifference, from which lamentable condition affairs are only now being slowly dragged.

Even now there is gross mismanagement. Some years back a series of roads was planned, and operations commenced. Bridges are a most important feature of Dominican roads, on account of the many streams running from the mountains to the sea. As these streams, which are easily fordable during the dry season, are swelled into raging torrents by the rains, it would have been thought that, in the construction of the bridges, special attention to this well-known fact would have been paid.

Not a bit of it.

During one night of the rainy season of 1889, seven brand-new bridges were swept clean away.

Result: the labour is now being performed all over again, and the already sufficiently taxed islander is now overtaxed.

Another instance. It occurred to some brilliant genius that the purchase of a stone-breaking machine would at once save and expedite labour. In the dilapidated old Court-house the question was discussed, and it was resolved that an order be sent to England for a stone-breaking machine at a cost which, for safety, we will merely say was heavy. Out came the machine, and was duly landed and placed under a shed on the quay.

There it remains to this hour, rusty and probably much deteriorated. Why? Because some friend of the poor black discovered that the introduction of a machine would take the daily bread out of some scores of mouths. So the metalling of the new Dominican roads is crushed by hand, and when it is understood that the crushers are negro men and women, the gentleness and gradual character of the process will be realised.

So there are only two roads practicable for wheeled vehicles in the island, each leading along the coast out of Roseau for a mile or two; and, to equalise matters, there are exactly two carriages in the island. But the number of lovely excursions to be made on ponies by those who do not mind rough ascents, and still rougher descents, with one's off foot occasionally hanging over a two-thousand feet precipice, is legion. The ponies invariably choose the extreme outer edge of the track, but are exceedingly sure-footed, and, if allowed to have their heads, come very rarely to grief.

From the very commencement to the very end of these rides the eye is almost bewildered by the constant succession of fairy-like peeps and views. Dominican ferns generally do not equal such ferns as are to be seen near Ocho Rios, or above the Cinchona Plantations in Jamaica; but the Dominican tree ferns are not to be surpassed. Nor do we see in Dominica those exquisite clumps of bamboo, or the wealth of essentially tropical vegetation, such as charm us in Trinidad. But the general features of the scenery—the density of the foliage, the variety of outline, the grandeur of the trees, the rich luxuriance of the growth on the banks by the path side, the tints on hill and valley—equal, if they do not surpass, the best that Jamaica or Trinidad can show.

Take, for instance, the view over Rosalie and the north side of the island seen from the turn of the path which leads up from the Fresh Water Lake. Take the side over the mountains from Roseau to Geneva, on the other side of the island. Take, nearer home, the Roseau Valley where it splits into two, the point of divergence being a huge peninsula of densely forested rock. Take the valley road to the estate of Watton Waven, at which place are marvellous sulphur-springs, waiting to be utilised. Take—— But we could fill the page with invitations to beautiful trips; so we may simply say, take any path at haphazard, strike up into the mountains, and great will be the reward of the enterprise.

The secret of the charm lies in a nutshell: three-fourths of the island has absolutely never been touched by the hand of man; and it may be said, with probable accuracy, that fully a half has never been explored until within the last ten years.

This leads us to the second apparently unaccountable fact to which allusion has been made.

Dominica is acknowledged to be not only one of the fairest, if not the fairest, of the West India Islands, but one of the richest and most productive. And yet, from the point of view of commercial prosperity, it is the most backward.

Jamaica has thoroughly awakened from her sleep of long years, and new industries are springing up within her boundaries. The price of land in Trinidad is rising fast. Tobago, St. Vincent, and Grenada are pushing forward. St. Kitts and Montserrat are doing well. St. Lucia is being made the Gibraltar of the West Indies, and is full of energy and activity. Dominica alone lags behind.

Yet everything which grows in the other islands can be grown in Dominica—oranges, lemons, limes, bananas, tamarinds, cocoanuts, cotton, cocoa, coffee, mangoes, bread-fruit, guava, and, of course, sugar. In one group we saw oranges, limes, tamarinds, bread-fruit, mangoes, bananas and cocoanut palms growing wild, and to be had for the trouble of stretching forth the hand. There is splendid timber in the virgin forests, there is sulphur, there is an abundance of good water, and a few casual surveys have shown the probability of rich mineral deposits. The finest marmalade oranges are allowed to fall from the trees and rot on the ground, while the marmalade on the Dominican breakfast-table comes from London. There are cane pieces close to Roseau town, yet sugar for table use costs more than in England, and, in fact, comes from England, simply because there is not a refinery on the island. The pickles come from not a hundred miles off the Charing Cross Road, yet the materials for every pickle yet invented grow wild on the island. Dominica might be the vegetable-garden of the West Indies; yet vegetables are absolutely imported.

Now be it understood that the above enumeration of the possibilities of Dominica is simply gathered from casual, disinterested conversation during only a fortnight's stay in the island. An expert could make out a far better and more complete case for Dominica, for so evident is the want of energy, owing no doubt to want of encouragement, that it is almost impossible for an Englishman provided with ordinary ears and eyes not to be saddened beyond expression when he sees what is, and thinks of what might be.

As it is, the few young Englishmen who, equipped with the necessary pluck, brains, and capital, have engaged in business in Dominica, are doing well.

Two reasons present themselves for this extraordinary state of affairs. The first is the climate. The second is the absolute, utter ignorance at home concerning the West Indies in general, and Dominica in particular. The first reason is very summarily disposed of. The climate of Dominica is the healthiest in the West Indies with the exception of Barbados. This means that it is very much healthier than a great many places in the world which are overcrowded with young Englishmen on the search for a livelihood. Of course, it is hot during the hot season; but the hot season happens to be the part of the year when nothing is doing; and, moreover, heat is not an entirely unknown condition in China, in Australia, in India, or in South America, where fine young fellows are daily drinking themselves to the dogs out of sheer desperation of heart.

In fact, except the absurd parrot cry about yellow fever, there is nothing more irritatingly ridiculous than the statements gravely made in print concerning West Indian heat. From November till April a man may play cricket, or ride, or walk even so far south as Trinidad with as much safety and comfort during the heat of the day as during a hot summer in England.

But—and it is an important saving clause—he cannot drink or be indifferent to night chills with the same freedom. The climate certainly does not improve the appearance of children; but their mothers are unanimous that, despite weedy legs and paper complexions, they are perfectly healthy and soon recover their looks.

The home ignorance concerning the West Indies in general, and Dominica in particular, is inexplicable.

Every schoolboy, not necessarily of Macaulayan calibre, knows something about the intricate geography of newly-partitioned Africa; a great many have tolerably clear notions about Japan, and

China, and Persia, and British North America; but about the West Indies, nobody, schoolmaster as well as schoolboy, seems to know anything more than that the mention of them suggests yellow fever, sugar, sharks, and slaves; not Calverley's catechism on "Pickwick," or the examination paper placed before Mr. Verdant Green, contained more ridiculous questions than were put to us by otherwise well-informed people when we announced our resolve to winter in the West Indies, or than we now have to smile at on our return. In fact, a really comic article might be written on "The West Indies, from an English point of view," and yet the West Indies have been ours on and off for two hundred and fifty years; and, half a century ago, it would probably have been difficult to find a family of which at least one member was in some way connected with them. So poor Dominica has remained as much a terra incognita to the modern Briton as was Ultima Thule to the ancient Roman, or London City to the modern cockney, and has been confounded by the writers of grave books with San Domingo, and is passed over by the omnivorous tourist who is ever sighing that there are no more lands to explore.

Well! we went simply as pleasure and health seekers. We began to wonder, after a couple of days, how on earth we were going to pass the twelve days which must elapse ere a steamer would take us away; we packed up at the end of these twelve days with more than an inclination to prolong our stay for another fortnight; with a conviction that Time had flown all too quickly; and with a resolution to revisit at some future time fair, forlorn Dominica.

THE YEOMEN OF THE GUARD.

Among the ever-diminishing number of institutions which connect the life of the present day with that of a more picturesque past, the Yeomen of the Royal Guard, popularly known as "Beefeaters," are conspicuous. There are few prettier sights in London than that of the little band of yeomen in their quaint costume, filing through the Park and Mall on a Drawing-Room day, to their duty in the Palace. There has been much learned discussion among etymologists as to the correct meaning of the word "Beefeater," by which name the Yeomen of the Guard have long been known.

Some have considered it derived from the French "Buffetier," with reference to waiting at the Royal table. But though it was the practice of the yeomen to carry in the dishes for the Royal table, it seems that the duty of officiating at the buffet, or sideboard, devolved on an officer of superior rank, probably on a gentleman usher; at present the generally accepted opinion is that the simple meaning of the word is the right one, viz., an eater of beef. The corps was established by Henry the Seventh, at his Coronation in 1485, as a body-guard, "on which day," says Lord Verulam, "as if the crown upon his head had put peril into his thoughts, he did institute for the better securing of his person a band of fifty archers, under a captain, to attend by the name of Yeomen of the Guard." These men, according to the chronicler Hall, were to be "hardy, strong, and of agilitie," and he adds that it was thought the King must have borrowed the idea from the Court of France, "for men remember not any King of England, before that tyme, which used such a furniture of daily souldjours." This was very likely the case, as Louis the Eleventh of France organised a similar body of archers of the guard called, "La Petite Garde de son Corps," in 1475. Hentzner, in his "Travels," tells us that the guard of yeomen was to be composed of the tallest and stoutest men that could be found in all England. Such stress having been laid on the size and strength of the men, it has been argued that they would naturally have been great eaters of beef, the national dish of the day. Moreover, beef was cheap, for when the butchers under Henry the Eighth were compelled to sell their mutton at three-farthings a pound, the price of beef was only one halfpenny. In fact, one always imagines the diet of our forefathers to have been composed largely of roast beef and mustard, varied by huge capons and venison pasties, and an almost unlimited quantity of beer! However this may have been, there can be no doubt that the new Yeomen of the Guard were popularly supposed to have very excellent appetites, as may be gathered from the allusions to them in various old works. Cowley, in his poem called "The Wish," seems to refer to the yeomen when he writes, "and chines of beef innumerable send me, or from the stomach of the guard defend me." Again, in the old play of "Histrio Mastix," published about 1610, one of the characters—Mavortius—dismisses his serving men with the words:

> Begone yee greedy beefeaters; y'are best
> The Callis Cormorants from Dover roade
> Are not so chargeable as you to feed

which helps us to trace back the use of the word beefeater, as a person of large appetite, to the beginning of the seventeenth century. In another old work, Earle's "Microcosmography," an individual is referred to as "a terrible farmer on a piece of beef, and you may hope to stave the guard off sooner." Finally, a certain Grand Duke of Tuscany, Cosmo by name, who paid a visit to the Court of Charles the Second in 1669, mentions the Yeomen of the Guard in his "Travels." "They are called," he says, "in jest, beefeaters, that is, eaters of beef of which a considerable portion is allowed them every day." Under Henry the Eighth, the number of yeomen was increased to two hundred, of whom one hundred were mounted. When on active service, many were added, for at the siege of Terouenne in 1513, the King, we read, was attended by "six hundred yeomen of his garde, all in white gaberdines and cappes," and when Tournay fell into his hands, among other forces, four hundred archers of the guard were kept for its protection.

In the year 1520, one hundred yeomen of the guard accompanied the new Lord Deputy, the Earl of Surrey, to Ireland—a fact which is noteworthy, as being one of the very few instances of their being employed in any other capacity than as a Royal body-guard. In fact, the occasions on which they served out of England are not very numerous, one of the last being in 1544, when we hear of their attending the King at the Siege of Boulogne. These yeomen, consisting as they did of picked men, were famous archers and foremost in all games of skill. On a certain occasion, in 1515, we read of King Henry and his Queen Katharine being on a visit to Greenwich: "And as they rode towards Shooters Hill they espied a company of tall yeomen, clothed all in green, with green hoods and bows and arrows, to the number of 200. All of these archers were of the King's Guard, and had thus apparelled themselves to make solace to the King." One of the yeomen at their head styled himself Robin Hood, who, after the shooting match was over, regaled their Majesties with venison and wine, "to their great contentacion"; and then escorted them back to Greenwich.

Edward the Sixth took great pride in the corps, and himself joined at times in their sports and exercises. In 1552, when the young King went in State to Sussex, the guard had given them one hundred and twenty-six livery bows and twenty-four gilt javelins "for their furniture," or, as we should say, equipment, together with one hundred and twenty-five sheaves of arrows, which, with the cases and girdles, cost thirty-three pounds six shillings and eightpence of the money of that day. In 1527 they had been given a livery of scarlet for the first time.

Queen Mary expended a large sum in the ornamentation of their uniform, as much as one thousand pounds being given to one Peter Richardson, "maker of the spangles for the rich coats of the Queen's Highness's guard." Again seven thousand one hundred and seventy-five ounces of gilt spangles were employed for the embroidery of the liveries of Her Majesty's Guard, Footmen, and Messengers.

Elizabeth kept the number of yeomen in ordinary at about two hundred; but, with an eye to economy, reduced the number of extra yeomen to one hundred and seven. Hentzner was present at Greenwich, in 1598, and saw Elizabeth dine in public, in the usual stately fashion. "The Yeomen of the Guard," he says, "entered bareheaded, clothed in scarlet with a golden rose upon their backs, bringing in at each turn a course of twenty dishes."

The Yeomen of the Guard appear to have always been a very well-behaved body of men, for instances of crime being imputed to them are few and far between. In 1511, however, we hear of a certain member of the King's Guard being executed for murder. Although high in the King's favour, he "slew wilfully a servant of my Lord Willoughby's, in the Palace at Westminster; wherefore the King, abhorring that deed and setting aside all affection, caused him to be hanged in the Palace at Westminster, where he hong two daies in example of other." A few years later, we learn that one Richard Smith was committed to the Marshalsea for spreading abroad "lewd and seditious books:" a curious offence for a member of the Royal Guard. Before being sent to prison, his coat was taken from his back and he was discharged the service.

James the First had two hundred Yeomen of the Guard, some of whom were to attend on Prince Henry. They were diligently to keep guard in the great chamber, suffering no stranger to pass. It was also directed that two of them, with halberts, should attend at the gate to assist the porters to execute their office, and the orders to be observed in time of infection, and on other occasions. They were to be especially careful to keep the great chamber free from ten of the clock in the morning until one, and from four in the evening until seven, that His Highness might quietly take his repast in the Presence Chamber. We do not hear of them during the Commonwealth. Probably enough they were suppressed together with other vain shows and institutions—only to be revived at the Restoration. Charles the Second reduced their number, in 1668, to one hundred, and supernumeraries were placed on half-pay, amounting to fifteen pounds per annum. Until this period the captain received no fee or salary, his only allowance having been an official gown. The office, however, was generally combined with some more remunerative appointment. Charles the Second now granted the captain a salary of one thousand pounds a year—later on raised to one thousand two hundred pounds. The captaincy is now always held by a peer.

For many years the men who mounted guard at St. James's Palace each day (about thirty in number) had fixed rations provided for them on a very liberal scale, as the following menu will show: These thirty yeomen were allowed twenty-four pounds of beef, eighteen pounds of mutton, and sixteen pounds of veal, together with thirty-six loaves and two pounds of butter; twenty-seven gallons of beer were allowed in winter, and one gallon extra in the more thirsty days of summer. The dinner was cooked in the Royal kitchen, and served in two messes, one for each guard. There were extra allowances on special occasions, such as haunches of venison twice a year, five geese on Michaelmas Day, and three plum-puddings every Sunday. Whenever the guns fired a "feu de joie," as on the birthdays of members of the Royal Family, which were called "pitcher days," wine was added to the usual fare. A curious note for 4th June, 1802, informs us that "no claret was allowed as there was no ball;" and, again, in 1811, on the Queen's birthday, owing to the illness of George the Third, it is remarked that no wine was allowed. This table allowance was abolished in 1813 on the score of expense, the men when on duty being given board wages instead. According to some new orders issued by the Duke of Manchester, the captain of the yeomen in 1738, it would seem that some of the men had adopted a slovenly way of dressing which brought a sharp reprimand from their commanding officer, who seems to have had a great opinion of the merits of pipeclay—or its equivalent. One of the clauses is as follows: "Whereas it has been observed of late time that several of the guard, to the great dishonour of the service, have been very negligent in keeping themselves neat and clean while they have been on duty, having their shoes, stockings, and gloves dirty, and their hair and wigs unpowdered, and not wearing the gloves and stockings provided them by His Majesty, and having been negligent in keeping their partisans clean. It is ordered that the officer in waiting shall take care that no such neglect shall occur again, etc." Any yeoman offending in these respects might, in future, be discharged from his wait, and was liable to forfeit his salary.

As regards the costume and equipment of the Yeomen of the Guard, it has been already mentioned that a red livery was first given them in the eighteenth year of Henry the Eighth, before which time they appear to have worn white. A rose was embroidered on the front and back of the coat; after the accession of James the First the thistle was combined with the rose, and the shamrock was added at the Union. The stockings have been of different colours, blue, grey, and white. The scarlet hose and Elizabethan ruff were restored to them by George the Fourth. Rosettes of red leather were given them, in 1785, instead of shoe-buckles. The present rosettes are made of red, white, and blue ribbon. The yeomen were first armed with bows and arrows, which gradually yielded to the arquebus. Sometimes they carried pikes and partisans. In the reign of Queen Anne they gave up the arquebus and retained the partisan, which had been introduced at the Restoration. In 1743, when the yeomen attended George the Second to Hanover, they were armed with partisans when the King halted, on other occasions with carbines. For many years the places in the corps were bought and sold, large fees being paid on appointment. In the beginning of the present century the captain's fee was three hundred and fifteen pounds, that of the clerk of the cheque ten pounds ten shillings, captain's servant sixteen shillings, and so on; while five pounds was charged for "cloaks" and the same sum for "treat," a sum of two shillings and sixpence was monopolised by "sword" and two shillings by "quilt." In 1835 the system of selling and purchasing these various situations was abolished, together with the fees on appointment. The chief posts were henceforth to be filled by officers on half-pay, while the privates were to be non-commissioned officers not below the rank of sergeant. The force at present consists of one hundred and forty yeomen, together with a captain, lieutenant, ensign, four exons, and a clerk of the cheque who acts as adjutant. The word "exon" is probably derived from an old French word signifying "exempt," and is applied to a resident officer who sleeps at St. James's as commander of the yeomen on duty, and is exempted from the usual guard-mounting, and the like. The clerk of the cheque was first appointed by Henry the Eighth, and was doubtless employed in keeping a record of the fines imposed as penalties for any breaches of discipline. Six of the corps are styled yeomen hangers from it being their duty in former times to put up and take down the Royal tapestry or arras, while two others are called yeomen bed-goers from their being intrusted with the care of the King's bedding, and the like. Besides attending on Royalty, other duties have at different times fallen to the lot of the yeomen guard. Such was that of arresting persons of high station. Thus Stafford, Duke of Buckingham, who fell a victim to Wolsey's enmity, was attacked by Sir Henry Marney, captain of the King's guard, with one hundred of his yeomen, and conveyed to the Tower; and, by the irony of fate, it was by a body of Yeomen of the Guard that the great Cardinal himself was brought from Sheffield to the Tower. Another of their duties was to carry the bodies of deceased members of the Royal Family to the grave. The last occasion on which they were thus employed was in 1817, on the death of Princess Charlotte, daughter of George the Fourth, when one of their number was injured. Since this they have only attended at the ceremony of lying-in-state. During the Chartist demonstrations in 1848, the whole available force of beef-eaters was stationed at St. James's Palace. Before closing this brief account of the oldest corps in England, some notice must be taken of the wardens of the Tower. They were never really incorporated with the Yeomen of the Guard, though from the reign of Edward the Sixth they have worn the same picturesque costume—the design of which, it has been said, we owe to Holbein. The wardens are appointed solely by the Constable of the Tower, to whom the Lord Chamberlain applies whenever he needs the services of beefeaters from the Tower at any State ceremony. Under James the First it was ordered that twenty-five should always remain within the Tower to the keeping of the gates from their first opening in the morning until their closing at night, and that they should each carry a halbert or bill wheresoever they went within the said Tower. They do not wear the shoulder-belt, as they never carried carbines. The old ceremony of the "keys" is still kept up. Within the Bloody Gate nightly, at eleven p.m., the sentry of the guard challenges the chief warder who is in possession of the keys of the fortress, "Who goes there?" "Keys." "Whose keys?" "Queen Victoria's keys." Thereupon the warder exclaims, "God bless Queen Victoria." To this the soldiers respond, the keys pass on, and the guard disperse.

THE HUMOUR OF PRIDE.

It is a mercy that each one of us has some quality, more or less obvious, in which he flatters himself he excels the majority of his fellow-creatures. There may not be much justification in the comfortable unction we thus take to our souls. Indeed, the odds are that we have formed an exaggerated estimate of what we consider our good points. No matter. We have the gift of making more of them than reason would warrant. And so we are enabled to go through the world holding our heads decently, or even absurdly, high, and looking down upon our brethren as individuals by no means up to our own standard of excellence.

To the man who views life somewhat as a spectacle, this is very entertaining. The butcher with sledge-hammer arms may not, to the common eye, seem the equal of the cultivated Oxford Don who can talk eleven languages and discourse learnedly about two score more. Yet it is improbable that he reckons himself the Don's inferior. Especially improbable is it at the moment when he is pervaded by the agreeable thrill he feels in the realisation of his strength. He has just slain an ox with his own arm. Could the erudite little gentleman yonder, who walks with a stoop and an eccentric waggle of his omniscient head, have done as much? Of course not. Therefore the Professor, with his income of a thousand a year, is not the equal of the butcher who earns but a pound a week.

It is the same on every level of life. Piquant incongruity abounds. One need look nowhere without the assurance of a hearty laugh or, at least, a mirthful chuckle.

The man who has made his pile in silver thinks himself the better of the man who has made his in tallow or rags and bones. The parson with a living worth nine hundred pounds of income would feel aggrieved if he were served at dinner after the parson who does his best to maintain a wife and nine children upon three hundred a year. The matron with three daughters, whom she believes to be sufficiently fair and amiable, cannot hide her chagrin if the eligible young man upon whom she has fastened certain of her hopes bestows but a casual bow upon the trio, and straightway offers his arm to the girl of another matron—"a mere chit of a creature, with nothing in the world to recommend her." The author with his first proof makes of himself a most diverting imbecile. The mother with her first child may invite one's heart to go out towards her; but she also—dear girl!—kindles the young smile upon the lips. The ponderous septuagenarian who is soft enough to fancy that he is an epitome of all experience, and must needs, therefore, buttonhole us younger ones with his sententious platitudes and warnings, is a terrible nuisance, but amusing withal. And so on all through the gamut. From the babe, anxious to show his first tooth to every unfortunate caller, to the old man in his bed, uncertain which world will call him its own to-morrow, but, nevertheless, still swelled with the pride of terrestrial office—the humour of self-consequence is in us all.

There need be nothing venomous in a laugh of this kind. That would at once transform the mere pleasure of the spectacle into barking cynicism. The true man of the world is not a cynic. He flatters himself that he sees rather deeper than the cynic. Doubtless he, like the rest of us, makes himself engagingly ridiculous by his pretensions. But he will be ready enough to join in the laugh against himself—which the established cynic will never consent to do.

An hour or two ago I was much amused by a queer sort of rivalry in a fair in my town. It happened that there were two fat girls in it, each under separate control, and each claiming—with a blare of trumpets, and by the aid of posters in fat type—to be the largest girl for her age in the world. I went first into one booth, and then into the other. They were both pitiable monsters: in short frocks to show the dimensions of their legs; bare-armed, that their awful shoulders might be seen from the elbow upwards; and with fold after fold of fleshy chins, like the piling of cloud upon cloud in a summer sky with thunder in the air.

The one damsel was eleven, and she weighed six-and-twenty stone. Periodically she waddled up and down a stout platform, built specially for her, and then collapsed with a sigh into a spacious chair on thick legs, which was also made with an unusual amount of care, cross bars, and trustworthy screws. Seated, she resumed the munching of biscuits and gingerbread, which appeared to be her constant occupation, and listened unmoved to the oft-repeated tale told by her father to the gazing and jesting crowd about her rate of growth and the extraordinary incidents of her fat young life. The spectators laughed to hear how the damsel still travelled half-price on the railway, in spite of the perennial protests of porters, two or three of whom had to be requisitioned to hoist and pack her into the compartment that was chosen for her. But the girl herself sat stolid, and when she had ended one gingerbread, she held her hand toward a lean little sister for another.

The second fat girl was like her, with the same lamentable piggish developement, the same pendulous chin and puffy cheeks, which seemed resolved in time to grow over her eyes and hide her from a world which might have been made simply and solely to pay pence to gaze upon her.

The rivalry between these two girls was so keen that in each case the father solemnly and enthusiastically took oath that his girl was bigger than the other. Of course, too, each girl was, in the opinion of the rival show, much older than she assumed to be. The medical men who accepted the stereotyped challenge to mount the platform and look at the pearly teeth of the girls, were in alliance with the show.

Here is a pretty jest of pride with a vengeance, although it would be much more precious if there were not lucre at the bottom of it.

Is there anything more enchanting than the gait of a self-conscious policeman, or the manners of a young soldier on his first leave? If there is, I should imagine it would be a peep into the mind of a modern king or queen during some great function, in which it is the rôle of innumerable men of light and leading, and accepted distinction, to go upon their knees to the sovereign, and kiss the sovereign's hand.

Whether one be or be not conservative in politics, ideas such as this last are bound to come forward again and again. What a silly pother it is to make obeisance to five or six feet of flesh and blood and bones, as if it were a certain amount of divinity and immortality for the nonce only concentrated into trousers or petticoats! The plea that it is an old and long-established custom doesn't quite satisfy us. It never could have satisfied all men and women. Our American cousins grin at this sort of thing, pull their moustaches, and guess they have long since grown out of even a feeling of sympathy with it. They are vastly interested in it, even as they are in the Egyptian statues in the museums; but their interest is antiquarian solely.

But to recur to the policeman. He is so familiar an object that he may well serve us as a familiar illustration of the fun that underlies assumption. As he patrols the street with rolling eye, does he not look awesome in his capacity of guardian of the public? So he be not disturbed out of his fine weather composure, he is truly an admirable object in his well-brushed coat and big boots, so bright, that if he would consent to look so low, he might see his own nose reflected upon them. But what a different tale does not the night too often tell! I have then seen him approach a misdemeanant with menacing shoulders, and hand upon the hip, a very figure of coarse commonplace Nemesis. But the vagabond has proved more than his match, and ere the poor man has had time to blow his whistle, he has been stretched upon the pavement, and a ruddy pool of his own gore has formed round about him. Meantime the felon has vanished, and the officer of law and order has risen to his feet, staggering, dumbfoundered, and, it is probable, uttering words and phrases which in any other mouth would have met with his express disapproval.

Anon, however, the scene of his life changes, and his face broadens into smiles, as in the course of his measured beat he beholds a female form, while the back door greets him with kindly invitation. This is very conventional. But it is all the better for that. You or I may thus be sure of our laugh if we do but go into the right street at the right time, to-day, to-morrow, or on any day next week. And perchance, while the great man, who has temporarily laid aside his dignity, is supping lightly on cold shoulder of mutton, another acquaintance of the genial housemaid is at that moment burglariously making an entrance into a house a little farther up the street.

In this way our Delilahs are for ever unnerving our Samsons; and our Cleopatras, in all the ranks of life, humble our various Antonys.

It were unseemly to laugh too loud at some of our clergy, else might I not find much to say about them within the scope of my subject? It could not be otherwise. They are so much higher than the rest of us. It were odd indeed if all, or even the majority of them, hit their mark. And of those who fail, and know that they fail, and so get tired of attempting to succeed, and subside into accepted hypocrites to whom epicureanism is a goal more within their understanding than aught superterrestrial, do not a multitude provoke something like laughter? It is not the clearest laughter in their case. For there is a sort of tragedy at the back of their lives, or, at least, there may be; and the laugher cannot, or, at least, he ought not to, help recollecting this. For all that it is no such huge sin for us of the laity to smile at our ordained brethren when we contrast the enormity of the difference in theory between them and us, with the very human ears of their revered heads, and their appetites but little differing from ours.

Between you and me, dear reader, I know few things in common life more ludicrous than a prelate's legs, and a dean's demeanour. I could sympathise with the father of a diocese, if he would but go bare from the knee downwards, like a man of Ross; or with the dean, if he would but be as humble of gait as the teaching of the religion he represents. But, to me, the loud-voiced, pugnacious parson, eager to enjoy the good things of this life while telling of the good things of another life, is excruciating. When I can smile at him, well and good, I am content. But, as often as not, he makes me wince, and I bethink me of one or two quiet, unostentatious old folk who have never made a stir in the world, but who could give him five hundred points in a thousand in the race towards ideal excellence, and yet win by hundreds of points.

The other day I was at a dinner, given by a number of old boys of a school to the veteran head-master, who was retiring into private life. There was a good deal of fun in the affair. We presented the old gentleman with a service of silver plate, and all through the feast his large nose was rubicund with elation, as he gazed from one to another of us, and, I doubt not, thought of our respective futures, and how much he had done to assure them.

Indeed, when the time came for him to get upon his legs and thank us for the bullion, he as good as said that he felt towards us much like the hen with an indefinite number of chicks. It was a charming sentiment, but, like other charming sentiments, somewhat ill founded. He told of the thousands of boys who had passed under his magisterial ken, and implied that he himself had made or hindered the marring of them. But I am fatalist enough to think he deceived himself, though I would not for the world have bruited my opinion in the teeth of his more generally received opinion. Nor would I for anything have clipt the pleasant graces of pride which blossomed out from the old gentleman as he stood, tremulous with emotion, protesting that the occasion was one he should remember as long as he lived. Then he sat down and drank some port, while we banged the table. It was good port. The old fellow said so, and he was a judge, as any one could tell at a glance.

Some term pride a very pernicious vice. I dare say, if it be a vice at all, it is a very pernicious one. But I am inclined to think there are few of us in which it fattens to the extent which might force us to term it a vice. Generally, it is no more than an odd quality in us—one of the qualities which, of all others, most tend to give us individuality. Without a wholesome leaven of pride we should be a very uninteresting squadron of limp personalities hardly worthy to be termed individuals.

Nor do I hold with those moral writers who love to cut our combs by belittling us. We know perfectly well that we have a fine stock of imperfections within us, and desires which, if we were demi-gods of a noble kind, would be in some other order of beings instead of in us. But, on the other hand, we have at least glimpses of the possible in relation to us such as may well make us a little excited.

We may be wrong in our placid assumption that the universe is made for our convenience; but, at any rate, it suits us remarkably well. The cuckoo is, I imagine, sufficiently content with the hedge-sparrow's nest, though it was not built specially for her lying-in.

Upon these and the like grounds, therefore, I object to such doctrine as the following in one of Gay's mild, but palatable little fables. I dare say you know the context. Man has just been congratulating himself upon the convenience of the world for his purposes:

"I cannot," he adds, "raise my worth too high;
Of what vast consequence am I!"

"Not of th' importance you suppose,"
Replies a flea upon his nose;
"Be humble, learn thyself to scan;
Know, pride was never made for man.
'Tis vanity that swells thy mind.
What, heav'n and earth for thee design'd,
For thee, made only for our need,
That more important fleas might feed!"

It seems, upon the whole, probable that if pride was made for any creatures upon the face of the earth, it was made for us. And we know pretty well that most things which are, exist for some purpose.

MR. WINGROVE'S WAYS.

A STORY IN TWO CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER I.

"GREAT Scott!" exclaimed Dick Wingrove, throwing down his fork with some haste, "con——I beg your pardon, father, but what in the world is this?"

"Do I understand you to refer to this pie, Dick?" enquired his father, placidly helping himself to the viand in question.

Mr. Wingrove and his two sons were dining together in the large and pleasant dining-room of his house in Bath.

Mrs. Wingrove was dead. She had died when her youngest son was only a few weeks old, and her memory would seem to have faded from Mr. Wingrove's mind; for he rarely, if ever, mentioned her. Her outward personality, however, could not well fade from his mind, for it was always before his eyes in the form of a large portrait hanging in the dining-room. This portrait represented a person of middle age, clothed in a grey garment, and standing on an emerald grass-plot, with a country residence behind her. The country residence was of a size to have gone easily into the pocket of the grey garment; but artistic criticism was not Mr. Wingrove's strongest point, such matters as drawing or perspective were to him unconsidered trifles, and the work of art in question was to him, when he thought of it at all, simply "poor Emily's" picture.

The artist had depicted the countenance of "poor Emily" as somewhat ordinary and plain; and among the early friends of the Wingrove family a controversy raged. There were those who said Mr. Wingrove never would have sought his wife's hand at all if she had possessed no greater personal attractions than those given her in the picture; and there were those who contradicted this, saying that the hand of the artist had been directed by truth, and that "poor Emily's" simple-minded spouse had sought and won her, without a single thought of such a detail as appearance.

The truth was, as usual, rather out of reach. For the period when the seeking occurred was more than three decades ago, and Dick, the aforesaid younger son, was twenty-nine. He was seated on his father's left hand, facing his elder brother Harold, and though his features were, for the moment, twisted into a look of irritation, it was easy to see that he was good-looking. He was tall and broad-shouldered, with fair hair and moustache, and quick, keen grey eyes. Between himself and his brother there was a very strong family likeness; but Harold Wingrove was darker in colouring than Dick, and both his face and manner showed plainly that he was five years his brother's senior.

Mr. Wingrove himself was a short, spare man, of about sixty-five. His face was smooth and comparatively unwrinkled for his years; the most remarkable feature in it being his eyes. They were of a faded light blue, with a short-sighted look in them, and were placed unusually far apart from each other. The expression Mr. Wingrove's face wore, which was evidently its normal one, was one of placid, simple good-nature and satisfaction. So short-sighted and so simple-minded did he look, that on a first inspection a stranger, being acquainted with the controversy raging anent the departed Emily, would have at once decided that Mr. Wingrove had neither seen nor considered, when he wooed her, whether she were plain or pretty. But first inspections are, of necessity, cursory.

"Did you allude to the pie, Dick?" he repeated, serenely, and raising his eyes to his son's face. "If so, I do not understand you."

Outwardly, indeed, the pie before them was all that a pie should be, excellent in form, elaborately patterned at the edge of the crust, and delicately covered with the lightest powdering of white sugar. But when Mr. Wingrove helped it, he had, unconsciously to himself, been obliged to exercise most of his remaining power and muscle, in order to penetrate that ornate crust; and a certain silence had fallen suddenly on both Harold and Dick, after they received their portion of the pie—a silence which had been unbroken until Dick's exclamation to his father.

Neither the silence, nor Dick's words themselves, seemed to strike Mr. Wingrove as worthy of note. He plied his own fork unconcernedly for an instant before he went on speaking.

"I hardly think there can be much amiss, Dick," he said a moment or two later, with a beaming smile of condescending superiority, which he shed impartially on both sons; "the pie was made for me by fair fingers—very fair fingers," he added, while the smile grew more beaming with the repetition.

A sudden, rapid flash of intelligence went across Dick's face.

"Fair fingers!" ejaculated he, under his breath; "I thought as much."

"Fair fingers, sir?" said Harold, laying down his fork, and looking interestedly and interrogatively at his parent. He was conscious, as he spoke, of a sharp, sudden pain in the region of his ankle; but beyond a feeling of vexation at what he believed to be his stupidity in knocking up against the footstool he did not give the sensation another thought.

"Fair fingers, Harold," returned Mr. Wingrove, with a certain elation in his voice, which grew stronger as he became aware that Dick was including himself and the pie in a glance which might be spoken of as menacing. "Miss Margetson made it for me—for us, I should say. And I find no fault with it," he continued, looking at each in turn with a confident smile.

"It's uneatable, and I am not surprised." Dick's remark would be best characterised as a low growl. His elder brother looked at him in some surprise, and turned again to his father.

"Miss Margetson, sir! Who is she, and why, may I ask, is she cooking for your table?" Another still sharper pain attacked Harold's ankle at this moment. He again privately anathematised his carelessness, and disregarded it.

"Miss Margetson! My dear Harold, do you mean to say that it is since you were last in Bath that Mrs. Margetson came here? She lives on the Easton Road. A most charming person, with a still more charming daughter. I have the happiness to possess the acquaintance of both."

Here Mr. Wingrove made a slight pause, and turned his attention to his plate. He grappled steadily with the pie-crust on it for some moments with an air which tried to seem unconscious of its undoubted hardness; then a catastrophe overtook him in his efforts. An unusually vigorous insertion of his fork into the last remaining piece caused it to sever and fly apart unexpectedly, with a suddenness that nearly upset Mr. Wingrove's equilibrium. He somewhat hastily laid down his fork and the struggle together, and, saying hurriedly to the servant, "You can take away, Robert," turned to resume his conversation with his elder son.

Dick's countenance was overspread by a cynical smile; but he said nothing. He only lifted up his arms carelessly to have his plate removed, and then, folding them on the table, prepared to listen heedfully to his father's and brother's further remarks.

"How this pie came into my possession," continued Mr. Wingrove, cheerily. "Well, I will explain. There was a cookery competition at the end of a course of cooking lectures in the town a week or so ago, and I was asked to be one of the judges of the exhibits. Several young ladies went in for this—to use the slang of the day—and Dr. Kingston and myself adjudged the prizes. We did not award one to Miss Margetson; I hardly know why, but Kingston seemed to think that two of the others were superior to hers; in fact, he was a trifle obstinate about it, said that merit alone was the criterion, and seemed to think nothing of a lady's feelings. And I'm sure I quite forget how any of them tasted; but hers must have been excellent, such a charming young person as she is. I was sorry with all my heart for Kingston's obstinacy; and meeting her a few days later in Milsom Street, I stopped her, and congratulated her, and told her my feelings. She seemed pleased; and she then and there promised to make me the counterpart of that pie. This is it. She brought it herself this morning. And it is——"

"Hopelessly indigestible," put in Dick, tersely.

"Worthy of the fair maker," continued Mr. Wingrove, without hearing or heeding his son's remark.

They were at the moment partaking of his favourite cheese — Gorgonzola — and perhaps this had swept from his mind the details of the pie-crust's consistency.

There was a slight pause after Mr. Wingrove's explanation. Then Harold looked up from his plate.

"Is she young, sir," he said—"this Miss Margetson?"

Before Mr. Wingrove could answer, Dick rose hastily from the table.

"Can we have coffee in the drawing-room, father?" he said. "This room is draughty. Come, Harold," he added, to his brother; and before either of the other two had quite grasped the meaning of his words, he had opened the door, ushered his father and brother through it, and into the drawing-room. In that womanless house, the only characteristic of a drawing-room left to the room so called, was its name; of ordinary drawing-room appointments and furnishings there were no traces. But there were several most comfortable easy-chairs, a soft, if much worn, carpet, and a large fireplace, in which, at this moment, a small wood fire was crackling brightly. September though it was, the nights were very chilly.

Mr. Wingrove placed himself in one of the easy-chairs, while Dick drew up another for his brother, and proceeded to hand his father a cup of coffee from the tray which the servant had set down on a small table beside the fire.

"You were asking, my dear Harold," began Mr. Wingrove, as he stirred his coffee contemplatively and complacently, "about Miss Margetson."

"I asked, sir," responded his son, "if she were——"

But an unforeseen incident cut him short. Dick, in sitting down, with his own cup in his hand, overturned it into the fender, and a slight delay occurred before the traces and results of his catastrophe were set to rights again. By the time peace was restored, Harold Wingrove had apparently forgotten his interest in

Miss Margetson, for he turned to his father and began to retail, with the air of enjoyment common to all imparters of gossip, masculine and feminine, the latest anecdotes current at his club concerning the private life of leading politicians.

Harold Wingrove had a Government appointment in London. He had come down to Bath that same evening on one of the Saturday to Monday visits which he not unfrequently made to his father and brother. The object of this special visit was to announce to them his own engagement to a young lady at Surbiton, a Miss Marion Byrne. He had received his father's congratulations before dinner, and had further dwelt somewhat exhaustively on her charms to his brother Dick, in the latter's dressing-room; summing up her individuality, when the dinner-bell rang, with lover-like simplicity, in the statement that she was "the sweetest girl in the world."

Dick Wingrove was an architect in Bath, and lived at home in his father's house. He was very clever, his connection was so rapidly increasing that he had lately taken a partner, and he was spoken of on all sides as "a rising young man."

But there was on his countenance at this moment none of the tranquillity that should belong to a young man in so satisfactory a position. The cynical look that had overspread his face at dinner deepened; and as he listened to his father and brother the irritation that had marred his good-looking face increased momentarily. He finished his replenished coffee-cup, set it down, and, taking out his matches, proceeded to light a cigarette with frowning concentration.

"I can't think how Harold could be such a duffer," he said to himself, mentally, as he did so. "Talking about Miss Margetson when I kicked him twice to shut up! He might know for himself, too. I'll have a word or two with him later on, see if I don't. It's all very well," he pursued, as a loud laugh from his father and brother made him look up; "it's all very well to sit here and talk so agreeably about Gladstone and Balfour, when you live in town, while you have none of the everlasting bother and responsibility of father! Let Harold try him for a week," said Dick, incoherently and feelingly, "then where would his anecdotes be? Never mind, I'll have it out when father's gone to bed."

During the next hour it seemed to Dick that his father would never either lay down his pipe or rise from his chair. But as the clock struck half-past ten, Mr. Wingrove did both.

"Good night, my dear Harold," he said; "I don't know really which is most gratifying, your visit or its object."

Dick fetched his father's lighted candle while Harold answered, and proceeded, according to his nightly custom, to carry it upstairs for him. This ceremony over, he returned to the drawing-room to find his brother Harold taking up his tobacco-pouch and looking at it reflectively.

"I don't think I'll have another pipe, Dick," he said, as Dick entered; "time's getting along, and I've been rather late three or four nights this week."

"I don't care if you've been late six or seven," responded Dick, brusquely, "you'll have the pipe—at any rate you'll stay here a bit. I want to speak to you."

He flung himself again into his easy-chair as he spoke.

"To speak to me?" said Harold, with some surprise, but no great interest in his tone, and a decided expression of languid indifference on his face; "speak away, old man, then—only don't be long. What do you want?"

"'What do I want?' I want to know how on earth you could talk to father about Miss Margetson!"

"Why on earth shouldn't I talk to him about Miss Margetson?"

"Surely, Harold, you don't need telling what father's ways are!"

"I know it's one of them to try to make himself agreeable to any pretty young lady who may cross his path—if that's what you mean. But that's an old tale, surely?"

"Yes," burst forth Dick, angrily, "it is an old tale; and that's just it! What in the world is to be done?"

"I don't see that anything is to be done," said his brother, placidly crossing his legs as he answered; "at his age you don't expect to alter father's idiosyncrasies, do you?"

"Idiosyncrasies!" echoed Dick, seizing the poker and violently beating the glow out of a dying red ember in the grate; "it's more than idiosyncrasies, Harold! It's—it's a torment!" He let the poker fall with a crash. "It takes all my energies, and more than all my time, to cope with him at all!"

"I'm very sorry, old man," began Harold.

"Sorry!" returned the other; "you'd be sorrier if you lived with him! Why, what is it—three months—since you were here last? And the trouble I've had with him since then—the idiotic things he's done. I never was a letter-writing man, you know—I prefer telegrams—but if I were in the habit of writing to you, I could have filled sheets with his doings!"

"Just as well you didn't," said his unsympathetic brother. "I shouldn't have had time to read them."

"Well, to give you an instance; an instance that I'll speak of first, because it is——"

"Get on," interposed Harold; "it's getting late."

"Hang the time! You listen to me. Did you ever—no, I believe you never did—meet the Armitages? Thank goodness, they're gone to live in Bristol now. But, before they went, father made himself utterly foolish with them. He carried on in the most senseless fashion with Jenny. She's the youngest and the prettiest. Goodness only knows how he came to know them. I never knew he did till one evening—the evening I'm going to tell you of. I know them—they're cousins of Mayo—my partner; and the way I found it out was this: I went in to their house to tea with Mayo, on my way home one afternoon. We were shown into the front drawing-room, and before we had been there three minutes the most excruciating row you ever heard in your life came from the back room. Jenny was accompanying, and some one was playing the flute with her—awfully. Mayo and I set our teeth and waited till Mary Armitage came in. Then he asked her if she couldn't stop it, somehow. She opened the folding-doors, and—I never was so taken aback, I think—there was father! Father in his go-to-meeting rig, standing beside Jenny, with his head on one side, screwing and blowing away at that flute. You bet, I never felt such an awful fool in my life! He didn't, bless you; not a bit of it! He came smiling up the room with Jenny, complimenting her, and carrying on as if he were twenty, instead of nearly seventy. He didn't even mind when he saw me. He smiled, and said something about an unexpected meeting, and went calmly on with Jenny just the same. After tea he went calmly back to the piano, but before he took up that flute, I rose and left; I couldn't stand it any more."

Dick paused for breath, and Harold took his pipe from his lips reflectively.

"You spoke to father? Reasoned with him, I mean?" he said, to his brother, questioningly, a moment or so later.

"Reasoned with him! You might as well reason with the milestones on the Bristol road," said that father's distracted son. "All he said was that Jenny enjoyed the duets as much as he did, and he saw nothing ridiculous in it at all!"

Harold did not speak, but his indifferent expression of countenance had changed, while Dick talked, to a very contemplative one, and he had apparently forgotten his haste to go to bed, for he slowly filled and lighted another pipe.

"There was worse than that, though," Dick pursued, breaking the short silence. "There was Mrs. Smith-Ridgway."

"What about Mrs. Smith-Ridgway? Who's she?"

"She's the widow of an Indian judge, and——"

"Not that dreadful little, sallow, dark-eyed woman who stopped father in the street one day when I was with him last time I was down?"

"That's her!" cried Dick, excitedly and ungrammatically. "She's awful!"

"How? Has father tried it on with her?"

"Tried it on with her! Rather! And, to make it worse, she saw through him in a twink, and went for him. He got introduced to her at some garden party; you've no idea of the dissipations he trots out to while I'm at work. She, it appears, is—or pretends to be—a great botanist and naturalist. I dare say she's found it handy before now. However, father caught on, like anything. For a week, I give you my word, he was never in when I got home for lunch. And, when he did come home, he had always his hands full of nettles, or birds' nests, or flowery stuff of some sort, which he said was for Mrs. Smith-Ridgway. He had 'accompanied her on a charming botanical expedition,' he said. Then in the afternoon he used to carry all the stuff round to her house to press it and so forth; and whenever I did chance to come across him with her it was evident she was going it like one o'clock. I was at my wits' end. I couldn't stop at home from work to see after him. Mrs. Smith-Ridgway would have married him before this if it hadn't been for an accident that kept him out of her way for a bit. He came home one day with a sprained ankle; I couldn't imagine how he got it, and he wouldn't tell me, bless you. But it came out. You may imagine how I felt when Mayo asked me how my father was, after his fall from the tree! It turned out that he had been seen in Hampton woods climbing a tree to get some rare nest or other for Mrs. Smith-Ridgway! Climbing trees at his age! He might have broken his neck! I could have shaken him!"

"Dick, you're exaggerating!"

"On my honour, Harold, it is as true as gospel. And that's not half! He nearly caught his death of cold star-gazing with one of the Harrison girls who is astronomical and intellectual — he had bronchitis, and I was up with him all the next night. He got awful cramp in his rheumatic shoulder sitting to the other Harrison girl, who wanted him as a model for Saint Jerome. He got half drowned getting water-lilies for Miss Margetson to wear on her frock at a dance; and now he's ruining his digestion and ours, eating her abominable pastry. She's the last, and he seems to me to get worse with every one."

Dick broke off with a very heavy sigh.

"Do you think anything would be gained by my putting things before him?" said Harold, after a long and thoughtful pause.

"No," said his brother, dejectedly. "Nothing—I don't believe talking's any use. But something must be done; I'm blessed if I know what; but my life's a burden to me, that's all I can say."

He rose as he spoke, and flung away the end of his cigarette. "Good night, old man," he said; "I've kept you an age."

But Harold did not take his brother's hand at once. "It's much worse than I thought," he said, slowly. "But don't you worry, Dick; we'll do something. I shall try, at any rate. I'll have a regular talk to him to-morrow."

"I wish you luck," said Dick. "Good night, old fellow."

Harold grasped his brother's hand warmly. The two men were very fond of each other in a reserved and undemonstrative way. They went their respective ways to bed. Dick laid his head on his pillow, soothed by the consciousness that he had entered upon the placid hours in which he might safely relax his rigorous cares, and possess his soul in peace; the few hours for which his father was in his own room in bed.

Harold also thought gratefully of the coming night as a sort of bulwark between him and his attempt to reason with his father.

"I'll have it out to-morrow," he murmured, sleepily. "To-morrow, if I can get hold of him. There's nothing to bother about just now."

It is doubtful whether either brother would have experienced these soothing sentiments could he have seen on Mr. Wingrove's dressing-room table the newspaper which that gentleman had been perusing in seclusion before he sank into the arms of slumber.

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CHAPTER XXI. COUSIN SARAH.

The Admiral's sister-in-law, Mrs. Grant, and her daughter were now ruling at the Towers. In one way this added to Colin's happiness, for his lady-love could now come to the Towers under his aunt's chaperonage.

Mrs. Grant was tall, stiff, and angular, very prim of manner. Her very presence seemed to radiate cold instead of warmth. A French gentleman who had once met her had described her to his friend as a lady always afflicted with "le spleen," a malady supposed to be peculiar to England.

Miss Grant, on the other hand, was too active and too energetic, and education was her hobby. She had had every advantage herself, and her own standard was, in her opinion, the only one worth having. She knew many things and was very thorough, but she despised all weak and foolish women, and domineered over them in a manner which made the crushed worms sometimes turn.

Some women get their own way by shedding tears, and others by being firmly disagreeable. Sarah Grant seldom allowed any one to thwart her, but then she was a very capable person; she could "manage" better than most people, and found no undertaking too much for her. Whether it were a party, a school-feast, or a charitable meeting, all was done in a thoroughly business-like manner. It was sure to be well arranged, but then she never cared how many people she put out, or how many she inconvenienced, in the carrying out of her plans. No sooner had she settled down at the Towers for a long visit than she looked about for something that wanted settling. Certainly the Church wanted settling, but so did the Rector and so did the Curate, with whom must be included the congregation itself. Then Longham society was very shallow and frivolous, very uneducated; however, even Sarah's capability could not compass the higher education of all the business men and their wives, though she meditated long on some plan for doing this. Lectures she decided might do for a beginning, and if no one else turned up she herself was prepared to give them.

Naturally she saw a great deal of the Miss Gordons, Colin's engagement having taken place just after her arrival; at first she was delighted to find out that they were ladies, but on closer inspection she was shocked to see that though they might be accomplished their education was not solid, and that they did not even seem to wish to be better grounded. Sarah took the determination to warn Colin of the folly he was about to commit in making Beatrice Gordon his wife, for the Admiral only looked at pretty faces, caring nothing for learning, and so could not with propriety warn his son. One day when Beatrice was expected to spend the day at the Towers, Sarah attacked her cousin after breakfast in this manner:

"I do think it is a pity, Colin, that you should marry a girl who, after the first bloom of beauty has worn off, will have nothing left. She will be a mere doll." Sarah paused, whilst the Captain looked alarmed. He was always more or less frightened when Sarah attacked him; besides, he did not like to hear his Beatrice maligned.

"She is not a blue-stocking, my dear Sarah, certainly, but she will get more time by-and-by for reading; besides——"

But Sarah was indignant; to call an educated woman a blue-stocking annoyed her excessively.

"You men are all alike; you like a bit of pink and white china, and never think of anything beyond. Look at Charles Andrew and his wife, that silly little piece of vanity; they say he is always on thorns as to what she will say next."

"I am very sorry for him, but I see no parallel," said the Captain, who was very patient with Sarah, because in his own mind he always looked upon her as having been jilted in early youth—the truth being that she had never had an offer, though she would not have owned this for the world.

"Well, I don't think Mrs. Gordon has done her duty by those girls, they all think of nothing but their clothes; in fact, I don't like Mrs. Gordon at all, and mother thinks the same as I do. I believe she is——"

"Ahem!" said the Captain in a warning tone, for the door was opened and Beatrice herself entered, looking extremely pretty, and very shy, but so nicely dressed that evidently she had been thinking of her clothes that very morning.

"I was coming to fetch you," said the Captain, going hastily forward, with an old-fashioned politeness which was only increased and not diminished because he was engaged.

"I came up early because mother wants you to come down and settle about our Christmas entertainments; and she and Minnie are going to London this morning to choose all sorts of things for the new house; they want to see you first."

"Certainly, I will come at once; and then after that you may like to take a walk."

Beatrice smiled an assent, though she felt terribly frightened of "Cousin Sarah," who, after a chilly greeting, was knitting as if her livelihood depended on it, looking sternly at the fire instead of towards Beatrice.

"Will you excuse me a minute, Beatrice?" said the Captain. "I want to speak to my father before I go out;" and off went the lover, leaving Beatrice to face Sarah alone—who was in her most disagreeable mood—and who remarked drily:

"I thought you did not go out in the morning, Miss Gordon, because you and your sisters did so much needlework."

Beatrice thought her future cousin very rude, but tried to answer pleasantly.

"No, we do not often go out, but to-day I have a holiday."

"I suppose you never get time to open a book?"

"I do now," began Bee, "since Colin told me he would like me to read regularly."

"You won't continue that practice very long if you only do it to please Colin—but I assure you he is a very intellectual man, and he likes talking to superior people."

Beatrice blushed, and felt that she was not at all superior, and that the speaker was odious.

"Would you like to join a reading society? I am secretary to one and could put your name down for election, but we never elect people who are not in earnest."

"How do you know when people are in earnest?" stammered Beatrice, not knowing she was sarcastic.

"By the books they have already read. We ask for a list."

"Then I am sure you would not elect me, I have only read novels and a few lives of——"

"Of course, for my cousin's sake I should make an exception in your favour," said Miss Sarah, condescendingly; but, happily for Bee, Colin entered at this moment, and she hastily bid his cousin good-bye.

"Oh, Colin," she said, when they were well out of the house, "I am too stupid for you. You will feel tired of me some day; your cousin said as much to me."

Colin laughed heartily as he drew Bee's small hand into his arm.

"What nonsense! My dear child, don't notice what Sarah says. The truth is, I believe she must have been jilted when she was young, and that makes her a little sharp."

"Well, then, I will not mind what she says; but I should die, Colin, if you got tired of me. I know I should. I mean to make myself very clever and very wonderful just for your sake."

"But, my darling, you are quite clever enough for me. I don't want a blue-stocking."

"No; but Sarah said one day that after a time men get tired of pretty wives who have no ideas, and that they then repent of having ever married them. She gave me two years—no more; and then she said I would see!"

"You will see that every year I shall think you are a great deal too good for me."

"But, Colin, sometimes I think that you do not really know us—know me, I mean. You think that I have all kinds of high ideas which I have not got. I wish I had."

"What nonsense, darling. Don't you know that you are only too good for me? Now, what do you think I have settled with my father? That you are all to come to spend Christmas at the Towers. You see, he would not like me to be away from him all day; so this cuts the knot. What say you to that, Miss Beatrice?"

Beatrice in her heart did not quite like the plan. Between Cousin Sarah and her own sister, Minnie, there would be but little peace for her. She would get less of Colin than she did even at home. However, she would not tell him so. One thing the girl had learned at home, and that was to give up her own way. So she assented as cordially as she could.

"Ah, I thought that would please you, that is if your lady mother agrees. There is another thing I want to tell you, Beatrice; it is a secret, but we must have no more secrets in future, eh? I have found out that that little Philips is very fond of Minnie Gordon, so at Christmas we shall have him here a good deal. What do you say to that?"

This time Bee shook her head.

"No, Colin, it will be no good."

"What, has it gone as far as that?"

"No, but of course Minnie knows he admires her, and all that, but now there is not the least chance."

"Why not?" asked Colin.

"Because," said Bee, innocently, "since we came in for this money of course Minnie could not think of marrying a curate." Beatrice, looking up, saw a strange look on her lover's face.

"And suppose I had waited till now to propose to you, should I, also, have had no chance?" he said, a little sternly.

"Please don't say it like that, Colin; no, indeed, I should always have cared about you if you had been ever so poor; but Minnie, you know, is prettier than I am, and——"

"I suppose most women marry the money and not the man," he said, half sadly; "but after all this poor Philips is a gentleman and a capital fellow. He may not be much to look at, but one can't listen to him on Sundays and not believe he has a big soul; he wants to do us good, but we are, I am afraid, quite satisfied with ourselves. Do you really believe your sister would throw him over because she is now richer than she was?"

"Don't put it like that, Colin; and I don't believe Minnie ever cared for him; in fact I know she did not; but still—no—Minnie would never marry a poor man; she would be quite out of her element."

"I thought you had never been very rich?"

"You know we have not, but all the same Minnie has always looked forward to the time when she should be rich, and she thought that there was no way to alter her position but by marrying a rich man."

"And yet now you say she would not marry a poor one."

"No, I feel sure she won't; but please, Colin, don't ask me any more; you will never believe that I could think differently. There now, say you never will."

"Nonsense, child, you don't want my word for it."

Nevertheless the Captain had experienced a mental shock about the Gordon family; perhaps it was partly caused by the failure of his plan about his friend the Curate. Well, he would think no more about it, and, to be fair, Beatrice had certainly owned that the Curate had never had a chance.

Very soon he was sitting in conclave in the Gordons' drawing-room and propounding his plan about Christmas.

Mrs. Gordon thought it delightful, and Frances agreed. Minnie said something about their being too many to invade the Towers, but her objections were soon overruled. After this was settled, Mrs. Gordon plunged into a discussion about furniture and arrangements concerning the Warren. Colin must give his opinion, as he was to come there for a certain little affair which might take place next year; besides, of course he must come directly they were settled in, but that was not to be till April or May. With the fine weather they would take their flight homeward like the swallows, etc. The truth was, Mrs. Gordon had settled that it would be better for everybody to let the talk about James Gordon's girls blow off, so that there would be less chance of the scandal reaching her dear girls' ears. Besides, she did not wish Colin to hear anything about it. It was already unfortunate that he had chanced to have once seen these very girls. However, she had ascertained that his friends had left the place, and that he was not likely to hear local gossip when staying at the Warren.

The family conclave broke up, everybody was well pleased about the future plans; the present was so bright, the future would be brighter. But Colin Grant found out that day what wiser men find out earlier in life, that when you get engaged to a girl you have to adopt her mother and all her sisters and brothers as your own relations; and that if these relations are not of your own way of thinking you have a good deal to put up with. However, Beatrice made up for it all; so he thought as he said good-bye to her that evening and saw the truthful eyes look up at him as she said:

"Colin, you won't think that I could alter, will you?"

CHAPTER XXII. TAKING POSSESSION.

It was a bright, warm May day, when the Gordon ladies said farewell for ever to their Longham villa. It is needless to describe the good-byes of all the neighbours, how a few sincerely said they would miss them, but how the greater part cared more to know who would be the next occupant at the villa, than whether Mrs. Gordon would be happy at the Warren. Of course, people who come in for fortunes always are happy, and those who have not that happiness feel just a little jealous that Fate has not been so kind to them. The Crozbys were profuse in their good wishes, but they hoped that some of their civility would be repaid by invitations to their grand new home, "which, perhaps, after all isn't much," said Miss Crozby to her mother. Miss Crozby had always been jealous of the beauty of her neighbours, for really it was rather aggravating to go out with girls to whom one only acted as a foil.

It was settled that Colin should accompany the Gordons to their new home; Mrs. Gordon had been backwards and forwards several times to see about furniture and wall papers, but she had never taken her daughters with her. She wanted the whole thing to be a surprise to them; and also she preferred having her own way about the arrangements, or so she said.

New servants, too, were engaged; the Gordons were to be all new together; and how they would enjoy life! Minnie had nearly recovered her spirits at the bare idea of a baronet who might fall desperately in love with her—she would, of course, make a great favour of marrying him. But, naturally, she kept these thoughts for her own private enjoyment. Poor Mr. Philips had come to bid them good-bye, and had ventured to keep Minnie's hand a few seconds longer than was absolutely necessary. He had had a smile for his reward which had sent him home having all the battle to fight over again. Should he ever find courage to make Minnie Gordon an offer? How he envied Captain Grant! All his love-making had been so easy.

At last the train stopped at Colsham Station. Colin jumped out of the first-class carriage (never before had the Gordons travelled all together in a first-class carriage), and handed out his future relations with a hearty grasp of his hand and a cheery "welcome home at last." A fly was waiting for them besides their own new carriage and pair, and even Mr. Blackston was ready on the platform to offer his services to the new heirs.

Beatrice could only gaze about her in admiration as they passed through the long street, and then ascended the hill and saw the old castle peeping out of its newly-awakened foliage. At the top of the long hill they first felt the delicious breeze which swept over the great heathy tableland across which they had to drive for several miles. Everything was beautiful, and Beatrice, looking up at Colin and at her mother, said:

"You never told me half the beauties of this place."

"You will not care for the Towers after this," said the Captain, smiling. "But, in truth, I had forgotten the scenery; it was years ago that I was here. One thing alone I remembered—the faces of those girls who were so like you and Minnie."

Frances looked up at her mother; how curious Colin should mention this just now! Mrs. Gordon hastened to point out the distant views, and to name some of the places she had already learnt to recognise.

"My cousin showed his taste in choosing such a spot to live in, don't you think, Colin?"

"Certainly. But he did not show his taste by living alone here. However, I suppose you will not quarrel with him on that account?"

"If he had had a wife he would have

had a dozen children, and we should not have come here," said Minnie. "I wonder if we shall be deluged with callers?" Minnie's taste lay more in the ways of society than in the paths of Nature's scenery. "You must come, Colin, very often, and help us to entertain the men. It is very tiresome of Austin to exile himself in this way!"

Minnie was now especially gracious to her future brother-in-law, she foresaw ways of making him very useful; but as he did not guess her motive, the worthy fellow was quite won over—for few men are proof against a pretty woman's attentions. Not that he would for a moment have wished to change his choice; but, still, he had forgiven the affair of poor Philips.

So all the party chatted happily—all except Bee, who cared more to gaze at the scenery than to talk of society. She was glad they were going to live quite in the country; there would not be so many tiresome neighbours, and perhaps she might put pride in her pocket, and join Sarah Grant's reading society.

At last the carriage turned into the drive leading to the Warren, and round by the front door. The old house was looking its very best; the garden was done up; the windows reflected the May sun; the bees hummed about the early rhododendrons; everything seemed to welcome these new Gordons.

Only Mrs. Gordon, as she stepped into the hall, had a strange sensation; she almost fancied she saw before her two beautiful girls, young and innocent, ignorant of what trouble was coming upon them. For a moment it seemed as if the sunlight flashed across Sibyl's golden head and Grace's pathetic eyes; then, with a little nervous laugh, Mrs. Gordon dismissed the vision, and turned with pride towards her own three daughters.

"Welcome, dear children, to your new home."

Whereupon everybody kissed everybody, and smiles could be seen on all their pretty faces.

In the background were the servants, some helping with the luggage, the others respectfully curtsying. For the first time Mrs. Gordon felt that she was in the position which she had always intended to fill, and which she knew she could fill to perfection.

There was, of course, a hasty inspection of the rooms—the two drawing-rooms, the large dining-room, no longer gloomy, a pretty morning-room, and a library filled with books, to which Mrs. Gordon pointed as she said to Colin:

"You see we have provided some fitting place for the learned Captain Grant."

It must be said that the Captain's first thought was that he and Bee would have a blissful week in these odd corners of the great heath, away from Cousin Sarah's reproving eyes, and he gave no heed at all as to how much he and Bee could improve their minds.

Upstairs the rooms had been a good deal changed and renovated. The old schoolroom was no longer recognisable, for it was fitted up as a morning-room for the young ladies. Easy-chairs and pretty nicknacks lay about; a grand piano replaced the old cottage one; and Grace and Sibyl's large arm-chair had disappeared altogether—it was put right away in some lumber room.

"This is a pretty room!" cried Beatrice, delighted; "look at the jasmine and roses climbing up to the very top. Later on, we can pick a nosegay out of the window."

"'Gather ye rosebuds while you may,'" said the Captain; "eh, Miss Bee?"

At five o'clock there was a delightful and sociable tea in the big drawing-room, and much animated talk about the furniture and all the many new things Mrs. Gordon had bought. The girls had not a word to say against their mother's taste, which was perfect; and as she sat in the midst of them she enjoyed their happiness, and her own. The possessive pronoun was continually on their lips; and how sweet it sounded!

"If only Austin were here," they all said, "then everything would be quite perfect. How tiresome of him to insist on keeping his word to that young man!"

"And the dear fellow has managed that I should find a letter from him awaiting me. How like him, dear fellow!" said Mrs. Gordon, slipping her son's letter into her pocket. It was too precious to be read in public; and next to having him in person it was really delightful to have a letter from him. The pleasure of ownership would not be perfect till Austin came home, then he should do as he liked about his future; money would be plentiful, and he need not deny himself. It was Bee alone, however, who thought of thanking her, as they went upstairs together.

"Dear mother, what trouble you have taken for us," she said, as she looked round her bedroom. For the first time in her life she was to have a bedroom to herself; and her mother had chosen her favourite blue for the draperies. It was the bedroom that had belonged to Miss Evans; but it would not have been recognised by her.

When she was alone in her own room, Mrs. Gordon sat down to read her dear Austin's letter. She ought, indeed, to have been a happy woman, but the direction at the top of her son's letter made her start.

"How strange some things are! Of all places in Germany who could have expected Austin to settle at Fribourg!"

Thus ran the letter:

"MY DEAREST MOTHER,—I hope I shall time this letter so as to let you find it at your arrival at the Warren. As I cannot give you a personal welcome, let this letter do it for me. I have not been able to find time to tell you about our plans, as we have travelled a good deal since we left Italy. Jones' mother wrote to him quite unexpectedly to tell him she had heard of an excellent German professor and his wife living at Fribourg, who were willing to take us into their house. Mrs. Jones said that these were bonâ fide Germans of the best type; that they could not talk English; and that the professor would be delighted to teach us his gracious, guttural language.

"You remember that Stanford was especially to learn colloquial German thoroughly, so we are to stay here a year. Of course, I have bargained for a good holiday in the middle of the time.

"Well, here we are, and prepared to put up with German ways in a German flat, and to grind the tongue into our brains. Bless the beautiful Vaterland and its terrible language!

"This town is very interesting and the scenery around is pretty. There are some lovely walks, we hear, but we have not yet explored them. The chief glory of the place is its cathedral; but I must leave its description till another day.

"I wonder how the girls bear their new honours. I suppose Captain Grant will keep Bee in order; but I must take the conceit out of Minnie when I get home. I know Frances will take life quietly everywhere. Has Minnie thrown over the Curate? I hope not; though I fancy her heart was never much captivated. You see, I am leaving all love-making to my sisters; I only walk along the paths that lead to fame. We have the usual appendages here of a German town—heaps of soldiers, and heaps of students. These last are always duelling, and appear every morning wearing fresh pieces of diachylon plaster on their flat faces. I point the moral to Jones by telling him that diachylon does not adorn a face.

"I long to be with you, dear mother; still, promises are promises, and the young man seems to appreciate my company. You ladies would turn up your eyes and lift your hands in horror at our professor and his wife. She does all the housework, and looks like a cook in the morning, and like a housekeeper in the afternoon. But she comes of a most respectable family, so her husband says; at least, we think the word means respectable, though we cannot quite agree about it, and the dictionary does not produce the article. On the floor beneath ours lives an old lady who takes in boarders. She is very prim when we meet her on the stairs, and will not even look at us. An officer lodges above us—at least, we call him an officer, for we never see him; but he comes in late, and perfumes the universal staircase with the fumes of his cigars. He goes out early, and does the same. If we knew enough German we should suggest that there are too many fleas; but we cannot find the word for flea-powder anywhere, and the chemist refuses to give us any; at least, any of the thing we ask for. Tell the girls to write, and to give me their opinion of the Warren. Your affectionate son,

"AUSTIN GORDON."

"Dear boy!" soliloquised the widow. "One would not guess from this letter that he is very peculiar in his views. Of course, these two young men will never meet those girls. It is quite impossible. Why should they? They are in a girls' school, too. Quite impossible."

At this moment Mrs. Gordon's maid entered, and the mistress of the Warren gave herself up into the hands of her new abigail with a sigh of happiness, as she said to herself:

"At last, at last I am in possession."

ABOUT ROSEMARY.

"DOTH not Rosemary and Romeo both begin with a letter?" asks Juliet's nurse. Yes, but what did she mean by the query, and by the further remark that "Juliet hath the prettiest sententions of it, of you and rosemary, that it would do you good to hear it"? For answer we must make some search into the beliefs and customs of the past.

Rosemary is the "Ros-marinus" of the old herbalists, but it is not a native of Britain, and there is no exact record of when it was introduced here from the south of Europe. Mention of "Ros-marinus" occurs in an Anglo-Saxon vocabulary of the eleventh century, where it is translated Feld-madder and Sun-dew. There is some doubt whether this has reference to the same plant now known to us as rosemary, but in no case was it the Rose of Mary, as some have supposed. It is not a rose, and the "Mary" is from "marinus," or "maria." The old English spelling was Rosmarin, or Rosmarine; in these forms one finds the word in Gower, and Shenstone, and other old poets.

In the south of Europe the rosemary has long had magic properties ascribed to it. The Spanish ladies used to wear it as an antidote against the evil eye, and the Portuguese called it the Elfin plant, and dedicated it to the fairies. The idea of the antidote may have been due to a confusion of the name with that of the Virgin; but as a matter of fact the "Ros-marinus" is frequently mentioned by old Latin writers, including Horace and Ovid. The name came from the fondness of the plant for the sea-shore, where it often gets sprinkled with the "ros," or dew of the sea, that is to say, sea-spray. Another cause of confusion, perhaps, was that the leaves of the plant somewhat resemble those of the juniper, which in mediæval times was held sacred to the Virgin Mary. In the island of Crete, it is said, a bride dressed for the wedding still calls, last of all, for a sprig of rosemary to bring her luck. And now we come to find rosemary in close association with both marriage and death, just as the hyacinth was, and perhaps still is, among the Greeks. It is interesting to trace the connection by which the same plant came to have two such different uses.

One of the earliest mentions of rosemary in English literature is in a poem of the fourteenth century called "The Gloriouse Rosemaryne," which begins thus:

> This herbe is callit rosemaryn,
> Of vertu that is gode and fyne;
> But all the vertues tell I ne can,
> Nor, I trowe, no erthely man.

Nevertheless, the poet proceeds to record at great length many astounding virtues, including the restoration of youth to the aged by bathing in rosemary water.

The "cheerful rosemarie" and "refreshing rosemarine" of Spenser became a great favourite in England, although now the plant is hardly allowed garden space.

Sir Thomas More said: "I let it run all over my garden walls, not only because my bees love it, but because 'tis the herb sacred to remembrance, and therefore to friendship: whence a sprig of it hath a dumb language that maketh it the chosen emblem at our funeral wakes and in our burial grounds." The popularity of the plant was doubtless due to the long-enduring scent and verdure of the leaves. It is one of the most lasting of evergreens, and the pleasant aromatic odour lingers very long after the leaves have been gathered. Fragrance and endurance, then, are the characteristics of a plant which came to be commonly accepted as an emblem of constancy, as also of loving remembrance. Thus it is that Herrick sings of it:

> Grow for two ends, it matters not at all,
> Be't for my bridal or my burial.

Thus it is that we find Friar Laurence over Juliet's body, saying:

> Dry up your tears, and stick your rosemary
> On this fair corse,

which is certainly not what the nurse meant when she told Romeo of the "prettiest sententions."

High medicinal properties were ascribed to the rosemary, so much so that old Parkinson writes: "Rosemary is almost as great use as bayes, both for outward and inward remedies, and as well for civill as physicall purposes; inwardly for the head and heart, outwardly for the sinews and joynts; for civill uses, as all do know, at weddings, funerals, etc., to bestow among friends; and the physicall are so many that you might as well be tyred in the reading as I in the writing, if I should set down all that might be said of it."

One of the "physicall" uses was in stirring up the tankard of ale or sack, while at weddings a sprig was usually dipped in the loving-cup to give it fragrance as well as luck.

The virtues of the plant are celebrated in a curious wedding-sermon quoted by Hone:

"The rosemary is for married men, the which by name, nature, and continued use, man challengeth as property belonging to himself. It overtoppeth all the flowers in the garden boasting man's rule; it helpeth the brain, strengtheneth the memory, and is very medicinal for the head. Another property is, it affects the heart. Let this ros-marinus, this flower of man, ensign of your wisdom, love, and loyalty, be carried not only in your hands but in your heads and hearts."

One does not easily reconcile this laudation with the popular superstition that wherever the rosemary flourished, there should the woman be the ruling power. To this superstition, be it noted, has been ascribed the disfavour into which the plant has fallen among gardeners since Shakespeare's time. Moreover, good Dr. Roger Hacket was evidently confused between "maris" (of man), and "maris" (of the sea).

The medical properties may have been overrated by old Parkinson, but some are recognised even to this day. Thus it is used as an infusion to cure headaches, and is believed to be an extensive ingredient in hair restorers. It is also one of the ingredients in the manufacture of Eau de Cologne, and has many other uses in the form of oil of rosemary. It is said that bees which feed on rosemary-blossoms produce a very delicately-flavoured honey. Perfumers are greatly indebted to it. According to De Gubernatis, the flowers of the plant are proof against rheumatism, nervous indisposition, general debility, weakness of sight, melancholy, weak circulation, and cramp—almost as comprehensive a cure as some of our modern universal specifics!

The medicinal properties of rosemary have been held by some to account for its funeral uses. At all events an ingenious writer of the seventeenth century held that the custom of carrying a sprig at a funeral had its rise from a notion of an "alexipharmick" or preservative virtue in the herb which would protect the wearer from "pestilential distempers," and be a powerful defence "against the morbid effluvias of the corpse." For the same reason, this writer asserts, it was customary to burn rosemary in the chambers of the sick, just like frankincense, "whose odour is not much different from rosemary, which gave the Greeks occasion to call it Libanotis, from Libanos (frankincense)."

The hyssop of the Bible is believed by some to be rosemary, and it is said that in the East it was customary to hang up a bunch in the house as a protection against evil spirits, and to use it in various ceremonies against enchantment. Perhaps there was some connection between this custom and that of the Greeks, referred to by Aristotle, who regarded indigestion as the effect of witchcraft, and who used rue as an antidote. The dispelling of the charm was just the natural physical action of the herb. We are not aware, however, of rosemary being included in any western pharmacopœia as a corrective of dietetic errors.

In Devonshire, however, there was a more mystic use for rosemary in dispelling the charms of witches. A bunch of it had to be taken in the hand and dropped bit by bit on live coals, while the two first verses of the Sixty-eighth Psalm were recited, followed by the Lord's Prayer. Bay-leaves were sometimes used in the same manner; but if the afflicted one were suffering physically, he had also to take certain prescribed medicines. As an item of English folk-lore, Mr. Thistleton-Dyer mentions that rosemary worn about the body is said to strengthen the memory and to add to the success of the wearer in anything he may undertake.

It is as an emblem of remembrance that rosemary is most frequently used by the old poets. Thus Ophelia:

There is rosemary for you, that's for remembrance.
I pray you, love, remember.

And in "The Winter's Tale":

For you there's rosemary and rue; these keep
Seeming and savour all the winter long;
Grace and remembrance be with you both.

And thus Drayton:

He from his lass him lavender hath sent,
  Showing her love, and doth requital crave;
Him rosemary his sweetheart, whose intent
  Is that he her should in remembrance have.

Quotations might be easily multiplied, but the reader will find in Brand's "Popular Antiquities" numerous references to the plant by writers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

As an emblem of rejoicing, rosemary was also often used. Hone quotes a contemporary account of the joyful entry of Queen Elizabeth into London in 1558, wherein occurs this passage: "How many nosegays did her Grace receive at poor women's hands? How often times stayed she her chariot when she saw any simple body offer to speak to her Grace? A branch of rosemary given to her Grace, with a supplication by a poor woman about Fleet Bridge, was seen in her chariot till her Grace came to Westminster." The object of the particular floral offering in this case is not very obvious, unless as an emblematic tribute to the maiden Queen.

Rosemary used to be carried in the hand at weddings, as well as strewed on the ground and dipped in the cup. Thus Stow narrates of a wedding in 1560, that "fine flowers and rosemary were strewed for them coming home;" and Brand cites numerous instances from old plays. In one, "the parties enter with rosemary, as if from a wedding;" and in Beaumont and Fletcher's "Scornful Lady," the question is asked about a wedding, "Were the rosemary branches dipped?" This dipping, moreover, was in scented water as well as in the loving-cup, and hence the allusion in Dekker's "Wonderful Year" to a bride who had died on her wedding-night:

"Here is a strange alteration: for the rosemary that was washed in sweet water to set out the bridal, is now wet in tears to furnish her burial."

It is on record that Anne of Cleves wore rosemary at her wedding with Henry the Eighth; and in an account of some marriage festivities at Kenilworth, attended by Queen Elizabeth, there is frequent mention of the plant. An idea of how it was sometimes used is given in a description of a sixteenth century wedding quoted by the Rev. Hilderic Friend: "The bride being attired in a gown of sheep's russet and a kirtle of fine worsted, attired with abillement of gold" (milliner's French even then!), "and her hair, yellow as gold, hanging down behind her, which was curiously combed and plaited, she was led to church between two sweet boys, with bride-laces and rosemary tied about her silken sleeves. There was a fair bride-cup of silver-gilt carried before her, wherein was a goodly branch of rosemary gilded very fair, and hung about with silken ribands of all colours."

Coles says that the garden rosemary was called "Rosmarinus coronarium," because the women made crowns and garlands of it. Ben Jonson says that it was customary for the bridesmaids to present the bridegroom next morning with a bunch of rosemary, and Brand says that as late as 1698 the custom still prevailed in England of decking the bridal bed with sprigs of rosemary. In Jonson's "Tale of a Tub," one of the characters assembled to await the intended bridegroom says: "Look an' the wenches ha' not found un out, and do present un with a van of rosemary and bays, enough to vill a bow-pott or trim the head of my best vore-horse; we shall all ha' bride-laces and points, I see." And again, a country swain assures his sweetheart at their wedding: "We'll have rosemary and bayes to vill a bow-pott, and with the same I'll trim the vorehead of my best vore-horse;" so that it would seem the decorative use was not confined to the bride, the guests, and the banquet.

For a love-charm the reputation of rosemary seem to have come from the South. There is an old Spanish proverb which runs:

> Who passeth by the rosemarie,
> And careth not to take a spraye,
> For woman's love no care has he,
> Nor shall he, though he live for aye.

Mr. Thistleton-Dyer says that rosemary is used in some parts of the country, as nut-charms are on Hallowe'en, to foretell a lover. Only St. Agnes's Eve is the occasion on which to invoke with a sprig of rosemary or thyme with this formula:

> St. Agnes, that's to lovers kind,
> Come, ease the troubles of my mind.

For love-potions, decoctions of rosemary were much employed.

As to funeral uses, those who are familiar with Hogarth's drawings will remember one of a funeral party with sprigs of rosemary in their hands. Misson, a French traveller (of the time of William the Third), thus describes our funeral ceremonies: "When they are ready to set out, they nail up the coffin, and a servant presents the company with sprigs of rosemary. Every one takes a sprig and carries it in his hand till the body is put into the grave, at which time they all throw their sprigs in after it."

Whether the fact that the rosemary buds in January has anything to do with its funeral uses admits of conjecture, as Sir Thomas Browne would say. But the fact was certainly present to the writer of the following beautiful verses, which were worthily rescued by Hone from a "fugitive copy," although the writer's name has been lost:

> Sweet-scented flower! who art wont to bloom
> On January's front severe,
> And, o'er the wintry desert drear
> To waft thy waste perfume!
> Come, thou shalt form my nosegay now,
> And I will bind thee round my brow;
> And, as I twine the mournful wreath,
> I'll weave a melancholy song,
> And sweet the strain shall be, and long—
> The melody of death.

Come funeral flower! who lov'st to dwell
With the pale corse in lonely tomb,
And throw across the desert gloom
A sweet decaying smell.
Come, pressing lips, and lie with me
Beneath the lonely alder-tree,
And we will sleep a pleasant sleep,
And not a care shall dare intrude,
To break the marble solitude
So peaceful and so deep.

And hark! the wind-god, as he flies,
Moans hollow in the forest trees,
And, sailing on the gusty breeze,
Mysterious music dies.
Sweet flower! the requiem wild is mine,
It warns me to the lonely shrine—
The cold turf-altar of the dead.
My grave shall be in yon lone spot,
Where, as I lie by all forgot,
A dying fragrance thou wilt o'er my ashes shed.

In Dekker's "Wonderful Year" there is a description of a charnel-house pavement strewed with withered rosemary, hyacinths, cypress, and yew. During the Plague, rosemary was in such demand for funerals, that, says Dekker, what "had wont to be sold for twelvepence an armfull went now at six shillings a handfull." Certainly a remarkable rise. What was the price in 1531 we know not; but in an account of the funeral expenses of a Lord Mayor of London, who died in that year, appears an item, "For yerbes at the bewyral £0 1 0," which presumably refers to rosemary.

"Cypresse garlands," wrote Coles, "are of great account at funeralls among the gentiler sort; but Rosemary and Bayes are used by the commons both at funeralls and weddings. They are all plants which fade not a good while after they are gathered and used, as I conceive to intimate unto us that the remembrance of the present solemnity might not die presently, but be kept in minde for many yeares."

We have now seen something of the many significations of rosemary, and find an explanation of why the same plant was used for both weddings and funerals, in the fact that it emblemised remembrance by its evergreen and fragrant qualities. One may hesitate to believe in the man of whom it is recorded that he wanted to be married again on the day of his wife's funeral because the rosemary, which had been used at her burial, would come in usefully and economically for the wedding ceremony; but there is interest enough in the circumstance referred to by Shakespeare, that:

Our bridal flowers serve for a buried corpse.

AT A COUNTRY SALE.

SCENE: a flat, oak-shaded, grass-bordered Norfolk road. Time: eleven o'clock on an Indian summer morning, the golden, glorious Indian summer of the East country. Dramatis personæ: the writer and, with his kind permission, the reader. The latter may be assured that he will find himself not unpleasantly situated, for the mellow sunshine warms without scorching, and the equinoctial gales having blown themselves away, the air is as soft as silk. A faint smell as of pot-pourri is wafted towards us from the fading flowers in the cottage gardens. It seems as though nature were "standing with reluctant feet" at the border-line between summer and winter.

As we walk along our eyes are dazzled by the glory of tree and hedge, beside which that of the lilies of the field—to say nothing of Solomon—would pale into insignificance. At no other season of the year is East Anglia remarkable for the brilliance of its colouring. In the spring it wears a garb of greenish-grey, in the summer of brownish-green; but in the autumn, as though by the touch of some magic wand, the grey turns to gold, and the brown to purple and crimson, till at length the whole country has the effect of being viewed through an old stained-glass window. Ladies with a taste for artistic arrangement carry home portions of tree and hedge, which they fasten in strange devices upon their drawing-room walls. But lo! as in the case of Rosamund's purple jar, or to use a less prosaic simile, the shining pebbles that children pick up on the seashore, the glory has all departed. The leaves, torn away from their setting of yellow sunshine and heavy morning dew, wax limp and dingy; the gold is grey again, and the purple brown.

There is evidently something in the wind to-day, for every few minutes a gig, a sulky, or a dealer's cart rattles past us. As a rule one may walk along this road for four or five miles at a stretch without meeting anything more exciting than a flock of sheep. It cannot be market-day, because the farmers who pass have their wives in Sunday garb seated beside them. There must surely be some local merry-making afoot, for the men have a jovial, hearty air, and the women wear a look of pleasant expectation. On the way to a race-meeting or a horse-show you may notice the same hail-fellow-well-met disposition, when even the stranger is accorded a cheerful "Good day," and offered a lift on his road.

It is easy to perceive that we are in the land of cobs, for there is scarcely a horse to be seen except in the plough. Within the shafts of that dilapidated little pig-cart is a perfect specimen of the pure Norfolk galloway. Of darkest brown, save for the white star on his forehead, with muscles of whipcord and legs of steel, he is built both for strength and speed. Although he looks ready to jump out of his skin as he flashes past us, stepping well up to his crimson nostrils, his owner would, no doubt, truthfully assure us that the "missus" and the children can do anything with him, for he is a "regular cosset." This promising "young one" will soon be snapped up by a dealer who will take him to London, and make a hundred guineas of him for a park hack. He will be well worth it, for the good old Norfolk breed is dying out, owing to the influx of sluggish Welsh Taffies, Norwegian Skewbalds, and vicious, thick-headed Russians. This is a digression, for which, however, no apology is needed, since the Melancholy Burton has freely sanctioned both the use and the abuse of the digression.

Of course, we should not be in Norfolk if we did not hear a constant volley of chaff from the gigs that pass and repass each other. The wit is not of a very high order, but it seems to be much appreciated by both the chaffers and the chaffed.

"Hullo, together!" shouts a fat old farmer, bulging out on each side of his sulky, as he overtakes a middle-aged married pair. "Thought you was a young couple gooin' a-courtin'. Bob, you want a new hat to match your missus's bonnet."

The missus giggles delightedly, and Bob retorts in similar fashion.

"I'll give you a shillun for your hat, bor, to scare the crows off my land. Save me a boy and a clapper."

In these and the like amenities the time passes agreeably enough, until round a bend in the road we discover the cause of all this excitement. Here stands a large old-fashioned farm-house, the roomy yards and barns of which look melancholy and deserted. The posts and gates are adorned with big staring placards, and the trampled garden is littered with straw and scraps of newspaper. On the croquet-lawn is erected a huge tent, from which issues the monotonous sound of a man's voice, a voice evidently accustomed to public speaking.

If we force our way to the mouth of the tent we shall see a curious sight. At the far end sits a commanding-looking gentleman, none other than the local auctioneer, upon a daïs composed of a kitchen chair hoisted on a three-legged table—our methods are primitive in these parts. Down the middle of the tent run two long planks, in front of which sit two rows of women, who have been lucky enough to secure the pit-stalls in this place of entertainment, to which there is no charge for admission. These women cannot talk except in whispers, because auctioneer is but another name for autocrat, and a gentleman of the hammer will tolerate the sound of no voice but his own and that of the bidder. The majority of the female audience do not bid; they have come for amusement, not business. Only a small minority are there to fill some solid uninteresting wants at the lowest possible cost. They buy milk-pans, jugs—"you can't have too many jugs," they whisper to one another—and door-mats.

The real buyers are the dealers, who on this occasion are represented by two or three villainous-looking "cadgers" from the neighbouring market-towns. No smart broker from Norwich or Yarmouth has thought it worth while to put in an appearance. The dealers are the only persons who make no disguise of the fact that they are bidding. They stand well in view of the auctioneer, and close to the official who may best be described as the showman. Behind the rows of chairs occupied by the ladies stands a large concourse of people, mostly of the farmer or small tradesman class. The parson may appear after luncheon, or the ubiquitous country doctor may look in for a few minutes, but otherwise the gentry are conspicuous by their absence. Only about three per cent. of the crowd that surrounds us have come to buy; the rest push in and out, eat apples and gingerbread, and appear breathlessly interested in the price made by feather-beds and coal-scuttles.

The auctioneer strikes us as a happy man. He receives the admiring homage of the whole assemblage, his jokes are always laughed at, and he is enabled to enforce law and order in a manner that would fill with envious admiration the breast of any man. But the task of maintaining order is not so difficult as it might appear in that rough crowd, for the British public is always virtuous in public. The most debased-looking cadger present is righteously indignant at the least suspicion of rowdiness or rebellion against lawful authority on the part of his fellows.

As we watch the proceedings we are soon filled with awe and wonder at the supernatural quickness of the auctioneer's vision. Is the man Argus-eyed that he is able to say thus rapidly, "Five shillings, six, seven; I'm offered seven shillings in three places." We have not been able to catch a single bid. As a matter of fact, one man has raised his eyebrows, another has jerked his pencil, a third has twitched the corner of his mouth, and all these infinitesimal motions have been perceived at one and the same moment by the little gentleman on the table.

The sale has begun, as usual, with the less interesting contents of the kitchen, store-room, and bedrooms. It is curious to note how certain articles are always eagerly competed for, while others are given away at prices which would make the mouth of a newly-married couple water. Cutlery always goes for its full value, there is a brisk market for kettles and saucepans, and quite a run upon matting. For breakable or cumbrous articles there is very little demand, since unless these are particularly good they are not worth the risk and trouble of carrying away. That combined breakfast and tea set is an extraordinary bargain at three-and-six, and so is that huge mahogany wardrobe at ten shillings.

To save ourselves from temptation we stroll out of the tent, and enter into conversation with a communicative man in a black coat, who may be either the dissenting minister or the schoolmaster. He knows, and is delighted to tell, the story of which this scene is the finale. It is a familiar tale enough, and lightened by not a touch of sensation or romance, yet it is not without instruction in its bearing upon the causes and effects of the so-called "agricultural distress."

It appears that the grandfather of the late owner of the farm made his pile in the earlier decades of the century, when one man's scarcity was another man's gain, and was able to buy the homestead which he had hitherto occupied as tenant. His son after him was a steady, hardworking man, not too proud to follow the plough, and take his own pigs to market. The son's wife made up her own butter, raised her own turkeys, and did all the work of the house with the assistance of a sturdy girl. The worthy couple made money hand-over-hand in the good times that succeeded the Crimean war. Then the children grew up. They had all been to boarding schools, and came home with "fine notions." The daughters had their piano and their pony-carriage, and never stirred a finger in the house. The sons hunted, shot, and lived generally like young squires. At last the bad times which had been staved off since the passing of the Corn Laws by the spread of railways and the war, began in earnest. In 1876 set in a long series of bad harvests, while every year the competition of foreign markets was making itself more felt. The father died at the beginning of this era, and the eldest son had to pay their little fortunes to his mother and sisters, which left him with but slender capital wherewith to carry on the farm. Of course, he married, and, says our informant, "his wife was a perfect lady, for she kept three maids and put the washing out." The definition is a new one, and we accept it gratefully. Of course the new owner and his "perfect lady" would have thought it out of the question to return to the simple hardworking ways of the father and grandfather. The old market-gig had long ago been exchanged for a smart dog-cart, and the hunter was looked upon as a necessity. The dairy and poultry-yard were now under the care of hirelings, and, strange to say, they did not answer. The luxuries which could be managed in the days when the land yielded a good income were a different matter now, when a determined effort was necessary to make even a living out of it. The usual result followed. The husband took to drinking, and the smash was only a matter of time. The family had to give up their home, and see it and all their belongings pass into the hands of strangers.

This story is a chapter from the contemporary history of the English nation, and is just as important in its own way as the chapters that deal with the lives of Kings, Princes, and Governors. Upon it is raised the outcry about the poor farmer, who cannot make the land pay unless his rents are reduced and his tithes remitted. As a matter of fact, good land can always be made to pay, though not, at the present time, a high percentage. But no business, whether farming, shop-keeping, or other, will ever answer unless the owner has sufficient capital to start with, and is himself a sober, hardworking man, content to live in accordance with his station.

But let us return to the tent, where the proceedings have reached a more interesting stage. The furniture of the sitting-rooms is now being sold. There is not much here to tempt the dealers, for antique treasures are few. The old oak, if ever there were any, has long since been ousted by mahogany and rosewood. Stop a bit, though.

A marvellous old object is being dragged in at this moment, which was unearthed from among the contents of a lumber-room. It is marked in the catalogue: "Antique oak settee; imperfect." This is made of open wood-work, in the form of a double arm-chair, and is fast dropping to pieces with age and neglect. There is a general laugh as it appears, and some one remarks that it would be worth five shillings as a curiosity. But the dealers are already buzzing round it. They have perceived the eagles' heads, with the long hooked beaks, that finish off the arms, and the claws holding balls which form the feet. There is quite an eager competition for this venerable relic, which is finally secured by an old Jew for fifty shillings. The purchaser is delighted with his bargain, for which, when done up, he tells his neighbours he shall not take a penny less than fifteen pounds.

One of the chief humours of the sale is the unquenchable sanguineness of the auctioneer. Lot 225 has just been brought in, which consists of a representation of the Crucifixion carved in ivory—a curious object to be found in such a place, but illustrating probably the secret passion of one of the daughters of the house for some fascinating High Church curate.

"Now," says the auctioneer, with unconscious profanity, "here is a very elegant lot. Hold it up higher, Fred, that the ladies may see it. Shall we start the bidding at a sovereign? The article is honestly worth two."

A dead silence ensues, broken only by a sepulchral voice which says "Three bob." The modern descendant of Thor instantly climbs down with the philosophic resignation of a man long inured to disappointment, and says rapidly:

"Three shillings; any advance upon three shillings? I'm offered only three shillings for this most desirable lot," etc., etc.

The dilapidated-looking books are sold anonymously in lots of about half-a-dozen. Eager heads crane over each parcel to see whether there is a rare or well-illustrated work among its contents. A labourer buys a lot without examining it beforehand. No doubt he intends it for the children, who are so clever "at their books." He will be disappointed when he gets home to find that he has carried off an armful of directories and Latin grammars.

The pictures, particularly when coloured, always sell well, for the countryman loves a "gay" picture, and is the best of customers to the enterprising grocer who gives away a chromo-lithograph with a pound of tea. There is also a brisk market for the parcels of tattered music, which go by no means for a song. The buyers look like small farmers or tradesmen, whose daughters, no doubt, have been to some seminary for young ladies, and who yearn for new "pieces" wherewith to afflict the old piano.

The job lots, or "sundries," are the most remarkable collections of useless rubbish. Why do people buy them, one asks in vain, and what do they do with them when they have got them? Of what value can that tray containing a broken chimney ornament, a toy horse (headless), a dusty Japanese hand-screen, some wooden chessmen, and several fragments of china be to that bird-like old dealer, and how will he ever recoup himself for the eighteenpence he has paid for them? If we watch him for a moment we may solve the mystery. Before he shovels his purchase carelessly away in a corner of the tent, his grimy claws fasten upon one of the bits of china, which he wraps in paper and puts into his pocket. This is nothing less than the lid of an old Lowestoft jar, with the brown dog and the raised flowers all complete. The lid will be fitted on to a bit of imitation Lowestoft, and the china-maniac who buys it may think himself lucky that so much of his bargain is genuine.

Even the delights of a country sale begin to pall in time, and we have been standing quite long enough in this stuffy atmosphere. We will take our leave before the out-door effects—lawn-mower, roller, and flower-stand—are put up.. As we pass through the yard we see several of the largest buyers packing their purchases after the extraordinary fashion of the dealer tribe. In that little open cart a man has placed a round table by way of foundation, on the top of that a gilt-framed looking-glass, then a pair of curtains, and last of all a chest of drawers. Under these circumstances it seems just as well that each of these articles went for considerably less than the value of the raw material.

THE WHITE WITCH.

The White Witch stood on the harbour side, the wind sighed soft from the west,
The brown sails drooped from each steady mast, the blue sea had not a crest;
They placed the basin in her hands they had filled at the holy well,
And of the luck of the fishing fleet they bade her look and tell.

The White Witch over the water bent, her face grew grey with pain,
She brushed the mist from her keen black eyes, she looked in the bowl again;
Once more she shivered, as if in fear, and her lips were drawn and white,
As she gasped: "There's a heavy weird to dree, an' ye dare to sail to-night.

"I see the wild waves lashed to foam, away by great Bradda Head;
I see the surge round the Chicken Rock, and the breaker's lip is red;
I see where corpses toss in the Sound, with nets, and gear, and spars,
And never a one of the fishing fleet is riding under the stars."

Black and stern the fishermen stood, as her bode the White Witch said,
Till Kermode strode from out the group, and bared his hoary head,
With: "The glass is steady, the sea is smooth, the nets are strong to haul,
Our timbers are stout, our hearts are good, and Heaven is over us all.

"I say, set sail, my mates, and leave the witch to mutter and moan;
I neither care to know her rede nor to heed her malison.
I say, set sail; we Islemen sure can trust to our own right hand;
An I'd my will the witch and her crew should be cleared from off our land."

Loud cheered the fishermen of Peel, and away from the harbour mouth,
Like great brown birds each fishing-smack went heading for the south;
And careless of threat and mocking word, careless of scoff and sneer,
Shunned by the women and children all, the White Witch left the pier.

And or ever three bright suns arose, o'er sea and land to smile,
Or ever three broad suns sank down behind St. Patrick's Isle,
Through town, and hamlet, and mountain farm, the terrible tidings ran;
There was mourning for the fishing fleet through the length and breadth of Man.

For few and far between the men who struggled to the shore,
When the sudden tempest struck the fleet, and 'mid scud, and flash, and roar,
Amid the rocks under Bradda Head and the deadly swirl of the Sound,
The boats were foundered, crushed, or swamped; their gallant crews were drowned.

They gathered, a stern avenging crowd, on Slieu Wallin's lofty crest,
They brought the White Witch to her doom, in her shroud of burial dressed;
They forced her into the barrel spiked, while her shrieks rang shrill and wide;
They sent her rolling to her death down the mountain's rocky side.

And still a barren track is left, 'mid gorse and heather-bell,
Of the sentence and fulfilment stern to coming years to tell;
And pilgrims to the sunny isle, if they scale Slieu Wallin's crest,
May see the "Witch's Way" to death marked on the hill's broad breast.

SOME DINNERS IN FICTION.

In preceding numbers of this journal the present writer has dealt with a series of historic and notable dinners, and brought together some anecdotal particulars of the hosts who gave and the guests who ate them. In concluding the series, he proposes to glance at a few which belong to the realm of fiction, having been provided by novelists for the entertainment of their dramatis personæ.

We may take it to be a matter of regret that Sir Walter Scott does not set forth the bill of fare of the dinner which the Baron of Bradwardine put before the young Squire of Waverley Honour on his visit to Tully-Veolan. "We cannot rival the luxuries of your English table," said the Baron, "or give you the epulæ lautiores of Waverley—I say epulæ rather than prandium, because the latter phrase is popular; 'Epulæ ad senatum, prandium vero ad populum attinet,' says Suetonius Tranquillus." However, there was excellent cheer, according to the ideas of the presiding genius of the kitchen at Tully-Veolan, and young Waverley did justice to it. He had, afterwards, experience of Highland hospitality under the auspices of Fergus MacIvor. "Some pains," we are told, "had been bestowed in dressing the dishes of fish, game, etc., which were at the upper end of the table, and immediately under the eye of the English stranger. Lower down stood immense clumsy joints of mutton and beef, which, but for the absence of pork—abhorred in the Highlands—resembled the rude festivity of the banquet of Penelope's suitors. But the central dish was a yearling lamb, called 'a hog in har'st,' roasted whole. It was set upon its legs, with a bunch of parsley in its mouth, and was probably exhibited in that form to gratify the pride of the cook, who piqued himself more on the plenty than the elegance of his master's table. The sides of this poor animal were fiercely attacked by the clansmen, some with dirks, others with the knives which were usually in the same sheath with the dagger, so that it was soon rendered a mangled and rueful spectacle. Lower still, the victuals seemed of yet coarser quality, though sufficiently abundant. Broth, onions, cheese, and the fragments of the feast regaled the sons of Ivor who feasted in the open air."

Scott observes that it was of old the

Scottish custom for persons of all ranks to assemble at the same table, which might have been regarded as an assertion of the democratic principle of equality—only they did not all partake, you see, of the same fare. Fynes Morrison, an English traveller in the seventeenth century, says: "I myself was at a knight's house, who had many servants to attend him, that brought in his meat with their heads covered with blue caps, the table being more than half furnished with great platters of porridge, each having a little piece of sodden meat. And when the table was served, the servants did sit down with us; but the upper mess, instead of porridge, had a pullet, with some prunes in the broth."

Let me turn to another of Sir Walter's imaginary dinners. When the Laird of Monkbarns and young Lovel dine at the "Hawes"—"for so the inn on the southern side of Queensferry is denominated"—the landlord put on the table—"in the sanded parlour, hung with prints of the 'Four Seasons'"—sea-trout and caller haddocks, a mutton chop, and cranberry tarts. Not at all a bad dinner, I can assure you! But when Monkbarns plays the host under his own roof, "the dinner was such as suited a profound antiquary, comprehending many savoury specimens of Scottish viands, now disused at the tables of those who affect elegance. There was the relishing Solan goose, fresh from the Bass Rock, whose smell is so powerful that he is never cooked within doors; the hotch-potch—most delicious, to my thinking, in July, when green-peas and beans and other summer vegetables can be utilised; fish and sauce, and crappit heads; and chicken-pie, made after a recipe bequeathed to Monkbarns by his departed grandmother of happy memory. The wine was worthy of one who held to the excellent maxim of King Alphonso of Castile: 'Old wood to burn, old books to read, old wine to drink, and old friends to chat with.'"

Sir Walter seems to have been as fond of inns as Shenstone was. In "Redgauntlet" he takes the Quaker, Joshua Geddes, to the picturesque hostelry kept by Joe Crackenthorp on the bank of the Solway. Frugality was the "note" of the Quaker's dinner—a pint of ale, bread, butter, and Dutch cheese. And Peter Peebles, that humorous victim of the litigious passion, feeds there—for want of a "pluck pie," or a "souter's clod"—on a mutton pasty, a quart of barley-beer, with a gill of sherry, and a dram or so of brandy.

Who has not laughed—at the same time twinkling away a tear—over the details of the dinner which Caleb Balderstone, in his anxiety to maintain the honour of Ravenswood, puts before his master and his master's guests? First there is the simulacrum or imaginary outline of a dinner fit for a duke, with capons in white broth, roast kid and bacon, roasted leveret, butter crabs, and veal Florentine; blackcock, purple damas, a tart, a "flam," and some winsome sweet things and comfits. But the real dinner dwindles down to a scant supply of venison from the inn, and a wild fowl which Caleb has carried off from the cooper's cottage. Yet this was plenty itself compared with the attenuated repast which on a previous day the old butler had put before Ravenswood and Bucklaw. "And for eating—what signifies telling a lee?—there's just the hinder end of the mutton ham that has been but three times on the table, and the nearer the bone the sweeter, as your honours weel ken, and there's the heel of the ewe-milk kebbuck wi' a bit of nice butter, and—and—that's a' that's to trust to."

Thomas Love Peacock, quaintest and most original of story-tellers, has a pretty taste in dinners, and is never unmindful of the fitness of things when arranging his imaginary menus. As for example, at the dinner given by Squire Crotchet, of Crotchet Castle, to his select friends, Dr. Folliott, Mr. MacQuedy, Mr. Skionar, and others. As Dr. Folliott, quoting from Rabelais, explains: there is a fine music in the "cliquetis d'assiettes," a refreshing shade in the "ombre de salle à manger," and a delightful fragrance in the "fumée de rôti." After soup a noble salmon attracts the organs, both olfactory and peptic, of those of the guests who do not prefer an equally noble turbot. While salmon and turbot are being discussed, the Doctor quotes a passage from Athenæus in support of his contention that the science of fish sauce is by no means brought to perfection, which no doubt is true, though oyster sauce and lobster sauce are praiseworthy inventions. A joint of lamb, with lemon and pepper, follows the fish, and the moderate but sufficing meal ends with chicken and asparagus. Not a bad dinner this, is it?

In the pleasant days of old when the first Lord Lytton was known to the world as Edward Lytton Bulwer, he posed as an expert in the culinary art;

and in "Pelham," which, though certainly not the best of his many works of fiction, is, perhaps, the cleverest, had a good deal to say on high gastronomic matters. His hero goes to dine with Lord Guloseton, a gourmet of the first water, and dines very well indeed. The soup, "à la Carmelite," suggests a libation in Madeira to the memory of the once famous monastic brotherhood to whom a grateful world is indebted for this inimitable preparation. While lingering over the turbot, Pelham (quoting from Ude) breaks out into a strain of fervid eloquence: "Qu'un cuisinier est un mortel divin!" Why should we not be proud of our knowledge in cookery? It is the soul of festivity at all times and to all ages. How many marriages have been the consequence of meeting at dinner? How much good fortune has been the result of a good supper? At what moment of our existence are we happier than at table? There hatred and animosity are lulled to sleep, and pleasure alone reigns. There the cook, by his skill and attention, anticipates our wishes in the happiest selection of the best dishes and decorations.

Afterwards a superb béchamelle is served. Oh, the inimitable sauce! Worthy memorial of an age when men knew how to live and eat "en grand seigneur!" While toying with a "filet mignon de poulet," Lord Guloseton tells an anecdote. During the residence at Pondicherry of Suffren, the French governor, a deputation of natives one day waited upon him. He was at dinner. "Tell them," he said, "that the Christian religion peremptorily forbids any Christian while at dinner from occupying himself with any earthly business except that of eating." The deputation retired, profoundly impressed, no doubt, by their ruler's piety.

Suffren, I may note, had good authority at his back. The Greeks regarded a hearty meal as a kind of thanksgiving to heaven—how many poor wretches would be only too glad to prove their gratitude in this way!—and Xenophon observes that as the Athenians had more gods than any other nation, so had they more feasts. And Euripides, in his comedy of "The Cyclops," makes Polypheme say that his stomach is his only god; and no doubt it is a deity which even in our own day has a good many devoted worshippers.

Lord Guloseton and his friend (I am going back to the novel) after some "veau à la Dauphine," and a quail or two (by the way, Brillat-Savarin says that among game properly so-called, it is the pleasantest and "la plus mignonne," while a plump quail, he adds, charms by its taste, shape, and colour; it must not be cooked except by being roasted or "en papillote," because its flavour quickly evaporates), indulge in the dessert, which calls forth from Pelham the suggestion that at this stage of the meal perfumes should be served. It is, he says, their appropriate place; in confectionery (delicate invention of the sylphs!) we imitate the outlines of the rose and the jasmine; why not their odours, too?

From these gastronomic altitudes let us descend to the level of ordinary life. What delightful dinners one finds in Charles Dickens's books! I am sure he himself enjoyed the Christmas dinner at the Cratchits', and the Pickwickian dinners, as much as any of his readers have done; though hundreds and thousands have longed to handle knife and fork at Manor Farm! Then with what keen satisfaction he acts as purveyor for young David Copperfield! With how subtle an appreciation of boy-nature he puts down pudding as the pièce de resistance—either currant pudding, toothsome but dear, or a stout pale pudding, heavy and flabby, with great flat raisins in it, stuck in whole at wide distances apart—cheap, but satisfying! On extraordinary occasions he allows David to regale himself with a saveloy and a penny loaf, or a fourpenny plate of red beef from a cook's shop, or a plate of bread and cheese with a glass of beer. Such is the appetising variety of viands at the command of the happy owner of fourpence—happy, indeed, in the digestion that can do justice to them! In his early London life the great Samuel Johnson aspired to nothing much better. His most sumptuous dinner (at the "Pine Apple" in New Street) cost him only eightpence: "I had a cut of meat for sixpence, and bread for a penny, and gave the waiter a penny"—such is the great moralist's own record.

How good, too, is the description of the feast which David Copperfield prepares for his friend Steerforth, on the recommendation of Mrs. Cripp, the landlady! "A pair of hot roast fowls—from the pastrycook's; a dish of stewed beef, with vegetables—from the pastrycook's; two little corner things, as a raised pie and a dish of kidneys—from the pastrycook's; a tart and a shape of jelly—from the pastrycook's," Mrs. Cripp making herself responsible for the potatoes. Better still is the Micawber banquet, at which Mr. and Mrs. Micawber and Tommy Traddles were the guests. The bill of fare was sweetly simple: "a pair of soles, a small leg of mutton, and a pigeon-pie;" but what mattered, when Mr. Micawber was there with his flow of eloquence, Mrs. Micawber with her feminine grace, and Tommy Traddles with his inexhaustible good humour?

Thackeray, though something of a gastronome, does not take in his dinner scenes the interest that was felt by his great contemporary. Still, what can be better in its way than the bright little sketch in "Esmond," of Addison, and his friends Steele and Harry Esmond, in his apartments in the Haymarket, where a frugal dinner, consisting of a slice of meat and a penny loaf, was despatched by Addison in a very few minutes; after which the three sat and drunk Burgundy—a present from Lord Halifax? Then there is the feast—by way of contrast—given by the Ladies Castlewood at Kensington, when the tables of the dining-room were laid for a great entertainment, and the ladies wore gala dresses, and the gilt chandeliers were gay with twelve wax candles, and among the guests were such men as General Webb, and Steele, and St. John, and the Duke of Hamilton; and we have, too, the memorable dinner at the Sedleys', in Russell Square, at which Becky Sharp angled so skilfully for the retired Anglo-Indian, Joseph Sedley. Mrs. Sedley, as the reader will recollect, had prepared a curry for her son—"just as he liked it"—and in due course a portion of the dish is offered to Rebecca. Though suffering tortures from the cayenne pepper, she professes to relish it; but in an unlucky moment is induced to try a chili. Her agony is redoubled, and forces from her the despairing cry, "Water, for Heaven's sake, water!" However, she carries off her mortification gallantly. "I ought to have remembered," she says, "the pepper which the Princess of Persia put in the cream tarts in 'The Arabian Nights.'"

Let us pass on to the dinner at Queen's Crawley, which introduces us to Sir Pitt Crawley and his household. The sideboard was covered with glistening old plate, old cups, both gold and silver, old salvers, and cruet-stands, like Rundell and Bridge's shop. Everything on the table was in silver too, and two footmen, with red hair and canary-coloured liveries, stood on either side of the board.

"Mr. Crawley said a long grace, and Sir Pitt said Amen, and the great silver dish-covers were removed.

"'What have we for dinner, Betsy?' said the Baronet.

"'Mutton broth, I believe, Sir Pitt,' answered Lady Crawley.

"'Mouton aux navets,' added the butler, gravely (pronounce, if you please, 'moutongonavvy'), 'and the soup is potage de mouton à l'Ecossaise. The side dishes contain pommes-de-terre au naturel and choufleur à l'eau.'

"'Mutton's mutton,' said the Baronet, 'and a devilish good thing too;'" a sentiment in which he unconsciously agreed with Dean Swift.

Among other Thackerayan dinners I must note that at the fine hotel in Cavendish Square, at which George Osborne and his young wife entertained that "preux chevalier," Captain William Dobbin, and Joseph Sedley, prior to the departure of Osborne and Dobbin for the theatre of war in Belgium. That was the dinner at which Dobbin helped Joe to turtle soup, because Amelia, before whom the tureen sent up its perfume, knew so little of its elements that she was on the point of helping Sedley without giving him either calipash or calipee! though such ignorance has always seemed to me incredible on the part of a London merchant's daughter.

We must not omit the dinner given by Colonel Newcome to his strange assortment of guests, Pendennis, Fred Bayham, Mr. Binnie, the Rev. Honeyman, George Warrington, and Barnes Newcome; the dinner at which the Colonel sings his last song, and Clive resents an insult offered to his father by dashing a glass of wine in Barnes Newcome's face. This surely deserves a place among the most memorable dinners in fiction, and Thackeray's graphic description of it has always seemed to me a very successful piece of work.

For a middle-class dinner, I don't know that you can go to any better authority than Theodore Hook, in his "Maxwell." There are some good dinners in Trollope's stories, as in the "Vicar of Bullhampton," "Doctor Thorne," and "The Little House at Allington"; also in James Payn's, in George Meredith's, and in Thomas Hardy's. I recollect one in "Far from the Madding Crowd"—a bucolic dinner—which is admirable in its truth and humour. Of course, dinners are not wanting in Walter

Besant's fictions. But among our Victorian novelists there are few who, as caterers, come up to Lord Beaconsfield. In his "Henrietta Temple," he makes one of his characters observe, in reference to a book she has been reading: "How vivid is the artist's description of a ball or a dinner! everything lives and moves." And another remarks: "I do not despise the talent which describes so vividly a dinner and a ball." Certainly, Lord Beaconsfield possessed that talent. He knew how to individualise his guests; how to keep up a crisp and sparkling conversation among them, without being too witty or too elaborate. In the novel to which I have referred how bright is his sketch of the dinner given by that paragon of money-lenders, Mr. Bond Sharpe—what a happy name!—to Captain Armine, Lord Catchimwhocan—a caricature of a name—Lord Castlefyshe, Count Alcibiades de Mirabel—known in real life as Count D'Orsay—and others! "The dinners at Mr. Bond Sharpe's," we are told, "were dinners which his guests came to eat. Mr. Bond Sharpe had engaged for his club-house the most celebrated of living artists, a gentleman who, it was said, received a thousand a year, whose convenience was studied by a chariot, and his amusement secured by a box at the French play. There was, therefore, at first, little conversation, save criticism on the performances before them, and that chiefly panegyrical; each dish was delicious, each wine exquisite." In fact, as Count Mirabel afterwards declared, "it was a good dinner." He knew how to appreciate one. "I should like to see the man," continued the Count, "who would give me a bad dinner. That would be a 'bêtise,' to ask me to dine, and then give me a bad dinner." The justice of this statement can hardly be disputed. A man is under no obligation to ask another to dine with him; but if he does so, he puts himself under an obligation to dine him well.

The dinner in the sponging-house—I am still referring to "Henrietta Temple"—is an excellent good dinner. To Captain Armine, who is lying there a prisoner for debt, enters Count Mirabel, with helpful hands, and in the best of spirits. He proposes to stop and dine with him. Turning to the attendant, he asks:

"What can we have for dinner, man?"

"Gentleman's dinner's ordered, my lord; quite ready," said the waiter. "Champagne in ice, my lord."

"To be sure; everything that is good. Mon cher Armine, we shall have some fun."

"Yes, my lord," said the waiter, running downstairs. "Dinner for best drawing-room directly; green-pea soup, turbot, beefsteak, roast duck, and boiled chicken, everything that is good, champagne in ice. Two regular nobs."

The dinner now appeared; and the two friends seated themselves.

"Potage admirable!" said Count Mirabel. "The best champagne I ever drank in my life. Mon brave, your health. Finest turbot I ever ate! I will give you some of the fins. Ah! you are glad to see me, my Armine, you are glad to see your friend. Encore champagne! Good Armine, excellent Armine! You must take some bifteak. The most tender bifteak I ever tasted! This is a fine dinner!"

I may add that the general winding-up, the dénouement, of "Henrietta Temple," takes place at a dinner, where the novelist assembles all his characters and makes them happy in their various ways.

Lord Macaulay once counted the number of swoons or fainting-fits that occurred in a novel which had fallen into his hands. In like manner, I have noted the astonishing number of dinners which Lord Beaconsfield has found necessary for working out the plot in "Coningsby."

1. Dinner—or, perhaps, I should say "lunch," with Périgord pie, truffles, etc.—at Monmouth House.

2. A little dinner, "not more than the Muses, with all the guests pretty, and some clever;" also at Monmouth House.

3. A dinner at Beaumanoir.

4. A dinner at Mr. Ormsby's.

5. A dinner—"only eggs and bacon, with cheese and a bottle of perry"—at the "Forest Inn."

6. A dinner at Beaumanoir.

7. A dinner—"plain, but perfect of its kind"—at Millbank.

8. A dinner at Coningsby Castle.

9. Another dinner—with Sidonia and Mr. Ormsby—at the Castle.

10. A third dinner—after Lord Monmouth's wedding—at the Castle.

11. A dinner given by Lord Monmouth at Paris—successful because "his lordship's plates were always hot."

12. Coningsby entertains Sir Joseph Wellinger—"in hall"—at St. John's, Cambridge.

13. A dinner—Oswald Millbank's—at Hellingsby.

14. A dinner at Millbank.

15. A dinner at Grillin's.

16. A dinner of four—Lord Monmouth, Clotilde, Ermengarde, and Coningsby—at Richmond.

17. A dinner at Lord Eskdale's.

18. A dinner at Sidonia's.

It is evident that Lord Beaconsfield believed in dinners, and in the magnitude of their influence, political, social, and moral — an all-round influence — as was natural enough in a man who, in the course of his wonderful career, had dined at so many distinguished tables, and knew how much secret history had been transacted there, and how much wit and wisdom diffused abroad. From Lady Blessington's table to the Queen's, from Gore House to Windsor Castle, he had run through a gamut of dinners—always crescendo, be it noted—and acquired a wide and profound knowledge of the art and mystery of dining.

In all his works the reader will find the same prominence given to the dinner, from "Vivian Grey" (in which the dinner scene between Vivian and the Marquis of Carabas recalls that between Pelham and Guloseton in Lord Lytton's "Pelham") to "Lothair"; and in the latest, as in the earliest, the novelist is always at his best when bringing out the idiosyncrasies of his puppets "round the mahogany tree." How he luxuriates in these banquets! How obvious it is that he does not "despise the talent which describes so vividly a dinner," but finds a pleasure in exercising it!

Here is a characteristic passage from "Lothair":

"It is curious," says the novelist, "that Lothair's first dinner at Brentham was almost his first introduction into refined society. He had been a guest at the occasional banquets of his uncle (Lord Culloden, a Scotch nobleman), but these were festivals of the Picts and Scots, rude plenty and coarse splendour, with noise instead of conversation, and a tumult of obstructive dependents, who impeded, by their want of skill, the very convenience which they were purposed to facilitate. How different the surrounding scene! A table covered with flowers, bright with fanciful crystal, and porcelain that had belonged to sovereigns, who had given a name to its colour or its fame. As for those present, all seemed grace and gentleness, from the radiant daughter of the house to the noiseless attendants that anticipated all his wants and sometimes seemed to suggest his wishes."

In our latter-day novels you come upon nothing so good as this. Their characters seem never to dine, or breakfast, or take any other meal than, perhaps, a five o'clock tea. How should it be otherwise? Their authors are much too busy in analysing the emotions and tracking the ratiocinative methods of their heroes and heroines to find time to analyse the component parts of their meals, and follow them through their first, second, and third courses to the dessert.

Here is one of the "Lothair" dinners at Mrs. Putney Giles's:

"The repast was sumptuous. Lothair thought the dinner would never end, there were so many dishes, and apparently all of the highest pretension. But if his simple tastes had permitted him to take an interest in these details—which they did not—he would have been assisted by a splendid menu of gold and white typography, that was by the side of each guest. The table seemed literally to groan under vases and gigantic flagons; and, in its midst, rose a mountain of silver, on which, apparently, all the cardinal virtues, several of th Pagan deities, and Britannia herself illustrated with many lights a glowing inscription which described the fervent feeling of a grateful client."

To parody Nelson's famous words, this is the true Beaconsfield touch!

Yet another. Lord St. Jerome: "There they saw, in the midst of a chamber hung with green silk and adorned with some fine cabinet pictures, a small round table, bright and glowing. It was a lively dinner —a dinner where there could not be two conversations going on, and where even the silent take their share in the talk by their sympathy."

There are some fifteen or sixteen dinners introduced into "Lothair," and each is touched off in some felicitous descriptive phrases. Further, the reader who wishes to study the novelist's characteristic manner and method will find some capital dinner scenes in "The Young Duke," in "Sibyl," and in "Endymion."

It seems to me that one might properly suggest a new departure in criticism—with Mr. W. D. Howell's permission. Let the novelist, in future, be judged according to the quality and quantity of the dinners which he invents.

MR. WINGROVE'S WAYS.

A STORY IN TWO CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER II.

It was about half-past twelve o'clock on the Wednesday following Harold Wingrove's Saturday to Monday visit to Bath, and the landlady's maid was setting the table for lunch in his rooms in Westminster. They were pretty rooms. The house of which they formed part was old and picturesque, and Harold Wingrove, who prided himself on the possession of artistic taste, had made the most of their possibilities. He had had a window-seat placed in a little oriel window from which could be obtained a glimpse of the river. He had papered and painted everywhere, in undoubtedly artistic colours, and he had draped the folding-doors that led into his bedroom so successfully that, with the aid of a mirror, they presented an illusion of illimitable space. There were, also good pictures, and well-filled bookcases.

The whole effect of the room was one of inviting peace and luxurious tranquillity. Even the preparations for luncheon were unobtrusive, and in no way interfered with this.

The only object not in accordance with it all was the figure of Dick Wingrove, who was pacing backwards and forwards from the oriel window to the bookcase at the other end of the room. His face was flushed, his eyes anxious, and his hair dishevelled; his steps were hasty and erratic, and his right hand played incessantly and restlessly with his moustache. His whole appearance denoted extreme agitation, and he was also very dusty and untidy, and looked as if he had just come from a journey. This was, indeed, the fact, he having arrived in town by the midday train from Bath half an hour earlier.

His unceasing walk up and down the room greatly confused and embarrassed the maid in her efforts to lay the table. She was new to her place, and Dick Wingrove's visits to his brother being few and far between, she was unacquainted with his personal appearance. Since his arrival she had taken various furtive glances at him, and was gradually, but surely, coming to the conclusion that "the gentleman was off his head," which conclusion scarcely tended to lessen her embarrassment.

Of the inconvenience he was causing her, the usually courteous and considerate Dick took, at this moment, not the slightest heed. Suddenly he stopped short in his walk, and confronted her.

"At what time did you say Mr. Harold Wingrove would be in?" he demanded of her, for at least the fourth time.

The bewildered damsel dropped a fork and a wine-glass before she could answer him; then she responded, also for the fourth time, in a very frightened voice, "About one, sir, if you please, sir."

Dick took two more agitated strides, and faced her again. "Is he punctual as a rule? What do you mean by 'about one'?" he enquired, hastily. "Do you mean before one, or after one?"

At this crisis, the maid's lingering doubt and indecision as to whether "the gentleman" was or was not a lunatic, disappeared entirely. She determined to rush downstairs and recommend her mistress to send for a policeman—in readiness to remove Dick if necessary.

"I don't know, sir, I'm sure," she began, falteringly, edging towards the door. Dick, thinking she meant to leave the room without answering him, took a step in her direction. She was just preparing to rise to the occasion with a shriek, when all further complications were averted by the opening of the door, and the entrance of Harold Wingrove himself.

"Dick, old boy!" he exclaimed, in utter amazement, as he caught sight of his brother; "who would have thought of finding you here?"

"Harold, I thought you never would come in."

"You can go, Susan; I'll ring for lunch," Harold Wingrove said to that petrified damsel, who thereupon fled incontinently to retail downstairs the story of "the cracked gentlemen belonging to the first floor."

"What on earth brought you to town, old fellow?" he added. "I needn't say you're very welcome, though; and you're just in time for some food. I'll have lunch up at once. I wonder if that girl has had the sense to say you're here." He moved towards the bell as he spoke; but Dick laid a detaining hand on his arm.

"Don't bother about lunch," he said; "listen to me first. I've come to you because I am at my wits' end."

"What is up?" said Harold, staring at his brother. "Sit down, at any rate."

Dick obeyed him by sinking into a chair.

"It's father!" he said, with a gasp that ended in a groan.

"Well?"

"I give it up, Harold, and that's all about it!"

"What in the world has he done now?"

"He's done—that is, he proposes to do—something worse than anything he has done yet."

"For goodness' sake don't keep me waiting! What is it?"

"He is going to marry through the 'Matrimonial Oracle.'" With this Dick sank heavily back into his chair with a wearied gesture, as if, with the imparting of this startling information, he relinquished and threw on to Harold the responsibility he had borne so long.

Harold Wingrove started out of his chair as if he had been shot.

"An advertisement, Dick! Marry her, Dick!" he cried.

"That, and none other," returned Dick, gaining somewhat in self-possession, as his brother lost his. "An advertisement!"

"The 'Matrimonial Oracle,' Dick!" gasped Harold.

"The 'Matrimonial Oracle,' Harold," returned Dick.

"Great Scott!" said Harold, falling back into his chair as suddenly as he had started out of it. "What on earth is to be done?"

"What is to be done, is precisely what I came to ask you!" said Dick.

"How did you find out?" said Harold, faintly, after a moment's silence.

"How I found out is simple," answered Dick. "On Monday evening, after you were gone, I thought father odd and abstracted; at first I thought that he was missing you, simply. But he seemed absent, and thinking with a good deal of concentration about something, and altogether queer. I didn't bother, though; I knew Miss Margetson was away for a few days, and I didn't see who else he could have found yet. I just waited and kept a sharp look-out on him. He said nothing, though, till Tuesday. Then he mooned about the dining-room, before I went to business in the morning, like a boy who has been stealing apples and doesn't like to tell. I watched. At last he stood still under that picture of mother; and sighed a good deal, and said, chiefly to himself, but of course he meant me to hear: 'A house is a poor sort of place without a mistress. Poor and comfortless! A lady would cheer us all up.'"

"Great Cæsar!" ejaculated Harold.

"I took him up sharply at that," Dick went on, "and asked him what he meant. He fussed and fidgeted, and would say nothing for a long time. At last he said that I must be aware that he had long had thoughts of marrying again, and asked if I didn't think it would be a very desirable thing to do. I said plainly that, on the contrary, I thought it would be the action of a confirmed lunatic, and then I went out and left him to think that over. Of course I thought then that he was only thinking of Miss Margetson, and that I could put that down with a firm hand. But when I got home in the evening, he was reading a paper that he put out of sight like lightning when he saw me. I kept my eyes open and saw where he put it; and I looked at it as soon as he went to dress. It was the 'Matrimonial Oracle.'"

"What was the advertisement?"

"I'm coming to that. He came down, and I could only glance at it then; but when he was gone to bed I took another look. Here it is," said Dick, drawing a paper from his breast-pocket. I got a copy to bring you. Here is the advertisement he had marked. You bet he wrote on Saturday to the advertiser. Now, will you kindly tell me what we'd better do?"

Harold took the paper from his brother and looked at the lines indicated by Dick's finger. The following words met his eyes:

"A lady, possessed of estimable qualities and private means, wishes to correspond with a gentleman with a view to matrimony. Cheerful and domesticated. Widower preferred. Address, A. D., office of this paper."

He read it twice through; the first time with no comprehension of the words he was reading; the second time, all the position rose up before him with startling clearness. He let the paper fall from his hands, and stared helplessly at Dick.

"He'll marry her before we can say Jack Robinson," remarked the latter, cheerfully, from the depths of his arm-chair. There was on his hot, harassed countenance a dawning light and animation—the light and animation arising from the excited sensation consequent on being the bearer of startling news; and side by side with this sensation had arisen the irrepressible instinct to make the news in question as bad as possible.

But Harold was not studying his brother's face, nor did he answer his words.

After a few moments of silence, he had turned on his heel abruptly and began to walk up and down. He was now pacing from the window to the bookcase, with steps that were quite as agitated as Dick's own had been half an hour before.

"She probably isn't even a lady; and he'll believe every blessed word she writes to him. He'll swear she's all he could wish. He'll never listen to a single word against her till we've got a step-mother!" Dick said, cheeringly. "Miss Margetson, or Mrs. Smith-Ridgway even, would have been better," he added.

"Dick, do hold your tongue and let me think," said his elder brother, sternly. Dick retired into the recesses of the arm-chair, and began to contemplate future possibilities and family trials with an imagination stimulated by the gloominess of the situation into absolute inspiration.

Harold continued his walk in silence.

"I've got it!" he exclaimed, suddenly, stopping short and bringing down his hand on the table with a force that made the glasses ring. "I've got it! We'll be even with him. I'll settle him and the whole thing all at once."

"Settle him?" said Dick, raising himself hurriedly. "Settle the whole thing!" he added in an amazed tone.

"Settle the whole thing," said his brother, triumphantly. "Ring for lunch, Dick."

"But how?" asked Dick, reaching mechanically towards the bell with a dazed expression on his face. "You can't, Harold. Goodness knows I've thought over every possible plan!"

"You come and have lunch, and I'll explain," said Harold.

A moment later lunch appeared. The two brothers drew their chairs to the table, and Harold scarcely waited for Susan to set down the plates and depart before he entered into an eager monologue, to which Dick listened with a countenance which grew more expressive moment by moment.

A few days later old Mr. Wingrove, grasping an umbrella and a rug, got slowly and carefully out of a train on to the main arrival platform at Paddington. He stood still when he had alighted, looking round him a little confusedly. A long sojourn in the comparative quiet of the city of Bath had by no means fitted him to cope successfully with the bustle of a London terminus.

However, after a short interval of consideration, during which he was pushed in every direction by unscrupulous porters, at whom he gazed reproachfully and amazedly with his short-sighted blue eyes, he threaded his way through the crowd and contemplated the assembled cabs for a brief space. Then he proceeded to hail a four-wheeler by means of a graceful sweep of his umbrella and rug together. During the gesture, the umbrella, being old, became loosened at the spring and opened itself, thereby adding somewhat to the singular nature of the action. A cabman promptly obeyed the summons with an expressive twinkle in his eye, and Mr. Wingrove, controlling the umbrella with some difficulty, got in and directed the man to drive to a street in Westminster. It was the street in which Harold Wingrove lived, and Mr. Wingrove was on his way to his son's rooms. When he was established inside the cab he took from his pocket two letters: one of these he laid down on the seat beside him, the other he opened and began to read. It was a short note from Harold, and ran as follows:

"My dear Father,—You are extremely welcome to use my rooms for your business interview on Monday. I am sorry that I myself shall be called out of town that morning.—Your affectionate son, "H. Wingrove."

"Most fortunate!" Mr. Wingrove murmured to himself, as he refolded the letter. "I am sorry to miss dear Harold, of course; but in an interview of this kind, his presence would be inconvenient; I may say, highly inconvenient; and even the possibility of his appearance would have been a little trying. It is really most fortunate." He placed the letter carefully in its envelope, and put it back in his pocket. "It is a relief, too," he continued, as he did so, "to feel that Dick is well out of the way. He knows nothing of this—nothing. I did not even mention that I was going to Harold's rooms when I told him I was suddenly called to town. Caution is always desirable—always!" said Mr. Wingrove, chuckling with delight at his own acuteness.

But that chuckle might have ended rather abruptly, could Mr. Wingrove have looked through the back of the four-wheeler and seen, at a little distance behind him, a hansom containing the person of his son Dick, who was at that very moment holding converse with his driver to the effect that the latter was to keep the four-wheeler in sight.

Mr. Wingrove now took up the other letter—the one he had placed on the seat—and proceeded to open it. The writing was a woman's, a pretty, neat, woman's hand.

"I will consent to give you an interview," the writer said. "I will be at the address you mention at three o'clock on Monday afternoon."

"Capital!" Mr. Wingrove said, aloud, as he refolded this letter and placed it, not loose in his pocket, but carefully in his pocket-book. "Capital! I really have managed this very well! Now it only remains to see the lady herself. And if all goes well, and we arrange it satisfactorily, I feel sure that she will be a charming wife—most charming. Let me glance at the advertisement again." He drew from the same pocket-book a slip of paper cut from the "Matrimonial Oracle" of the preceding Thursday. The slip contained an advertisement in these words: "A young lady of most prepossessing appearance and engaging manners is desirous of corresponding with a gentleman with a view to matrimony. Cultured, refined, and accomplished. Address, M. B., office of this paper."

"Far better than the first," he said to himself, in a tone of great satisfaction. "Evidently pleasing and attractive, while the other individual, A. D., was certainly not so much so. It is most fortunate that this caught my eye before I had gone too far with A. D. I am quite anxious to see the young lady, I am, indeed. She describes herself so modestly and so prettily in her letter, too. Oh, here we are!" as the four-wheeler drew up with a jerk at the door of Harold's lodgings.

Mr. Wingrove collected the umbrella and rug and dismounted with care. Then he grasped his personal property in his left hand and extracted a handful of loose coin from his pocket with the other.

"What is your fare from Paddington, my good man?" he said, approaching the cabman.

That functionary, to whom a hard life had early taught the lesson that the advent of gentlemen like Mr. Wingrove resembled angels' visits, rose promptly to the occasion.

"Seven-and-six, sir, if you please," he said.

"Seven-and-sixpence," repeated Mr. Wingrove, "that is rather an expensive fare. Perhaps," he soliloquised, thoughtfully, "an omnibus might have been cheaper, or the Underground Railway—but both are dangerous, very dangerous; and one does not grudge expense on an occasion like the present."

He thereupon placed the whole amount in the man's hand, and entered the house, the door of which was opened by the maid who had been so alarmed at Dick.

"Will you walk up to Mr. Wingrove's room, sir?" she said. The old gentleman followed her with the glow of satisfaction at his own excellent management growing stronger and stronger within him.

Arrived in Harold's room, he took out his watch. "Five minutes to three!" he said, "excellent time. She said three. Let me find her letter again, and hold it in my hand. It will simplify matters."

He took two or three impatient little turns about the room to while away the five minutes. Precisely as Big Ben struck, however, the door opened. It opened to admit a girl—a very pretty girl. She was very prettily dressed too; and her well-made frock and picturesque hat seemed to set off every line of her slender figure and sweet face. She entered with a quiet, graceful movement, and Mr. Wingrove rose hurriedly to meet her, his satisfaction growing by leaps and bounds to exultation. This was, he told himself, by far the cleverest thing he had ever done in his life. He did not observe, in his elated pre-occupation, that the girl had left slightly ajar the door by which she entered.

"My dear young lady," he began excitedly. The girl made him a gracious little bow in answer. He pulled out a chair from the table, and she seated herself with a word or two of thanks. She smiled as she spoke, and her smile made her prettier still, Mr. Wingrove thought. "Our letters have settled the preliminaries," he went on, quickly. "I need scarcely allude to them again. But may I ask you, my dear madam, to inspect me personally as much as you wish? We are each taking a momentous step, and I should wish you to take a calm and unhurried inspection of me. Allow me to walk to the window." So saying he rose, and the girl rose also. Her pretty face was crimson, and her lips were pressed very tightly together. At this moment a kind of suppressed choke might have been heard outside the door. Mr. Wingrove turned round slowly, that the girl might survey him from every possible point of view. Her eyes were fixed on him, gravely; but her face grew yet more crimson, and she raised her handkerchief to her lips as if to conceal the fact that they were trembling. Mr. Wingrove noted these signs of confusion, and said, mentally: "Delightful traits—shyness and modesty! Will you permit me to resume my seat?" he added aloud. "Have you sufficiently noted my personal appearance?"

"Yes, thank you," she said, in a low tone.

"May I venture to hope that you find it such as you can like?"

"Yes," she returned in a still lower tone, her handkerchief still over her lips.

Mr. Wingrove's face expressed intense contentment.

"I will not presume to tell you what I think of yours," he said; "it would be impertinent. I have placed before you, madam, by letter, all the details of my position. It only now remains to ask the final question: Will you marry me?"

The girl's face was now quite composed, save for her eyes, which were dancing with laughter.

"No," she said, in a louder voice. "I am greatly obliged for the honour you do me, sir; but I cannot marry you."

Before Mr. Wingrove could express himself in any way, the door was pushed hastily open, and Harold Wingrove entered, followed immediately by his brother Dick. At the sight of his son, Mr. Wingrove's countenance, which had taken a shade of blue at the girl's words, turned a vivid green.

"Harold!" he stammered, "I thought you were going out of town to-day."

"So I was, father," returned his son, pleasantly. "I have been and come back. I went to fetch—your correspondent," putting his hand on the girl's shoulder as he spoke. "I am sorry, sir; but she certainly cannot marry you. She is engaged to marry me."

Mr. Wingrove sunk heavily and helplessly into an easy-chair beside him.

"I do not understand," he said. "This lady met me by appointment. What have you to do with it?"

"You answered last week an advertisement in the 'Matrimonial Oracle,' signed A. D.," said Harold Wingrove, tersely.

"I did," came in a subdued voice from the easy-chair.

"You subsequently broke off negotiations with A. D., and answered another advertisement from a lady, signed M. B.?"

"I did," repeated the poor gentleman, feeling as if some utterly supernatural misfortune had suddenly descended on his incomparable plans.

"Dick," said Harold, turning to his brother, "you tell him the rest."

Dick accordingly advanced towards his father. Mr. Wingrove had not realised the presence of his younger son in his agitation hitherto. But as he did so, he felt that it was only one more in the overwhelming concatenation of circumstances which were crushing him to the ground.

"Father," began Dick, with a cheerful air, "you know that I've spoken to you a hundred times about the way you flirt."

Mr. Wingrove's mouth opened as if to speak; but apparently no adequate words came to him, for he shut it again silently, and Dick pursued, unconscious of the effort: "You see, you're always so—interested in young women; and when I knew you had seen and marked A. D.'s advertisement in the 'Matrimonial Oracle' I made sure you would answer it, and probably interview her, and goodness only knew what sort of woman you might get hold of, and what would happen then. So I came up to Harold, and we concocted another advertisement, more attractive than A. D.'s; and I got the paper with it in, marked our advertisement, and left it about, hoping you'd answer it and let A. D. go. You did. Harold got Marion to correspond with you. She wrote the letters at Harold's dictation, and he brought her here this morning to keep her appointment. That's all, sir, I believe."

Mr. Wingrove rose very slowly from his chair.

"Harold," he said, looking around for his hat, and not looking at his sons or his correspondent, "I shall be obliged if you will provide me with a 'Bradshaw.'"

But Harold found himself quite unable to provide a "Bradshaw"; and how it happened Mr. Wingrove never knew, but half an hour later he found himself partaking of tea, poured out for him by M. B., with a dawning consciousness coming to him that a pretty young woman was quite as charming, and far less likely to be embarrassing, when viewed in the light of a daughter-in-law than in that of a possible wife. And, to Dick's great relief, he has never seemed likely to change his opinion since.

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By ESMÈ STUART.

Author of "A Faire Damsell," "Joan Vellacot," "Kestell of Greystone," etc. etc.

CHAPTER XXIII. MRS. JOHNSON'S NOVEL.

IN after times Grace and Sibyl could remember but little of that journey to Germany. It seemed to them at the time as if they had suddenly been launched into some great whirlpool which swung them round and round in its mad course, and from the terrific power of which they were powerless to escape.

They had each other, and that was apparently the only connection with the old life that remained to them, their only anchor of safety. Sibyl nestled up close to her sister, and for a long time cried bitterly, much to the annoyance of Mrs. Johnson, who, having offered a few common-place words of sympathy, relapsed into silence, and secretly abused Mrs. Gordon, who had laid this unpleasant charge upon her, and then finally went to sleep. When Sibyl was tired of weeping, she too fell asleep, and Grace alone was left watching.

She was beginning to learn that she must find strength for herself and for Sibyl; that she must be her sister's guide and support. The knowledge that there was no one to help her and no one to turn to stood her instead of experience, as it has done before now to many a struggling and isolated young creature in the world.

Then, after the train journey, followed a sea passage, uneventful save that poor Sibyl was terribly nervous. She had never even seen the sea, and this new sensation of having nothing betweeen her and the water but wooden planks filled her with terror. Mrs. Johnson retired to her berth as happily as she would have done to her bed, and took very little notice of what she called to herself her "troublesome charges;" for Sibyl had relapsed into a sullen silence, differing much from her manner at Victoria Station, and now she no longer cared to be agreeable to her escort, whom she considered to be part of the terrible deceit which had been practised upon her.

But Grace was always near to her during that long night, sitting by her and holding her hand till the younger girl fell asleep, and woke up refreshed and feeling less frightened. Then the two crept up on deck, no one forbidding them, and though somewhat frightened at being the only ladies, they could not help enjoying this novel sight of the dancing waves till the cold drove them back to the stuffy cabin.

How tired they were when, the passage being accomplished, there was a further weary train journey, this time in a carriage filled with foreigners! Grace and Sibyl listened to the strange jargon, as it seemed to them, and felt more lonely than ever. Mrs. Johnson buried herself in a novel, and the foreigners—or so Grace thought—stared rudely at Sibyl. The great cathedral at Cologne was the only thing they remembered distinctly, for they slept in that old city, and spent a morning wandering about its famous minster.

Mrs. Johnson was too tired to move out before it was necessary; but she told the girls that they might go to the cathedral, though nowhere else, of course, without her. She did not wish to be unkind, but these strangers were a burden to her; so she settled that, as soon as Fribourg should be reached, she should not keep them long with her at the hotel. She herself had come to see her son, a boy at school, who would, of course, pass his short Christmas holiday with her.

Cologne Cathedral has charmed many less unsophisticated people than these two forlorn maidens; to them it appeared almost too beautiful to take in; and when seated there, safe from Mrs. Johnson's presence, Sibyl begged Grace to tell her again all she knew and all that Nan had explained to her. Grace never treated Sibyl as a child; perhaps Nan had done this too much, but to Grace she was as herself, only far more precious, and to be loved and cared for above everything else on earth. It was a strange picture these two English girls made, both so young, so pretty, left, as it were, to struggle through life as best they might, deprived of the only friend who would have loved and shielded them had she been able to be with them.

"Oh, Grace, Grace, it is a very, very cruel thing. I don't seem to understand it; only I shall always hate Mrs. Gordon. What business has she to send us into this strange country, and to drive us from our home? Why did not father——"

"Oh, hush, darling; remember, he is dead. Besides, Sibyl, I have been thinking, thinking so much all night; and I remember father's anxiety to write something that last night. I never told you about that; but now I feel sure he wished to make something right for us, he wanted to leave his written word about something which was very particular; it was for us, I know it was, and yet he could not do it, he could not even hold the pen. You see his illness was so sudden. We must not blame him."

"But all our life has been a wrong," said Sibyl, passionately, for the young take very decided views of right and wrong, and her present one seemed to harden the girl's heart. The world was against her; yet, truly enough, she felt more guiltless than the world, and turned round fiercely against her enemy. By nature Grace was more gentle, more humble, and more able to accept the fate that Heaven sent her. She did not feel it less acutely; but that which made Sibyl rebellious made her calm and patient. She accepted the must with the heroic courage that some women can show, and do show every day of their lives.

"And then, Grace," Sibyl continued, "Nan should not have left us; she might have——"

But on this subject Grace was strong.

"You must not say a word against Nan. I know you do not mean it, but I can't bear even you to say one word that might hurt her if she were here. We shall never understand what Nan has done for us, I believe."

Sibyl was willing to repent her hasty words about Nan; but soon she burst forth again.

"Look here, Grace, they may think and do what they like. If they will give us nothing of what is our own — I don't care who says the contrary—I will show them we can live without help. Grace, you must not accept one favour from that Mrs. Gordon, not one; promise me."

"But, Sibyl, what can we do at present? We can't speak German, and we can't keep ourselves. Who would have anything to do with two strangers? No, no, indeed, we must do as she likes now, and when we get used to the place and can speak a little, then we will tell her that we want no more help. But till then, Sibyl, darling, you must be patient."

Far away from Cologne Cathedral and from these two orphans, other girls were rejoicing at the possession of a new fortune, little knowing or guessing what a tumult of unhappy thoughts was being stirred in the hearts of those whose home they were going to occupy. Even Frances Gordon herself had but a shadowy idea of these two unfortunate girls whose misery was going to make her happiness.

Before they left the cathedral, Grace gently drew her sister into an out-of-the-way corner, and whispered:

"Won't you say your prayers here, Sibyl?"

Sibyl shook her head.

"I can't say any prayers. I can't, Grace; I am not like you."

Grace was not satisfied.

"Pray for the future, dear Sibyl; that will be better, I am sure it will. And then think of Nan; she said she was going to make a home for us, and we will work hard, too, to help her. Some day we shall all live together and be so happy."

The idea of happiness made Sibyl cry again. So she knelt by her sister's side to hide her tears; but whether she prayed or whether her utter misery was all she could think of, who can tell?

Once more there was Mrs. Johnson's company, and the train, and the accompaniment of the German gutturals. The sisters relapsed into silence, Mrs. Johnson into her novel, and the rest of the journey was a blank, till, cold, tired, and weary, they reached the Baden town of Fribourg, so pretty in summer, so cold and cheerless in winter. The hotel was, however, fairly comfortable. Mrs. Johnson had ordered her rooms beforehand; these were well heated with stoves, and though cheerless-looking to English eyes, a good bed seemed a luxury to the sisters after that long journey. For the first time England and home seemed far away, so far that they felt only a miracle could ever take them back again. They were exiles, and Sibyl, as she nestled near to her sister, murmured before she fell asleep:

"Gracie, Gracie, I feel quite changed. I don't think I am the same Sibyl that I was last summer. If it wasn't for you I feel as if I should try to run away—far away; to run away from myself, if that were possible."

Grace, too, felt the same, only she knew she was no longer young, and she knew what the world meant now—that world with which some happy souls associate all their lives, pleasure, and smiles, and love; but which others see in a different light, and which they embody as a sad forlorn woman, with sorrow and sin written on her features. Without having soiled her hands by one touch of that sin and misery, Grace yet knew the meaning of it; it had been learnt in one day.

Knowledge of evil is far more terrible when the knowledge is forced upon those who would fain not know of it, and when the very innocency of their souls makes them shrink from even acknowledging that they know it.

The next morning Mrs. Johnson was all bustle and eagerness. She told the girls to "stay indoors and amuse themselves"; which command they found it difficult to carry out, considering that they were shut up in a room with no books; that their travelling boxes were unopened; and that the view from the window was merely a row of bare lime-trees. The German waiter, whilst he cleared away the morning coffee, tried hard to enter into conversation; but after "good morning, leddies," his English failed him, and he relapsed into broad smiles, which meant much but conveyed little to the sisters except rude curiosity; for every now and then he looked at Sibyl as if she were some strange creature he had not seen before. That was, indeed, the worst of the situation, only they had neither of them yet realised it. Sibyl was so extremely pretty, nay, beautiful, and was, moreover, so unconscious of her beauty, that she attracted attention wherever she went. If only they had both of them been ugly what a world of trouble they would have avoided! Sibyl at last, tired of staring at the limes, suddenly hit upon Mrs. Johnson's novel, took it up, and was soon immersed in it before Grace, who had employed herself by a little necessary sewing, found out what her sister was doing.

"How quiet you are, Sibyl. I do believe you have found Mrs. Johnson's book."

"Yes," murmured Sibyl, her eyes racing on quickly over the close print.

"Is it a nice book?" asked Grace. "Don't read it if it isn't, dear."

"What is a nice book?" asked Sibyl, looking up almost crossly, with flushed cheeks.

"You know there were some books Nan said were not worth reading, and should not have been written."

"We must know about things and people, Grace, if we are to be left alone in this horrid place; besides, this is a very interesting book;" and the girl bent eagerly over the volume, whilst Grace sighed a little and lost herself in a maze of thought, wondering how she could influence Sibyl. Even in the first little question of a book Sibyl would now take her own way, though some instinct told the elder sister that her sister had never looked like that over a book at home; that her face had never flushed; that she had never read in that eager manner such books as Nan provided.

"Oh, Nan," she sighed in her heart, "I cannot do as you did. I cannot be trusted with dear Sibyl because I have not the power of your influence."

But she made one more effort.

"What is that book about, Sibyl? Tell me. It is dull to work in silence."

Sibyl's heart smote her; but the volume was so entrancing. It told in graphic words the sorrows of a girl who had married a baronet for money. When the deed was done, she found out that she really loved the parish doctor. In spite of herself, she could not help meeting him and bemoaning her fate. Love was stronger than duty, and she began to hate her husband, who naturally became jealous, and, not without reason, rather harsh. Lastly, one day he came upon his wife talking earnestly to the doctor, and——

It was at this point that Grace made her second attempt at getting the volume away from her sister. It was a bad book, not because it dealt with sin, but because it sympathised with it; handled the evil lightly, almost tenderly, and made passion an excuse for forgetfulness of duty. The idea of sin was swallowed up in pity for the sinner, and passion excused every shortcoming.

"It's about a girl who was in love with a poor man," was Sibyl's truthful account of the story. "But you can read it, Grace, directly I've done it. One can't tell the point of a whole long story. It's too bad of Mrs. Johnson to leave us shut up in this stupid room, isn't it?" And without waiting for an answer Sibyl was once more perusing the course of false love.

If Nan had been there, the volume would have been taken out of her hands and thrown into the fire; but what could Grace do? She could not anger her only sister, her Sibyl, who was her all, and the only link with happiness. Besides, though Grace did possess some influence, she was but a year older; and the first draught of knowledge of good and evil is to some minds very exciting and very powerful. Sibyl would have rebelled had Grace tried to stop her mid-way; but Grace felt this, and though she was sorely disappointed and helpless, she did not try to attempt what would have been useless. So the golden head bent eagerly over the novel, Germany and Fribourg disappeared and were as nothing, for Sibyl's spirit was in a country village where lived the characters of the work.

CHAPTER XXIV. OFF HER HANDS.

MRS. JOHNSON, having left mental poison behind her, careless whether the young girls imbibed it or no, hastened away about her own affairs.

First she had her boy to see; and to her great satisfaction she found out that he could get leave to come and stay with her the next day. Very delightful news, of course, for the mother; but then she must at once get rid of her visitors. So, leaving her dear Richard, she hurried off to Fräulein Storme's Establishment for Young Ladies. Mrs. Johnson had previously taken care to provide herself with Mrs. Gordon's letter, and meant to use her persuasive powers so as to get the girls taken in at once in some capacity or other. Not that she had much doubt of success, as the offer of the charge of the two sisters was to be accompanied with the offer of good English gold.

Mrs. Johnson already knew Unterberg, but not being of a sentimental turn of mind, she did not pause to look about her, or note the various changes which had taken place in the old town. Fräulein Storme's house, or, rather, her flat, was situated in one of the houses near the Platz. There was a large front-door opening on to a central courtyard, and a dreary, grand central staircase up to the second storey. Here was the Fräulein's establishment, and here, too, to-day she was in person. Mrs. Johnson was ushered into a drawing-room, very warm, very tidy, and very devoid of comfortable chairs. Through the opening doors she heard a clatter of voices—German voices, and then the Fräulein entered in person. She was a woman of middle age, flat-faced, with eyes à fleur de tête—there is no English expression for this—a low, broad forehead, with hair rolled and brushed off, and small eyes—made much more presentable by the use of spectacles—a good straight nose, and a heavy jaw. The Fräulein talked English very badly; but her natural intelligence made up for her ignorance. Mrs. Johnson was not at all business-like, so that between them it took a long time before the Fräulein arrived at the understanding that there were two young English girls who required her motherly care and her valuable instruction, that they were at this moment in the town, and that the Fräulein was required to take charge of them at once.

"Ach! that is difficult," said the Fräulein. "I have not two bets; a little one might do till next week, then the other young ladies go off to their parents to holiday-make, and then the young dames might find room. My parents will be coming here for the Christmas feast—that will amuse them. Then they can study——"

"And your terms?"

The Fräulein meditated a little, added a third more to the usual price as they were English, and then named the sum total in German money. This took Mrs. Johnson quite ten minutes to reduce to the coinage of her own realm; and lastly she assented without bargaining, for fear lest the Fräulein should refuse to take the girls at once under her German wing.

"I have brought you a letter from their friend, who will pay all for them; she will explain everything about them." And Mrs. Johnson lowered her voice and continued, mysteriously: "Poor girls! they are not quite like other girls."

"Ach! so?" asked the Fräulein, tapping her forehead.

"No, no; but their father was a sad, wild fellow, and, in fact, their mother was——"

The Fräulein understood, and nodded quite complacently. She was not at all shocked.

"Ach, so? That is often so."

"Oh, no," said Mrs. Johnson, in a sad voice, her English ideas of propriety rising quickly to the surface; "this is a very sad case—very extraordinary. They will be called in future Grace and Sibyl Evans. You understand me, Fräulein?"

Certainly the Fräulein understood, she was so intelligent!

"Grace and Sibyl Evans. A goot name and very pretty. They will soon be happy here. How many years have they?"

"That is the worst part of it. The eldest is, I think, seventeen or eighteen, and the other a year younger."

The Fräulein threw up her hands.

"But then they will not be long in my establishment; they are grown up tall."

Evidently the Fräulein did not yet quite understand; and once more Mrs. Johnson patiently tried to make matters clear to the Teutonic mind—which values exactness—not blessing Mrs. Gordon for having given her this difficult task to perform unaided by a knowledge of German.

"You must teach them German thoroughly, and then you must find them some teaching or useful employment by which they can earn a little money. Mrs. Gordon will be pleased when they can do something for themselves. She gives this money out of her own pocket."

"Teaching is very badly paid," said the Fräulein. Then, suddenly brightening up, she said: "But listen, madam. I will keep them in my establishment, and they can teach the English tongue. Very goot; and then I will remit what they are worth to the kind lady, their friend; but it will be very leetle for several years. Ach! very leetle."

"Very well; now we understand each other," said Mrs. Johnson, with a sigh of relief. "I shall be staying here for three weeks, so, if anything happens—I mean, if you are in any difficulty—you can appeal to me; but otherwise, please remember that I am not related to them in any way—only a friend of Mrs. Gordon, who is defraying all their expenses."

"I understand quite rightly," said Fräulein Storme, smiling and nodding, delighted at the idea of her good English pupils who would teach and converse in their own tongue, whilst they paid for picking up German. The news would get about the town and new German pupils would flock in. Both ladies quite understood, and when they had nodded energetically at each other to certify this fact, and had loaded each other with compliments, Mrs. Johnson took leave.

It was twelve o'clock before she had completed all these arrangements. Christian charity could go no further, and it was very fortunate for the sisters that they had such a good person to look after them. Then at last Mrs. Johnson hurried back to the hotel, and found Grace gazing sadly out of the window, whilst Sibyl lay curled up in a velvet-covered chair reading the novel. She had by this time reached the last few pages, and Mrs. Johnson for a moment felt a pang of remorse at having left the volume within reach of this mere child.

"My dear Sibyl! What, are you reading that stupid book? Here, child, give it to me. It is not meant for young people."

Mrs. Johnson was not given to moral reflections, except of the broadest and most palpable kind, and so she did not consider that books which were not fit for young or old could only exist because she and others like her created a demand for them.

Sibyl reluctantly gave up the book. She knew she ought not to have read it; but the forbidden fruit had tasted nice, and it had served to make the dreary moments go faster. For the time being she had forgotten her miseries. Now, this amusement being gone, the weariness and the disgust came back doubly strong. Why was she not living in that delightful world of riches and of passionate love? Had she found herself there she would, of course, have chosen the good and left the evil; she would have risen above low motives and proved that one can be good as well as rich, and that admiration need not spoil the character.

"What do you think, girls?" said Mrs. Johnson, in her most cheerful manner—that manner which the "girls" had not seen since Victoria Station—"I have found the most delightful school for you. I have often heard of Fräulein Storme's intelligence and amiability. She is most anxious to welcome you to her charming establishment; and I shall write and tell your kind friend, Mrs. Gordon, how happily all is arranged. I thought it was a pity that you should unpack your boxes here for so short a time, my dear girls. You are to go at once to Linden Strasse—such a charming flat, with a balcony outside! In the summer you will see the soldiers pass and hear the beautiful German band."

These future pleasures did not impress the sisters much, considering that sitting on a balcony was impossible for a long time to come, and a band and soldiers at present unknown excitements. However, no place could be more cheerless than this hotel, so neither made any objection to the news; only Sibyl murmured that she hated schools of all kinds, and that German was an extremely ugly language.

"So it sounds to us, dear, because we don't understand it; but, by-and-by, when you will be able to enter into conversation with learned people you will be charmed, I expect. The Germans are always held up to us as a most intelligent nation. Now, Grace, let us ring for dinner. I dare say they will bring us preserved fruit with our meat. That will seem so strange. I am really getting used to it, though this is only my second visit. Isn't it strange how quickly one gets accustomed to—to a new state of existence?"

"Some people do," said Sibyl, tartly; she had been reading the sharp sayings of the heroine in the novel, and felt inclined to imitate them.

Wishing, however, to speed the parting guests, Mrs. Johnson was most gracious, laughed at Sibyl's repartee, tried to make a joke with the waiter—who still grinned, and still could not in the least take in the English meaning; and in this manner Mrs. Johnson tried to make the first German dinner go off with éclat, though now and then she calculated how much she must charge Mrs. Gordon for the extra expense she had incurred for the orphans. Mrs. Johnson must not be judged harshly; she was not particularly well off, and "Richard was a great expense."

A carriage was hired directly the dinner was over, the girls' boxes were placed on it, and Mrs. Johnson accompanied them to their new home. The lady's heart became lighter the nearer they approached Linden Strasse, and then in five minutes more she had introduced them to Fräulein Storme, who smiled and looked more intelligent than ever; also much astonished when she beheld two tall maidens. The youngest, with her golden hair and refined features, at once entranced the German lady.

"Ein wunderschöne Bild," she murmured; "one might fancy an Undine, or what not, some spirit maiden—a very enchantress."

Happily Sibyl did not hear all these epithets; and Grace, with her sweet, gentle manner, was the one who came forward to shake hands and appear to listen to the lady's voluble conversation.

"So, we shall be great friends, and we shall make you very clever; ah, yes, certainly; but the young dames must forgive the small accommodation possible at present;" and so on, till at last the sisters found themselves saying good-bye to Mrs. Johnson, now their remaining link with England, and they were shown into a small room, where their boxes took up nearly all the available space.

"What a horrid little hole!" cried Sibyl, bursting into tears, when they were left alone, for then came the remembrance of the dear old roomy chambers of the Warren. "Oh, Gracie, I shall die! I know I shall! This tiny room and dreadful house, after our——"

"Not ours now, Sibyl," sighed Grace. "We must forget all that."

"But I can't, I never shall," said Sibyl, impatiently; and for an answer Grace put her arms round her sister, and laid her cheek against hers, whispering:

"My Sibyl, you have me."

And Sibyl was touched, and a choking feeling of remorse rose up in her heart, causing her to return the caress, as she exclaimed:

"Grace, Grace, I am a horrid wretch—not like you, dear; but I am feeling that my heart is becoming all stone—quite hard and don't-carish—as if I didn't mind what happened to us; and then there comes just the opposite feeling, and I am certain that I shall never bear it. You can't understand all this, or you couldn't look so good and calm."

Grace would not answer this remark, because she felt that she must not dissect her thoughts and feelings. One of them must remain calm and strong.

A FRENCH "GRIFFITH GAUNT."

It was recently pointed out in an essay in the "Nineteenth Century" that there was a slight but undoubted tendency on the part of real life to follow the lines suggested by fiction. If the writer had maintained merely that the conduct of human beings is frequently influenced by the latest novel, his statement would have been a truism; but he did not limit himself to this obvious fact. His theory was that circumstances—their imagination exhausted, perhaps, by the extremely severe strain thrown upon it during the last four thousand years—had thankfully adopted the plot of the most fashionable romance as a guide to their order and arrangement.

The idea was ingenious; but even the ingenuity of the writer failed to suggest that events, evidently copied from a notable novel of the nineteenth century, could have forestalled their prototype by taking place nearly two hundred years earlier. Yet this difficult task was performed by the help of a little group of actors in France, at the close of the seventeenth century.

It was about the year 1687 that Louis de la Pivardiere, Sieur du Bouchet, found himself in the position proverbially occupied by younger sons. His income was small, and his descent—for his family was a very ancient one—cut him off from all professions but one, and in that he was more likely to spend than to make a fortune—the gentlemen who joined the camp being expected to keep up something of the feudal show of their ancestors. There remained to him only marriage as a possible resource, and he proceeded to make as good a bargain as he could of himself and his long pedigree.

Amongst his acquaintances was a widow of thirty-five, the mother of five children, and in possession of a landed estate of a certain fair amount. The lady, without being pretty, was attractive and pleasant. The bargain was soon struck, and, at the close of the year, the wedding took place. Their married life, in spite of this unromantic prologue, might have been as happy as the average had it not been for the difference of temperament between husband and wife. The lady loved society, the husband longed for solitude. Each cared too little for the other to sacrifice personal inclination, and the result was a series of disputes and quarrels, in which both were equally to blame and equally unwilling to give way. They parted with mutual feelings of relief when, in 1689, La Pivardiere was summoned to serve in the army as Seigneur de Narbonne, his wife's estate.

During his absence the lady was able to indulge her taste for society, and the château was full of life and gaiety. Amongst her most frequent visitors was an ecclesiastic—the Prieur de Miseray—who was the head of a small religious foundation about a mile from her house, and who, as her private chaplain, paid weekly visits to conduct services in the chapel. His frequent visits, his attentions to Madame de la Pivardiere during her husband's absence, and her evident pleasure in his society, aroused suspicions, and scandal soon began to busy itself with the relations between them. Dark whispers reached the ear of the husband on one of his visits home, and found a ready hearing, but he does not appear to have remonstrated with his wife.

His military duties—for he had obtained a lieutenancy in a regiment of dragoons—afforded him an excuse for long and frequent journeys from home, which he spent in wandering from town to town with a keen relish of the unconventional and unrestricted life he thus enjoyed.

At Auxerre, however, his wanderings suddenly ceased, for, whilst strolling on the ramparts idly watching the games of a group of girls, he was suddenly attracted by the beauty and charm of one of them. She was his inferior in social position, for her father had held, during his lifetime, some small post in the courts of justice, and her mother kept a little inn in the town; but there seems to have been some justification for his sudden passion. The girl was beautiful enough to win commendation many years later from so good a judge as Louis the Fourteenth himself; and her subsequent history shows that she was capable of high purpose and unselfish action.

It was easy to discover her home, and to hire a room for himself in the humble inn. There he stayed for many days, unable to tear himself away, and passing every day more completely under the charm of his enchantress. In order to prevent the suspicion which would naturally have arisen from the presence of a man of his position amidst such surroundings, he called himself Louis du Bouchet, and gave no hint of his rank or his past history.

Whatever designs he may have formed upon the happiness of the innkeeper's daughter—and he was not a scrupulous man—recoiled upon himself. He became passionately attached to her, and finally made up his mind to marry her. His hesitation was doubtless long and painful, for bigamy was at that date a capital offence in France.

He seems to have been far more happy than he deserved, and to have settled down with absolute content to a station in life far below his original one. He accepted the post of door-keeper formerly held by his wife's father, and helped to carry on the business of the inn, living in complete harmony with his surroundings. He did not, however, entirely neglect his first wife, as he made annual journeys to the Château de Nerbonne, where Madame de la Pivardiere was only too glad to give him what he asked, and so get rid of him. His pretext on each occasion for the hurry of his visit was the necessity for speedily rejoining his regiment; and this excuse served his purpose for two or three years. Vague rumours, however, began slowly to find their way to Nerbonne, and before his arrival in the year 1697 his wife knew enough of the truth to rouse a passion of indignation in her heart. The threatened storm was not likely to be averted by the fact that the husband—unconscious of her discoveries—heard on his journey home much fresh scandal concerning the Prieur de Miseray and Madame de la Pivardiere. The old jealousy flamed up again, and he was heard to say that either he would have the priest's life or the priest should have his—words remembered when later events lent them a cruel significance.

It was a Saint's day in August when he reached his wife's country house. It was full of guests, for many of the neighbouring gentry had attended High Mass in the chapel, and had remained to dinner. Amongst these was the Prieur de Miseray himself, who had just conducted the celebration. He was most prominent amongst those who hurried to congratulate the Sieur de la Pivardiere on his return. Indeed, all the guests did their best by their enthusiasm to cover the marked coldness of the wife, who said little and looked darkly on her husband. Her pride was deeply wounded, and there was no love in her heart to urge excuses for the culprit.

Her manner was too remarkable to escape notice; and one guest—a woman, of course—was foolish and ill-bred enough to remark upon it.

"Is this the way you welcome a husband who has been so long absent?" she asked.

The mistress of the house took no notice of the question; but the master replied, as he took his place at the table:

"I am her husband, but I am not her friend;" a remark fully calculated to destroy whatever remnant of sociability had survived his wife's coldness.

The party broke up in confusion, and the couple—each injured, and each deeply resentful—were left to their enviable tête-à-tête.

It will not have required so much of the history of Louis de la Pivadiere du Bouchet to show how boldly he had followed the example of Griffith Gaunt, in the book of that name to be published one hundred and seventy years later by Mr. Charles Reade. The marriage with a rich wife; the jealousy of a priest; and the bigamous marriage with a girl inferior in station but superior in character, are adventures common to both. They both return home to find a brilliant party assembled; and both disperse it with a degree of ill-breeding unworthy alike of the Cumberland squire and the French officer.

But the audacity of La Pivardiere did not end here, and he carried his imitation of Griffith Gaunt to a point which nearly ended in the destruction of four innocent persons.

His interview with his wife did not last long. The reproaches exchanged were equally bitter and equally contemptuous; but even supposing that their moral guilt was equal—of which there is no proof—his position was obviously far more critical than hers, and she used her advantage unsparingly. She threatened him with the law, and when words ran high between them, she spoke of having his life as a revenge for his wrong-doing; and the words overheard were supposed to refer to an expiation very different from the legal punishment with which she intended to terrify him. When he left her and retired to his bedroom he had almost forgotten his wrongs in the terror of his probable doom; and he must have kept a terrible watch through the night as he thought of her vengeance and saw the gallows looming close at hand.

It was in the first faint dawn of morning that these unpleasant thoughts were interrupted by one of his wife's maids—a certain Catherine Le Moine—who came to his room and warned him that if he stayed in the castle he would be arrested next morning. Her words coincided only too well with his wife's threats and his own fears. Accordingly he crept silently out of the castle, and prepared to depart. His horse had lamed itself the day before; he, therefore, left it in the stable, together with his pistols and his cloak, and started for Auxerre with only his dog and his gun. It was easy, later on, to trace his route through Châteauroux and Issoudun, and to discover the two hotels in these towns where he passed successive nights. Finally, he reached Auxerre, and here he felt comparatively safe. He had always been careful to date and send his letters from a distant town, and he hoped that Madame de la Pivardiere had no idea of his true hiding-place. He little guessed that her discovery of it would soon be necessary, not to her revenge, but her safety.

La Pivardiere's sudden disappearance, the horse and pistols left in the stable, the high words reported by the servants, the coldness of the wife, were all much discussed in the neighbourhood of Nerbonne, and dark suspicions arose as to his fate. Whispered from one to another, these terrible ideas soon grew in strength and clearness, and became certainties beyond the need of proof to the popular mind. There is no direct evidence that the lady of the château was much disliked in the neighbourhood, but it is difficult upon any other hypothesis to account for the extraordinary ease with which those who knew her believed that she was guilty of a horrible crime. She had lived at Nerbonne for many years, she had seen much society, but her acquaintances, who must have known, moreover, of her husband's habit of frequently leaving home for long periods of time, very rapidly decided that as he was not forthcoming she must have murdered him. The whispers of this dark crime grew daily louder and more violent, till at last, on September sixth, the Procureur du Roi of the Department in which Nerbonne was situated sent his deputy—the Sieur Bonnet—to inquire into the alleged crime. The Procureur himself was by no means an ideal judge, and the same may be said of his representative; both had cause to dislike the Prieur de Miseray, and they took up the accusation against the wife with great eagerness, hoping to involve their enemy in her destruction; and the evidence against her was such as to ensure a conviction before the most impartial tribunal. The first inquiry consisted in the examination of about fifteen witnesses, whose hearsay evidence, valueless enough in itself, was all traced to two maids at the château, and these girls, when interrogated, gave convincing evidence of the crime and the guilty persons. One of the witnesses was the Catherine Le Moine already mentioned, the other was a certain Marguérite Mercier, goddaughter and favourite of Madame de la Pivardiere. Mercier gave a most precise and circumstantial account of the alleged murder. She said that her mistress having secretly introduced two men-servants—whom she named—of the Prieur de Miseray into the house, had led them to her husband's chamber and there looked on whilst these men murdered him. She added various details which seemed to prove the truth of her story, and she repeated it a few days later when she was in imminent danger of death and was about to receive the viaticum. She not only repeated the tale but she added a finishing touch to her performance by declaring that the Prieur himself was present at the murder and gave the coup de grâce to his victim. This additional detail, curiously enough, did not arouse any suspicion as to the truth of her story, which produced much effect upon popular feeling and heightened the general indignation to a dangerous pitch. It is perhaps not surprising that she was believed. What motive could be strong enough to prompt a human soul—apparently within a few hours of the Great Assize—to bear false evidence, and such false evidence, against four persons, one of whom had shown her great kindness?

Catherine Le Moine, endowed probably with a less vivid imagination, had a less elaborate story to tell, but it fully corroborated her fellow-servant's testimony. She said that her mistress had purposely sent her out of the way, that she had, however, entered her master's room just as the crime was accomplished, and she had seen his bleeding corpse in the hands of his murderers.

The little daughter of this unhappy couple deposed that in the middle of the night she had heard her father cry, "Oh, my God! Have mercy upon me!" an exclamation doubtless wrung from his lips by the thoughts of judgement and death which haunted him through those long, lonely hours of vigil, but interpreted by the Court as corroboration of the previous evidence.

The Prieur de Miseray was at once arrested and put into irons, as were his two servants. Madame de la Pivardiere, however, managed to escape to Paris, where she appealed to be sent before some other judge rather than the Procureur of her Department. She declared that she could prove before an impartial tribunal the existence of the husband she was accused of assassinating, but that she had no chance of a fair hearing from those engaged in investigating the matter. She obtained the favour she sought, and with that concession the story practically ends.

La Pivardiere was soon traced to Auxerre by the route he had taken the preceding August, but though easy to follow him it was by no means easy to make him return to Nerbonne. When he discovered that officers of justice were on his track he fled from Auxerre, fearing, naturally enough, that they were agents employed by his wife to arrest him for bigamy. Even when he heard the truth he showed no chivalrous eagerness to risk himself in defence of a wife he suspected and a man he hated. His second wife—the only character in this history absolutely free from a shadow of blame—acted like a generous woman, and sent him back to save her rival.

The new judge appointed to hear the evidence was an able and fair-minded man, with a keen eye for theatrical effect. One evening, when the parish church near Nerbonne was crowded with a congregation met to celebrate the festival of Saint Anthony, the patron Saint of the parish, he sent La Pivardiere right into the midst of the assembly, standing by like a stage manager to watch the effect of his appearance. The result was convincing enough; in a moment the place was in a tumult, prayers were interrupted, and the whole congregation gazed with awe and terror on the dead man brought to life.

We wonder that the creator of Griffith Gaunt did not give us the description of such a scene in the north-country church. Who could have described more graphically than he the dark arches with their scanty lights, the sleepy congregation waking up to horror, and their gradual conviction of their own folly? But the conception and execution of such a dramatic coup would be less natural, it must be owned, in a Cumberland justice of the peace than in a French lawyer.

The question of the innocence of the accused was now set at rest; but the legal forms could not be satisfied until an appeal had been heard by the Parliament of Paris, and La Pivardiere absolutely declined to run any further risk on behalf of his falsely-accused wife. It was again the innkeeper's daughter who resolutely made another effort to help her rival, and show her unworthy husband his duty. Helped by powerful friends—probably of La Pivardiere's—she obtained a personal interview with Louis the Fourteenth, and, flinging herself at his feet, obtained a full safe-conduct for the Sieur de la Pivardiere, and a compliment for herself.

"A girl such as you," said the great King, "deserved a better fate."

The flattery implied in the remark is not overwhelming; but doubtless it was received with due humility and gratitude.

In June, 1701, nearly four years after the August dawn when La Pivardiere had crept away from the Château de Nerbonne, the Parliament of Paris pronounced its final decree, and the whole affair terminated, except for one of the false witnesses. Le Moine had already died in jail, but Marguérite Mercier was condemned to a humiliating penance.

With the acquittal of the innocent wife ends the similarity between the real story and the novel founded thereon. There was no reconciliation between Louis and Marguérite de la Pivardiere, as between Griffith and Catherine Gaunt. In real life, much may be forgiven; but human nature revolts against daily and hourly intercourse with those who have inflicted and suffered irreparable wrong. The French husband instantly sought and obtained a military appointment, and was killed a very few years afterwards in a fight with some smugglers. About the same time, his wife was found dead in her bed. The Prieur de Miseray lived to a good old age, and was regarded with some admiration as the hero of a romantic story; but during the short remainder of Madame de la Pivardiere's life, he never again sought her society. The solitude of a prison, the weight of chains, and the near prospect of death may have given him wholesome material for reflection upon the relations between the sexes, especially when the woman is married and the man a priest.

La Pivardiere's second wife—her innocence and her misfortunes have compelled us throughout to give her a title to which she has no just claim—did not break her heart over her false marriage and her unworthy husband. The four children born of that unhappy connexion all died; but the mother married twice, and, it is to be hoped, found peace and happiness during the many years through which she lived to an extreme old age.

The biographers of Mr. Reade, in their enthusiastic memoir, place "Griffith Gaunt" high among his works, and speak of it as "satisfying the most exacting among the republic of literati"—a phrase which has the extreme advantage of being alike incapable of proof and disproof. The novel has, undoubtedly, obtained a high degree of popularity, and contains abundant evidence of the force and ingenuity of its author. It is striking to contrast the romance with the story which suggested it, and to observe the way in which the bare sketch is filled in so as to interest and excite the reader.

The heroine, from a middle-aged widow, the mother of five children, becomes a handsome and high-spirited girl; the sordid story of her marriage developes into a charming love-tale — a love-tale so complete in itself that the subsequent tragedy appears a monstrous impossibility rather than the too natural result of a mercenary marriage. Catherine's relations with the priest, which — like those of Madame de la Pivardiere—produce much scandal and misery, are almost impossibly childlike in their innocence, save in one scene, where the author makes her forget her rôle and blush with delight at the recognition as her own of the glove which Leonard had treasured. It is in such touches that Mr. Reade was too apt to destroy the delicacy and refinement with which he desired to endow his heroines. It is strange that a writer, who was always dissecting passion, should not have recognised the enormous force of purity created by a strong love in marriage.

As it was obviously necessary to make Catherine more beautiful, interesting, and innocent than her original, so was it desirable to palliate the hero's guilt. There is true art in the way in which the suspicious, unhappy man is led by his ingratitude and his jealousy to the commission of a crime; but the excuse La Pivardiere might have urged is wanting to this hero of romance who had lived for eight or nine years in absolute happiness with a woman he adored.

The innkeeper's daughter required little alteration in character or situation to fit her for the position of subordinate heroine, where her gentle unselfishness made her a fitting foil to her strong-willed rival. The Puritan Mercy Vint is none the less a beautiful creation because her original lived and loved and suffered two hundred years ago.

With regard to the construction of the story, there were two points in the real narrative which the novelist felt it desirable to change. The case against the wife being very weak, Mr. Reade greatly strengthened it by the discovery of Tom Leicester's body in the pond, with much of the face unrecognisable, but with the black mark still clear on his forehead—that black mark which was the common inheritance of himself and Griffith. There is no such incident in the case of La Pivardiere, but it is quite possible that the idea was suggested by a trifling fact recorded at the trial.

On the eve of Saint Anthony's Day, before the public appearance of the supposed victim, the Sieur Bonnet went to Nerbonne to discover fresh evidence against the accused. He must have been something of a busybody, for the matter had, on the appeal of Madame de la Pivardiere, been removed from his jurisdiction, but, undaunted by this fact, he resolved to drag the ponds for the evidence he expected to find there. Instead of the corpse, he met, however, La Pivardiere himself, strolling by the water; and his terror at this encounter proved, at all events, the genuineness of his belief in the crime. He uttered a shriek of horror, and rushed away from the spot, not heeding or not hearing the sarcastic enquiry: "Why should you look in the ponds for what is standing on the banks?"

Does it seem too fanciful to imagine that this remark suggested the discovery of Leicester's body, and the consequent justification of the suspicions against Catherine?

The other point in the French story which refused to lend itself to the purposes of romance is the evidence of the two servants. This evidence does not, either for wickedness or falsehood, stand alone in the history of jurisprudence; but no novelist would dare to introduce such unblushing perjury without incurring the charge of grossly outraging human nature. What motive but insanity can be urged as prompting Marguérite Mercier to the utterance of those terrible words? Even if she had cause to hate a mistress who had always treated her with marked kindness, did she bear a deadly grudge against the Prieur and his men-servants? And how, having once invented the hideous story, did she prevail upon Catherine Le Moine to join in the perjury? Le Moine's corroboration makes the fact doubly incomprehensible, destroying as it does the theory of insanity as a possible motive. Madame de la Pivardière might have been so unfortunate as to have one maid mad enough to invent such a tale; but it is quite impossible that she can have had two sufficiently mad to maintain the truth of an absolutely false narrative, and sufficiently sane to agree as to its details.

It may be possible that such crimes have a far humbler origin than is generally suspected. In the discussion which followed their master's disappearance, did one of the girls begin to hint darkly that she could explain it if she would? Enjoying the self-importance gained by this pretence of superior knowledge, did she find herself led on by degrees to the construction of this monstrous tale? The motive is absurdly inadequate; but the student of human nature will not, therefore, dismiss it as impossible. Among the many mysteries of the human soul none is deeper or darker than the early origin of great crimes.

The theory suggested, however, even if true, is obviously unworthy of the dignity of romance. Mr. Reade had, therefore, to build up in Caroline Ryder a character full of good impulses, and capable of great crimes, and also to construct an under-plot of love and jealousy to account for her enmity to Catherine Gaunt. After this elaborate structure of motive, it is disappointing to find how little her evidence affects the case against her mistress, although no reader can regret her creation, if only for the fine duel between her in the witness-box and the prisoner in the dock. Contrasting, however, the details by which the novelist accounts for her slight deviations from truth with the splendid, and apparently purposeless, mendacity of Marguérite Mercier, we must own that the writer is heavily handicapped in his efforts to prove that fiction is stranger than truth.

PARSON JOEL.

THE Californian gold fever was at its height when the crowd of fortune-seekers, excited by the prospect of immediate gain, rushed to the banks of the Bangalong.

We—that is, Jack Pettit and I—had followed the gold away up the river for long weary miles, sometimes in company, often alone, occasionally finding dust, but more frequently digging from sunrise until sunset without seeing a speck. In common with thousands of adventurers, who were in a similar plight, we were ever mocked by the fickle jade Fortune.

The most incomprehensible thing about it all was that there seemed to be some party for ever in advance of us; for, although the banks of the river were undisturbed, the water came down from the hills laden with mud, which was easily recognisable by a miner's eye.

It was only after a long, tedious tramp, with heavy hearts and ever-lightening pockets, that we came upon the advance party. They welcomed us with what grace they could, which was not much; but our arrival mattered little, for others quickly came along our trail, now in companies and again singly, until there were fully fifty gold-seekers of almost as many nationalities upon the ground. All of these remained, not one went further. There was no need, for the bed of the gold had been discovered. Within the space of a square mile or so, thereabout, lay enough of the precious metal to have enriched a thousand miners beyond the dreams of avarice.

The camp was pitched on the bank of the river, which, under the scorching rays of the summer sun, had dwindled down to a mere freshet. There was none too much water obtainable for the requirements of gold-washing; it was rapidly becoming too precious a commodity to be recklessly employed as a beverage—a result which gladdened the heart of Bert Togue, the bar-keeper, who, with the keenness of a vulture for scenting out carcases, had followed promptly upon the heels of the thirsty miners and adventurers.

The scenery was impressive and awe-inspiring. Bleak, barren, yet priceless quartz-reefs rose in long undulating waves of stone, like a petrified ocean, on every side. Beyond these lay the bush and scrub, interspersed here and there with clumps of pine, while farther away still, a long range of low, naked hills stretched along the sky-line until they were lost in mist.

Those hills enjoyed an evil reputation as resorts for bands of redskins, who had cut off more than one prospecting party, and of prairie pirates and road agents, who were even more merciless than they. In one thing both were cordially agreed; their hands were against the miners, and equally the miners scored against them on every possible opportunity. These fellows served one useful purpose, for the fear and dread of them caused us to keep together; as to have fallen into their hands would have been certain death.

One evening, when the cradles were busily rocking and the dippers flashing, a stranger rode into the camp. His jaded nag was nearly travel-spent, its tongue lolled limply out of its mouth, the great ears flopped loosely over the bleared, bloodshot eyes, and its withers were badly wrung. Nor was the appearance of the rider more attractive. He was an undersized, thin, red-haired man; and, as he sat there upon his sorry steed, almost spent with fatigue and hunger, he looked the most unprepossessing of mortals.

The arrival of a stranger was too common an event to attract attention in a camp where the collection of glittering wealth was the one serious business of life. Therefore no one spoke to or even noticed the new-comer, who, after looking slowly around as if to take in all the bearings, rode up to Togue's bar. Having climbed down and hitched up his nag, the stranger entered the large shanty in search of that provision for man and beast which it was the bar-keeper's proud privilege to dispense and that of his customers to pay for.

Later in the evening, when digging was ended, and the everlasting damper had been disposed of, the boys assembled beneath Togue's hospitable roof-tree for the accustomed drink and fun. The red-haired arrival was present, keeping unobtrusively in the background. He had no kit with him, nor anything to indicate that he was a prospector, although his travel-stained appearance, and the freedom with which he spent his cash, showed that he was familiar with the customs of mining life.

In one of the lulls of conversation he spoke. His voice sounded soft and low like a woman's, but its sweet and perfectly modulated tones penetrated through the long bar. It was long since any of us had listened to such a silver strain. Words pure as the notes of English song-birds, and unsullied by ribaldry or blasphemy, were all too scarce and strange on the Bangalong, or anywhere else in California.

"Who d'ye s'pose he is, mate?"

"Don't know. One o' them 'Frisco chaps, maybe. P'r'aps a sneak a-spying out the nakedness o' the land."

The speaker laughed at his own sally of wit.

Speculation was cut short almost at once. The little red-haired man, turning to us, said, civilly enough, and with a slight tremor in his voice:

"Boys, I am a missionary, and have been sent here that I may look after the interests of those who have left fathers and mothers behind in the old Eastern States."

The speech was greeted with derisive laughter.

"A parson!"

Taking no notice of the interruption, except that his cheek reddened a little, he continued:

"You will find me a friend. By permission of the keeper of this saloon, there will be preaching here next Sunday afternoon; and I mean to practise that which I preach."

A hum of excited voices now drowned the speaker's words. When it ceased he had gone.

Judging from the conversation which followed, it seemed probable that the parson, if he should attempt to carry out his intention, would encounter a lively opposition; the camp not being an assembly of saints, not even latter-day ones.

But something occurred that night which entirely altered the situation.

A sharp word spoken by Togue's son to a rough Yankee led to a rapid unmuzzling of "bull dogs," with the result that the bar-keeper's son, who was a general favourite, was shot through the shoulder.

Camp opinion ran high against the perpetrator, who was even threatened with lynching.

When the tumult was at its highest, the parson came back, and quickly made himself master of the condition of affairs.

"Hold, unhallowed men," he exclaimed, in those low, earnest tones of his, "would you add sin to sin? Let this man go, and your forgiveness shall be his greatest punishment."

"Stand aside, mister; this ain't no time for preaching—we air on business here."

"I will not. Who among you has a right to take away a life which he cannot restore?"

A voice in the rear of the crowd rejoined:

"I guess, stranger, we hev. And we air going to."

A rough-looking man, who was, to all appearance, a leader in this roughly-constituted court of justice, now interposed. He said:

"You mean well, stranger, no doubt;

but you air out of place here. Take my advice, and make yourself scarce; for you can't do good, and you may do harm. Jake here has got to die; we says it. 'Tisn't the first time he has been too handy with his shooting-iron; but it's got to be the last. Eh! boys?"

"But I tell you, men, you will commit——"

"Go, parson, and don't meddle with what doesn't concern you. What are we Vigilants for?"

"I have a duty, men, to perform, as well as you, and will not be deterred from doing it. You say you will slay this man. Then hear me; you will only kill him over my body."

The miners liked grit, wherever found; and a low murmur of applause greeted this speech, which was to them far more impressive than any mere plea for mercy could have been. The rough fellows talked to one another, the culprit's guards, perhaps intentionally, relaxed their vigilance, and in the confusion the Yankee disappeared, giving his comrades and would-be executioners time to let their anger cool.

Young Togue did not die.

The parson, who gave his name as Joel Baldwin, constituted himself the sufferer's nurse, attending to his every want, dressing his wound, and feeding him like a child through the long days and nights, more tenderly, the grateful old saloon-keeper said, than any woman could have done.

This act of devotion touched the heart of the camp, which lay deep but was not dead. When Sunday afternoon came round the congregation was a crowded one.

At the very outset of the proceedings the preacher made an important demand upon the goodwill and forbearance of his audience.

He commenced by pointing out the danger which attended the mischievous practice of carrying shooting-irons, enforcing his argument by reference to the critical condition of young Togue. He then, further, urged the inappropriateness of these destructive weapons being brought into the house of the Prince of Peace, stated his personal dread of such, and concluded an earnest appeal by insisting that all who might attend his ministrations should deliver up their weapons to the saloon-keeper on entering.

The gaunt miners looked foolishly sheepish, laughed, demurred, and then, when they saw that the man meant what he said, handed over the irons into the custody of Bert Togue.

Togue took charge of all these, placing them in the box which served as a pulpit, so that the parson trod the carnal weapons under his feet.

Several weeks passed, and the influence of Parson Joel, as he was familiarly called, began to effect a marked improvement in the camp. Duels became less frequent, irregularities less pronounced; the weakest found that they had some chance in the battle for wealth and life. The Sunday afternoon preaching became an extraordinary success; not a man among us would have missed it upon any consideration, the parson had such a winning way with him. Togue, junior, too, began to improve under the care of his self-constituted nurse.

The gold, which yielded heavily both in dust and nuggets, was regularly deposited with a firm of brokers, whose fair dealings inspired their clients with confidence. Once in every month an armed escort came over from 'Frisco, and conveyed the accumulated precious metal to the bank.

Parson Joel had been with us three months, finding plenty of work both in instructing and nursing his rough flock, more than one member of which it had been his melancholy duty to consign to the auriferous dust. During this time he had increasingly endeared himself to all, so that more than one nugget had been pressed upon him for acceptance by rough fellows who could conceive of no other means of showing their gratitude. These were invariably declined, with the remark that he had enough for his personal needs, and sought not theirs, but them.

All this increased Parson Joel's reputation for goodness; he became idolised of all.

About this time the pirates of the prairie became increasingly daring, and there were rumours that a band of them had allied with the road agents, forming a camp in the hills, under the leadership of a daring female named Bess, whom they had constituted their queen.

The rumour acquired force from the fact that a man who had recently joined us was found shot dead in the scrub.

This occurrence served to make us increasingly careful; but no one apprehended serious trouble such as an attack upon the camp, which by this time numbered one hundred souls all told, men whose hands could keep their heads.

The month was drawing to a close. The Saturday night saw the last bag of dust deposited; and the honest brokers retired, holding fully fifteen thousand pounds' worth of the miners' property, which would, all being well, be en route for 'Frisco on the following Monday.

On Sunday morning the honest, quiet-going miners remained reading or smoking in their shanties, or wandered aimlessly down the gully; while the rougher sort scattered around among the various bars which had sprung up. When the hour for service struck, every one, except the brokers and young Togue, who, with the willing consent of Parson Joel, had gone for a stroll, were in their places.

Togue, although vastly improved, was still weak, and needed, so the parson said, all the fresh air he could get. There was no lack of it in the vicinity of the camp.

In accordance with Parson Joel's custom, all the firearms were collected, and deposited in the depths of the extemporised pulpit before the service began, so that during worship he mounted guard over them.

The opening hymn being concluded, the parson led in prayer.

At the moment when the attention of all was absorbed in this exercise, a shot was fired outside, and the sounds of a scuffle, followed by a wild cry for help, was heard proceeding from the direction of the gold office.

The miners, like a famished lion aroused from its lair, sprang to their feet, only to find themselves face to face with two tall masked men who had quietly and unobservedly entered the building. These, presenting their revolvers, thundered:

"Hands up! The first of you who moves is a dead man."

The situation became clear. The camp was attacked, and those who should have been its defenders had been rendered defenceless by their own action.

One possible chance of escape remained open. There was the door behind the preacher, who had remained a quiet, unmoved spectator of the proceedings. If this could be gained, the attack might even yet be beaten off, and the gold saved.

Those of us who were farthest removed from the robbers made a partial movement towards the door. But this was quickly checked, for, as we gathered ourselves for a rush, the meek and gentle attitude of Parson Joel underwent a complete and terrible change. The man's slight form dilated, his usually mild eyes flashed fire, and his countenance became so altered as to be scarcely recognisable. With a movement which was almost quicker than light, he whipped out a brace of Colt's revolvers from some secret pocket, and with the skill of a practised marksman, he, who feared the very sight of a pistol, covered the congregation in front as completely as the two strangers had done in the rear.

We were checkmated completely.

The game so boldly played was won.

The helpless diggers, chafing under the indignity which was even less patiently to be borne than the threatened loss, sat down again, anticipating, only too well, the course which events would take.

Our chagrin was not lessened when Parson Joel, without the ghost of a smile upon his face, said:

"Friends, adversity comes, sooner or later, to us all, in order that we may learn how to practise as well as preach. You are all witnesses that I have frequently besought you not to put your trust in riches, which make to themselves wings and fly away."

He had scarcely ceased speaking when a peculiar cry—the yelp of the coyote—was heard in the distance.

This was evidently the signal for which the marauders had been waiting, for Parson Joel bowed ironically, and, kicking open the door behind him, immediately disappeared. The other two similarly vanished.

The miners, like a troop of school-boys, or a gang of released convicts, tumbled pell-mell into the open; but they were too late.

The sound of rapidly retreating horse-hoofs intimated the flight of the robbers. There was no doubt of the direction which they had taken, for one of the fugitives was still full in view. So far from urging his horse to its greatest pace, he seemed rather to check it; designing, perhaps, to aid the escape of the rest of the gang. In his flight he had the hardihood to turn and wave his hand to the discomfited miners.

These saw at a glance the extent of the mischief. The gold store had been rifled. Its single defender lay dead in his own doorway, shot through the heart. The other broker had fled.

With a wild cry for vengeance we turned and snatched such weapons as were convenient, then, throwing ourselves upon our horses, dashed away in swift, relentless pursuit.

The fugitive evidently observed this, for, putting his steed to its fullest stretch of speed, he rode recklessly over every impediment; and his retreat appeared secured, for he distanced the foremost of us at every stride.

In another quarter of a mile he would have gained the shelter of the ranker scrub, where pursuit would have been hopeless; but, before he could do so, a puff of smoke floated out over a distant reef, this was followed by the report of a rifle, which reached our ears as we saw the galloping horse stumble, throwing the rider heavily over its head.

A man—it was young Togue—came leisurely across the rocks, carrying a still smoking rifle in his hand. He was making directly for the scene of the catastrophe; but some of the riders reached the spot almost as quickly as he.

The aim had been true. The horse, a magnificent sorrel, lay dead in its tracks, ten yards behind its hapless rider, who was bruised out of all semblance to humanity. A coarse red wig had fallen from his head, and a rich wealth of blood-draggled, tangled golden hair trailed out over the stones.

Young Togue stopped, wiped his weapon, and coolly remarked:

"I thought something had gone wrong; that's why I fired. Sorry I wiped the fellow out though."

"By the jumping Jeehoshaphat, it's our Parson Joel; anyway it's all that's left of him," murmured some one.

Togue stepped forward, a light of recognition flashed into his eyes, and he fell upon his knees, tearing away the rough coat in his frenzied endeavour to discover whether the heart had ceased to beat. He had scarcely done this when he sprang to his feet, with consternation depicted upon his face, crying:

"Boys, by all the powers it is a woman!"

We were still standing, baffled and angry, around the corpse, when a band of horsemen dashed up at a hand-gallop. As the leader sprang from his horse, he half-pushed, half-dragged, a villainous-looking ruffian to the front.

"Here, you honest fellows," he called out in tones of command, "do any of you know this rapparee scoundrel? We caught him galooting around three miles below, and as he couldn't give a good account of himself, took the liberty of bringing him along with us."

A dozen men sprang forward to look into the captive's face, as he glared defiantly, daring them to do their worst, and he read death in their eyes.

Then the fellow's gaze fell upon the body of Parson Joel. In a moment the strong man was bowed with anguish, his fortitude forsook him, he fell upon his knees, gently raised the battered head in his grimy hands, and, passionately kissing the pallid brow, wailed:

"Oh! Bess, Bess! Good Heaven!"

Then we all knew that Joel Baldwin, parson, sick-nurse, trusted friend, and gold robber, was none other than Bess, the notorious queen of the pirates of the prairie and the villainous road agents, who had for so long been the scourge of California. For one brief moment afterwards we felt sad at heart.

CONCERNING WINDOWS.

After man had achieved for himself the great work of building a house, no long time can have elapsed before he experienced the necessity of letting light and air into the interior. The door could not always be left open; and the hole in the roof which carried off the smoke was scarcely available for any other purpose. Weary of the darkness, and oppressed by the heat, we can conceive of some impatient patriarch as, one day, suddenly starting to his feet, and with any implement that lay near at hand, making an opening in the side-wall of earth or timber — narrow at first, but enlarging gradually as its advantages came to be recognised. Thus was invented the window, an aperture unenclosed at first, and giving free admission to the sweet airs and light of heaven! But in course of time a moveable screen or shutter would be put up to moderate or wholly intercept the air and the light, or a piece of stuff, or the skin of an animal, which could easily be shifted, would be suspended like a curtain. Then it would come about that the chamber was once more inconveniently darkened and not sufficiently ventilated, and man would find himself face to face with the problem, How to keep out the wind and let in the light? In the East the difficulty was partly solved —as it is to this day—by filling in the casement with lattice-work; but in colder climates this expedient was unsatisfactory; and after generations had shivered in the "eager air," and suffered from the cramping pains of rheumatism, glass, which had previously been invented, was brought into use, and the glazed window triumphantly vindicated the inventive faculty of man.

The date when this "magnum opus" was consummated, history, which has recorded so many things of minor importance, has carelessly and ignorantly omitted. But glass windows have been discovered among the ruins of Pompeii and Herculaneum, destroyed in the first century, though talc seems to have been the material chiefly employed. They were tolerably common in Italy in and after the third century, for they are mentioned both by Lactantius and Saint Jerome, by the former in the third, and by the latter early in the fifth century. In England they remained unknown till they were introduced in 674 by Benedict Biscop, abbot of Wearmouth; and they did not come into general use for some centuries later. At first they were rectangular in shape, because, we suppose, this was the easiest for the workmen; but semi-circular and circular windows were afterwards designed by resourceful architects, as well as the pointed or geometrical forms which assimilated with the angular characteristics of Gothic structures; and in their original simplicity were known from their length and narrowness as "lancets," or "lancet-windows." When two or more of these were grouped together under a common arch, the different compartments, divided by thin mullions, were called "lights," so that we read of a two-light, a three-light, or even a five-light window. Exeter Cathedral can boast of a nine-light in its west front; the west window at Rochester has eight lights. Then there was the beautiful Saint Catherine window, broken up by a number of lights which radiated from the centre to the circumference, broadening as they radiated, like the spokes of a wheel. This was intended to imitate the wheel on which Saint Catherine, an Alexandrian virgin, was tortured to death because she had confessed the Christian faith.

In the case of lancets, when grouped together, the space between their tops and the arch was filled in for ornament's sake with circles, trefoils, or quatrefoils, which gradually developed into rich tracery. The picturesque beauty of such windows is conspicuous even to the uncultivated eye, and they are among the most noticeable features of our mediæval cathedrals and churches. To soften, subdue, and vary the light which they admitted, and enhance the sublime impressiveness of the interior, they were glazed with painted or stained-glass, representing the scenes and figures of Biblical history, the saints and their legends, kings, queens, and other notable personages, and pouring their exquisite colours on the carved columns and marble pavements of nave and aisle, and even on the sanctuary itself, with a magical effect which our poets have not left unnoticed.

Painted windows, "high and triple-arched," prevailed until the end of the fourteenth century, when, with the new perpendicular order, came in square-headed windows, with upright tracery, which became common during the period of the Renaissance. But in the Elizabethan age came a revival of the Gothic, and the pointed window was once more in the ascendant. Sometimes, in the great Tudor and Jacobean houses, both styles may be seen together, and the combination accomplishes a picturesque individuality of character which is delightful to the observant eye. How different to the monotonous aspect of the Queen Anne or Georgian mansion, with its level rows of unadorned rectangular windows, as like one another as peas! The Victorian builder also seems utterly unable to depart from this conventional type. His windows are wretched reflections of one another, commonplace in their ugliness; and he puts up miles of streets of mean-looking houses which, in their hideous uniformity, are a weariness and a torment to the soul!

Yes, to use a convenient if hackneyed formula, there are windows and windows. Contrast the unlovelinesses of which I have been speaking with the delicately fanciful Moorish casements, such as in Grenada or Seville still open charmingly upon the sparkle of the fountains and the fragrance of the orange-trees; or the stately palace windows of Venice, from which a Ginévra and a Beatrice in the old times have peered forth, in the soft, pale moonlight, to catch a glimpse of the gondolas of their lovers. From such a window Juliet stepped out upon her balcony to hold impassioned talk with her young Romeo. From such a window, in the great mediæval cities, dames and damsels have witnessed many a sumptuous procession of knights, and men-at-arms, and burghers, winding through bannered streets to the blare of trumpets, and in all their pride of pageantry. From such a window, for exown head would have done had she hammered it against a stone wall. She had, therefore, at last come to the conclusion that the proceeding was unprofitable, and only conducive to much wear and tear on her own nerves; and now peace reigned between them.

"Of course not; and, naturally, you are quite as well able to support cold and privation now as you were when you were younger and stronger," coolly. "If there is nothing more I can do for you I shall go."

But she lingered a moment longer to wrap the woollen shawl closer round the placid, uncompromising figure seated there in the chill of a late October afternoon; arranged the curtains that the light might fall as long as possible into the room, for no lamps were allowed to be brought in before five o'clock; and then ran off to put on her own things for her afternoon walk.

She had first to carry a small basket of provisions to a sick woman who lived a little distance outside of the village.

It was a grey, chill afternoon, with the leaves fluttering down in passing gusts of wind from the trees overhead, which were already looking bare against the autumn sky.

But it was always so great a relief to escape from the still, sober atmosphere of that well-regulated house under the hill, that neither wind, nor rain, nor snow, nor mud, could depress Priscilla when she found herself out of doors.

She walked along briskly now through the lanes from which the glories of summer had departed, the quick movement bringing a pretty colour to her cheeks, the fresh air giving a brightness to her eyes, which were too often shadowed by a weary gravity that was unnatural and pathetic in the eyes of a girl of her age.

She reached the cottage, had a little chat with the sick woman, leaving her cheered with her own bright words and the basket of good things sent by Mrs. Joliffe, and then started on her walk again. She skirted the breezy common till she came to the entrance of some woods, into which she plunged.

"It's a nuisance!" she said, as she passed, more slowly now, down the narrow, mossy path between the beech and slender larch. "Now those people have come home, I suppose I must give up coming here. And where shall I go, I wonder?"

The woods were still beautiful, though the red and gold of the autumn tints were fast fading into the monotonous sadness of the earth's winter dress, and at every gust the dry leaves fluttered down from the branches, or drifted, brown and rustling, along the path she was treading.

There was a suggestion of deep melancholy in the woods this grey, gusty afternoon, and it touched her as with a dull regret and a vague sense of coming trouble, which paled her face, and brought out sad little lines about her mouth, and darkened that haunting shadow which never entirely left her eyes.

It was only with an effort that she flung off at last the sadness that was depressing her. She knew by experience the danger and folly of letting her thoughts dwell on the past. It could never be forgotten. To the day of her death her whole life would bear the impress of it. Its spirit was with her by day and night, as she walked and talked, and ate, and even laughed. But she had schooled herself to live as if it had not been, and to do this, she dared not let her mind dwell on it. She forced even her thoughts to live in the present, knowing too well how unprofitable it was to let them awake the passion of that dead past; how, even to-day, it would kindle such a storm of rebellious pain, anger, and sick longing, that the dead level—the grey monotony of her life of to-day—would become intolerable, nay, almost impossible to her. In the early days, when she first came to live with her aunt, she had not been so wise, or, perhaps, so well schooled in discipline and endurance. Her heart, like a caged bird, had beaten itself in its passion and pain against the dreary conventionality—the cold, soulless piety of the atmosphere of her aunt's home. But what good had it done? The fierce revolt had ended for the sick and bruised heart, as it ends for the desperate beating of the bird's wings against the bars of its cage.

There was no escape for it. Its very struggles had but made the life it was forced to live more intolerable. So by degrees a kind of still submission had taken possession of her, and Priscilla came and went in her aunt's house and lived its daily life outwardly as if she had known no other.

She hastened her steps now to rid herself of the profound languor and sadness stealing over her, and after about ten minutes of quick walking, she reached a five-barred gate set in a thick hedge, which was the boundary of this end of the wood through which she had come. The woods belonged to a family of the name of Dacre, who had been absent for a good many years, and who had only just returned that same week to live once more at the old Hall, which had been shut up for so long. These woods had long been used by Priscilla as a short cut to a favourite spot of hers, while she had spent many pleasant afternoons wandering through the woods themselves. Indeed, she knew them by heart, and she thought a little ruefully as she stood by the five-barred gate that for the future she would no longer be able to wander through them as she would.

It was a lonely spot; the country people rarely passed that way, though the woods had been used during the absence of their owners as general property, and there had been much discussion in the neighbourhood as to whether the present members of the family would close them as churlishly against the public as the late master had done during the latter part of his life-time.

Priscilla, however, had determined to risk one walk more through them. After all, as the family had only arrived two days ago, and the Hall was some little distance from this end of the wood, it was hardly likely she would run across any of the Dacres. Both Mrs. and Miss Dacre, who represented the family now, would probably be still too busy up at the house to trouble to inspect the surrounding woods yet. She stood in her rather shabby brown dress and jacket against the gate, looking back into the wood, with its falling leaves and fading tints, something longing and wistful in her face. A gust of wind rushed up through the trees, stirring their tops and scattering the leaves that lay thick on the ground, and she shivered a little as if she were cold.

She turned sharply away and laid her hand on the gate, which for so long had stood hospitably open to all comers. It was closed; a padlock fastened it to the post. Already the owners were taking possession of their property. A fine little disdain crossed her face, chasing the sadness.

"Selfish creatures!" she said, aloud, with an impatient shake at the closed gate; "but as I am in I mean to get out, anyway."

There was no one to see her except a rabbit, which at that moment scudded across the fallen leaves, and the next moment she was perched on the top of the five-barred gate—a pretty, white-capped figure—and then dropping lightly on to the ground beyond, she walked on down a sloping path which led into a wild picturesque bit of valley, which soon narrowed into a mere ravine between huge crags and tumbled boulders. Bracken—yellow now—and bramble and tangled grasses grew wild and luxuriant. In the summer time there were honeysuckle and wild roses, and in the spring primroses stood thick in the moist mosses that grew by the tiny stream that wandered through the ravine. Priscilla reached at last a sheltered nook between two overhanging crags. In the open space beneath lay a large flat slab of rock, on which were the remains of embers, as if a fire had recently been burnt there. This was a favourite afternoon retreat of Priscilla's, during the short two hours which she could spend as she liked outside the dreary formalism of her aunt's house.

Something of the old gladness of life would seem to return to her during these two hours of liberty, and here, in this secluded spot, whose stillness was rarely ever broken by any passing foot but her own, she read, or worked, or wrote as the fancy seized her.

Here, too, she indulged in a luxury that was austerely forbidden in her aunt's household.

Afternoon tea was ruthlessly condemned as an unnecessary indulgence, hurtful to the digestion and enervating to the morals.

In a niche in the crag, hidden by a tangle of ivy and fern, she kept a small store of material for the forbidden luxury of afternoon tea.

The stream trickling clear and sweet over its stony bed provided her with the water. The fire for boiling her kettle she made with sticks on the slab of rock, and she had become as expert as a gipsy over the process.

She soon collected enough wood to light her fire. But this afternoon it proved refractory. The wind was in the wrong quarter, and swept in gusty fits up the ravine, and whirled round through the fallen rocks, almost sweeping away the fire itself, and amused itself by puffing out the flames, or sending up volumes of smoke into her face as she bent over it. She was so absorbed in her task that she did not hear the leisurely approach of footsteps down the ravine by the way she had come. But a sudden shadow falling across the opening between the two crags under which she was sheltered made her glance up in that direction, to discover a young man gazing at her with the keenest attention. A gust of wind, a puff of pungent smoke, bringing tears to her eyes, shut him the next second from her view. When she saw clearly again, he had passed on.

"Who can he be?" she wondered. "A tourist, or artist, I suppose. Oh, dear! How sorry I shall be if they have found out this place! There will never be any peace here any more."

The kettle boiled, and she had just made her tea, when there came the sound of steps again from the opposite direction, and this time they were more hurried. As she looked up from her teapot she saw the young man again.

"Oh, I'm awfully sorry to disturb you!" he said, raising his hat; "but I was wondering if you could spare a cup of tea for a poor beggar I have just found, half-fainting with hunger and fatigue, a little farther on. There's apparently not a place near where he can get anything. I never saw such a desolate, deserted-looking place! Not a cottage nor a house in sight!"

"Where is he?" she asked, lifting up the teapot and the cup with a readiness that showed she was accustomed to acts of charity.

"Under that clump of firs at the end of the ravine. I heard him groan as I passed. I've been trying to get him round; but he's starved, and has no more strength than a kitten!"

"Bring that box," she said, already out in the ravine; "there are some biscuits and cake in it. I haven't anything else." And then she hurried off in the direction of the fir-trees.

The young man caught up the little tin box and followed.

He took the teapot out of her hand.

"You will scald yourself," he said. "Oh!" in concerned tones, "the confounded stuff has gone all over your hand already!"

"Oh, it isn't anything!" with a touch of impatience. "And I am sure I could walk quicker with it than you; I know its peculiarities," she said, as they hurried along.

"It seems to have—a few," he said, as, waving it out of her reach, the lid suddenly slipped into the pot, and splashed some of the scalding fluid over his own hand.

"Oh!" as she saw the accident; "it is an odd one, and doesn't fit properly. It is a most tiresome teapot. I had better run on and tell the poor man that the tea is coming."

But he started running, too.

It was not an ordinary position in which he found himself.

At another time the smart young hussar, keenly sensitive to ridicule, might have hesitated before setting off to run with a lidless teapot full of hot tea in one hand, and a tin of biscuits in the other. But for the moment he had no consciousness of the slightly ridiculous appearance he might be making, as he ran along by the side of the light-footed, white-capped girl, with her serious eyes and sweet mouth. When they reached the clump of firs that stood at the farther entrance to the glen, they found that the tramp had raised himself from the ground, and sat leaning his back against the trunk of one of the trees. He looked a pitiable enough object; ragged, bare-foot, dirty, unkempt. His bearded face, thin and drawn, was deadly white; and as he leaned with closed eyes against the bole of the fir-tree, he looked so ghastly that a faint exclamation of intense pity broke from Priscilla.

The man heard it and opened his eyes. As they stared at her, into their dulness came a faint, startled wondering. His lips moved; but he seemed to check himself, and turned his head uneasily away.

"I have brought you something to eat," she said, her sweet voice full of pitying gentleness.

"I'm thirsty," he muttered, hoarsely.

"Here's something for you to drink, too," she said, holding up her hand for the cup into which the young man had poured some tea.

Something like a gleam of pleasure lightened the tramp's face, and he turned his head with more energy to look at the cup she held up to him.

"Tea," the light faded from his face. "Isn't there anything in it?" he growled, feebly.

"Milk!" Her face fell. "I'm very sorry, but I haven't any—I never take any in my tea; but it'll do you good all the same," coaxingly.

"Milk," the faintest glimmer of humour lighting the disgusted disappointment in his eyes, "I don't like my tea without—milk. But I suppose it is better than nothing," with a shudder of disgust.

"I should say it was," said the young man, calmly; "anyway, it is more than you deserve, I suspect."

Priscilla looked up at him reproachfully. Under the circumstances she considered the speech brutal.

"Shall I run and get him some—milk? It's a pity to spoil his cup of tea," said the young man, obligingly.

Priscilla turned back indignantly to the tramp, who was feebly trying to lift the cup to his lips. She rested her pretty white fingers on the man's dirty hands to steady them. The young hussar apparently could not stand that, for he dropped suddenly on his knees on the other side of the man, and taking the cup out of the trembling, dirty hands, held it to the man's lips himself.

"I think you had better move a little farther off," he said, with cynical suggestion to Priscilla; "the wind blows towards you!"

"How can you?" exclaimed Priscilla, under her breath, looking with indignant eyes across the disreputable specimen of humanity lying stretched between them to the brutal young Samaritan on the other side.

"That's better," said the tramp, in his faint, hoarse voice, "it puts a little life in—a fellow—though there isn't any—milk in it—give us some more—of the stuff," the adjective preceding the last word being lost in his beard.

The young hussar held out the cup for Priscilla to fill. The tramp, the cup again held to his lips by the young man, drank off a second cup, and then enquired if they had not anything to give a fellow to eat, after drenching him with all that stuff. But he was distinctly gaining strength, and mingled with her pity, there grew up a conviction in Priscilla's mind that he was rather a disagreeable person, though she carefully avoided meeting the eyes of her fellow-Samaritan to encourage him in his same decidedly unfavourable opinion.

She took out some biscuits, which she gave the tramp. He ate them greedily, and asked for more. She had heard that when people are starving they should be ed carefully, and when he again demanded a third supply she could not help looking at her companion in charity. He met her questioning gaze with one of preternatural gravity.

"He'll eat the whole boxful," he said, esignedly.

"Oh! I don't mind that; but is it good or him?" she asked.

"Good!" The tramp suddenly sat up nd seized the box for himself. "You'd eat anything, I guess, if you had been twenty-four hours without a mouthful passing your lips," and he once more ravenously attacked the biscuits and cakes. In a moment or two the tin was empty. He held out the cup for some more tea.

"Give it to him," said Priscilla, who was beginning to feel slightly hysterical.

The young man drained the last drop of Priscilla's afternoon tea into the outstretched cup. The tramp finished it at one gulp.

"It's better than nothing," he said, "though there wasn't any—milk in it," with a hoarse attempt at a laugh. "I'll be getting on now again," he said, feebly stumbling to his feet. "No, I can't rest any longer. I've got friends I want to call on down there," with another gleam of sardonic humour in his eyes. "I'll just push on. I'm much obliged to you," raising his hat to Priscilla, with a suggestion in the movement of a past culture. Then he turned on his heel and shuffled on down the ravine, not taking the slightest notice of the young man, who, after all, had been the first to come to his assistance.

That young man did not appear to miss his gratitude. Indeed, the only feeling he had towards him was a desire to hasten his departure with a vigorous application of his own well-shaped boot.

"Disgusting brute!" he murmured, looking at the empty teapot and biscuit-box. "I'm afraid you have lost your afternoon tea," he said, ruefully, to Priscilla, "and it was all my fault."

The girl broke into a merry peal of laughter.

"The worst of it is the poor creature hasn't had half enough—I would like to have given——," she stopped, flushing.

"You needn't regret anything," grimly. "That gentleman is quite well able to provide for himself. I am only sorry that——"

"Oh, it doesn't matter at all. Besides," with a little mischievous mockery, remembering her aunt's tirades against that afternoon indulgence, "I dare say I am better without it. I only hope it won't undermine his constitution."

He laughed, and picked up the cup and teapot and empty biscuit-box.

"I will carry them back for you," he said; then, hastily, as he thought she was about to decline his services, "I shouldn't like to leave you alone till that villainous-looking gentleman is well off the scene."

"Oh, I am safe enough. I come here continually, and have never even seen a tramp till to-day," she said, brightly, as they walked back to the spot where she had made her tea.

"You know this place well?" looking at her a little curiously.

"Very well. I have been here nearly every day this summer. I shan't be able to come here so often now," she added, with a touch of petulant regret, "now those people at the Hall have come back!"

"Why?"

"Because I shall have to take a much longer round, and I shan't have time to get here. They are true Dacres; they are already asserting their rights."

"What have they done?" innocently.

"Oh, shut up the gate that the poor people have used for so long as a right of way. I suppose no one will be allowed to go into the woods now. Isn't it wonderful how people can be so horrid and selfish?" looking at him with bright, indignant eyes.

"It is," he said, gravely. "But," hesitatingly, with a very sober look on his face, "couldn't you still come this way, even if the gate is shut—like you did this afternoon, for instance?"

She started and stared at him, then coloured scarlet.

"You saw me?" half under her breath.

"I saw a five-barred gate," he said, gravely, but something twinkled in his eyes.

"Oh!" She did not know whether to laugh or to be angry. The laughter prevailed, and he joined in it.

"I really couldn't go back—especially as this will perhaps be the last time I shall be here for a very long time!" with that note of regret again in her voice.

"Why?" he asked, quickly.

"Because there is no longer a right of way for us poor luckless mortals who live outside the charmed circle of the Dacre family," with a fine mockery. "Thank you, I am very much obliged." They had reached the rocks, which she had converted into an afternoon retreat. "Would you put the things down there, please?"

There was no encouragement in her face or voice for him to linger. He set down the teapot and biscuit-box.

"I would rather wait till that unpleasant-looking tramp was farther off," he said, reluctantly.

"Oh, I am quite safe, thank you."

"Well, I'll go and get that gate opened for you at once. It's a mistake, you know. I am sure my aunt doesn't know anything about it. She wouldn't inconvenience people for the world!"

He felt that it was about as big a one as he could tell. His aunt would certainly not keep that gate open for any one's convenience but her own.

She looked at him a little startled.

"You are—I am afraid I have said more than I ought to have done," she said, with a half-embarrassed, half-mischievous smile. "But——"

"You don't care a bit," he laughed with keen amusement. "You are quite right. It would be an awful shame shutting up the place after the people have used it for so long. I am sure it is a mistake. I'll go and speak about it at once. Perhaps I ought to introduce myself. I am Reginald Dacre, Mrs. Dacre's nephew."

If he expected her to give her name in return he was disappointed.

She bowed gravely. He lingered a second, then, as she said nothing, raised his hat and turned away. But his effort to save her a long round was wasted. When he returned to the ravine half an hour later, the white-capped young lady had vanished. He felt unreasonably disappointed, considering that he had only seen her for the first time barely two hours ago. As he returned to the woods through the now unclosed gate he met one of the gardeners, and after a little talk about the property asked him a question.

"Do you mean a pretty young lady who wears a white sort of cap, sir?" the man said, with a pleased smile. "They call her little 'White-cap' about here, and a great favourite she is, too. Anybody would do anything for her. She is Miss Colmore, sir, and she lives with her aunt, a Mrs. Joliffe, a very religious kind of lady, who has the old mill-house down by the river there, sir, and—if I may make bold enough to say so—solemn enough to take the heart out of any one. It must be pretty dismal for Miss Colmore sometimes, we think, sir."

"Little White-cap," thought the young man, "I hope we shall meet again."

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By ESMÈ STUART.

Author of "A Faire Damsell," "Joan Vellacot," "Kestell of Greystone," etc. etc.

CHAPTER XXV. CHRISTMAS EVE.

To some English girls the novel life of a German school might not be without its attractions; but Grace and Sibyl had spent all their days in comparative retirement, and this publicity and the undisguised astonishment they called forth, made the shy girls miserable. In this respect Grace suffered the most, for Sibyl was not shy by nature; but she bitterly resented being treated like a child.

The rule of Fräulein Storme was strict in school hours. She was a thorough martinet, not caring personally for her pupils, but bent on their advancement. The German tongue was another source of trouble, for, though they could read it, when the loud, hurried, gurgled sounds were hurled at them, they failed to find any sense in them; but they had made up their minds to conquer this difficulty, and bravely kept to German except in their own little chamber. The pupils were all their juniors; but, true to their German training, they were well-drilled learning machines. At fourteen or fifteen the education of each one was completed, and then the Fräulein went home to learn the mysteries of keeping a well-ordered house. Books were put away and the kitchen apron donned. An excellent system for making educated housewives and for crushing out originality.

A week of this routine work made Grace and Sibyl feel that they were sadly ignorant in many respects, and they had now such hard work that their real troubles were partly driven out of their minds; and so, in spite of themselves, life was not without its compensations. They seldom went out of doors, for the weather changed, snow fell, and the old town put on a thick, white mantle. Then the pupils went home full of anecdotes about the English young ladies, who were so pretty and so silent, and of whom they stood much in awe.

Now succeeded a very sad, dull time for the strangers. Every German woman was occupied with thoughts about Christmas. This festival was at hand, and Christmas presents was the one topic of whispered conversation. Fräulein Storme's family soon filled up the forsaken rooms. Among them was the old mother, very wrinkled, very much bent, and very deaf. She did not know one word of English. Two more daughters came with her, both flat-faced and wearing spectacles, but highly educated and intelligent. Besides these there came a nephew and niece. The first time the sisters appeared at the dinner table, after the arrival of the guests, there was a long introduction and great staring, and then a chattering in quick German patois, of questions and compliments naturally addressed to dear "Anna" Storme. Sibyl thought it was like a volley of guns going off, and felt abashed by the curiosity she excited; and she did not half understand that it was all meant in kindness and politeness. The questions, however, she did not mean to answer, and resolutely shook her head when she did or when she did not understand; so that the guests soon addressed themselves to Grace, who did her best, in her halting German, to answer a hailstorm of enquiries.

Did she and her sister like Germany? Was not Fribourg a heavenly town? How well she spoke German—which was a fib—who had taught her? Had her Herr papa or her gracious mamma been in Germany? Here Anna Storme coughed and explained in patois that the ladies were orphans, and must not be questioned too closely about their relations. The old lady wished to have all the answers repeated to her, close to her ear, in very loud tones, whereupon she nodded kindly for several minutes at Sibyl and Grace, muttering something which they could not understand.

After the meal, which, this being holiday time, was interminable, Grace asked Fräulein Storme if they might do as they liked and take a walk in the town, whereupon the lady lifted up her hands and eyes, and said that was English ways; but in Fribourg, to walk alone in the town was terribly shocking! But remembering that she did not wish to accompany them, and that no one knew and fewer cared for these young ladies, she relented, and said that they might go to the Minster and the Platz. There would be no lessons this week; but they must converse to each other in German. After Christmas she would instruct them herself, as it was most important they should understand it as soon as possible. The truth was, the Fräulein wanted an English teacher by the time the school met again, and, by employing Grace or Sibyl, or both, she could save the salary of a mistress; for, she argued, they were too old to learn in her classes. The German girls would do nothing but stare at them or officiously offer to help them. Anything out of the routine was, in Fräulein Storme's eyes, a terrible sin; but the sin was mixed with a vast amount of self-interest.

Oh, the relief of being free from that round table full of staring eyes and ceaseless tongues! Grace felt as if she had been under hot fire, so she and Sibyl put on their stout English boots and went out, feeling that now at last they could breathe freely. There was plenty to be seen in the old town: the peasants flocked in for Christmas purchases; many hastened to the Minster to offer candles and prayers for their departed friends; and the costumes were so varied that it was a new and delightful sight.

"Grace, these Stormes are terribly curious. Why do they ask us so many questions? Isn't it nice to be rid of them?"

"I am sure they mean it kindly. We must try to like them, Sibyl, for, after all, they are our only friends."

"I don't think Fräulein Storme cares for us at all. Look at those women. What curious caps they are wearing! They are entering the Minster. Do come in."

It was a beautiful building, and its perfection was more easy to realise than that of the great Cologne Cathedral. The many chapels were now illuminated with candles, and decorated with artificial flowers, and crowds of peasants knelt before the shrines, all deep in earnest prayer. There was a joyful Christmas look about every one; greetings were exchanged; and children came to the Minster hand in hand, looking extraordinarily good, because they were afraid that Saint Nicholas would be spying out their behaviour, and that he would distribute his gifts accordingly. The Christmas-tree would not shower its presents upon them if they told a lie, or even a tiny fib, a few days before the festival.

When the sisters came out of the cathedral, Grace remarked:

"We had better ask the way to our own church. Fräulein said there was one. Nan would like us to do just as we did at home—I mean in England, wouldn't she, Sibyl?"

Sibyl shook her head disconsolately.

"After that, we will go in and write her long letters for Christmas Day. Oh, if only we could have Nan with us now—just for one hug." Grace's sweet face was full of that strange longing for love which is natural to youth. "Just one hug," she repeated.

After some hunting, and a good deal of questioning in pitiful German, returned by a plentiful amount of staring, they at last found their way to the English chapel.

"By the waters of Babylon we sat down and wept," could not have been spoken with more truth by the Jews, when they remembered their own fair Sion, than by these two, who dreamt of the old house on that wide moor, and of Nature in all her loveliness.

That daily walk was their one happiness now; they even ventured up the hill overlooking the town, where the trees were loaded with snow, so that the paths were not easily followed. But the view of the white-enveloped city, with its tall cathedral spire pieced and carved in a wondrous manner, was very lovely and very new to the country maidens.

Indoors there was the same persecution of questions whenever they ventured into the sitting-rooms. The German youth at once fell deeply in love with Sibyl. He was only fifteen, but very susceptible, having just read Werther; and the stout and very plain young niece poured out all her English vocabulary for the edification of Grace, whose patience was an encouragement to her to go on. The three sisters Storme disappeared into the kitchen, bent on bringing forth wonderful culinary triumphs for the Christmas dinner. They were all "advanced thinkers" in the matter of church-going, and considered it a mild waste of time, though proper for the young and unenlightened. Christmas for them meant a Christmas-tree, many wonderful cakes and good things, and long, long, happy gossips.

Yet they would have been kind to the strangers had they known how to set about it; at least, the old deaf "mama" often looked sympathetically out of her big spectacles at the silent "hüblich madchën"; and, at last, on Christmas Eve, when all were busy in a separate room getting ready for the Christmas-tree lighting—the sisters having been bidden to come and sit in the salon with the old "mama" till the tree was lighted—then, like some voice from the past, the old lady gathered up her thoughts and her best German, and said gently, in her shaky voice, to Grace, who sat listlessly waiting in the hot, dimly lighted chamber:

"You are sad, my children. This Christmas makes you long very much, I doubt not, for your own Heimath?"

"Ah, yes! we are sad," said Grace, slowly; "very sad, Fräu Storme; and we long, more than we can say, for our home."

"What is worse, we shall never, never see it again!" cried Sibyl, angrily. "What we feel now we shall feel all our lives—quite, quite miserable."

She spoke so loud and so vehemently that the old lady heard and understood; her withered, shaking hand sought tremblingly the golden orb of Sibyl's head that was near to her, for the girl had knelt down near to her to make her hear, and rested it on the pretty mass of fair hair.

"Ah! maiden, we are all strangers and foreigners, strangers, foreigners. I tell the daughters so; but I am too old to be listened to, too old for anything but the grave."

From this night sprang up a curious sympathy between the old Fräu and the young "strangers"—a kind word or a kind glance and smile, not often more; but Grace felt grateful for these, and by many a little thoughtful act testified her gratitude.

To return, however, to the Christmas-tree. What lights on it; what chattering round it; what exclamations about it, and what a present-giving! Grace and Sibyl felt that they had not properly understood all the importance of that glorious institution, and were loath to accept small presents that somehow had found their way on the tree even for them. The German heart expands on Christmas Eve, its thermometer makes a bound upward, whether they will it or no every one must be cheerful on that day. The youth had spent his last thaler on procuring a looking-glass for Sibyl, set in an ornamental frame. She was so beautiful, he thought, that the nicest thing she could gaze upon was her own heavenly face. Grace had a sober housewife and a pair of flower vases.

After the present-giving came the family dinner, and who can describe the scene? No alien pen could dare to undertake such a task. Suffice it to say that long before the end of the meal Grace felt inclined to go to sleep from sheer weariness at the length of the entertainment and clatter, and Sibyl amused herself by carrying on a mild flirtation with the student—her first attempt at this sort of amusement, and she found it decidedly amusing; at least it served to while away the time, and to make the German language more melodious in her ears.

One good thing about all this was the incessant German talk that was forced to go in at their ears. From sheer repetition a good deal filtered into their brains. Happily Nan had taught them a good deal, except the pronunciation; but this last would not have been perfected among the family of Fräulein Storme, though of course she herself spoke unexceptionable Deutsch, learnt in the right country, and at the most orthodox town.

"Ah," said the niece to Sibyl, when the good-night time had at last come, "have you ever spent such a Christmas before? Is it not heavenly?"

"No, never."

"Ah, no, of course not. There is no country where people are as happy as in Germany on Christmas Eve. Are not you glad and fortunate to have come here?"

Sibyl was spared answering by Grace's remark:

"You have all been very kind;" and the German girl went to bed glorying in her Vaterland, though a little jealous of her cousin's evident admiration for the beautiful Englander.

"Nevertheless, beauty is nothing compared to mind," she said, for she was considered to do honour to her native village, having an extraordinary memory for dates and a genius for classification of facts.

No, Grace and Sibyl never had spent a Christmas like this one; but to both of them rose the vision of the dear Hall, with the great logs of wood burning on the hearth, of Nan, of love of their own father, who spent Christmas with his girls, hearing them sing, or telling them adventures, while Nan sat there pleased at their happiness, and pleased when their efforts were praised. No, they had had no Christmas-trees or lengthy dinners; but they had had love and home, and they thought surely that is the true meaning of Christmas.

CHAPTER XXVI. NEW LODGINGS.

Once more the German souls relapsed into the usual routine of everyday life, and the excitement being over, Fräulein Storme, I am afraid chiefly for her own ends, undertook to teach her charges the German tongue as it should be spoken, and with good success, for when the Fräulein meant some one to learn something they were obliged to do it, her system was so excellent and her intelligence so abnormally great. But how she kept them chained to their books! Even Grace, who was more patient though less clever than her sister, groaned in spirit, and nothing would have made her persevere but for that one object which both had so much at heart, and which was:

"When can we do without Mrs. Gordon's help?"

Every Sunday they went to their English chapel, and the old words fell pleasantly on Grace's ears; but nothing comforted Sibyl, she was more impatient than ever. On these days she longed inexpressibly to get home. Fribourg soon woke up to the fact that Fräulein Storme had two English prizes in the shape of grown-up young ladies. The officials made her send in their names to be entered at their bureau. The neighbours concluded she was well paid, and speculated how much she received, and all stared at the girls till the novelty wore off, after which they left off wondering.

But when the boarders came back and the day boarders trooped in, Grace learnt that she and her sister had made such wonderful progress that they knew quite enough to be able to teach Fräulein's pupils, and considering they were to teach English, this was not wonderful. Sibyl very nearly rebelled; she would not be ordered about by Fräulein Storme, if she were paid for by Mrs. Gordon; at least, she would have the benefit of it; and the pretty eyes and lips looked very angry till Grace showed her this was one way of getting on so as to be able in the future to do for themselves. Oh, the drudgery of teaching those quick or dull children to Sibyl—wild, free Sibyl; but she had spirit and courage too, and did it with a will. Indeed, the German girls soon found that the wonderfully beautiful English maiden was by no means as heavenly in temper as her looks implied. Grace, on the contrary, won hearts by her gentleness and her loving smiles; but both were well supported by Fräulein Storme, who knew that she had made an advantageous bargain, and feared that her teachers might rebel or point out to her that she was saving money at their expense if they found their lives too much of a drudgery.

The daily classes were wearisome in the extreme to poor Sibyl, who several times seriously entertained the idea of running away from the Storme family; but then better thoughts prevailed. How could she dream of leaving poor Grace to fight the battle alone? Then followed remorse, and she called herself a selfish wretch, but loved her tasks none the more.

Whenever the sisters were not teaching they were learning, and they could indulge in no more solitary walks; the long line of girls had to be accompanied, and Fräulein Storme, who hated walking, always found some good reason why the sisters should head and tail the procession without her.

But the end was gained; with their previous knowledge they found that in three months they could understand everything, and could almost say anything they wished in German. That was the first real joy that brightened their life.

The bigger room had never been foun by the Fräulein, so they still shared t tiny chamber; but habit makes secon nature, and they became reconciled t want of space. One day Sibyl said:

"Grace, when can we leave this place I can't help hating it, because I remembe how miserable we were here when we firs came. I feel so much happier now that this terrible German speech has entered my brain." And Sibyl tapped her pretty forehead.

"We must wait till the spring. At Easter the pupils will fly again, and then——"

"But suppose she will not let us go?" suggested Sibyl, this dreadful supposition coming into her head.

"She cannot prevent us—that is, if we tell her we are living on charity. Little Gretchen Hanson was telling me yesterday that her mother has some rooms to let."

Gretchen Hanson was a day boarder, whose mother was very poor, but much respected.

"Can't we manage to keep ourselves? It is very hard, but it is better than living on her money."

Then Grace disclosed Nan's parting gift, which she had put away and forgotten. This would help them to begin life, and after that—"Why, after that, courage, Sibyl, darling," she whispered.

Nan had written to them several times, giving her address but few particulars, only her brief notes were full of longing after them, which she tried hard to hide for fear of unsettling them. On her side, Grace wrote to Nan regularly every week, Sibyl often adding to these epistles. The great plan of earning their own living was communicated to Nan, but she said: "Try by all means, and if you fail, write to me; but wait till May."

Thus it happened that the sisters once more began their work, and Sibyl imperiously led the girls by her strong will, and also by her beauty.

The spring came, slowly but surely, shedding a special beauty on the town, with its hills, its squares, its cathedral, and its busy population. Gayer attire was donned, the spire came out with its new beauties, the hills, having shaken off the snow, slowly put on their green shades, and the evergreen firs put forth tender shoots.

It was just when the pupils also flitted that Grace, taking her courage in her hand, begged to speak to the Fräulein. She was very gracious, and said, "Ah, certainly," and then Grace, followed by Sibyl, went into that terrible parlour.

"Fräulein, we are going to surprise you."

"So? Nothing that you find fault with, I hope. Are you not happy?"

"We find fault with nothing, Fräulein; but, you know, we are not children, we lost our childhood before we came here. Do you think we teach well?"

"Well? Wonderful! Such intelligence, such earnestness I have never met before." The poor Fräulein never guessed the trap thus laid for her.

"I am glad you say that, Fräulein; Sibyl and I have done our best, but——"

"Surely your best, it is very goot."

"But we want to know, too, whether Mrs. Gordon pays you well for us?"

"Yes, goot, I say; but I will take some off for your services; I promised I would." The Fräulein felt wonderfully honest as she said this.

"But you must not do that, because we want to leave you."

Fräulein Storme threw up her hands.

"Leave me! What ingratitude, what monsters! What other home of education has my name, my reputation? I have treated you as my own children, I have cherished you, and you wish to leave me! You are snakes in my bosom, and I took you for doves."

Sibyl nearly laughed, but Grace was in dire perplexity, for she hated giving pain to any one.

"You don't understand, Fräulein. We do not complain at all, and I hope if we cause you any loss you will make Mrs. Gordon repay you, only we cannot live any longer on her money. We do not like her, and she is not a near relation enough for us to accept anything from her willingly." Tears stood in Grace's eyes, and Fräulein began to have a faint notion of the meaning of her words. She would have liked to offer to keep them for their services free of Mrs. Gordon's gold; but she could not quite make herself do this, for her hopes of gain were sadly shattered.

"But what will you do? You cannot live on air; who is to help you, or start you here? If you wish to teach, you will fail, I warn you."

"We hope not; but if we do——"

"You are mad, wicked children. Go to bed, and think better of it to-morrow. Have I not sacrificed my life for you, received you at great inconvenience to myself?"

It was no good storming; they were young, bent on their own plan, and the next day Fräulein took up the idea of propriety. It was wrong that two maidens should have no care, no protection, and they would be sure to repent it. These prophecies made them sad enough, but the deed must be done.

Sibyl was determined that no more of Mrs. Gordon's money should keep them when they had the power to help themselves. Of course, after this Fräulein Storme was very frigid to them, she would hardly address a word to them, but began writing many letters. Among these she wrote to her mother and to her sisters, also to some English friends, begging them to send her out an English teacher at once—one who would want very little or no money for the sake of learning Fräulein Storme's pre-eminently beautiful language. She put off writing to Mrs. Gordon, hoping the sisters might change their mind after finding out the difficulties of their new venture.

Grace was not hopeful, not that she was less anxious than Sibyl to be free of Mrs. Gordon—the very name sent a little shiver of pain through her—but she had not Sibyl's impetuous faith; however, Nan had given leave—that was her one solace.

The same day the sisters started off to Fräu Hanson's house; it was up three pairs of stairs, in a house near the Marienstrasse Square. Little Gretchen opened the door, a small, fair child, with her hair drawn very tightly away from her forehead, and plaited in a pigtail. She was delighted to see her dear English teachers, and danced away to call her mother. The Fräu mama looked anything but what we should call ladylike; but Grace at once liked her face, a good, care-worn face, with all the light of youth gone out of it.

"We want to have two rooms, Fräu Hanson, for myself and my sister; we are very poor, but we mean to work for our living."

"We must work for it," put in Sibyl, and Fräu Hanson, turning towards the younger sister, shook her head slowly as she gazed at her face.

"You are too pretty, Fräulein, to go alone about the world; but you have a good sister, I see."

"Yes, the best in the world; we should be very sad without each other."

"But what about the two rooms, Fräu Hanson?"

"I have them, yes, yes; but——" She hesitated; the letting of her rooms helped to pay her rent, and now the taxes were so heavy. Suppose these girls could not or would not pay it, she could not turn them out of doors, for her little Gretchen made her tender-hearted. Was she wise in taking them in?

Sibyl saw the meaning of her pause sooner than Grace did.

"We have enough money to pay you for a year, indeed we have, and we will starve sooner than make you lose anything."

Fräu Hanson was ashamed that her mind had been read so easily, so she accounted for the hesitation in another way.

"But the Herr Professor above does not like to hear much noise; he is very particular, though he never, never minds about my rest being disturbed by his lodgers. They wear such very thick boots."

"And they run up and down so quick," added Gretchen, who had been listening to the conversation.

"But about the rooms?" again asked Grace, "I don't think we shall disturb the professor very much."

"You shall have them, Fräulein. Yes, yes, even if I should lose by it; and Gretchen says she will have no other teacher, so you must have her for the beginning of a class."

This was a piece of unexpected good fortune, and Grace thanked Fräu Hanson heartily. On the way back to Fräulein Storme, she said:

"Gretchen is a dear child; I am glad that we owe our good fortune to this little one, for I feel sure Fräu Hanson is a kind woman, and is very fond of her child."

But Sibyl was dreaming already of a fortune made, and of a house of their own, where Nan should come and live with them, while they should know nice people, and—and——

As they were turning the angle of the street, they came face to face with two gentlemen. One of them courteously raised his hat, and begged their pardon, of course looking at Sibyl, and both hastened to make way, whilst they must almost have heard Sibyl's exclamation:

"Oh, Grace, those are Englishmen. It is nice to see some countrymen. What a good-looking young man the one with a moustache was!"

"I only saw the other," said Grace, "and I thought I must have seen him before somewhere. Isn't it funny how one does have that feeling sometimes? I am always thinking so in church on Sunday just because the faces are English."

"I do feel a little happier now, Grace; you must write at once to Mrs. Gordon and tell her we do not want her money; or let me write. Then we can forget all about her for ever."

HOW JACK SPENDS HIS CHRISTMAS.

A COMPLETE STORY.

FIVE men sat together in the gloomy forecastle of a little brig. The floor of the place sloped like the roof of a house, for the vessel lay in harbour, and, the tide being low, she had fallen over on to her bilge upon the mud. The hour was eight o'clock in the evening; darkness had some while since brought the work of the day to a close, and the five sailors, clean-washed and respectably dressed, were enjoying a pipe and a pannikin of grog in their little sea parlour. The fore-scuttle was shut, for the snow fell thickly outside, and the atmosphere of the interior was redolent of bilge-water, the fumes of the smouldering slush-lamp, the smell of tar, and hemp, and other marine stores. The men sat upon their sea-chests, leisurely blowing forth great clouds of smoke from short, sooty pipes. Conversation had flagged for the want of an animating topic, for these Jacks were weary of discussing their nautical grievances, so they smoked and drank with vacant minds, and did not prove very good company.

"Well," said one of them, presently, crushing the ashes in his pipe-bowl with his fore-finger, "so this here's Christmas Eve. It's a gay time, mates, for the likes of us, ain't it?"

"Christmas be blowed, says I!" exclaimed the boatswain of the brig, a great burly whiskerando, who went by the appellation of Darkey Dick; "what difference do it make to us, I should like to know? Why, strike me daft, mates, if I don't reckon it's an unlucky time for sailor men. Christmas!" he sneered; "that's all very well for folks as live where the shoes shine, or to please the kids at home; but for seafaring people——"

"What I says is this," broke in a third sailor, speaking with his pipe between his teeth: "It don't matter much whether it's Christmas Day or any other blooming day; it's all the same thing to us men. Now, see here: to-morrow's Christmas, ain't it? Werry good! What's to be our Christmas cheer? Whilst the little children's still overhauling of their socks to see what Santy Clause — as they calls him — has stowed away in 'em, and whilst the growd-up folks is still snug abed, we shall be hauling out for to go to sea, in weather cold enough to perish the topmost hanks of a Greenlan' man's jib, and, like as not, with a gale o' wind blowing."

"Maybe, mate; maybe," mumbled another of the little group. "This here Santy Clause ain't no pal o' mine, for one, I'll take my oath."

"I've always took perticler notice myself," said the fifth man, after a prolonged pull at his pannikin, "that, as Darkey Dick there says, Christmas is an unlucky time for sailors. Tell'ee what," cried he, as though suddenly struck with an idea, "it' ud be a good way of passing the time for all of us to tell where we was and what we was a-doing of last Christmas Day. We'll each spin our yarn; only," added he, pulling out a huge silver watch, "let them be short 'uns, for I'm a goin' to turn in early, mates."

A murmur of assent was raised by the men.

"You begin, Joe, then," said the boatswain, whilst the others cried, "Ay, let young Joe Pringle start!" Thereupon, relighting his pipe, and adjusting himself in an easy position, the sailor who had made the suggestion cleared his throat and commenced as follows:

"Last Christmas Day, mates, I was aboard a little bit of a barque, in which I had shipped as ordinary seamen, and we was a-lying brought up in the Downs. At daybreak it was snowing a little, with a fresh wind blowing up from the sou'-west, which made the skipper cuss and swear because it obliged him to keep his anchors down. But the weather then was nothing to take any notice of, and some of us even reckoned on getting a run ashore during the day and having a bit o' jollity at Deal. There was a crowd of wessels of all sorts and sizes lying around us, waiting for a fair start like ourselves. But after breakfast, when we came up on deck, we found a blinding snow-squall driving along, and the wind piping up stronger every minute. 'No going ashore for us to-day,' says we, looking at the seas, which began to run long and curly, 'unless so be we parts our cables and goes ashore in a manner which we'd rather be hexcused!' Well, the cap'n comes out of the cabin and takes a look round him, and then, not liking the appearance of the weather, sings out to us to pay out chain and give her plenty of scope that she may ride more easily. Next, he orders the yards to be braced sharp up to relieve the strain aloft, and by the time that was done, and we had made all snug, the wind was blowing a regular hard gale. Nothing happened during the morning, but about one o'clock, when we was below in the fok'sle at dinner, there comes a heavy thumping on the scuttle, and the mate sings out, 'Tumble up, men; tumble up for your lives!' We all rushed up on deck, and there the first thing I saw was a great lump of a light ship blowing right down athwart our hawse, growing out of the snowstorm, so to speak, not fifty fathoms ahead of us. I could see what had happened as soon as I looked; she had gone adrift, and was now coming along to foul us. We fell to shouting and bawling like a lot of madmen, and they shouted back at us, but not a bit could they do, seeing as their wessel wasn't under control; and as for our getting out of their road, why there wasn't time for us to so much as slip the cables. Being very light, and showing her broadside to the gale, she drove down upon us like a balloon. There was a tremendous crash, and we all ran aft to be out of the road of the falling spars. Our bowsprit and jibboom, foretopmast and mainroyalmast, were carried away by the blow, and you never heard such a clatter as was raised all about our ears. But worse mischief than that was done, for the blow snapped both our cables like pipestems, and started a whole lot of wooden ends, so that when we sounded the well we found the barque making water fast. What became of the wessel that had cut us down I don't know; she went clear of us, and we lost sight of her in the smother.

"Now that we were adrift we went blowing away to loo'ard like an empty cask. We turned to and cleared away the wreckage as best we could, and then we sets the fores'l, the skipper having some notion of running round the Foreland and bringing up again in Margate Roads, which 'ud give us time to bend on a new anchor and chain. But it was so thick with the snow that we couldn't see three ship's lengths ahead. I was standing forward clearing away the raffle all about the knight-heads, when suddenly I catches sight of white water, and afore I could sing out plump we goes ashore, and there we was, hard and fast upon the Knoll Sand, to the nor'rad of the Goodwins. Considering the state of the weather, we was now in what the Yankees calls a quandary. We'd got no means of signalling our distress; it was so thick that the Nor' San's Head lightship, which we knowed must be somewheres near, couldn't see us, and we knew that the barque wouldn't hold together very long in such a sea as was now pounding her. Well, we very soon saw that if we didn't all want to be swept overboard we must take to the rigging, for the spray was flying over the wessel's hull like clouds of smoke; so all hands of us got into the mizzen shrouds, that mast seemingly being the safest, and there we lashed ourselves. You may reckon, mates, what our sufferings was when I tell ye that we was eight hours in the rigging afore the weather cleared and the Ramsgate lifeboat came and took us off. My feet and hands were so frost-bitten that it took me a month's lying-up in the hinfirmary, when I got ashore, to make me fit to get about again. And after I came out I found myself without a penny piece, for all that I owned in the world had been in my chest, and that was lost in the barque. So that was how I spent my last Christmas, lads," and, in a sudden passion at the recollection, he snapped the clay pipe he had been smoking, and flung the pieces on to the deck.

"Well," said the boatswain, reflectively, "Joe Pringle didn't have a perticler gay time of it, I allow; but I don't know as he was much worse off than me. I'd been out o' work for a tidy bit, and the shot in the locker was beginning to get middling low, when I falls in with an old chum of mine, and he offers me for to ship aboard a barge to go across to the French coast. If it hadn't been that I was pretty hard up, I don't reckon I should have been very willing to go in a wessel of that sort, from Bristol to Cherbourg, in the month of December. However, the owner of the barge offered me good money, and so I accepted, and two days afore Christmas away we goes out of the Avon, with the craft loaded so deep with Bath stone—a likely sort of cargo, lads—that her deck amidships was pretty nearly awash. We had contrairy winds beating down the Bristol Channel, and when Christmas Day broke we was away out in the Chops, about half-way across to the French coast, and ratching along under spritsail and mizzen, with a heavy, lumpish sea rolling up from the Atlantic. It was snowing a trifle, just as Joe there says; but this soon came on faster, making the air thick as white wool all about the barge. There were three hands of us, and the hour being about eleven o'clock, we were all on deck, one steering, and t'other two sitting in the shelter to loo'ard of the bulwarks. The old bucket was washing along through it in proper style, for we had lost time to make up for, and were holding all on, when by rights we should have reefed down long ago. The lee-boards was over to prevent her sagging too much, and she went splashing along, with the water nearly up to her hatch-coamings, and raising a regular smother o' froth all about her great square bows. I was sitting along with a young chap named Job Trot, and he was just a-saying that the wind was freshening yet, when the barge suddenly seemed to lie right flat down upon the water; her dark red sails stooped and stooped till the foam washed up to them. I felt myself fetch away and go sliding along the deck, and then the next thing was I found myself in the bitter cold sea, with my two mates striking out close to me, and the capsized barge settling away out of sight. We was all pretty good swimmers, but, having on our oilskins and sea-boots, we couldn't reckon to keep afloat very long, 'specially seeing what a nasty sea was running. But it so happened that the barge's dinghy had been stowed just inside the bulwarks without being lashed, and when the craft turned turtle and foundered, the boat floated off. We struck out strong, and the three of us managed to reach her and scrambled aboard. She was a little bit of a boat, not more'n twelve foot long, and with ne'er so much as an oar in her. So here was we, about twelve o'clock on Christmas morning, with the wind fast rising to a gale, the snow driving in clouds, and the seas a-getting higher every minute, adrift in a dinghy that was about fit to navigate a mill-pond, without sup or bite, wet through and freezing, and the land Lord knows how far off, whichever way ye might head.

"Well, we all lay down in the bottom of the boat, that being the likeliest way to keep her floating right side up in that heavy sea. But we found we dursn't stay long like this, or the snow that was falling in flakes pretty nigh as big as your fist, would have buried us. Presently it came on dark, and then the weight of the wind took off a bit, and the snow stopped falling. But the cold, mates, the cold of that night! We couldn't move for it; couldn't speak for it; couldn't feel for it! When dawn broke it found us more dead than alive. I raised my head and looked round the sea, and by-'n-by, when the dull grey light had brightened a bit, I saw a steamboat heading so as to pass within a little distance of us. She stopped her engines, and the man on her bridge shouted to us to come alongside; but presently, seeing that we did not move, and guessing our condition, I suppose, they lowered a boat and took us all on board. One of my mates died the same night from exposure, t'other has been laid up pretty nigh ever since, and, as for me, I'm always a-getting of the rheumatics since that there blooming day, which'll be to-morrow a year."

"Are ye done, Dick?" cried another sailor, finding that the boatswain paused.

"Ay, Ted, I've done."

"Well, then, I'll just give you my experiences last Christmas Day. I don't reckon that they're so bad as either yourn or Joe's, but still I allow they ain't much in accord with the notion landsmen seems to have of the jollity that goes on in ships' fok'sles at this here festive season. I was aboard a Liverpool ship named the 'Euxine.' We was twelve hands, when twice that number wouldn't have been any too many to work such a lump of a craft as this here wessel was. But short-handedness wasn't our only trouble. The wessel's provisions wasn't fit to give to a hog. When ye'd done a-knocking the weevils out of the biscuits there was nothen left; and many a cigar-case and match-box have I made from bits of the beef that was served out to us, ay, and polished 'em, too, afterwards, so tough was the stuff. Things had been going slowly from bad to worse aboard that there 'Euxine' ever since we sailed. The skipper was a bully, the two mates took their cue from him and treated us like dogs instead of men; and, to make matters better, we hadn't been a week out afore the wessel started to leak like blazes, which necessitated us pumping of her out every four hours. Well, on Christmas Day we was somewheres to the west'ard of the Canaries, going along with all plain sail set, the weather being middling fine. I was on the poop, engaged upon some trifling bit of a job there which I don't quite recollect, when the chief mate, whose watch it was, sings out to me: 'Hi! you! how is it that the binnacle lamp ain't in its place?' I drops my work, and looking round at him, says: 'The binnacle lamp ain't got nothen to do with me. I've not seen or touched it, and,' says I, 'begging of your pardon, sir, but I'll trouble you to keep a civiler tongue in your head when you addresses me,' I says. 'Ho-oh!' cries he, 'that's it, is it? That's the time o' day, eh? Sarce from a cove like you!' and he goes on a-calling me all the hinjurious tarms he could think on. Now it so happens that whilst he was talking in this way the skipper comes up through the companion, and hearing what was going forward, sings out: 'Mr. Mack,' says he, 'what's that man been a-doing?' 'Mutiny, sir,' says the mate, turning and touching his cap; 'mutiny, or I'm a Dutchman!' Well, lads, you may reckon how my hump was up by now. I chucks down the marline-spike I had in my hand, and stepping right up to the mate, I says, 'Mr. Mack,' says I, 'you're a —— liar!' He falls back a bit, being a cur at heart, and looks round to the skipper as much as to say, 'ye see how it is, sir?' I looks round, too, and there I sees all hands gathering in the waist, being ripe for trouble, seeing what villainous grub and hard usage had been given 'em. The capt'n was a very wiolent-tempered man, and seeing me step up to the mate, defiant-like, he rushes at me, and catching hold of my collar, slewed me round, singing out for Mr. Mack to tell the carpenter to come and put me in irons. 'Hands off, sir!' says I. 'Hands off!' says he; 'I'll hands off ye,' with which he ups foot and gives me a thundering kick. I twists clear of him in a jiffy, and afore he knew what I would be at, I'd hit him fair between the eyes and knocked him sprawling right across the cabin skylight. On seeing this the men down on the main-deck gives a bit of a cheer, and sings out that I had done very well, and that they'd stand by me. Well, if it hadn't been mutiny afore, it was mutiny now plain enough. I was standing near the head of the poop ladder, 'splaining to the men how it sarved the skipper very well right, when the mate comes sneaking up behind me, and like the cur that he was, he hits me a blow over the back of the head, fit to fell an ox, with a belaying-pin, which he'd whipped out of the spider-poop round the mizzen-mast. Down I went, falling right on to the main-deck, and the wonder is to me, mates, when I come to think of it, instead of only breaking my leg I didn't break my neck. I went into a swound after that there fall, and when I came to myself I was lying in my hammock with my leg as stiff as a marline-spike, and my head feeling as though a ton weight was a-pressing down upon it. My mates told me that when they saw the mate clip me over the head in that fashion, they rushed upon him and pummelled him so that he now lay in his berth pretty nigh half dead, the skipper lying where I had knocked him all the time this was going on, being stunned by his own fall. I was ten days in my hammock, and then when I was able to get up on deck again I wasn't no good aloft owing to my broken leg. Shortly after this we was a-lying one night becalmed near Sierra Leone, and having had more'n enough of the 'Euxine,' six of us turned to and bound and gagged the officer of the watch, and then quietly lowered one of the quarter-boats, stowed her with grub enough to last us a week, and pulled away for the land. In the morning we fell in with a steamboat homeward bound from the Cape, and she took us aboard and landed us as shipwrecked mariners at Southampton. So now, lads, I've told ye what happened to me last Christmas Day."

"Let me see," said the fourth seaman, puffing reflectively at his pipe, "where was I twelve-month ago come to-morrow? Oh yes, I remember now! Well, the yarn ain't a very long un. I'd arrived home from a West India voyage about six weeks before, and after being paid off, had been cruising about Bristol on the look-out for another job. But ne'er a berth could I get. I'd go down to the Shipping Office in Queen's Square regularly every morning, and hang about there till I was sick and tired of it. The crowd was too great; there was between three and four hundred men in the office at times, all out of work, and most of 'em furriners—chaps as was willing to ship for nothen a month and find theirselves." (A loud growl of approval.) "Well, I was never so much down on my luck in all my life. The shot in my locker kept growing lower and lower, and all in my chest that was worth pawning had already gone up the spout. The chest itself was the last thing to go; I got four bob on it; and this, together with the clothes I stood up in—of which these here trousers is the remains," said he, digressively, pointing to the well-worn pilot-cloth garments upon his legs—"was all I had left in the world. This trifle o' money carried me on to the day afore Christmas; and then, having paid for my lodging, I found myself regularly hove up in the wind's eye, without a farden in my pockets. Ye may reckon that I ain't got very lively recollections of last Christmas, when I tell ye, mates, that I never tasted food nor drink the whole blooming day long, and that I was tramping about the streets from eight o'clock in the morning till ten o'clock at night, with the snow falling thick all the time. Christmas!" he sneered, an acidulated expression entering his weather-beaten countenance, whilst he sucked hard at his pipe. "What's the good of talking of it? 'Taint meant for the likes of us. But let Jim spin his yarn; perhaps he's got something a bit cheerfuler to tell us. Heave ahead, mate!"

"To-morrow'll be a hanniversary with me, I'm blowed if it won't," began the sailor called Jim, with a broad, ironical grin overspreading his bewhiskered face. "If the story could be writ down by parties as could spell, and as had learnt out of the grammar-book, blessed if I don't think it 'ud make a first-class yarn. I was working my way home from Calcutta in a big, teak-built ship called the 'Rajah.' I can't tell you what was our situation exactly when Christmas Day broke, but you may reckon that we was just about in the spot where wessels usually lose the south-east trades, and get into them latitudes known as the Doldrums. I don't recollect what our cargo was, except that I know there was a very great deal of cocoa-nut oil amongst it, for one thing. It was a fine enough day, with a light air just a-blowing the ship quietly along. I was at work up on the cro'-jack yard, the hour being maybe about ten o'clock. Presently I takes notice of a kind of hazy vapour a-floating up betwixt me and the main-tops'l, making the canvas swim, as 'twere. I was wondering what was the cause of this, when I sees the mate, who was pacing the poop under me, stop short all on a sudden, and seem to fall a-sniffing; and then he calls out something to a man on the main-deck, which I didn't hear; and the man he drops his work, and falls sniffing, too; and then he cries out: 'Yes, sir, it's fire! The ship's afire!' Well, the alarm was raised, and all was commotion in a minute; people running about and bawling out; every man giving of his orders all at the same time; the skipper rushing up out of the cabin and telling the hands to keep cool, for there wasn't no danger; the head-pump being rigged and the hose got along; and all the likes of that. Well, when the crew came to lift the main-hatch—phew! You never see such a suffocating mass of smoke as puffed up out of it, turning the sea all round dark with its shadow as it spread out, and choking us back from the hatch with our eyes a-watering and our throats smarting. The moment I saw that, I felt it was all U-P with the old ship. We worked away, doing our best to keep the fire under; but, Lor'! what chance had we, seeing how hinflammable the cargo was, and the little dribblings of water we was able to pour down the hold with our one hose and the buckets? The ship bust out into a blaze for'ard all on a sudden; and on this we took fright, expecting the decks to blow up under our feet, and made a rush aft for the boats. Scarcely waiting to pitch a bag o' biscuit and a breaker o' water into the gig, four of us lowered her, and sliding hand over hand down the falls, we got in and shoved off. The rest of the crew followed in the quarter-boats. We pulled a little way clear of the wessel, and then lay watching of her. Land o' love, how she blazed up, to be sure! The roaring of the flames was like thunder, and the air, even a quarter of a mile off, was so hot that we were forced to take to our oars and row further away. Half an hour after we'd left her there wasn't a spot of deck which wasn't burning; the sails caught, and from truck to water-line she was just a sheet of crimson flame, with the black smoke pouring up and overcasting the heavens with its great heavy clouds. It made terribly sharp work, to be sure, did that there fire. The masts fell one after another, hissing like millions of snakes as they dropped into the water. All of a sudden there was a dull kind of a bang, such as a gun fired a long way off might make, and all the after-part of the ship was blown right up in the air, looking for all the world like a set-piece o' fireworks; and then the hull, which was pretty nigh gutted by this time, gave several heavy lurches, and slowly foundered, the flames roaring something horrible as the water rushed in and put 'em out.

"We kept company all the rest of the day; but when night fell, a bit of a breeze sprang up, and then when the morning came the other boats had disappeared, and we was alone upon the sea. Well, the first thing that we discovered was that somebody had left the bung out of the breaker of fresh water, and that it had been haccidentally turned over, emptying every drain of it out over the bag of biscuits, and, besides spoiling them, leaving us without a drop o' drink on a part of the hocean where, I needn't tell ye, mates, the bite of the sun makes a man thirsty even to think on. But we didn't make much of our situation at first, hoping to be picked up by a passing craft, or, at least, reckoning to fall in with one of t'other boats.

"Soon after daybreak, however, it fell a sheet calm, and then we knew that nothen but a steamer could heave in sight, and we was miles and miles too far to the west'ard to look for them. Our sufferings that day was something fearful. There was no shelter to be had from the blazing sun, and the mere knowing that we was without drink made a man the thirstier. I baled the water out of the boat's bilge and tasted it, but it was salt as the sea itself; and mad as I felt, I still had sense enough left to know better than to drink it.

"Night came on, and the air turned cooler when the sun was gone and the dew began to fall. Presently I sees one of the men stand up, take the empty tin-can which served as a baler, fill it with sea-water, and swallow it right down afore I could stop him. I pretty well knew what'ud happen after that, and sure enough, about three o'clock in the morning, he falls stark mad and tries to stab a man with his sheath-knife. We knocked him down and took his weapon away from him, and he lay quiet for a bit; but suddenly up he starts and dives clean overboard. He must ha' gone down like a lump o' stone, for we never once saw him rise again. Next day came, as hot and calm as the one before; and what our thirst and hunger was no mortal could know as hadn't suffered in a like manner. Ten days was we adrift in that there boat, mates, and when at last a little barquantine picked us up, they found me insensible, one of my mates dead, and t'other so weak that when they gave him drink and wittles it killed him right straight off."

"It's a good yarn, that," said Darkey Dick, "only what's it got to do along with Christmas Day?"

"Why," said the sailor Jim, with an expression of contempt, as though the question were too ridiculous to be answered, "didn't I tell ye that it was on Christmas Day that the 'Rajah' caught fire, and, therefore, Christmas Day was the beginning of all our fearful sufferings? But it'll be 'all hands' afore daylight to-morrow, so I'm a-going to turn in for one, not forgetting," concluded he with a satiric grin, "to wish you all a very happy Christmas."

OLD YEARS AND NEW YEARS.

WHAT a pleasant fiction it is when, towards midnight of the last day of December, we listen to the mournful tolling of the church bell through the frosty air! Even as our forefathers were wont to fancy the woods and rivers had spiritual or even quasi-human form, which now and then they chose to assume, so we give an imaginative personality to the mass of hours, and minutes, and seconds, which have passed away with the last three hundred and sixty-five days.

Heigh ho! there is a pause in the dolorous sound of the bell. The last stroke seems to echo long, with a quivering vibration which we could imagine was meant for the final expiration of the poor old man whom we are so soon to bury, then the bells chime forth merrily in salutation of the New Year. If it is possible to propitiate Destiny by being among the first to pay homage to the year just born, the bellringers in their belfry ought to stand well with Fortune. They are like the doctor in the still room, upon whom it devolves to make the announcement that another child has entered the arena of life.

This parallel may be pushed a little farther. One happens now and then to be in a house where the birth of a child is celebrated by a sort of family gathering. There are aunts and perhaps a grandmother, or even two, in the lower room, awaiting the news from upstairs. You cannot expect them all to have had so much light and joy in their lives that they will hail the newcomer with the most unfeigned and sincere of congratulations. How should they be able to assure themselves that it will have a smoother lot than they have had? Money cannot guarantee a man or woman against the trouble which besieges all men and women; nor can great talents or an amiable disposition. So the good doctor, when he descends to say that "mother and child are going on as well as can be expected," is not a whit surprised to be received with words of foreboding and compassion as well as congratulation. The poor little darling has scant knowledge of the world into which he has been ushered with so much care and ceremony. Perhaps—as one thoughtful aunt suggests—if the case could have been put equitably before the small mortal, he would in his wisdom rather not have been born at all.

We always figure the New Year as a little child, with a round ingenuous forehead, and trusting baby eyes which appeal so strongly to our sympathies. If it came in any other shape we should be much less eager to welcome it. But who can be churlish to a child? It is an affecting fable. Though we know in our hearts that the little mortal is bound to develope exactly like the bent and bowed old fellow we have just dismissed with a kick of parting, we flatter ourselves and the youngster that things may after all turn out better than we imagine.

To give them a chance of so doing, therefore, we take exceeding pains for the first few days or weeks of the youngster's existence. His leading strings are of beautiful silk cord. He is fed on the softest and most nutritious food. His baby passions are swiftly pruned away as fast as they sprout forth from him. We are—for a while—sternly determined that this year shall be a very model of happy, virtuous years.

But of course we lose patience at length. Either we tire of looking so closely after the boy, or we are fain to exclaim he has so many imperfections in embryo that it is quite absurd to think of extirpating them the moment they show above the surface. He must just take his chance, like his predecessors. Besides, he is a biggish boy by this time, and certainly not wanting in wit. It is absurd, moreover, to think of keeping him in the nursery at his time of life. He ought to be out and abroad in the world.

Thus the New Year gets stripped of its ingenuousness, and soon treads in the steps of its forerunners. And we, too, with melancholy certitude, get weary of trying to act in accordance with our resolutions, as if we were immaculate men and women in a world which always fitted with our humour, and which invariably smiled upon our virtuous endeavours. The year wags on, and ere it is middle-aged we are but little different from what we were three hundred and sixty-five days ago. Wars, pestilences, earthquakes, and a famine or two have proved, with grievous emphasis, that the promising boy has turned out a thorough scapegrace. And we, too, have had to surrender to evil here and there all down the line, and we are far from sure that ere another New Year's Day the better part of us will have been beaten outright, and made to scamper pell-mell before the combined assaults of the confederate army of temptations.

All the same, we stick to our colours from day to day, until at length December comes round again; then we pluck up heart a little, and breathe rather more freely than of late. We have, after all, not been utterly defeated in the battle. In the truce that will soon come between the tolling of the midnight bell and the chiming in of yet another year, we shall be able to pull ourselves well together for yet another spell of conflict. Thus one year follows another, and if, at the end of them all, we can in all sincerity believe that we have fairly kept our heads above the waves of unpardonable sin, it is much, rather than little.

What odd reading are the diaries to which we devote so much time in our youth! They are not a very truthful picture of the years we then lived, but they have plenty of suggestion in them. We must have been queer and simple creatures in those days. It seems as if one of the chief anxieties of that time hinged upon a weekly or monthly balance of one's accounts. A shilling or a sovereign more or less made, one would suppose, all the difference to us.

Then what curious descriptions they offer us of the way in which we spent our time! "Read so-and-so — beastly dry! Got pulled up for not knowing the Æschylus. Sold bat to Henderson, six shillings; half now and half at the end of term. Had a jolly row in the evening as far as Perry Lock, with Bessy and her brother."

This is a day's record. On the surface it does not seem such a very disagreeable day of one's life. The evening hours must have been particularly nice, from what I remember of Bessy. I fancy I can see her now, as she leaned back with the rudder-strings in one hand, dangling the fingers of the other hand in the water.

Of course, however, one's diary confidences at that time of life have no real value as biographical material. From the beginning to the end of the year they are mere Philistine jottings. Perhaps the only lines of sentiment to be found in them are provoked by the first and the last block of space in each book. Upon January the first, for several years, some such words as the following appear: "A New Year," or "Another New Year—hope it will be a happy one, and a good deal more lucky than the last." And on December the thirty-first, "Well, another year gone, and a good riddance—hope the next will be better."

We keep diaries only when there is really very little in us worth reproduction upon paper. When the early phases of youth are gone, and we are in the tumult of hot hopes and fears, which men call strong life, we have a great deal too much to do to trouble ourselves about the little black books with bands to them. Once in a way, perchance, we open them and write a line; but the confidence does not come without an effort. It may be, too, that we are so bitter that what we pen disgusts us; and so the thick ink stroke through it all is the mark for the aftertime of the sudden severance of our connection with the little black books.

A score or two of years later we may once again take to diaries. But the tone of our records is then so manifestly veiled that we see at a glance that here also we are unable to make a clean breast of ourselves to ourselves. At the best the remarks are then worth nothing except as a domestic chronicle, or a mild reflection of those public events of the day which the newspapers notice in a much more interesting manner.

Some people have been bold enough to attack our custom of celebrating anniversaries—whether they refer merely to the lapse of what is called "time," or tend to revive in our minds the memory of events that have happened. It is, however, a custom which has something to commend it, although naturally it brings upon us a repetition of many griefs which we should like to have got through once and for all, when first the occasion of them came upon us. By an effort we may keep at a distance those anniversaries that worry us beyond endurance, while on the other hand we can find our pleasure in the recollection of those other events which at the time seemed likely to make us happy for life. Of course they failed to do so, but we do not blame them for it; they could not help themselves.

Just for the freak's sake, do but consider for a moment what a strong influence convention has upon the tone and actions of our life in the one matter of the calendar, or the common measure of time which it presents to us. It would be very hard to dispense with. Suppose, for example, that all the people of civilisation who are not sincere Christians agreed to revolt against a chronological method which takes as its starting-point the "annus domini." Suppose, too, that these rebels had no common standard of agreement as a substitute for the rejected chronology. What confusion there would be! Commerce would fall into a ruinous tangle, and tiresome calculations would have to be made for the determination of numberless matters which depend wholly or in part upon chronology.

To be sure, a single human being in such a case might manage satisfactorily for himself alone. He might recur to the sun and moon — those obvious guides and tallies, and use particular events in his own life as epoch-marking sign-posts. Thus he might say: "It is forty-three moons since I married. Nineteen moons after my marriage I was taken with a bad attack of rheumatic fever. Ever since then you, my doctor, have paid me two visits a week—as it is popularly called—or eight visits a moon, at half a guinea a visit. The reckoning, therefore, seems to show that I am indebted to you for a hundred and ninety-two visits, and so for ninety-six guineas!" The physician, who we will suppose follows the conventional Christian standard of chronology, refers to his books, and has no difficulty in verifying his calculation.

Heaven be praised, however, that this vision is mere phantasy. It is all very well for a clever woman like Lord Beaconsfield's Madam Phœbus to say: "For my part I do not think that it—time—ought to be counted at all; and there is nothing to me so detestable in Europe as the quantity of clocks and watches." Madam Phœbus could, perhaps, get through life very well with the aid of her unsupported instincts. But for the rest of us the mere thought of the uncertainty of the dinner hour which would, of course, be a consequence of the abolition of all the eight thousand seven hundred and sixty hours of which the year consists, is so paralysing that rather than submit to such anarchy, social and domestic, we would wear much heavier chains than those with which convention has already shackled our necks and ankles.

But for the clock, how on earth should we be able to put an end to those sad interviews which now and again come to bore us so inexpressibly? "My dear sir," the visitor might say, if he noticed our agonised fidgeting, "why this emotion? Of what value is time to you or me, or any one else? Be patient. And so, as I was saying——"

Our estimate of time and its flight may be merely fictitious and abstract, but it is profoundly useful to us. In nothing is it more useful than in the encouragement to hope better things of the future than we have in the present, or have had in the past, with which it provides us. If our little spans of existence were not divided into precise years, and months, and weeks, and days, we should sicken of the uniformity. Our horizon would be like that of the great central plains in the United States—far extending before and behind, and deadly dull everywhere. But the dates anno domini stand up prospectively like the purple or snow-capped mountains which delight the eye beyond the sober flatness, in the midst of which the traveller groans at the present moment to find himself. "A little while," he says to himself, "and I shall be in that fair country; and then it shall go hard with me if I do not scale that fine towering peak with the sunlight on it. When I am on the summit I shall look back upon this dismal plain and think of the wretched days I spent there. Nor shall I mind them a bit then, though now they are completely wearisome."

Honeywood, in Goldsmith's "Good-Natured Man," offers us a very pretty pill for our digestion when he says that, "if we compare that part of life which is to come by that which we have past, the prospect is hideous." Of course, we need not put entire faith in the utterance of a man in a play. For all that, the words are worth a little thought. They are the representation of an idea as old as the hills. Dryden gives it to us when he says:

None would live past years again;
Yet all hope pleasure in what yet remain.

Similarly, in the dialogue between a vendor of almanacks and a customer:

Customer.—Would you not like to live these twenty years, and even all your past life, over again?

Vendor.—Ah, dear sir, would to Heaven I could!

Customer.—But if you had to live over again the life you have already lived, with all its pleasures and pains?

Vendor.—I should not like that.

Customer.—Then what other life would you like to live? Mine, or the King's, or whose? Don't you suppose that I, or the King, or every one else would reply just as you have replied—in fact, that none would wish to live his old life over again?

Vendor.—I believe that.

Customer.—Then would you begin it again on this condition, if you could on no other?

Vendor.—No, sir, indeed I would not.

Customer.—Then what sort of a life would you like?

Vendor.—Such an one as Heaven would give me without any conditions.

Customer.—A life at haphazard, and of which you would know nothing beforehand, as you know nothing about the New Year?

Vendor.—Exactly.

And so hoping, away goes the almanack-seller, with his cry of "Almanacks, new almanacks!"

It seems to me that one may just as well face these somewhat despondent utterances. If there were no new years, we should be in a worse plight. And with these thoughts in our minds, we are at least forewarned. They give us the hint so to work that the new years when they are old years shall not be anything like as melancholy in retrospect as Dryden and others would have us believe they are bound to be.

LITTLE WHITE-CAP.

A STORY IN NINE CHAPTERS.

By BARBARA DEMPSTER.

Author of "Mrs. Dawe's Lady-Help," "The Bridge House," "Tabitha's Choice," etc., etc.

CHAPTER II.

Captain Dacre accompanied his aunt and cousin to church the following Sunday. Mrs. Dacre was very pleased. The one shadow on the otherwise perfect plan she had arranged in her mind—for the future of her daughter and nephew—was the fact that he was scarcely as orthodox as she would wish. She was not prudishly particular in everything; but she would prefer her daughter's husband to go to church at least once every Sunday.

It was, therefore, with pleasure that she heard him announce his intention of accompanying herself and Cecilia to the parish church.

"That dear, sweet girl is already doing him good," she thought, fondly, as she looked at her daughter's pretty, serious face in church; "and as soon as they are married he will settle down into a steady, model husband. She will make a sweet little countess, if that ever happens."

Perhaps Captain Dacre, who was the possible heir to an earldom, through two accidental deaths and one sickly life, that now alone came between him and the title, thought so too, for he looked several times at his cousin as he stood by her side, the pretty, grave face shaded by the most daintily picturesque hat of the last new fashion.

Her mother certainly knew how to dress her. Even to her gloves and shoes, that careful, far-seeing lady saw that not a flaw should be visible in her perfectly appointed toilettes. Not a frock had Cécilia ever been allowed to choose for herself in her life. Not that she wished to venture on even so small a display of will as that. She was a pattern of obedience and docility, ruled by her mother in everything, and, as that good lady was rather fond of asserting to mothers less fortunate, a model daughter.

Perhaps this complete submission to her mother's will was the one flaw that Captain Dacre found in his charming cousin, who, he perfectly well knew, was destined to be his wife. At least, so his aunt had arranged. As for himself, he had not yet made up his mind. He was very fond of his cousin Cecilia, and would have been fonder still, if she had been a little less placid, a little less conventionally fit in every way for the exalted position he might one day have to offer her. His eyes wandered away several times from the golden head, with its dainty Paris hat, of his pretty cousin, in search of the one he had seen covered with that delightfully picturesque and bewitching white cap, two days before in the ravine. The face under that unconventional head-covering had taken his fancy; it was as refreshing to his satiated taste in its bright, piquant mischief, and frank smile, as the quaint white woollen cap, set coquettishly on the dark hair, rang a delightful change on the dainty smartness of Paris hats and bonnets of the everyday girls and women of his acquaintance.

He had visited the ravine twice, he had wandered as far as the old Mill House by the river, since that afternoon, but he had not met "Little White-cap" since, though, as he rode slowly past the gates of the Mill House, he had caught a glimpse through the trees of the white cap, as Priscilla paced slowly to and fro before the house, her aunt leaning on her arm. Vexed at his want of luck, he had come to church, feeling certain that he should see her there at any rate.

But again he was disappointed.

Mrs. Dacre began to speak of Mrs. Joliffe as they drove home.

"I hear she has a niece living with her," she said, "and that she leads a more secluded life than ever. Mrs. Gay says it is dreadfully dull for the poor girl. That fatal match turned Mrs. Joliffe's head!"

"Whom did she marry?" asked Captain Dacre, who, till now, had not displayed the smallest interest in any of their neighbours.

"She was a Miss Saltash—the Devonshire Saltashes, you know—and she ran away from home and married Mark Joliffe, a very handsome miller. It was a shocking mésalliance, and turned out a wretched marriage naturally. They came and settled down here, and after Mark Joliffe died, she stayed on at the Mill House, either out of pride or some absurd notion of doing penance for her sins, I believe," said Mrs. Dacre. "At first when she settled down here, soon after I was married, no one called on her, being only the miller's wife, you see; but in some way, either by the fact becoming known that she was a Saltash, or else by her own determination, she was taken up by the county, and when I left the place after my poor husband's death ten years ago, she was called upon by almost everybody. Mrs. Gay says that she took this niece to live with her two years ago."

"She looks a very nice girl," said Cecilia; "I am sure I shall like her."

"Ah, I don't quite know," said her mother, thoughtfully. She had heard various things of Priscilla from Mrs. Gay, the Rector's wife, which made her rather doubtful as to whether she would be quite the safest companion for so well brought up a girl as her own.

"I am sure she is very nice," said Cecilia, a little indignantly.

"I have no doubt but that she is. Mrs. Gay says she is charming, but just a little too independent of thought and speech. It is not good form in a girl. It looks eccentric. Then I don't quite like the way her aunt seems to let her wander alone over the country. One would think that, after her own unfortunate marriage, she would be doubly careful of any girl under her charge."

"I hope they will come and call on us," said Cecilia.

Mrs. Dacre did not echo the wish. But a few days later Mrs. Joliffe called. The Dacres were out, and so she did not see them. Captain Dacre had to go up to town for a few days, and when he returned he found his aunt and cousin in the midst of returning some of the numberless visits they had received. They had finished off most of the particular ones, for Mrs. Dacre, the essence of worldliness, was most scrupulous in her attention to rank and position. There only remained some of the least important ones.

"The Joliffes!" said Cecilia, as she and her cousin wandered through the conservatory after dinner; "and I am so dying to know that girl. She seems to be quite a feature in the neighbourhood. You should hear all the poor people talk about her; she is so good to them; but she never seems to care to go anywhere or make anybody's acquaintance in her own class. I wonder she doesn't cry her eyes out in that dreadful house, with that dreadful aunt, who sits all day reading sermons, and drinking cold water, and knitting. I am sure she and I would get on beautifully together. I know she has a story, her face looks so sad sometimes. I have seen her out walking once or twice."

"Poor 'Little White-cap,'" he said.

"Little White-cap! Did you know they call her that?" looking up at him quickly.

"Yes;" then a momentary vexation that he had let the name slip passed in a laugh, and he told his cousin of the adventure he had had with her in the ravine. "She is delightful, and the cap was most bewitching," he added.

"I don't think so; it looks ridiculous, I think," said Cecilia. "It is one of those 'berets' you see the French people wearing at the seaside. It is all very well there, but it is absurd to see one here—and to get known by it, too! It is very bad taste. A girl can't be very nice who wanders alone all over the country dressed up in that noticeable fashion."

Her cousin laughed.

"Mother, I don't think James is half so nice as he used to be," she said, petulantly, that evening, as she lingered a few moments in her mother's room on her way to bed. "I don't think I like him at all now."

Her mother looked at her in some alarm; then the anxiety vanished.

"You mustn't talk like that, Cecilia. It isn't good form," she said. "He is your cousin, and one day, I hope, will be your husband."

"Mother!" with a quickened breath, as if the idea were new to her, though she had known from the day that she came out that this match had been arranged in her mother's plans, "I shan't marry him, not even if he asks me."

CHAPTER III.

The next day at luncheon Captain Dacre asked his aunt if she would pick him up at the Naylors', one of the families on whom she intended to call that day. Their house was the last but one on her visiting list for that afternoon. The last was Mrs. Joliffe's. Cecilia was not taken out by her mother that afternoon. The daughters of a neighbour, whose name and position were all that the most socially fastidious could desire, had been invited to take tea with her; Mrs. Dacre not considering the families upon whom she was going to call at all necessary to her daughter's acquaintance.

"I thought you were going to call on Lord Braith this afternoon," said his aunt, in some surprise, Lord Braith's place lying in a totally different direction to the Naylors' house.

"I've changed my mind. I want to have a look at that mare of Naylor's. He is going to part with her," said the young man, helping himself to a substantial portion of game pie.

Cecilia glanced up at him with a touch of girlish spite.

"And I suppose you will help mother pay her visits," she said, demurely. "The Mill House lies on your way home."

"Perhaps I shall," said her cousin, innocently.

Cecilia flushed and bit her lip.

"Cecilia can't go," said her mother. "Lady Elizabeth and Lady Dora are coming to spend the afternoon with her."

"How cheerful!" said the young man, feelingly.

"I am sure the Dormer girls are very nice," exclaimed Cecilia, indignantly, "and I should enjoy myself much more with them than talking with that harum-scarum sort of girl, Miss Colmore."

"Yes; I don't at all approve of the way Mrs. Joliffe seems to be bringing her up," said Mrs. Dacre. "She seems to be well known—in a way—all through the neighbourhood. She does the most extraordinary things—apparently a regular madcap I should say. It is all very well to be kind to the poor, but there was no need for a girl in her position to sit up all night with a sick woman, ill with small-pox, too, whose very daughter was afraid to go near her. It was tempting Providence! Then, when the floods were out last year, she paddled about all alone in a small boat, helping to carry provisions to some of the flooded cottages, and actually rescued two children from an outhouse. It was all very noble, but rather eccentric, and——"

"It would have been much more suitable to her position to let the children drown," said the young man, meditatively.

"I didn't say that, James," with a touch of asperity; "but there were plenty of other people, surely, to do that work, without her risking her life and coming back drenched to the skin, and covered with mud, and so white and exhausted that she dropped down in a dead faint in the Rectory kitchen, as Mrs. Gay said she did."

"But it would have been awkward for the children if she hadn't been there, as there happened to be no one else," said Captain Dacre, with that innocent expression which his cousin, quicker-witted than her mother, noted and dreaded.

"James is always saying something disagreeable, mother," she exclaimed now, before her mother could reply, "so you needn't trouble to argue with him over the propriety of Miss Colmore's proceedings."

"Well," said her mother, with dignified tolerance, "I shouldn't like Cecilia to act after that mad fashion."

"Cecilia wouldn't," said her cousin. "She would be afraid of the damp taking her hair out of curl. Besides, she would have told the little boys, if she had been there, that probably they had been doing what they had been told not to, and that was why they were in peril of drowning."

Cecilia's usually soft eyes flashed.

"Perhaps if you had always done as you were told, it might have been better for you to-day," she said, so sharply that her mother was roused to the fact that instead of banter it was the flash of crossed swords between them. She did not mean them to quarrel.

"What time did you tell the carriage to come round, Cecilia?" she asked, to change the conversation.

About half-past four, Mrs. Dacre, calling on the Naylors, found her nephew waiting there for her. It was about five o'clock when they drove up to the Mill House. It stood, bare and uncompromising, on a slight eminence. The mill itself was built lower down on the bank of the river.

It was a bright afternoon, the western sun still casting a glow of light on house and garden; but the air was sharp and chill, and Mrs. Dacre drew her warm mantle closer about her as she descended from the carriage.

"I can't think how Mrs. Joliffe can live here," she said. "It is such a dreary, cold sort of place."

The young man thought only of the girl with the white cap, and felt very sorry for her. The servant, a prim, elderly woman, with a rather severe cast of countenance, led the way through a small hall, furnished with a bare simplicity that made Mrs. Dacre shiver again, to the room in which her mistress sat in the afternoon. It could scarcely be called a drawing-room, so bare it was of all the dainty grace and comfort which the word usually implies. It was a square room, with polished floor, in which were set stiffly chairs, and table, and chiffonier of old-fashioned make. An ugly paper hung on the walls, while chairs, and couch, and an endless array of footstools were upholstered in Berlin wool-work. By the fireplace, in which at last had been allowed a fire, was Mrs. Joliffe, her table, with its usual contents, standing by her side.

Near the window sat Priscilla.

As the door opened and discovered the room, the young man took it all in—the ugliness, the bareness, the coldness, and Priscilla.

The room was full of the red western light. In its radiance, on a stiff, upright-backed chair, sat Priscilla. Before her was one of those old-fashioned frames in which Berlin wool-work and other favourite atrocities of our grandmothers used to be perpetrated. Priscilla was working on a great piece of canvas stretched in it. As the visitors appeared she looked up, one hand resting on the work, and met Captain Dacre's eyes.

She was dressed in the dull brown dress in which he had seen her, white linen collar and cuffs at her throat and wrists only relieving its sombreness.

The coquettish white cap had gone. The hair was smooth and neat, the bright eyes grave and intensely dreary—so Dacre recollected afterwards as he recalled the details of the scene. For the moment he could only think of the whole.

As it was, he was intensely amused at the change. This might have been some demure Quakeress maiden—her occupation, her dress, all suggested it—into whom had been metamorphosed the brilliant-eyed girl he had met in the ravine a week or so ago. Mrs. Dacre, glancing at her, was astonished, too. This was not the hoydenish, madcap girl she had been expecting to meet, whose companionship she had dreaded for Cecilia. But she merely glanced at her as she advanced to shake hands with Mrs. Joliffe, whose acquaintance she was renewing after the lapse of ten years.

Priscilla, who had been exchanging a greeting with Captain Dacre, came forward to be introduced.

Mrs. Dacre, looking at her a little curiously, raised her hand. Then, as she saw Priscilla's face more clearly, she started, and something incredulous, puzzled, shocked, flashed into her eyes. Her hand dropped just as Priscilla held out hers.

But her social training was perfect, and the smiling grace with which, after a slight bow to Priscilla, she instantly turned to her nephew and presented him to Mrs. Joliffe, was so quick and clever that the little act of the withdrawn handshake was scarcely perceptible to any except the one from whom it had been withheld. But Priscilla saw it and flushed scarlet. Captain Dacre noticed it, and in secret anathematised his aunt's social prudery and ungenerous narrow-mindedness. He did his best to wipe away the affront and followed Priscilla, who went back to her seat by the tambour-frame to gather up some wools that had fallen on the floor. Mrs. Dacre sat down near Mrs. Joliffe; but as they talked together Mrs. Dacre kept casting watchful, uneasy glances in the direction of the tambour-frame, by which her nephew and Priscilla were now sitting, the Captain having succeeded in detaining her there. She was trying to make herself certain of something.

Could it have been this girl she had seen before, under such different circumstances? It could not be. And yet——

The more she looked at Priscilla, the more certain she became.

How could she make quite certain?

It was mysterious. It was inexplicable.

How thankful she was that she had not brought Cecilia with her!

Captain Dacre, after they had laughed a little over their adventure in the ravine, asked:

"Do you like that kind of work?" looking at the wonderful piece of Berlin wool-work in the frame.

It was a scene from Scottish history—Rizzio playing before Mary Stuart. The canvas was extensive, and Priscilla had been many months and days at it.

A little smile crossed her lips.

"Do you?" she asked, meekly.

He looked at it critically.

"I think, perhaps, there is rather too much of it," he said, politely.

"There's a great deal more," with a gesture to the top of the frame, where a roll of the finished work bore witness to her industry. "Mary's head and the ceiling of the room are all round the corner there. I have been working at it for months!"

"Why?" he asked, involuntarily, thinking that it would be difficult to find anything more ugly.

She laughed, the Quaker primness vanishing.

"Isn't it hideous? I feel quite sorry for poor Mary Queen of Scots when I look at it. You should see her eyes! I nearly sewed boot-buttons in for them; they would have looked quite as natural as the black silk, and far more effective. It is a shame to make her such a sight. It is wicked!"

"But why do you do it, then? I thought that sort of work was relegated to the Middle Ages."

"So it is—mostly. But I do a good deal of it."

"Why?" with an amused smile. "Do you fancy that you, too, are in the Middle Ages?" with a glance about him.

Her cheek dimpled, then something passionate, rebellious, flashed into her eyes as they, too, glanced round at her sombre, dreary surroundings.

"Do you wonder?" under her breath. Then, as if a sudden feeling of shame and remorse had touched her for mocking at the home that had been so generously given her, "Aunt is very good to me," she said, more sedately, "and I am glad to do what I can for her. Her husband's mother began these things years ago, and died before they were finished. I believe it worried her a good deal, that she couldn't get through with them; and so, after her death, aunt thought she would get them finished for her. But she couldn't do much herself—her hands are crippled with rheumatism—and so I have worked at them since I came. I have done a good deal since I came." She looked round the room with a curious expression, half disgust and weariness, half pitiful amusement, on her face.

What long, dreary hours she had spent over that ugly work! And yet how pitiful, how futile, how pathetic to the girl had been this penance set herself by this austere, stern, narrow-minded woman, whose hands had been unable to carry out the useless task she had set herself to perform. Priscilla had heard something of her aunt's history — how she had come to this house, high-spirited, haughty, with the husband for whom she had flung aside family, position, affluence; how love had slowly faded under the new circumstances of her life, so utterly opposed to all those which had hitherto surrounded her; how she had wearied her husband with her tempers and moods, and had said bitter words, and grown colder and harder, till he, losing patience, retaliated after the rough manner of his order, the courtesy of a naturally kindly heart becoming embittered by her treatment of him; how she had scorned the ignorant, gentle-minded mother, who, by her son's decision, lived with them at the Mill House after their marriage, and who had at last faded away, worn out by the continual jar between the son she had adored and the wife he had married. It was over her dead body that the bitterest wrangle between husband and wife had taken place. The miller had spoken out bluntly and coarsely his opinion of his wife's conduct, and from that day a breach had sprung open wide between them, never to be closed again, for a few days later he, and the only child she had borne him, were brought home dead, killed by an accident when out driving.

From that time, though outwardly hard and cold as ever, a change took place within her. A year or two after that, she took out the work in which the tender-hearted, gentle old mother had taken so much pride, and which, in the innocent simplicity of her heart, she had begun many years ago, for the purpose of decorating the drawing-room when her son should marry. It had been a terrible blow to her feelings, when the daughter-in-law her son at last brought her scornfully rejected the gift, and laughed at the idea of its being used in one of her rooms. Now Mrs. Joliffe had set herself to the task of finishing it, and using it for the original purpose for which the poor old dead woman had designed it.

But her hands had failed her, and it was only when Priscilla came to her that she saw a chance of carrying out her task.

Captain Dacre looked round too, and, with a masculine eye, appreciated the ugliness, without taking in the patient labour of the task.

"I don't think any woman should be encouraged in the perpetration of such monstrosities!" he said, severely. Then, with a more earnest kindliness, as he looked at her: "How could you endure to waste your time over such nonsense, Miss Colmore?"

"Perhaps I wished to do penance, too!" she said, lightly, though her eyes fell suddenly before his, and her fingers pulled restlessly at a piece of silk that hung from the frame. "Perhaps it was like one of those opiates that make one sleep and forget!"

He laughed incredulously.

"What have you to forget?" he asked; "the woes of a broken toy, or a wet day?"

She laughed, but her lips were white, and she rose.

Mrs. Dacre rose too. That prolonged tête-à-tête in the bow-window made her uneasy. But that shocked doubt in her heart had become a conviction.

"I am thankful I didn't take Cecilia with me!" she said, involuntarily, as they drove away.

"What is it, aunt?" asked the young man, quickly.

"Oh, it doesn't matter," said Mrs. Dacre, who, after her lights, was a merciful woman, and, now that she had succeeded in saving her daughter from the contamination of making the acquaintance of Miss Colmore, felt some slight pity mingling with her indignation and scorn; "only I happened to see Miss Colmore under rather curious circumstances in France two years ago. But don't say anything about this, James; I shouldn't like to be the first to make a scandal about the poor girl."

"Certainly not," said her nephew, with a grim mockery, too subtle for her to see.

He did not ask another question, though he was intensely curious to know, and was divided between a desire to utter a wholesale malediction on the ungenerous, uncharitable prudishness of women in general, and his aunt in particular, and an uneasy question as to whether there had really been some incident in Miss Colmore's past to justify his aunt's insinuations. Why had she spoken so bitterly, and looked so white and strange?

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OF

ALL THE YEAR ROUND.

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AN OUTSTANDING DEBT.

BY MARY ANGELA DICKENS.

Author of "Cross Currents," "A Mist of Error," "Her Inheritance," "A Social Success,"
"Kitty's Victim," etc., etc.

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CHAPTER I. COMPAGNONS DE VOYAGE.

THE voyage was nearly over. For nearly five weeks the passengers on board the P. and O. steamer "Philistia," thrown together by the accident of passages booked on the same boat and kept together within the narrow limits of deck and saloon, whether they would or no, by the impossibility of escaping from one another's society without the assistance of wings or fins, had worn away the days in making friends or in making enemies, in flirtation, gossip, or silent contemplation, according to their individual propensities.

The weather had been delightfully bright and fine, and had done its best to satisfy lovers of heat and lovers of cold alike. There had been athletic sports, with the thermometer at ninety-five degrees in the shade; there had been tennis; and there had been dancing. Breakfasts, luncheons, and dinners had been alike hilarious—except, perhaps, during the passage through the Bay of Biscay—and the voyage was declared on all hands to have been "very jolly."

And now another twenty-four hours would bring the "Philistia" in sight of Sydney Harbour, and a few hours later, the people, whose interests for the time being had been mutual, who had watched one another and talked about one another as though the world was bounded by the timbers of the "Philistia," would separate, never, possibly, to meet again. And to one of the common subjects of comment which had occupied every one more or less for the last five weeks, the near prospect of the end of the voyage was lending an interest that was absolutely thrilling.

It was the lovely evening of a lovely day, and nearly every one was on deck. There were groups pacing up and down the hurricane-deck; others leaning over the bulwarks, looking down at the heaving, rolling masses of blue water, through which the ship pursued her even, persistent way, or watching the beautiful evening sky of that southern latitude. Nearly all the deck-chairs were occupied, and in two of these, drawn rather apart from the others in the ardour of conversation, sat two elderly ladies. War had raged fiercely between them throughout the voyage as to which should place her own particular chair in the most desirable situation on deck; but they had apparently buried the hatchet in a common interest, and their heads were very close together as they talked in a low tone of voice.

"I assure you, my dear Mrs. Dunstan-Brown, I assure you there isn't a doubt about it. She has come out to Sydney to be married. Poor, unfortunate young man, I'm sure I pity him!"

The speaker hardly looked as though a feeling heart were her leading characteristic. She was a sharp-featured lady, with little, piercing black eyes, which nothing apparently could escape. Mrs. Dunstan-Brown, a stout and kindly woman, with a keen relish for gossip, answered her with deep but placid interest:

"She is very young, dear Mrs. Vernon; not more than nineteen, I should think—should you?—and really very pretty. Her fiancé probably knows her tendencies, poor fellow, and I dare say she will settle down very nicely when she is married. I'm very much afraid, too, do you know—I really am very much afraid—that the dear doctor is just a little to blame. She ought not to encourage him of course; under the circumstances it is very sad and shocking, I'm sure; but still——"

Either words failed the speaker or her companion thought that she was monopolising the conversation, for she interposed sharply:

"I am sorry that I can't agree with you in the least. The doctor is pleasant to every one, and his delightful manner would be the same to Miss Brand as it is to every one else on board, if she had not made such a palpable set at him. And as to her being pretty, my dear," finished Mrs. Vernon, waxing as intimate and confidential as though she and Mrs. Dunstan-Brown had never cut one another dead on the deck-chair question, "as for her being pretty, I cannot see it in the least."

"Dr. Ward is a very good-looking man," returned Mrs. Dunstan-Brown, turning her head slightly; and her comment was apparently not as irrelevant as it seemed, for Mrs. Vernon followed her example, and, turning her head also, looked across the deck as though it was the natural thing to do under the circumstances.

Standing against the bulwarks, with just enough repose about his attitude to make it graceful, and, at the same time, perfectly courteous to the ladies in the group of which he formed the centre, was a tall man in the trim uniform of a ship's doctor. His face was long in shape, fair in complexion, and rather thin, though by no means unbecomingly so. The features were handsome and clear-cut, though the admirably straight line of the nose was, perhaps, a little too finely chiselled. The blue eyes, for all their obviously penetrative power, were looking extremely pleasant at the moment; and the mouth was hidden by a long heavy moustache, which was fair like his hair. He looked like a man of about five-and-thirty, and his expression and manner were those of a man who has seen enough of the world and its ways to be very sure of himself and his power of dealing with it—too sure for anything in the least resembling aggressive self-confidence. He was Dr. James Ward, medical officer of the "Philistia," and the most popular man on board. He was talking and laughing gaily as he smoked his cigarette, and his voice, as it floated across the deck, was, like his eyes, very pleasant.

The two ladies looked at him for a moment, and then, as by common consent, looked away to the other end of the vessel. It was a noticeable fact that every pair of eyes on deck that glanced at Dr. Ward — and they were many — glanced from him to that other end, from which came the sound of children's voices and laughter.

"He is a delightful man to have on board," continued Mrs. Dunstan-Brown, with a general air of desiring to say something pleasant. "I don't know when I've enjoyed the passage so much, and I've made it several times, as you know, I think. It is quite surprising what a difference such charming manners make to the whole tone of the ship. He has really kept us all alive—always something going on."

"Exactly what I say," interposed Mrs. Vernon, eagerly. "I have thought all along that his universally charming manner makes Miss Brand's conduct——"

But the remainder of Mrs. Vernon's thought was not destined to be expressed in words. She broke off suddenly, her attention apparently arrested by the sound of pattering, flying feet, and, turning in the direction from which it came, she exclaimed, in the tone of one whose expectation is realised:

"Here comes Miss Brand."

But Miss Brand's progress—if one of the advancing figures was indeed she—might have been more aptly described by the words: "Here rushes, or, here flies Miss Brand!" From the after part of the deck, with a child clinging to each hand, and a small court of children scampering about her, came, at a swift run, accompanied by shrieks of delight from the little ones nearly carried off their small feet in the rush, a girlish figure, in a smart little blue serge dress, with no hat on the ruffled curly, auburn hair, and a laugh nearly as merry as the children's own. Before her words were well uttered, the whole flying troop had borne down upon Mrs. Vernon and her companion, and the curly-haired leader was saying to Mrs. Dunstan-Brown, regardless of the childish protests that rose around her:

"I've brought them back. I think it's nearly bedtime, isn't it? Yes, Kitty, I'm sure you're sleepy, really and truly." The last words in answer to a vigorous protest from one of the little girls clinging to her hands. "It's ever so late, and I'm dreadfully tired."

A doleful wail arose among her followers.

"We're not tired a bit!" they answered vociferously; and one admirer, aged about five, observed, contemplatively: "Miss Band, she always do dit tired before we does."

Miss Brand laughed as she kissed him, and released her sailor hat from a very grubby little paw, and his aunt, Mrs. Dunstan-Brown, rose.

"You are very good to them, Miss Brand," she said. "Thank you, it is nearly their bedtime, and they may as well come now."

A general movement ensued on deck. The children were claimed by various relatives and conveyed, amid wails and lamentations, below. The groups broke up and rearranged themselves, and, somehow—no one could quite say how, though more than one pair of eyes was on the alert—Miss Brand and Dr. Ward happened to be standing side by side. Miss Brand was very busy putting on her hat and trying to restore some sort of order to the curly hair, which a series of vehement hugs had left in wild confusion; and James Ward watched her for a moment without speaking.

"They've pulled me all to pieces!" she exclaimed, lightly. "I like children immensely—nice, jolly children like these; but they certainly do make one in a mess."

She laughed as she spoke, and looked up at him for a moment, and he said in a tone which reached only her ears:

"You're nothing but a child yourself, I believe."

She did not answer; but her soft, brown cheek flushed a little, and her small fingers were busier than ever with her hair.

"Why have you kept out of the way all day?"

Still no answer, and the manly persuasive voice dropped into a lower key still.

"Won't you come for a stroll?"

She looked up at him again, and, with a little gesture of assent, half-careless, half-deprecating, turned and began to saunter along the deck.

He walked by her side, and they exchanged remarks upon the weather and various other topics of interest on board the "Philistia," apparently for the edification of the few people yet left on deck, for, as the two passed out of hearing of these, their conversation stopped abruptly and silence fell upon them. It lasted until they had passed to the far end of the deck, and, as they turned mechanically, having reached the farthest limit possible and begun to retrace their steps, it was broken suddenly by the man. He stopped in his walk just where they were hidden from view by deck-houses and cranes, and, looking down at the little figure by his side, he said, softly:

"Have you considered, Bertha?"

She looked up at him with a shy, startled movement, and then turned away.

"You mustn't call me Bertha, Dr. Ward," she said, hurriedly. "I—I told you so!"

"I know you did," he answered, following her with his eyes as she moved; "but you have told me a great many other things that I don't mean to attend to, Bertha." He drew a step nearer to her as he spoke her name again. "There is only one thing you can say to me that you would never have to say twice—that you don't like me. You won't say that to me, will you?"

She lifted a pair of large brown eyes to his face, dropped them again quickly, and said, in an irresolute little voice:

"I shall have to!"

"You will do no such thing!" he exclaimed in a low, tender voice, and taking both her hands in his, he drew her into the shelter of a convenient and friendly corner, with a gentle force to which she gave way with very little struggle. "Bertha," he said, "you've bewitched me with those big, round eyes of yours, don't you understand? I want you, dear. I love you. Tell me you'll be my wife." The words were serious enough, and his tone was persuasive earnestness itself; but over the little brown face into which he looked, there broke an irrepressible little gleam of fun, as though she were in truth the child he had called her.

"I can't," she said. "How can I, Dr. Ward? One can't be two people's wives."

"Then you shall be mine!" he said, trying to draw her to him as she held back half-frightened, half-fascinated by his vehemence, though she had left her hands in his with the faintest possible attempt at drawing them away.

"You hardly know this man; he hardly knows you. He doesn't care for you as I do—it is not possible. How can you tell what your life with him will be? How can you tell that he will make you happy. You don't know what you're doing! You don't know him!"

"I don't know you!" murmured the girl, looking into the handsome, pleading face with wistful admiring eyes.

"You know enough!" he said, drawing her to him with a touch that there was no resisting. "You know enough, for what you do know—— Ah, Bertha, tell me the truth; tell me the truth—you do, you do love me?" She tried to draw herself away; she tried to hide her face; but he held her fast.

"Not till I have my answer," he said. "Promise to follow your heart, Bertha! Promise to be my wife!"

"I promise!" she cried; "oh, I promise! Let me go!"

The next instant he had taken her into his arms, and her face was hidden—no other hiding-place offering itself—upon his shoulder. There was a long pause. Miss Brand having laid her face down was apparently disinclined to raise it again; her pretty little head being indeed in a confused whirl of sensations, of which the most distinct was a shyness—not a usual characteristic of her by any means—of the man in whose arms she was. He, for his part, stood looking down at the head on his shoulder with a curious expression of possession and intense satisfaction on his face, which would hardly have tended to compose her if she had seen it. At last, however, the position seemed to cease to content him. He moved her gently and tried to raise her head.

"Won't you look at me?" he said.

"I'd rather not," said a muffled little voice, and then Miss Brand changed her mind suddenly—or so it seemed—for she not only lifted her head, but removed her small person from the arms that held her with such a quick little movement that any active protest on their part was forestalled. "It does seem so very odd," she said, addressing apparently the heavy crane—with which she stood face to face as she turned her back on the man who watched her. "I never thought I should be engaged to you, you know, because, you see, I'm engaged to him. Oh, dear!"—the quaint little tone changed suddenly, and she faced round quickly—"that sounds dreadful, doesn't it?"

"The last words do," he answered, with a smile, putting one arm round what was now a very resisting little figure. "But they're not true—at least, they won't be long—and you are engaged to me, you see, and you will be always. Is that what seems odd?"

"Yes."

"But you do——?" He finished his question with his handsome, confident eyes only, and she let herself be drawn a little nearer, and put her head back on his shoulder for about half a minute as she said, shyly: "Yes." Then, with an instinctive conviction that in another instant his lips would be pressed to hers, and either from a disinclination to the process, which was half childish in its sense of recoil, or from a characteristic impulse to tease, she moved again quickly.

"We ought to go now," she said; "we've been here ages, Dr. Ward. I'm sure it's time we went."

"Dr. Ward went some time ago," he answered, with another smile, as he held her fast. "This is Jim, now isn't it?"

"Jim?" she repeated, softly. "Yes, I suppose it is. Jim!"

But tenderness for more than a moment at a time seemed to be a phase to be avoided by Miss Brand to-night, and she finished with a little laugh.

Her wilfulness was as provocative to the man by her side, however, as her prettiness, and, without more ado, he took her into his arms, and was turning up her face to his, when he was energetically pushed away, and the crimson, half-frightened face broke into a smile.

"Dr. Ward, somebody is coming! If you don't want them to have fits, leave go," she whispered, hastily.

He released her incontinently, with a muttered exclamation which was hardly a benediction upon the approaching footsteps; and by the time the new-comers—Mrs. Vernon and a friend who had been seized with a desire for an evening stroll—appeared upon the scene, Dr. Ward and Miss Brand were leaning over the bulwarks, with a wide distance between them. If any further private talk had been exchanged between them that night, it would have been through no fault of Mrs. Vernon's. But Mrs. Vernon would not regulate the clasp in which Miss Brand's small hand was held as she said good night to Dr. Ward; nor could that worthy lady control the little answering touch with which the clasp was met. She would have given a good deal to assist at Miss Brand's private meditations when she finally retired to her cabin for the night; though had she done so, she would have found them considerably less distressed and perplexed than the meditations of most girls would have been in Miss Brand's circumstances.

CHAPTER II. THE DEBT INCURRED.

BERTHA BRAND had left London for Sydney, five weeks earlier, to be, on her arrival at the latter place, married to the man to whom she had been engaged for the preceding six months—Ralph Charteris.

She had said good-bye to England, and to her life there; the baggage stowed away in the hold contained her trousseau; and she had in her possession a letter from Charteris himself—a letter of welcome that had reached her at Colombo—telling her how anxiously he was waiting for the day that should bring to Sydney his promised wife.

Bertha had been an orphan from her babyhood, and from her babyhood she had been brought up by her only relations—her mother's brother and his wife—a Mr. and Mrs. Warrener. She had inherited next to nothing from her parents—five-and-twenty pounds a year only, "which doesn't buy frocks," as she was wont to say, ruefully. She was, further, endowed with characteristics eminently unsuited to a girl in her position; she was a wilful, light-hearted, irresponsible little thing, with no application or industry whatever. She had an irrepressible tendency to see the humour of a situation in season and out of season, and she was very pretty. She had little, delicate features, soft cheeks—not round, but coloured like a child's—and very large, liquid brown eyes that laughed and danced, and looked grieved and plaintive, with a rapid change of expression that made her face absolutely bewildering to a stranger. That pathetic expression in her eyes was the only sign at present that she possessed much heart. She was light and bright, with the lightness and brightness of unstirred youth, and the depths below had still to be sounded.

Mrs. Warrener was the last woman in the world to appreciate such a nature under any circumstances. She was a harsh, unsympathetic woman, and her personal dislike to her husband's niece was accentuated by the fact that she looked upon Bertha as a decided defaulter in presuming to exist at all with no money of her own to exist upon. Not unnaturally, Bertha had agreed worse and worse with her aunt as she grew older, and, when she was nineteen, matters had culminated, and she had decided, desperately, that she would go away and be a governess.

It was shortly after the birthday on which Bertha had made this decision that Ralph Charteris, a nephew of Mrs. Warrener, came unexpectedly to London from Sydney on business. He had not been in England for many years; and Mrs. Warrener, partly from some remote feeling of kinship which her sister's son called forth in her harsh temperament, partly because the business in which Ralph Charteris was the Colonial partner had become very extensive, and he was, therefore, a rich man, had shown him a certain cold cordiality. Charteris had very few friends in London; and spent much of his short time in London, at the Warreners' house in Porchester Square.

Ralph Charteris was a very quiet, shy man; one of those men who say little because they are more observant and reflective than they are known to be; and outwardly he had taken no marked notice of, or interest in, Bertha Brand. He had left England without a word to her, save those which included her in his general quiet expression of pleasure in his stay and regret at going back to his lonely home and life in Sydney. But three months afterwards, just when Bertha was beginning to chafe alike at the prospect of governessing, and of continued life with her aunt, she received a letter from Ralph Charteris asking her to come out to Sydney to be his wife. Bertha was perfectly heart-whole; she liked Ralph Charteris as much as any man she had ever seen, far better than she liked the prospect of being a governess, and she answered his letter and said "Yes."

But life on board the "Philistia" opened a new world to Bertha Brand. She was nominally under the captain's charge, but the captain's conceptions of his office were, naturally, limited, and Bertha found herself, for the first time in her life, free to enjoy herself from morning to night; and for the first time in her life the attentions of a man formed a prominent feature in her daily life. She had, indeed, scarcely known any men. Much society, male or female, did not accord with the system of repression desirable for a poor relation in Mrs. Warrener's mind; and her cousin Monteith—Mr. and Mrs. Warrener's only son, who was the only young man Bertha could be said to know well — she had treated and looked upon from their childhood as a brother.

James Ward was a man who was universally popular with women; apparently the women he met in society liked him the better for a certain superiority implied by the fact that his manner was the same to one and all, that no one individual made more impression on him than another. But before the "Philistia" had been at sea a week, such of his popularity as rested on his impartiality was seriously imperilled; his flirtation, as it was called, with Bertha Brand was the talk of the ship.

Whatever it might have been in its beginning it was no flirtation on his part at least — had the commentators been aware of the fact—by the end of that week. The sparkling, changing face, the bright, little, irresponsible, wilful manner, had taken possession of James Ward as no woman had done for years. And as to Bertha, her proceedings were hardly to be dignified with so serious a name as flirtation. He was to her, simply the nicest man she had ever seen, the nicest to talk to, and to listen to, the most fascinating in the indefinite sense of possibilities he stirred. It seemed to her "a great pity" that she should have to spend her life with Ralph Charteris, who suggested nothing to her, when it would be so much more interesting to spend it with James Ward. The latter thought always caused a little thrill of excitement to run through her which was never stirred by the idea of marriage with Ralph Charteris. James Ward was on the spot, very urgent, very argumentative, and exercising over her, as a matter of fact, the influence of a fully-developed experienced man over a nature so utterly unawakened as to be still that of a child. Ralph Charteris was in the distance; the idea of him had never been very real or substantial to her; his love and her promise had been from the first little more than shadows to her. She yielded at last to James Ward's representations with a vague conviction that it would be "all right."

But though it is extremely hard to realise difficulties awaiting one on dry land when one is on the open sea, with nothing for the eye to rest upon but rolling water and sky, it is quite another matter when signs of the said land become obvious, not to say obtrusive, and assurances are heard on all hands that the boat will be "in in an hour."

As the "Philistia" passed between the Heads into the smooth water of Sydney Harbour, Bertha Brand's vague confidence in the amiable malleability of things in general, instead of assuming the distinct outline the situation began to demand, grew slighter and slighter, until at last it resolved itself into an uneasy conviction, which was at the same time not without its humorous side to her; a conviction that it was "very awkward." The shadowy Ralph Charteris, the thought of whom had troubled her so little, began to assume unpleasantly definite proportions in her mind, and she did not even give a thought to the beauties of Sydney Harbour as the "Philistia" made its slow passage through it. She was inclined to resent the excitement of the passengers at the close prospect of the end of the voyage, and to make excuses for the Sydney Board of Health when its medical officer delayed them for an unconscionable time in his inspection of the ship. In spite of herself, however, she broke into a little irrepressible laugh as Sydney came actually into sight. "It—it's so absurd," she said to herself, "to have come all this way." It was not until the final turmoil of arrival began that the soft little cheek turned rather pale, and the eyes that scanned the wharf grew very large and plaintive. "Perhaps he isn't here," she thought; and then as the idea crossed her mind she drew back suddenly, flushing hotly. She had looked full into Ralph Charteris's face on that instant, and she realised that it was very awkward indeed. A few minutes more and he was standing by her side.

"You are come!" he said, in a low voice, not touching her, not even attempting to take her hand. But he looked down at the little bent head with a light of great joy in his eyes, and the tone in which the three words were spoken was the tenderest welcome Bertha could have had. He was a tall, well-made man of three-and-thirty, with a square face, very good grey eyes, and short, crisp, brown hair, which curled a little above his firm forehead as he lifted his hat.

Bertha looked up at him helplessly enough, and then looked round her with a childish expectation that "something" would come to her assistance. The deck was in a state of the wildest confusion; everybody was being hustled or pushed, to hustle or push in their turn, and nobody had any attention to spare for anybody else.

With contact with the outside world, and the sudden expansion of their own individual interests, the interest of the passengers in one another had suddenly evaporated. Of all the people who had looked forward to Miss Brand's meeting with her fiancé as an occasion of thrilling interest, only one or two gave her now even a hurried, passing glance.

Ralph Charteris, apparently, expected nothing from the little figure before him in the way of greeting. As a matter of fact, he was only too conscious that he had no idea what he ought to expect. The little fleeting glance she gave him told him nothing, and in no wise interfered with his perfect happiness.

"If you are quite ready, we will go," he said, quietly. "I have told my man to see after your baggage."

He moved slightly, as though to make way for her; and, to her own horror, a little hysterical laugh broke from Bertha. It was so dreadful, she told herself, and he was so calm about it!

"I—I've got something to tell you," she said. "Oh, I wish people wouldn't push so!" she added, desperately; "come into this corner." She retreated, as she spoke, into an oasis of comparative calm, and he followed her, wondering, and saying something which she hardly caught in the turmoil about getting away. She turned round to him quickly as she reached her temporary haven, not lifting her head, and beginning to speak at once in a tone and manner so light, in her embarrassment, as to be almost flippant. "I'm awfully sorry," she said. "I won't keep you a minute. I do hope you won't mind, Mr. Charteris, but—but I'm engaged." She stopped suddenly, as though feeling that, having to make the statement, it was impossible to soften it, and he looked at her interrogatively.

"Engaged?" he said. "I'm afraid I don't understand."

She lifted her head desperately and looked at him.

"Engaged to be married!" she said, rapidly. "I can't marry you, I mean. Oh! I do beg your pardon!"

The last words came from her in a low, faltering murmur, and her head drooped lower and lower, as well it might before the change that came into the manly face before her at her words. Ralph Charteris did not speak for a moment. He stood quite still, looking at her as though trying to take in the words he had heard, and his lips were white and compressed, like the lips of a man who has received a heavy blow, and is bracing himself to bear what is to come.

"You can't marry me!" he said, slowly. "But you have come here to marry me!"

"I know," she faltered, twisting a fold of her pocket-handkerchief with little, shaking fingers. "I know. But since I started——" she paused. She had no means of gauging the pain of the man before her; and, in spite of her keen sense of discomfort, her perilous sense of the ludicrous forced upon her, even at that moment, a consciousness of the absurdity of her proceedings. Ralph Charteris finished her sentence for her.

"Since you started, you have seen some one you like better than you can ever like me?"

Bertha nodded. It was not a sense of the ludicrous that kept her from speech this time; she did not look up or move, and the busy little fingers were shaking frightfully. She had never heard a man's voice sound as did the low voice that had just spoken. There was a silence. The square, sensible face did not betray much. It was drawn and pale, and the grey eyes were dark with pain. He spoke at last, and his low, hoarse voice was steadily controlled, though the words came from him slowly and unevenly.

"Is he here," he said, very quietly, "to take care of you?"

"Yes," Bertha answered, almost inaudibly, "he is going to take me to some friends of his—till——" her face grew scarlet and she broke off.

"I needn't stay, then," he said. "I hope you will be happy. Good-bye!" He turned away as he spoke, lifting his hat mechanically; and as he moved, a lascar with a heavy load of baggage from the hold pushed his way between them. At the same moment, seeing herself cut off from the retreating figure, an undefined sense of guilt and humiliation rose suddenly in Bertha's childish soul.

"Oh, I must beg his pardon! I must make him understand!" she cried to herself; and as the lascar passed she sprang after him, heedless of the approach of a second man, equally heavily laden. In another instant she would have been knocked down, when she was caught and held by a man's hand. The man was James Ward. Bertha looked at him for a moment, looked again at the receding figure, and then covered her face with her hands, and bursting into tears, turned and ran away in the direction of her cabin.

James Ward let her go, and then stood for a moment looking towards the crowd of moving figures, one of which he knew to be Ralph Charteris. And his expression as he looked was not a pleasant one.

CHAPTER III. BERTHA'S DOLL'S HOUSE.

THREE months had gone by since the "Philistia" steamed into Sydney Harbour; and it was a bright morning in May. It was one of those spring mornings when the very air seems to be instinct with fresh life. And nowhere did the sun seem to shine more radiantly, nowhere was the atmosphere of spring with its promise more distinct, than in a little house in West Kensington. It was a very little house, and it was very new indeed. It was one of a row of little houses, all designed and decorated according to such modern standards of taste as could be attained without any considerable addition to the expense of building. The paint within was artistic in hue, the wall-papers would have been a revelation to the house-decorator of twenty years ago; there were electric bells, and there were diminutive Queen Anne fireplaces. In short, the houses looked as though they were especially prepared for the reception of the newest and most artistic of modern art furniture.

And the requirements of the little house in question, in the furnishing line, had evidently been fulfilled very recently.

Everything in it was pretty with the inexpensive prettiness of dainty colouring and modern design, and everything was absolutely new.

The windows were open all over the house. A canary was singing in one of the lower rooms, singing as though so much fresh air was having an absolutely intoxicating effect upon him; and, running downstairs with a mass of yellow muslin in her arms, wherewith she had decorative designs upon her drawing-room fireplace, came the mistress of the house, Bertha Ward.

Bertha Brand had been married to James Ward before the "Philistia" left Sydney on its homeward voyage. She had yielded partly to that insistent power in him, which half fascinated and half frightened her; and partly to her own conviction that she might as well be married before leaving Sydney as on arriving in London, since nothing would induce her to return to her uncle's house, even if he would receive her.

The voyage home had made a delightful honeymoon; and Bertha had enjoyed herself like a child over the furnishing of a little house, which, after many house-hunting expeditions undertaken by the husband and wife, had taken Bertha's fancy so instantly, that she had made her husband take it on the very day after they had first seen it. And she had chosen much of its furniture in the same sudden fashion, encouraged in her pretty, erratic wilfulness by her husband's constant acquiescence and delight in all the arrangements made by his "little witch," as he called her.

Bertha had been far too much absorbed in the delightful novelty of her position, in its ever fresh excitements, to feel much distress when, shortly after her arrival in London, she received from her uncle, to whom she had written, as in duty bound, from Sydney, to tell him of her marriage, a stern note, in which he emphatically disclaimed all further interest in her proceedings. "A woman who could so forget herself, and her plighted word, is no niece of mine," were Mr. Warrener's words. But they had not hurt Bertha; her uncle had never been kind to her, even the shelter of his roof had only been given to her from the sternest sense of duty, and she had no affection for him to be wounded by his words. Mr. Warrener, his wife, and his son were her only living relations, almost her only friends; and, cut off by them, Bertha had no one but her husband. But her husband, a new and inexhaustible interest, surrounded by a fascinating haze of unfamiliarity, was more than enough for Bertha.

James Ward, for his part, seemed to be well content that it should be so. His little wife was, apparently, always his foremost thought, and he spent every day in trying to make her happy. The days flew by too quickly for either of them; for James Ward was bound for another year to the P. and O. Company, and he had only a stay of four weeks to be spent in London, before the "Philistia" sailed again for Bombay. But this was—owing to some delay in the repairs needed by the "Philistia"—lengthened by an extra fortnight, and Bertha was happier and happier, and seemed to cling closer to her new life; while the little airs of mistress and wife that grew on her daily were delightful to behold.

If she seemed to grow little nearer to her husband mentally than she had been when she first met him on the deck of the "Philistia," if she knew nothing of his inner self, if she never in all her happiness felt exactly at home with him, Bertha was quite unconscious of these facts. It was not in her nature to analyse her feelings. She accepted things just as they came, and in the strangeness of her new position she found one of its greatest charms.

Nor did it occur to Bertha to consider how very little she knew of her husband's past life; how very little background, so to speak, his personality possessed in her mind. She did not even know of any one who had known him for any length of time. But she was far too fully occupied with the James Ward of whom she was still half shy—the clever, popular, fascinating man, who was, as he had told her, "bewitched" by her—to have room in her head for any sidelights whatever.

He was her husband—it was all very beautiful—and she was very happy; these facts were all she knew or cared to know.

And when the day at length arrived when he had to leave her, Bertha had sobbed and cried like a child.

"Don't cry so, my darling," he had said over and over again, as they took their last breakfast together. "I shan't know your pretty eyes when I get back if you cry them away now." But Bertha had refused to be comforted; and he had had at last forcibly to detach himself from the small detaining hands that clung to his arm, and to put her gently into an easy-chair. "Good-bye, my little witch," he had said, looking back at the little figure which, reluctantly enough, he was leaving all alone in her "doll's house," as he called it.

But on this May morning, James Ward had been at sea a month, and Bertha had dried her tears, and had begun to count the days which must go before he could return.

She opened the drawing-room door, and going up to the hearth, she let her muslin fall at her feet, and stood considering.

Bertha Ward had altered very little from Bertha Brand. The little figure looked more dignified, but that was owing almost as much to the long morning gown she was wearing, in place of the short blue serge she had worn on board the "Philistia," as to the air of proprietorship with which she glanced round the room. The soft, quietly-changing face was as childish as ever; the brown eyes were as liquid. But her face was changed, nevertheless. There was in it an indescribable new expression, as inseparable from the circumstances as was the wedding-ring upon her finger.

Her meditations were not long. She had seized a pair of scissors and was preparing to cut the muslin, when the servant came in with a letter. Bertha took it from her, replied with much dignity to an enquiry as to her orders for the greengrocer, and as the woman left the room, subsided into a low chair to read it.

"It's from Aunt Catherine!" she said, as she opened it. "Oh, I hope she can come!"

She read the few lines hastily through, turning scarlet as she read, and then let the letter fall, and lifted an indignant little face.

"Oh, how unkind!" she cried. "Oh, how dreadfully unkind!"

The Aunt Catherine in question was in truth no relation at all, being simply an old friend of her mother's to whom Bertha had given the title from affection. She had been kind to Bertha during her unhappy life with the Warreners, and the girl, feeling lonely in her husband's absence, had written to ask her to come and see her. The letter which had just arrived was a kindly version of Mr. Warrener's repudiation of his niece in consequence of her behaviour to Ralph Charteris. Bertha paused a moment, and then took up the letter again.

"As if it was my fault!" she protested. "I do call it unreasonable! 'Dishonourable, and unwomanly!' Oh, how can she say such things! Well, I'm sure she had better not come if she feels like that!"

She tore up the letter petulantly, and returned to her work with a pathetic expression of countenance.

But the muslin did not seem so satisfactory as it had been. A sense of injury was strong upon her, and mixed with it, and growing stronger as the moments passed, was a sense of loneliness. She had looked forward to seeing her old friend, and it was dreadful, she told herself, to feel "cut." It seemed to bring home to her the fact that she was quite alone, that there was no one to come and see her, no one whom she could go and see. The very fact that she had no particular occupation for the rest of the day seemed to emphasize her loneliness, and after lunch she wandered about the house thinking desolately how long it would be before her husband came back. At about four o'clock she was gazing disconsolately out of the drawing-room window, when she was startled by a ring at the front-door bell. She waited almost breathlessly until the drawing-room door was opened, and then as she saw her visitor she rushed forward with a cry of joy:

"Monty! Oh, Monty! How delightful!"

He was a tall, broad-shouldered young fellow, of about five-and-twenty, with fair hair, a clean-shaven face, and blue eyes. His dress was irreproachable, and there was a responsible expression about him, hardly reconcileable with a certain boyishness that lingered in his face, suggesting that he occupied a position in life in advance of his years. Monteith Warrener was in his father's office; he had obtained his articles as a solicitor, and as he was shortly to be made a partner, his father was, as he himself would have said, "bringing the boy on" as quickly as possible.

During the years that Bertha had spent in her uncle's house, though he had had little power to make her life pleasanter, she and her cousin had been close friends, and Bertha had wondered vaguely when she received her uncle's letter, "what Monty had thought."

He took the two little hands so eagerly stretched out to him.

"I should have come before, B.," he said; "but I've been away, you know—in America. I only heard the other day."

"Oh, I am so glad to see you!" she cried. "To-day, especially, Monty, dear, I thought—— Oh, it has been horrid! Sit down here and tell me all about yourself!"

Monteith Warrener seated himself, with a quick glance round the room, ending with Bertha's face, which looked now as though she had never known what low spirits meant.

"It's about you I want to talk!" he said. "These are nice goings on, B.! To go out to Sydney to marry one man, and come back married to another!"

"It's dreadfully ridiculous, isn't it, Monty?" she said. "But, you see, I couldn't help it, could I? I wanted to marry one, and I didn't want at all to marry the other. Besides, one wanted me dreadfully and the other couldn't, possibly. What was I to do? Oh, it is dreadful of people to be unkind about it!"

Her present judge was young. He looked indeed particularly boyish as he contemplated the little face and eagerly gesticulating hands with an indulgent expression in his eyes. He had a conviction that it had been "very rough on poor Charteris;" but, after all, it seemed to him that it was "hard lines to come down heavy on little B.," as he said to himself. Accordingly he said, with not quite the mature dignity he fondly hoped:

"It wasn't the thing to do, B., and that's the truth; but as it's done it's done, and we'll say no more about it. Tell us all about him, little woman."

Bertha rose and went to the table, returning with a photograph frame.

"That's him!" she said, ungrammatically, as she put it into his hands. "It was taken six years ago. He hates being taken, but he must be done again, when he gets back. Isn't he handsome, Monty?"

"Good-looking fellow," admitted Monty, with the air of a connoisseur. "And what are his people like?"

"His people?" repeated Bertha, vaguely. "Oh, he hasn't any people."

"All dead?" enquired her cousin, cheerily, still contemplating the photograph. "What were they?"

"Oh, they were all sorts of things, I suppose. His father was a doctor—his name was Hubert. There are some books of his about. Jim"—the name still came rather strangely from her lips—"Jim has the most ridiculous name—James Carrick Ward. He was born at Carrick-on-Shannon, in Ireland, you see. His father had a practice there."

"And he's off on board the 'Philistia'?" said Monty Warrener, interrogatively, as he handed her back the photograph.

"Yes," returned Bertha, disconsolately enough. "For another two months. I do miss him so, Monty!"

"You would, you know," admitted Monty, sympathetically. "It must be as dull as ditch-water for you, too. Why don't you get some one to come and stay with you?"

"There isn't any one to come," she said, sorrowfully. "I never knew any one to speak of, you know, and now—now every one's so unkind. I wrote to Aunt Catherine, and she's horrid! I had her letter this morning, and I was feeling quite—quite desert-islandy when you came."

"What a shame!" said her cousin. "Aren't there any friends of Ward's who come to see you?"

Bertha shook her head, and established herself in her favourite chair.

"No," she said. "He hasn't any friends in London. No one comes to see me."

"Great Scott!" ejaculated the young man, feelingly. "How deadly dull, B.! Can't you think of any one? There was a red-haired girl who came once to our place. Hullo! don't throttle a fellow!" he finished, as Bertha rose from her chair and embraced him effusively. "You're a married lady, B., remember!"

"I know I am," cried Bertha. "But it's so clever of you to have remembered her, Monty. Nora Mansell, of course! I do believe she'd come, and she's a dear, isn't she?"

"I don't know," returned her cousin, dubiously. "I don't remember anything about her except her hair. And married ladies don't hug fellows because they're clever, B. It wouldn't do at all, you know."

CHAPTER IV. UNDEVELOPED.

BERTHA'S enthusiasm did not evaporate with her cousin's departure. She wrote a letter that very evening, and, two days later, when Monty Warrener came again to "cheer her up," as he said, she greeted him with the words, triumphantly uttered:

"Nora's coming, Monty. On Tuesday! Isn't it delicious?"

And Monty, who had been considering that it would be a not unpleasant duty to look after his cousin in her unprotected condition, and who, at the same time, with a quite middle-aged appreciation of the ways of the world, had told himself that it would never do for him to be much at the house in West Kensington, if Bertha was alone there, assented heartily, and graciously accepted an invitation to dinner on the Tuesday in question.

The intervening days were spent by Bertha in a delightful fuss of preparation. The thought of showing her house to another girl, the thought of receiving her friend as hostess in her own domain, was most exciting. Even the prospect of a little girlish gossip was not without its charm, though Bertha was not one of those to whom the society and sympathy of their own sex is indispensable. She had known Nora Mansell for some years. They had met originally at a drawing-class and had become great friends. Nora was being educated at Cheltenham, and only attended the drawing-class in her holidays, but they had corresponded fairly regularly, and had met whenever it was possible. But Nora Mansell had left London to live in Yorkshire, twelve months before Bertha's voyage to Sydney, and consequently it was now nearly eighteen months since they had seen one another.

The present was always all-sufficient for Bertha, and in her excitement the sense of injury, of desolation, which had depressed her spirits before Monty Warrener's first visit, faded as completely as though it had never existed; and no thoughts but those of delight and pleasure at seeing her friend again, occupied her as she hovered briskly about her drawing-room on Tuesday afternoon, waiting for Nora Mansell. Tea was ready set out on the newest thing in inexpensive Japanese trays, the fireplace curtains of the yellow muslin were an unqualified success, and the room was adorned with quantities of spring flowers. It was particularly delightful to her to think that it was Nora whom she was prepared to welcome, but still, the idea of doing the honours was in itself extremely thrilling, and when the bell rang and she ran out into the hall, her eyes were sparkling and dancing, and there was a most becoming flush on her cheeks.

"You dear!" she exclaimed, "I am so glad to see you." And then for a moment she forgot that she was the mistress of the house, and clung enthusiastically to the tall girl in the travelling dress.

"I am so very glad to come," said Nora Mansell, and Bertha, returning to a sense of her responsibilities, turned to the servant who stood at the door, with a little air of authority which impressed the other girl not a little.

"See to Miss Mansell's things, Jane," she said. "The man had better take the portmanteau up." And then she turned again to Nora, saying: "Come into the drawing-room, dear, and have some tea. Are you tired?"

"I'm not a bit tired, thanks," answered Nora, as she followed her small hostess into the drawing-room. "But some tea will be delicious."

Nora Mansell was only a year older than Bertha, and by no means old enough to see anything but what was highly impressive in Bertha's assumption of the rôle of hostess, as she established her visitor in a chair and proceeded to pour out tea.

For most girls, the newly-married friend is a being to be contemplated with a respectful admiration, and Nora's attitude towards Bertha was no exception to the rule. Bertha and she had stood on equal ground when last they met; Nora, in fact, had had a certain superiority in right of her extra year's experience of the world, though Bertha's wilful little personality had always been so strong as to make the balance even. Now, however, there was an immense difference between them, and Nora looked up to her little friend with much impressed eyes, as Bertha stood on an altogether superior plane as a married woman.

The "married woman" meanwhile was perfectly conscious of the new point of view from which she was being contemplated, and was enjoying the position and the joke alike, with a double consciousness peculiarly her own.

"It is awfully nice of you to ask me, Bertha, dear," Nora said, appreciatively, when a moment's pause succeeded a rapid flow of question and answer.

"It's awfully nice of you to come," returned Bertha. "I wasn't a bit sure whether you would, or whether your people would let you."

Nora's "people" consisted of an aunt and a sister, who exercised no control over that self-governed young lady, and she answered:

"It wasn't their affair, Bertha! That kind of thing is absurd when a girl has been taught to think for herself." She paused, and then began again, with the utmost seriousness: "As for me, as I told you in my letter, I respect you immensely. Of course, the majority is always against anything unusual and unconventional; and I can quite understand that you have been cut on all sides. But no girl with a true sense of duty and the obligations of marriage could have taken any other course than the one you took. True love is not to be sacrificed to conventions."

There was a delightful air of finality about the manner in which these deep truths were enunciated in the speaker's clear, decided voice. Nora Mansell was not in the least emotional over her words. She was as wholesome-minded a girl as ever lived, and she approached ethics and metaphysics in the same matter-of-fact spirit in which she approached arithmetic.

She had been excellently educated, according to the latest lights in girls' education; and, as the result on her practical intellect, and her natural, youthful inability to appreciate the fact that human intellect is finite and the universe infinite, she had arrived at many satisfactory conclusions, which she held with much conviction and with the lofty superiority of her age and kind.

In person, Nora was a good-looking girl, with a fair complexion, fearless grey eyes, and waving auburn hair brushed back from a white forehead. Her expression was a little too confident, but it was bright and attractive. The grey eyes were fixed upon Bertha now with a serious expression, which had an irresistibly comic effect upon that wilful and hitherto unconscious representative of a "true sense of duty."

"You're a dear, Nora," she said, with a merry little laugh. "It's sweet of you to say I couldn't help it. Of course I couldn't."

"Where is your husband now?" enquired Nora, with the deepest interest.

"He expected to reach Bombay yesterday," replied Bertha, with a little air of conscious pride, which increased the speaker's charm immensely, as did all her sedate little matronly airs. A long talk ensued, consisting of duly sympathetic questions from Nora, and happy and erratic narrative from Bertha, only brought to an end by the necessity of dressing for dinner.

It was during this process, in the solitude of her own room, that an idea occurred to Bertha's active little mind that struck her as being little short of an inspiration. It arose in the reflection that Monty Warrener was coming to dinner; and it came upon her, as she told herself, in a sudden flash. Monty had promised to come and see her very often, and Nora had told her that she would stay as long as she liked. What a good thing it would be to marry them!

She was so full of her "inspiration"—the delights which would attend "managing it" as their common hostess—that a great deal of delay attended her dressing. She ran downstairs eventually, recollecting her dignified position as mistress of the house, with her mind very full of the introduction before her. She opened the drawing-room door, a dainty figure in a green dinner dress with a long train, and found that she was too late.

Nora's clear voice, at its most emphatic pitch, reached her ears, and Monty Warrener stood on the hearth-rug surveying his companion with an expression of as much distaste as was compatible with what Bertha had once described as his "company smile." Bertha was not a quick observer, however; that is to say, it never occurred to her to observe; and she said brightly, as she shook hands with her cousin:

"You and Monty have made friends already, I see, Nora. I needn't introduce him."

"I don't know that Miss Mansell has made friends with me, exactly," said Monty, with a rather short laugh. "Our political opinions, unfortunately, are at variance."

"Well, that doesn't matter," said Bertha, seating herself. "Nora is a girl, so, of course, you won't argue with her."

"Well, that was rather my point of view," began Monty, with a laugh of deprecating superiority; but Nora Mansell interposed, decidedly:

"Bertha, how can you say such a thing? Of course I shall argue with Mr. Warrener. I am afraid, though, that his views are dreadfully undeveloped!"

She looked across at him as she spoke with a glance of disapproval, and not all her pretty colouring and bright energy prevented Monty's dawning disapprobation for a young woman who insisted on plunging into political questions, who was unpleasantly well up in any quantity of unnecessary detail, and who looked upon him apparently as a mere boy, from developing rapidly into absolute hatred.

"I'm afraid I'd as soon they remained undeveloped, Miss Mansell," he said, in his most superior manner. "Bertha, won't you protect me?"

Bertha protected him by changing the subject, with a twinkle in her eye as she thought what fun it would be to see them quarrel themselves into the engagement which she looked upon as a certain conclusion to Nora's visit to her. She found her position as hostess delightfully onerous all through the evening; there seemed to be hardly a subject on which her two guests agreed, and she was continually having to interpose to protect Monty from Nora's energetic attacks, or to avert from Nora the polite contempt for female intellect in which Monty endeavoured to entrench himself.

"Will you come and take us to the theatre on Friday, Monty?" asked Bertha, as she followed him into the hall, when he finally declared within himself that he had "had enough," and took his leave. It was an undignified proceeding on the part of the mistress of the house; but she was impelled by a mischievous desire for his unvarnished opinion.

"On Friday," he repeated, vaguely. He was not considering his engagements, but he was debating "how much more of that girl" he could stand. He finally decided that he "wasn't going to be put down" by any girl, and answered, abruptly:

"All right, B., I'll come."

"How do you like Nora?" enquired Bertha, wickedly, lifting an innocent face to his. "She's a dear, isn't she?"

"She's a caution!" returned Monty, briefly and boyishly, and departed forthwith.

CHAPTER V.

MR. WARRENER, JUNIOR, IS DETAINED.

THAT same theatre expedition was the first of many similar ones, involving a great deal of fun, and a great many lunches, dinners, and teas in the little house in West Kensington, returned by Monty Warrener at various restaurants. The hostilities which had opened with their acquaintance between Nora Mansell and Monty flourished exceedingly, and now and then showed alarming signs of becoming serious. But Nora, though she never failed to controvert with much decision any and every opinion advanced by Monty, though she had apparently the smallest possible respect for his intellect, and none whatever for his judgement, found him pleasant enough from a social point of view. Monty, for his part, though he still declared in moments of self-communion that he "loathed the girl," became aware, during one extraordinarily unargumentative half-hour, that the object of his aversion was "not bad-looking, and jolly well got up," as he put it to himself while contemplating the straight, erect figure, set off by a very becoming and stylish frock. Monty Warrener was a young man who was keenly alive to the pleasure of going about with two girls who, he was pleased to consider, "did a fellow credit," and accordingly he resigned himself with a better grace than might have been expected to the improving he underwent.

To Bertha these proceedings were an unfailing delight. The quarrels of her two guests amused her inexpressibly, she amused herself little less when she interposed and calmed the excited combatants, or whenever there was a lull in the hostilities she looked mischievously forward to the time when she should deride them both—an engaged couple. Bertha was indeed perfectly happy in these days. She was her own mistress, and at the same time she had no responsibilities except such make-believe ones as she created that she might laugh at herself in the connection. She had plenty of gaiety in her life, a congenial and admiring companion in Nora, a mainstay in Monty. Above all, always in the background there was her husband. Her present happiness was enhanced by the sense that it was not all—that there was more to come when she should have her husband with her. As a matter of fact she practically missed him very little; but the thought of him surrounded by a fascinating haze of unfamiliarity, as of a stranger with whom delightful possibilities of infinite pleasure were connected, was the background to which life at present owed much of its charm for her.

His letters came to her from every port at which the "Philistia" touched, and there was none of the shyness which characterised her actual intercourse with him in her attitude towards his written words. She was far more at home with his letters than she was with the man himself, and the two occupied curiously distinct compartments of her mental consciousness.

She was expecting to hear of his leaving Bombay, and Nora had been with her about a month. It was a lovely June evening; the two girls, escorted by Monty Warrener—whose work at "the office" seemed to be anything but severe at present—had been to the Park in the afternoon, and had come back to West Kensington for one of the little dinners on which Bertha rather prided herself. Bertha herself was in the dining-room putting final touches to the table decorations, and keeping her ears open for the knock of the postman who might possibly bring her the letter she was expecting. Nora and Monty had been laughingly charged by her to amuse one another and not to fight, and they were obeying or disobeying her in the drawing-room.

They seemed, considering their respective opinion of one another, to be talking on better than might have been expected. The drawing-room looked very cool and pretty in the summer evening light, and perhaps the temporary amnesty was due to the fact that its quiet and serenity after the turmoil of the streets had had a softening effect upon Nora; perhaps it was due to the fact that she looked extremely attractive in her soft white dress, as she lay back in a wicker chair fanning herself with a palm-leaf fan.

À propos of their having seen the Queen in the Park, Monty was talking about Windsor, which Nora had never seen, and having waxed quite enthusiastic on the subject, he finished in a wonderfully friendly voice, as he looked at her:

"You ought to see Windsor, Miss Mansell, really; I wonder whether I could get a day off and take you and Bertha down."

"I should like it of all things!" said Nora, pleasantly, omitting to take advantage of the opportunity inadvertently offered of mounting one of her favourite hobbies—the demoralising desire of young men for holidays.

"I don't know that it will do, though," continued Monty, with a more boyish laugh than he usually indulged in in Nora's presence. "It's so historical, you know. We should fight over all sorts of old fogies, or rather I should be in hot water all the time for knowing so little about them!"

Monty Warrener was certainly very good-looking; perhaps never more so than when he allowed himself to look as boyish as he did at this moment. His manner as he spoke was very friendly, and it occurred to Nora that possibly when he grew older there might be "something in him." She was occupied in turning this very new idea over in her mind, and answered without a trace of superiority in her tone:

"Perhaps men haven't so much turn for history as women have. Don't you think we could keep on neutral ground for a few hours? I should immensely like to go."

She smiled up at him as she spoke, and he answered quickly:

"I can if you can, Miss Mansell; let's take the chance, any way. When shall it be?"

"We must talk to Bertha," she answered, as the door opened. "Here she is!"

Bertha came in, looking unusually pretty and childish as to her face, and unusually dignified and important as to her little person. Her letter had arrived, she was still holding it in her hand, and she was prepared to bestow upon her guests such small pieces of information as might lead to a proper appreciation of her husband in their minds.

"I've heard from Jim," she announced. "It is frightfully hot at Bombay, he says; and the 'Philistia' will be back in London about the second week of July. Isn't it delightful?"

"Capital," said Monty, heartily. "I shall be no end glad to make his acquaintance, little B."

There was a moment's pause, and then Bertha, with a little hostess-like air, enquired cheerily:

"And what have you two been talking about?"

Monty plunged instantly into the Windsor scheme, and it found such favour in Bertha's eyes, that in five minutes nothing remained to be decided upon but the date and the trains. The next day but one was finally fixed upon, and then Monty fetched a Bradshaw and prepared to look out trains.

"Where's something to write on?" he said, after a minute. "Let's have it in black and white. Give me Ward's envelope, B.," he added, laughingly, as he caught sight of it still in her hand. "An old wife like you doesn't cherish her husband's envelopes, of course!"

Bertha laughed, and hesitated. She was very fond of her letters, and the envelopes seemed part of them. Then she laughed again, at herself this time, and drawing the letter out, she gave the cover to her cousin.

"There," she said, "you'll have plenty of room; Jim's writing is so small."

"It's jolly good," returned her cousin, as he scrutinised the small, rather uncommon characters. "Now then, let's see! Here we are: 11.2 from Paddington, and 6.59 up. That'll do us, won't it?" He jotted the memoranda down on the envelope, and placed it in his pocket-book, marking the Bradshaw for the edification of his cousin and Nora.

Monty Warrener was not a little surprised to find how constantly his thoughts turned during the following day to the expedition thus arranged. He was quite nervous when he asked for the necessary holiday, eagerly promising to perform prodigies of industry during the first hour of the day. Nora's placid frame of mind had lasted throughout the evening, and he had made several new discoveries as to her personal attractiveness. She would be as sharp as a razor, no doubt, when they met the next morning, he told himself, with a fine assumption of carelessness, as he sought in the night sky for pleasant prognostics of the next day's weather; but still the contrast would be interesting from a purely pyschological point of view.

And when the next morning arrived, bright and sunny, the clerks at "the office" spent an extremely harassed hour—Mr. Warrener, senior, not having arrived—and offered up devout thanksgiving when Mr. Warrener, junior, hailed a hansom and prepared to depart at a few minutes before half-past ten.

He was standing in the outer office on his way to the door, giving some final instruction to one of the clerks, and doing it, in spite of his impatience, in a very capable and manly way, when a woman came in and spoke to the clerk nearest the door. After a short colloquy, in which she apparently explained herself with much loquacity, the young man left her and crossed the room to where Monty was standing.

"I'm sorry to trouble you, sir," he said, "but a woman has come who says she is Rosamund Smith. She has come up from the country on purpose to answer the advertisement, and she says she must go back to-night. Shall I tell her to wait for Mr. Warrener?"

Monty's face clouded with annoyance. Little as Nora Mansell would have believed it, he knew what business meant, and was thoroughly capable and responsible in transacting it. The case in question was that of a small legacy, and the firm had advertised for the legatee. The affair had been left entirely in Monty's hands, and to throw over the winding of it up would be culpable negligence on his part, which he knew would do him harm with his father, even if his own business-like habits would have allowed him to do it. He glanced across the room at the woman and hesitated. As he reviewed the position, he unconsciously took in the facts that she was a middle-aged woman, who had probably been handsome in a coarse, flashy style in her youth, though she looked thin and worn now. She was very shabby, but evidently dressed for the occasion with a tawdry attempt at finery.

"I'll see her!" said Monty, briefly. "Show her into my room."

"Very good, sir," answered the clerk, and retiring to the woman he conducted her up the office, and opened for her the door of a small room opening out of it on which were painted the words, "Mr. Warrener, Junior." Poor Monty, meanwhile, did not give expression to the anathemas which arose within him, such a course being incompatible with discipline, but he finished shortly enough the instructions he had been giving, and then turned back again towards the door, which had closed behind the woman. With his hand on the latch he turned and spoke to one of the clerks.

"Keep the hansom, Ford," he said, "I shan't be long." And then he opened the door and went in, shutting it after him.

A quarter of an hour passed, twenty minutes, half an hour, and still the hansom waited, and the door inscribed "Mr. Warrener, Junior," remained shut. Then it opened, and the woman came out as Monty's voice, hard and curiously unlike itself, called, "Ford!" and bade the man show her out. It shut again after her, and another half-hour elapsed before Monty himself came out, and despatched a clerk to Paddington station with a note addressed to Mrs. James Ward, and full instructions as to the probable whereabouts of the lady to whom it was to be delivered. Monty was very pale, and there was a strangely set expression about his mouth and eyes. As his messenger departed in the waiting hansom, he himself walked straight out of the office, and away down the street in the opposite direction.

Bertha and Nora meanwhile, waiting at Paddington, passed through all the stages of surprise, indignation, and disappointment. The reception of the note, in which Monty simply apologised for the fact that business prevented him keeping his appointment, complicated their emotions by adding the element of wonder. They wondered all day how such a catastrophe could have happened, and the next day they wondered, or rather Bertha wondered, when Monty would come and explain. Nora had little to say on the subject, nor had she any comments to offer when the whole of the ensuing week went by without a word from the delinquent, or on his taciturn demeanour when he did finally appear for a brief afternoon call.

The pleasant intercourse of the last four weeks seemed suddenly to have come to an end. A sudden access of business had apparently come upon Monty Warrener. He refused Bertha's invitations; he made one in her little expeditions no more. The days of Nora's stay in London were numbered, and Bertha had to own to herself, with a little laugh, that her match-making had turned out a failure; but she was less concerned on the subject than might have been expected. The days that brought nearer Nora's departure, were also bringing nearer the arrival of the "Philistia," and Bertha's head was filled with expectation. She wondered a little how it was that Monty had become so suddenly busy; but she gave the matter no serious thought, and accepted the new state of affairs unconcernedly enough.

It was a hot afternoon, in the second week in July, and Nora was walking across Kensington Gardens alone. She was going home the next day, having refused Bertha's invitation to stay longer and be introduced to her husband. She had persuaded Bertha to let her do her shopping alone, the heat being so great; and perhaps it was because the sun had tried her, that she looked rather grave and quiet. She was thinking of the weeks she had spent in London. She had had a delightful time, she told herself, though the latter part had certainly not been quite as nice as the former. She had just arrived at this conclusion, and she might have proceeded to enquire of herself why it should have been so, when her meditations were interrupted by a voice at her elbow.

"Miss Mansell! How are you?"

She turned quickly to find Monty Warrener beside her. He had apparently been walking fast, for he was out of breath.

"How do you do, Mr. Warrener?" she said, holding out her hand.

It was more than a fortnight since she had seen him, for he had only once been at Bertha's house since the failure of the Windsor expedition, and as they shook hands she noticed that he looked worn and almost haggard, and her eyes softened unconsciously.

"I'm glad we have met," she said, simply. "I am going home to-morrow!"

"Are you?" he said, quickly. "Back to Yorkshire?"

"Back to Yorkshire!" she answered, with a smile. "I don't want to be in the way, and the 'Philistia' is expected to touch at Plymouth to-morrow or the next day, you know!"

"Yes, I know."

He was certainly very white, she thought, whiter even than she had noticed at first, and she exclaimed, frankly:

"I'm afraid you're working awfully hard, Mr. Warrener. You're looking worried, do you know!"

He coloured like a boy as he met the direct gaze of those straightforward eyes, and answered, hurriedly:

"It's no end good of you to notice me, Miss Mansell! I—I am rather worried."

"I'm so sorry."

There was a pause, and then Nora offered him her hand again.

"Well, good-bye," she said. "Bertha will be wanting me."

"Good-bye," he said, hesitatingly. And then, with a sudden headlong rush, he added: "Miss Mansell, may I call if I should happen to be in your neighbourhood?"

The grey eyes were very soft as Nora answered:

"We shall be very pleased."

CHAPTER VI. ALONE IN THE DARK.

TWENTY-FOUR hours later Nora was gone, and Bertha, alone in her own house, was standing in the hall, with a telegram in her hand. It had just arrived, and it was dated from Plymouth.

"Expect to arrive to-morrow afternoon. Jim." Bertha read it, standing in the afternoon sunshine, a pretty little picture of crimson-cheeked excitement; and then she turned and went upstairs to her room. She tossed off her hat, and, going to the window, stood looking out with unseeing eyes, her curly head resting against the window-frame, as she repeated the words again and again. He was coming!

She could not have put into definite words the ideas those words conveyed to her. It was all too confusedly happy for that. Only she was conscious that it was a very long time since he had gone away, and that the interval had altered her; she felt, too, that his letters had in some way altered her attitude towards their writer, and she felt that she was going to take up the threads of life with her husband at a far more advanced point than that at which she had laid them down. Nothing was clear to her. Over the future there still hung a haze; but behind it there was a light, and the haze itself was the colour of roses.

She stood there dreaming, with the telegram still in her hand, for nearly half an hour; then she roused herself suddenly, and plunged into an energetic inspection and partial redecoration of the house—a process which was hardly finished by dinner-time, and left her considerably exhausted.

Her solitary dinner was over, and she was preparing to settle down in the drawing-room with a book, when, somewhat to her surprise, the door-bell rang. The next moment, however, she accepted it as the most natural thing in the world that Monty Warrener should come in.

"Why didn't you come to dinner?" she said, as she shook hands. "You've not been to dinner for ages, Monty! Have you heard that the 'Philistia' will be in to-morrow?"

"Yes," he answered, "I have heard."

The lamps had not been lighted, and the room was rather dark. Bertha, full of her own affairs, had hardly noticed her cousin's face; but, as he spoke, his voice struck strangely on her ear.

"Are you tired, Monty?" she asked, straining her brown eyes to read his expression in the twilight. "Why, you're very pale."

"I'm all right, dear," he said, in the same odd tone. "Bertha, I've got to tell you something."

"To tell me something!" she repeated, wonderingly. "Something—Oh, Monty—is it something bad? Not Jim? Oh, Monty, not Jim!"

She was looking up at him with dilated eyes and outstretched hands, frightened without knowing why; and the young man turned abruptly away from her, and walked to the mantelshelf.

"It's all right!" he said, hoarsely. "I mean, he's quite well, Bertha!" There was a moment's pause, while Bertha, reassured, wondered on what other lines bad news could possibly reach her; and then Monty went on, with an obvious struggle for his man-of-business manner:

"I've got to tell you a long story, Bertha. Sit down, my dear."

She obeyed him silently, with the twinkle in her eye which she could never repress when her cousin was paternal to her; but he did not speak. A moment or two passed, during which he stood leaning on the mantelshelf, with his eyes fixed on the ground; and when at last he began, there was a curious contrast between the boyish constraint of his attitude and the precision with which he spoke.

"Some time ago," he said, "a will case came into our hands in the office, in which one of the legatees was a woman whose maiden name was given as Rosamund Smith. Nothing was known as to her whereabouts, or as to whether she was married or unmarried, by any of the other parties concerned; and accordingly we advertised for her as Rosamund Smith. The case was handed over to me from the first; and when, about a month ago, a woman, claiming to be the Rosamund Smith in question, answered the advertisement, it was my business to see her and go into her claim."

He paused, and Bertha said, wonderingly, "Yes?"

"She gave her address as 10, Wilberforce Street, Reading," he went on, and his tone was more rigidly business-like than before, though he was fingering an ornament now nervously and uncertainly. "She was—an uneducated woman; one of those women who insist on telling you all their family affairs, under the impression that it is necessary to the establishment of their claim. She told me her husband's full name, and where he was born; she told me his father's name and occupation. I was struck by a curious coincidence between her statements and statements I had heard elsewhere."

Monty stopped, this time as though to add weight and significance to his words. The formality of his manner—a formality which increased as he spoke, as though he were trying to entrench himself in it—was almost pathetic contrasted with the furtive and boyish manner in which he tried to moisten his dry lips. Bertha made no attempt to help him. She was gazing at him in blank bewilderment, vaguely conscious that something terrible was coming, but with not the faintest idea as to its character.

"I was putting the coincidence aside," continued Monty, "as merely curious, when she went on to tell me her husband's profession and whereabouts. Evidently proud of having married into a sphere considerably above her own, and apparently thinking it an additional proof of her identity, she pulled out of her pocket a recent letter from him, and showed it to me. The handwriting was familiar to me. I made an excuse to get up and look for some papers, and I compared the envelope with an envelope I had in my pocket. The writings were apparently identical, and they were addressed apparently to the same person—Mrs. James Ward."

There was a little choking cry, and Bertha had risen from her chair and was standing before him, her face standing out dead white against the gloom of the falling twilight, her eyes wide and dreadful.

"Monty," she gasped, in a hardly audible whisper, "Monty!"

And then, quite suddenly, all poor Monty's assumed formality of manner deserted him, and he turned and took her impulsively into his arms.

"Oh, my poor dear little B.," he cried, boyishly, "try and be brave, and take it in. It's a thundering shame, dear, but she's his wife. She was married to him twelve years ago."

The words were hardly uttered before Bertha wrenched herself out of his arms and stood facing him, her face, her very throat a burning scarlet, her eyes shining with an unendurable horror.

"It isn't true!" she cried, breathlessly, "it isn't true!"

Monty turned away from her, and let his head fall on his arms as he rested them on the mantelshelf.

"It is true," he said, hoarsely. "Do you think I'd say it to you if I wasn't sure—if I didn't know?"

Then he raised his head again suddenly and looked at the little figure before him. He wondered, with the incongruous detail of thought that accompanies a terrible mental crisis, what he could do if Bertha fainted. She showed no signs of fainting, however.

"Go on," she said. And Monty obeyed her.

"It was the similarity of names that struck me first, as I told you," he went on, speaking still more hoarsely. "She told me her husband's name was James Carrick Ward; that his second name came from his having been born at Carrick-on-Shannon, in Ireland; that his father had been a doctor, named Hubert Ward. Then she told me that her husband was a doctor on board the P. and O. steamer 'Philistia,' and showed me his letter. I compared it with the envelope you gave me to write down our trains to Windsor on; it was that day. Of course I made her show me a copy of her marriage certificate—she thought it was a business formality connected with her legacy—and since then, Bertha—well, I haven't left a stone unturned to prove it one way or the other. I've told myself that there must be a frightful mistake somewhere or other, and that I should come upon it sooner or later. But I've done just the other thing, worse luck; I've proved beyond all doubt what I told you just now."

Bertha had heard him straight through, with her wide eyes fixed on him, as though she were turned to stone. Even the expression seemed to have become fixed on the mobile face. He paused, but still she did not stir, and after a moment, during which he dared not look at her, he said, rapidly:

"I hunted up one of the witnesses to the marriage, who is at present an innkeeper at Plymouth. I went down and saw him, and asked him if he could identify the James Ward whose marriage he had witnessed, and arranged with him to go on board the 'Philistia' and telegraph to me. I told him, too, that it was a formality connected with the legacy. I got his telegram this afternoon. He identifies the James Carrick Ward, at present medical officer on board the P. and O. steamer 'Philistia,' with the James Carrick Ward married in his presence in 1876 to Rosamund Smith."

A dreadful little sound parted her lips—they were quite white now—but there was no other movement in her face. Quite suddenly she sat down on the chair near which she stood. She was trembling from head to foot. Monty, with a sound that was very like a sob, knelt down beside her, and tried to take her hand.

"Dear little B.," he said, brokenly, "try and bear up. It's an awful shame, and he shall pay for it, I swear. It's cut me up like anything to tell you, dear. And now I want you to let me take you away—at once, you know. I've taken rooms for you with an awfully good sort of woman, and—and you may leave it all to me."

A moment's pause followed this speech, with its odd mixture of youth and manliness, and then Bertha turned and looked at her cousin, and a strange stiff smile touched her lips as she lifted one small cold hand and touched his face with vague gentleness.

"Thank you, Monty, dear," she said, speaking mechanically. "I can't do that."

"Well, we can think about that presently, dear," he responded, protectingly. "You'll come away now, at any rate."

"No, Monty!"

"Not—Bertha, you don't mean to stay here!"

"Yes," she answered, in the same toneless voice. "I can't go until I've seen him, Monty. It can't be true, you know." And then, as Monty rose to his feet, a picture of incredulity and dismay, a dreadful little laugh broke from her. "Don't look so ridiculous, Monty," she cried. "Don't try to understand, poor old boy, if you can't, only don't—argue with me!"

The last words came from her in an hysterical cry, and she pressed her face against the back of the chair.

Monty turned abruptly and walked across the room. His face was very white and set, and all its worry and anxiety seemed to have culminated now in a baffled bewilderment, which was desperate in its helplessness. Ever since his first interview with the woman who had introduced herself as Rosamund Smith, Monty Warrener had been bearing a heavy burden of suspense, and bearing it alone. When his suspicions as to the identity of the two James Carrick Wards had become almost a moral certainty, he had debated in his almost unendurable anxiety whether it would not be well to consult his father on the subject; but he had decided, knowing his father well, that there was nothing to be hoped from him, and that he would "keep it quiet."

As regards plans for the final confirmation or dispersion of his suspicions he had made and discarded one after another, and as the time passed proof upon proof accumulated until no doubt as to the truth was left in his own mind. The only legal proof in such a case was, of course, personal identification of James Ward by witnesses of the two marriages. Without such evidence Monty Warrener knew that he could not say to Bertha, "This is the fact." But a hot sense of tenderness and protection towards Bertha took possession of him, and he determined hastily, as an older and cooler man might not have done, that he could not and would not allow her to receive, in ignorance of what he knew to be the truth, the man she believed to be her husband; that he would take her away before he came back, and then "settle with Ward," as he muttered to himself through clenched teeth. Then, suddenly, while he hesitated before actually taking such a step on the moral certainty only, he had discovered ready to his hand the means of securing the legal proof he wanted, he had discovered the witness to Rosamund Smith's marriage at Plymouth. And now, when he thought he had attained his end, he found himself face to face with a blank wall. Bertha would not accept the facts presented to her—she would not go.

He stood at the window looking out into the summer darkness and trying to collect his forces, scattered and shaken by the scene he had just gone through, and then he turned and looked across the dark room towards the spot where he could dimly distinguish Bertha's figure. He was in a difficulty which he had never contemplated. The legal proof had assumed such overwhelming proportions in his mind during the last few weeks that he was completely thrown out of his reckoning, left stranded and helpless by the apparent insignificance of its weight with Bertha. He did not even know what line of argument to take up. He had, of course, no authority over his cousin, he could not compel her to leave the house. And there had been something about Bertha as she spoke to him, in spite of her assertion of incredulity, which seemed to shrivel up even the semblance of authority with which he had now and then been used to address her. Little, shallow, childish being as she had always seemed, the shadow, at least, of a terrible tragedy was darkening over her now, and his superior years were as nothing before it. He looked at her for a moment, and then began, hesitatingly and boyishly:

"But, dear, don't you see——" But Bertha interrupted him. She did not rise, but he thought she turned her wan face towards him.

"It's no use, Monty," she said, in a voice that was very thin but quite steady. "Please don't! You've been very good to me. Don't think I don't understand if I ask you to go away now, please."

He paused a moment, sorely perplexed in spirit. He argued with himself that she was safe for the night, at any rate, and that he could come back in the morning, and he was painfully conscious of his own inability to say anything to comfort her. "Poor little dear, she must face it out for herself before she'll hear any reason, I suppose," he thought, pitifully, to himself. He crossed the room and stood looking at her with awkward tenderness.

"I don't like to leave you, dear," he said.

"I'd rather, please."

"Alone in the dark?"

"Yes."

He turned away with a lump in his throat that almost choked him, and left her as she wished.

CHAPTER VII.

NO. 10, WILBERFORCE STREET, READING.

BERTHA never looked back upon the night that followed without a shudder. She could never remember how it passed. A terrible, shadowy horror, now receding, now advancing and assuming definite and frightful proportions—that this was with her without a moment's intermission, sleeping or waking—that she battled against it with a passion of incredulity and resistance, she was conscious. But what she actually did or thought she never knew.

Towards morning she fell into a heavy, dreamless sleep, in which consciousness of every kind left her for the first time. The sun was streaming into her room when she awoke, and for the first moment or two her short period of oblivion stood between her and all that had preceded it, and she wondered dimly why she felt so tired. Then, gradually, with the relentless distinctness which morning perceptions give to what was feverish confusion the night before, all that her cousin had said to her came back to her. She lay quite still and gazing straight before her, an odd little smile flitting across her face—so white and drawn as she recalled Monty's bewilderment when she sent him away. Then quite suddenly some words he had spoken earlier in their interview came back to her.

"She gave her address as 10, Wilberforce Street, Reading."

The next moment she was up, and dressing rapidly. Legal proof, as Monty had been forced to acknowledge last night, carried no conviction to her mind. No realisation would come to her through any verbal evidence, however unanswerable. A sudden unreasoning impulse to go and see for herself, an overmastering instinct to make tangible the horror against which she was holding out so stoutly, took possession of her. She never stopped to think that James Ward was coming—coming that very day, that he might even have arrived before she could get back. In another hour she was driving towards Paddington station.

Arrived at Reading, she passed out of the station, and then asked her way. The man who directed her looked admiringly at the dainty, coquettish figure—her face was almost hidden by a thick veil—and as she walked on he followed her with his eyes. But Bertha, perhaps for the first time in her life, was quite unconscious of admiration; she pursued her way quickly, attending to the directions given her, until she arrived at the door of No. 10, Wilberforce Street. It was a shabby, dilapidated street, with untidy children playing in the road, and a general atmosphere of poverty, degenerating into squalor. Bertha was conscious of a sudden change in her mental attitude. The horror had lost, instead of gaining, substance, as she turned into that squalid street. It was impossible, she said to herself, with no definition of what it was that was impossible. It was impossible! She pulled the bell, and waited patiently for some minutes. Then the door was opened with a jerk by a slovenly, tired-looking woman—the woman who had come into the office of Warrener and Warrener, on the morning when Monty Warrener had been preparing to start for Windsor.

"Well?" she said, shortly enough, as she eyed her visitor with disfavour.

"I beg your pardon!" said Bertha, pleasantly, the horror becoming absurdly shadowy. "I'm afraid this is an inconvenient time to call, but I was passing through Reading, and—I was anxious to make your acquaintance. Mrs. James Ward, I think?" Bertha nearly laughed as she spoke, the whole thing struck her as being so ridiculous.

"That's my name!" answered the woman. "Rosamund Ward. Rosamund Smith I was, and I come from away down in Ross-shire."

"I had the pleasure of meeting your husband some months ago," interposed Bertha, gently. "Dr. James Ward, doctor on board the 'Philistia,' I believe?" She paused, waiting with a smile for the wondering denial she expected, and then suddenly the horror seemed to rise before her again in overwhelming blackness, as the woman replied, with a kind of sullen pride:

"Yes, that's him; though p'raps you wouldn't think it to look at me. I'm sure if I'd a' known as any one would be comin' in I'd a' tidied myself up a bit; but there, it don't seem worth while, with nobody but the children, and all the house to see to." She paused, looking at her visitor curiously. In spite of a certain irritability of expression, the result of ill health and many cares, her face was far from being a bad one. It must have been very handsome, in its unrefined way, in her youth, and she looked now like one of those long-enduring women who talk a great deal about their troubles, but accept them as their natural lot, and rebel against them not at all.

Bertha did not speak. She was indeed hardly conscious that any interval had elapsed since she had found herself once more face to face with that terrible shadow.

"Jim asked you to come and see me, did he, now?" continued the woman, in a tone that was a mixture of ungraciousness and gratified pride. "He might a' sent me word. I don't call to mind his ever sendin' any one before; and as to comin' home himself—well, I don't hold with this sea doctorin', and that's the truth. It's goin' on two years since he's been down here. P'r'aps you'll step in?" she finished, suddenly. "You didn't say no name, I think?"

"My name!" repeated Bertha, with an odd high laugh. She was battling valiantly with her reason, holding herself together with a high hand; but her voice, even to herself, sounded hard and strained. "Oh, my name is the same as yours, oddly enough—Mrs. Ward. It is not an uncommon name, is it?"

"Are you any kin to Jim?" asked the other woman, with some slight curiosity.

"No, none," said Bertha, firmly. "Thank you," she went on, "I shall be very pleased to come in. I hope you have good news from the 'Philistia'?"

"Well, I haven't heard not lately," answered the other. She opened a door close to where she stood in the narrow little passage, and disclosed a room that she herself would have described as the parlour—very dingy as to the white "lace" curtains, very dusty as to its common ornaments, very stuffy as to atmosphere.

Bertha passed into the room, and at the same moment the horror which had threatened her so long descended and engulfed her in its blackness. There, on the little tawdry, dusty mantelpiece, in a tawdry, dusty frame, facing her as she entered, was the photograph that she had seen only that morning on her own dainty mantelshelf at home, the photograph of her husband.

The blackness was all around her now; she was struggling in it, not to ward it off. Her own voice seemed to come from a long way off, and to sound curiously unnatural as she heard it say:

"Ah, you have a photograph of Dr. Ward there, I see?"

"Yes," she heard the uneducated voice

behind her answer. "That was my husband six years ago. We'd been married——"

The voice broke off suddenly. The blackness was choking, confusing, and Bertha was swaying slightly as she stood. The next moment the woman caught her roughly, but kindly enough, by the arm.

"Are you took bad?" she asked, anxiously. "It's awful warm to-day. There, sit down, and I'll get you some water." But as she moved to put the little figure into the chair, the giddiness passed, and Bertha was herself again.

"Thank you," she said, quickly, as she released herself and took a chair, from which she could see the photograph. "Thank you so much; but it was nothing. I am quite well again now. The sun is rather hot, perhaps. Do you expect your husband home soon, did you say?"

The woman had been watching her rather doubtfully up to this point; but a question was evidently a bait which she could not resist, and she sat down opposite her visitor, and near the dingily gorgeous fireplace, so that Bertha's eyes could rest on her and on the photograph on the mantelpiece without a turn of her head.

Bertha often wondered afterwards how long she sat there, listening to the voluble communication about "Jim" and the children, which she drew from the woman opposite with little interested questions, glancing now and then at the photograph as she recalled her hostess from histories of her early days as a shop-girl at Edinburgh, to the subject of her husband, and then fixing her eyes once more steadily on the woman's figure, in which the horror had at last taken tangible shape.

She rose to go at last, her face quite white and her eyes fixed under the thick veil which she had not lifted, but perfectly collected. Her voice was hard and thin, but she spoke easily and naturally. "Good-bye, Mrs. Ward," she said. "I am delighted to have made your acquaintance."

"Good-bye," returned the other woman, heartily. "I'm sure I'm sorry you must be going. A bit of talk does do one good, I'm sure. If you should be seein' my husband again—not that it's likely, to be sure—you tell him I wish he'd find time to come home. He doesn't take no notice of letters."

"I'll tell him," returned Bertha, quietly; and then they shook hands, and the dilapidated street-door shut behind her.

She walked away down the untidy street, the same attractive little figure that had walked up it. She was not thinking; she was not reasoning; she was not even conscious of suffering. All her faculties were entirely absorbed in the intensity of her realisation. Instinctively and mechanically she returned to the station, and took the train back to town. Instinctively and mechanically, having arrived at Paddington, she got into a hansom, and gave the man the direction that had been home to her so long. She got out, paid the driver, rang the bell, and the door was opened almost instantly.

"Please, ma'am," said the excited servant, "master's come!"

Even as the girl spoke, the dining-room door opened quickly, and James Ward stood on the threshold. And then, for the first time, a full consciousness of her own position rushed upon Bertha. Hitherto she had only known the fact; now, for the first time, she felt it. The man before her was not her husband!

At the same moment, Monty Warrener, having been to the house in West Kensington very soon after Bertha left it that morning, and having returned post-haste to his office, hoping that she might have gone to him there, was coming back as quickly as steam could bring him from the docks, whither he had gone, hoping to "have it out with Ward at once."

CHAPTER VIII. "LISTEN TO ME, BERTHA."

Before Bertha had time to speak or move, even if she had had impulse left to do either, James Ward had come towards her, as she stood shrinking back against the wall, her face and throat a burning scarlet, and an unutterable horror in her eyes. He took her into his arms, and she, conscious even then of the proximity of the deeply-interested servant, made no active resistance, though she shuddered painfully under his touch.

"My dearest," he said, "where in the world have you been?"

He drew her down the hall, and in another moment the drawing-room door was shut upon them. The instant they were alone, Bertha tore herself away, and retreated from him with a movement of inexpressible repugnance.

"I have been to see your wife," she said. "Your wife, Rosamund Smith, to whom you were married twelve years ago."

And then, quite suddenly, her strength seemed to fail her. She covered her face with her hands, and turning away from him, stood there with her head bowed, not crying, but crushed to the earth by such an agony of shame as only perfect innocence can suffer.

There was a silence. No sound of any kind came from James Ward. There was one involuntary movement of fierce surprise, and a kind of spasm passed across his handsome features. Then they settled into a keen expression of calculation and determination, and he stood watching her and rapidly reviewing the position.

James Ward had married Bertha Brand in Sydney with the deliberate consciousness of the future possibility of such a moment as the present.

Twelve years before, a cynical, callous young man of three-and-twenty, he had met Rosamund Smith, a pretty shop-girl employed by an Edinburgh tobacconist, and married her, more with a view to the annoyance of his father, with whom he had quarrelled, than from any other motive. His father dying two years later, he had found his revenge too dearly bought at the expense of domesticity with the uneducated woman he had married, and he had given up his practice, cut himself adrift from all his old acquaintances—he had never made friends, and his father had been his last living relative. He had settled his wife at Reading, and had taken the appointment he still held with the P. and O. Company, sending his wife half-yearly just enough money for the support of herself and their two children.

No woman in his own class of life had ever attracted him as Bertha had done. Having no scruples of any kind, he seldom failed to obtain a thing for which he thought it worth while to exert himself, and Bertha's peculiarly lonely position had simplified his course of action considerably.

Hard, daring, and clear-headed, he had not attempted to deceive himself. It was extremely unlikely that the truth should ever come out, he told himself; but it was not impossible. It was even not impossible that extremely unpleasant practical consequences might ensue, since bigamy is an offence punishable by law; but Bertha would never be likely to prosecute on her own account, he told himself with a smile, as he considered pros and cons, while walking the quarter-deck of the "Philistia." She was practically friendless, and he could rely upon his own brains at a pinch, he decided finally. And he further decided that should the crisis ever occur, his conduct then would be influenced by numerous circumstances which it was impossible to foresee, not the least of which would be the state of his feelings towards his present "fancy." Of the effect upon Bertha of the revelation which might possibly be in store for her, he had thought not at all. Respect or consideration for womanhood was a sense entirely wanting in James Ward.

And now as he stood keenly observant of his "fancy," with no more comprehension or pity for her agony than if she had been a little crushed butterfly, he was clearly aware of one thing. The discovery had distinctly come too soon, and he was by no means prepared to let her go. It was obviously impossible for him, however, to begin to move until he should know the pieces with which he had to play. It was extremely unlikely, he argued, that Bertha should have made her discovery unassisted, and his thoughts immediately turned to Monty Warrener, of whom Bertha had naturally written to him constantly. Was this young man her only adviser, or had she found others more important?

"I am not going to deny what you say," he said at last, in a steady tone, into which he infused a dignity that sounded very effective. "Whether I can ever excuse myself to you, whether you will ever understand me, depends upon yourself." He paused a moment, and then, in that low, insistent voice which had always exercised a strange fascination over Bertha, he hazarded a bold stroke. "It depends upon your love for me, Bertha," he said.

He paused, waiting to judge of the effect he had made, and Bertha slowly lifted her head and looked at him. Minutes only had actually passed in that agony of realisation, but those minutes stood between her past and her present—a fiery barricade through which nothing could pass unchanged. And in its scorching heat the love that might have dawned in her for the man she had married lay dead, to be recreated by the man before her never again. He spoke to her of love. She was conscious of nothing but an unutterable sense of shrinking and recoil. She looked at him with great horror-filled eyes, and intense repugnance on every line of her white little face; but she seemed to be too absorbed by her own thoughts to recognise the fact that he expected words from her, and he went on after a moment with a direct question:

"To whom is it known besides yourself and me?"

"Monty knows."

"No one else?"

"No."

She had answered him in a strange, distant tone, as though he were a stranger to whom she had an inexpressible distaste; but James Ward, now sure of his ground, attached little importance either to her tone or to the expression of her face. He did not approach her, on the contrary he turned away, and shading his face with his hand as he rested his elbow on the top of the cottage piano near which he stood, he began to speak.

"Bertha," he said, "if you have seen the woman I married when I was a boy of little over twenty"—facts were by no means the weapons James Ward proposed to use at this crisis—"you will not want to be told what my life has been for the last twelve years. It is a horrible thing to spoil one's life before one very well knows what life means. I had carried that curse with me for twelve years—carried it with no thought of escaping from it or of lightening it—when I met you. I don't know what you did to me—I told you often, and it was true enough, that you bewitched me—I only know that before the 'Philistia' had been at sea a fortnight I realised, for the first time, all that my boyish folly had thrown away!" He paused. Bertha stood still, gazing at him with those wide, horror-filled eyes.

"Do you understand what I mean," he went on, "when I say that I would have given my soul to win you?" James Ward did not think it necessary to explain that he was no believer in the soul, and it would have been quite impossible to divine it from his low, intense voice. "I loved you," he broke off suddenly, and, raising his head, he turned abruptly towards her, covering the distance between them with two rapid strides. "Oh, Bertha! Bertha!" he cried, vehemently, "don't you understand? My love of you is all that I can urge in self-defence. My love of you possessed me, drove me mad with longing and regret, filled me with strength to do and dare everything, if only I might make you mine! Oh, can't you forgive me? can't you have pity on me? Is any wrong beyond forgiveness when it is done for love?"

Perfect self-possession, a flexible voice, and a handsome, expressive face are excellent substitutes for genuine emotion, especially when they are controlled by a powerful brain and a very genuine desire for success. It was strong testimony to the force of her reaction from him that the passionate appeal uttered in the voice which, on board the "Philistia," had been used to thrill her with a delicious mixture of fear and fascination, had no effect whatever upon Bertha now, except an intensely repellent one. He was standing close to her, looking right down into her eyes, and her repugnance, the sense of opposition waked in her by his urgency, seemed to give her back the spirit which her agony of shame had apparently crushed. There was no fear in her face, though the horror was still in her eyes as she drew back and faced him. He saw the change in her expression, and, before she could speak, he went on, quickly:

"Listen to me, Bertha," he said. "I cannot let you go—I will not. You are my love, whatever comes, and I will keep you. Let us go away together, you and I, and forget the miserable past! Ah. Bertha, I will make you happy! Have I not made you happy? Let us go——"

But he was interrupted. As the full comprehension of the proposal she was listening to dawned upon Bertha, such a flood of crimson had rushed over her face that even her delicate ears were dyed by it, and into her eyes there flashed a look in which contempt and loathing were inextricably blended. James Ward had only been permitted to say as much as he had done by her sheer inability to express herself in words, and when at last they broke from her he stopped, perforce.

"How dare you!" she cried, facing him with great, flashing, shining eyes. "Oh, how dare you! How dare you! Don't you know I would much rather die! Oh," she broke suddenly into a wild, despairing cry, and wrung her little hands passionately together. "Oh, why don't I die? Why don't I die?"

She clasped her hands wildly over her face, and turning before he could recover from his surprise at her utterly unexpected outbreak, opened the door and ran out of the room.

At the same instant the front door was opened, and she ran almost into the arms of Monty Warrener, returned, almost desperate, from his fruitless expedition to the docks.

"Oh, Monty," she cried, heart-brokenly, "take me away! Take me away!"

CHAPTER IX. THE BURDEN OF THE DEBT.

"WE'RE just in time, Monty! Here comes the rain!"

The speaker was Nora Mansell, and as she uttered the words breathlessly enough, the blustering, tyrannical wind of a rough October day partially suspended operations for the moment, as it were, in favour of a downfall of cold, driving rain. Nora and her companion, Monty Warrener, stood on the step of a small house in a dingy road on debateable ground between Regent's Park and Camden Town.

Great changes may be wrought in a man in the course of twelve months, and a man is, moreover, perfectly at liberty to alter his mind. These reflections were a considerable comfort to Monty Warrener when he was reminded, as occasionally happened, that it was not eighteen months since he had defined Nora Mansell with much brevity as "a caution." Now, as they stood together on the dingy door-step, they stood there in the capacity of engaged lovers, which only showed, as Nora had once or twice remarked when alluding to the early impressions made on her by her future husband, "how little one can tell."

"It seems such a long time since I saw her," said Nora; "have you rung, Monty? You won't come and fetch me for an hour at least, will you?"

"I'm only too glad she should have you," returned Monty, with a glance at the "caution," in which a proud conviction that she must be a solace under any circumstances, struggled with the remembrance of the subject of their words. "Miss Brand in?" he added, precipitately, as the door was opened.

"No, sir, she ain't," was the response. "But she said she'd be in by four."

"I'll wait, of course," said Nora, promptly, and nodding a good-bye to Monty, she left him to battle a lonely but radiant way down the dreary road in the wind and the rain, and followed the characteristic specimen of a lodging-house maid along the narrow passage.

It was not an enlivening room into which she was shown. The furniture—the ordinary furniture of the "dining-room floor" of furnished apartments—had never been good of its kind, and had acquired an air of squalor rather than dignity in this its advanced old age. Everything in the room was ugly—everything, that is to say, with the exception of two or three ragged yellow chrysanthemums which stood in a tumbler of water on the table, and a little work-bag of brocaded silk which lay near them.

Nora sat down in a chair near the unornamental hearth, but rose again immediately, as the door suddenly opened and a little, dripping, breathless figure, with hair and hat all blown about by the rough wind, dashed into the room and shut the door after her, as though she expected the same wind to pursue her, and tear it out of her hand.

"Oh, you best of girls," the figure gasped. "Isn't it rampageous!" Then, as Nora advanced towards her, Bertha stretched out both her hands with the old irrepressible laugh sparkling all over her face, and half holding the girl off, kissed her rapidly, and proceeded to unbutton her jacket, as she went towards the door that led from the sitting-room to the bedroom behind, talking briskly all the time.

"We must have a little fire, I think," she said, brightly, though she shivered as she spoke. "Ring the bell, Nora, will you? Oh, I forgot, it's broken; you've no idea what a blessing that broken bell is to Mrs. Simmonds. I wonder whether it's laid; let's see." She was a quaint, little, partially-dressed figure by this time, and returning swiftly to the sitting-room, she knelt down on the hearthrug, and proceeded to investigate into the state of affairs concealed by a white decoration.

"Ah, that's nice, isn't it?" she added, a minute or two later, as the flames began to leap and crackle brightly. She turned her face up to Nora as the latter stood by watching her deft proceedings, and the light fell full upon it for a moment before she turned again to the fire, as though reluctant to leave its warmth to finish her dressing.

"You look awfully tired, dear!" said Nora, sympathetically.

"Oh, no," returned Bertha, springing up, "not so awfully, Nora. But now you've got to tell me all about it, you know. Just let me get a frock."

She disappeared again into the inner room, and reappeared in a minute or two in another and shabbier edition of the little, drenched gown in which she had come in.

"Now, Nora," she said, establishing herself in a chair, with her pretty little feet on one end of the fender, and motioning to Nora to do the same. "All about it!"

Fourteen months had gone by since the day when, for Bertha Brand, the very foundations of her world had given way; when she had found herself homeless and almost friendless, her life utterly spoilt for her before she was twenty years old, and disgrace, as it seemed to her in the first agony of her humiliation, her companion for ever. And in every line of the little face and figure, as she sat there by the fire looking very small and white in her temporary quiescence, was visible some of the handiwork of those months—some outward tokens rather, of their handiwork within. She was much thinner, and every line of her delicate face was more sharply accentuated and firmer; her colour was gone for ever, and though her sense of fun was as irrepressible as before, the laugh had gone out of the brown eyes never to return to them again; these were tangible, obvious alterations. But there were other not so tangible, and not by any means definable developements, which lay beneath the surface in the depth of her nature, and towards the completion of which fourteen months—even fourteen months of such discipline as had fallen to Bertha's share—was only a single step.

She received no immediate answer to her imperious little demand, and, turning, she found Nora's eyes fixed rather anxiously on her face. In the first terrible day of her trouble, poor Monty, her only friend, in despair of his own ability to help and comfort her, had posted off to Yorkshire, explained things as simply as possible to Nora Mansell, and had begged her to go back with him to Bertha, then and there. Nora always acknowledged in her secret soul, with a good deal of shame, and a sense of the unfitness of things, that it was their journey back to town that "did it," as she expressed it, between herself and Monty. She had remained with Bertha for over two months, only leaving her when, with a bright, indomitable spirit of resolution, which came to her after the first acuteness of her misery was past, she had arranged her plans for the future, and left London to take a situation in the country as governess to three little children. This was the first time that Nora had seen her since, and now as she looked at Bertha, it struck her that there was something different about her, a new distress in the brown eyes which had not been part of their pathos in those first two months. What was it, Nora wondered? She looked as though time, in easing the first poignancy of her pain, had laid a heavier burden on her little shoulders. Was it the daily struggle with loneliness and monotony, Nora wondered, in girlish and less definite terms.

"I don't know that there's much to tell, Bertha dear," she said, rather hurriedly, as she met the bright glance of interrogation with which Bertha turned to her. "I've written to you all about it, haven't I?" And then, her own affairs coming uppermost for the moment—they really were very interesting, and it was the first time she and Bertha had met since her engagement—she coloured very prettily, and said, girlishly enough: "Oh, Bertha, it was sweet of you to write me such a nice letter."

"I am so glad about it, dear," returned Bertha, with a smile, a smile to which the past fourteen months had brought a great tenderness. "Monty is—well, I needn't tell you what Monty is now, need I? When is it going to be, dear?"

Nora hesitated. It seemed so horrid, she said to herself, "to talk to poor Bertha about weddings;" but Bertha's bravely bright little face was turned towards her expectantly, without a sign of flinching from the talk she invited, and Nora answered with much less than her usual conciseness:

"Well, it isn't settled yet, you see. It won't—not till the spring, I think. Have you heard of any children yet, Bertha?"

Bertha had left the people with whom she had acted as governess during the last year, rather unexpectedly, about a month before. She had come to London to find another situation—she had, of course, nothing but the five-and-twenty pounds a year, that had been hers all her life; but she did not take the opportunity thus provided by Nora for changing the subject.

"Spring is a nice time for a wedding," she said. "But Monty will be rather rampant, won't he?"

A long discussion ensued as to the pros and cons of an earlier date, with discursive accounts of various episodes in the engagement, drawn forth by bright questions and comments from Bertha, and delivered by Nora with a mixture of the old self-confidence and a new shyness which her hearer found inexpressibly entertaining. Finally, when the subject had been well discussed, there was a pause, and Nora, who had been very naturally carried away and self-absorbed, suddenly bethought her, with much self-reproach, that she had come to see Bertha, not to talk about Monty.

"I haven't heard why you left the Dennisons, Bertha, dear?" she said. "I thought you got on pretty well with them. They were nice children, weren't they?"

Bertha answered the direct question rather hurriedly:

"They were dears," she said. "I was always so sorry for them for having me for a governess!"

She laughed a little as she spoke, and something irresistibly comic in her tone and glance made Nora laugh too, until she suddenly found a choking sensation in her throat as she thought of the little light-hearted Bertha she had known struggling with a daily life which must be so dreary to a nature to which it is uncongenial.

"Was it Mrs. Dennison herself then?" she asked, rather precipitately. "Wasn't she nice?"

There was a moment's pause, and then Bertha answered, rather slowly:

"Yes, she was quite nice."

"What made you come away then, Bertha?"

Another pause, much longer than the first—a pause which Nora, somehow, dared not break, in which the only sound in the room was the sound of the rain dashed against the window by the howling wind. Then, quite suddenly Bertha slipped from her chair to the rug, and let her face fall on Nora's knee.

"Oh, Nora!" she said, in a stifled voice, "I can't bear myself—I can't bear myself!"

For a moment Nora, utterly taken by surprise and confused, thinking that the outbreak might be a new phase of the misery Bertha had gone through fourteen months before, could only bend mutely over the curly head in inarticulate love and pity. Then she murmured, tenderly:

"You couldn't help it, darling; it wasn't your fault!"

She had hardly said the words before Bertha lifted her head vehemently, and began to speak rapidly and passionately:

"Don't," she said, almost sharply, "don't say that, Nora; it isn't true. I used to say it to myself, as long as I thought of it at all. That I couldn't help it! Oh, I don't know what I can have been made of not to have known then that it wasn't true! It was such a wicked, cruel, heartless thing to do; and I can't ever undo it. I can't ever forgive myself. To promise him! To let him love me, and wait for me, and meet me like that, and then—oh! I can't bear myself!"

She let her face fall between her hands again for an instant, and then, before the confused and most astounding notion that was dawning upon Nora was sufficiently defined to allow her to speak, lifted it, and wrung them together as she broke out again:

"And I didn't half tell him I was sorry," she cried. "It was all so quick, and every one pushed, and he was gone. Oh, I ought to have told him more that I was sorry! I was sorry, just for the minute, but I didn't say so; there wasn't time. Oh, if I only had—if I only had! Nora! Nora! you don't know how I feel!"

She turned suddenly upon Nora as she spoke, her face quivering with passionate remorse, and Nora said, in a low, bewildered way:

"Is it Ralph Charteris you're talking of, Bertha?"

"Yes!" cried Bertha, vehemently. "Oh, Nora, yes—yes! I don't know when I began to see it first. The evenings were long at the Dennisons, you know, and I had plenty of time to think, and I've thought and thought now until I see it all, and it's behind everything and through everything! Oh, however could I have done it?"

"You thought it right, dear," said Nora, with an unsteady eagerness, quite unlike the confident composure with which she had delivered her opinion on the same subject on her first arrival at the little house in West Kensington. "You thought it right, and it was right and brave of you, if you felt that you couldn't love——"

But Bertha interrupted her with a cry:

"Oh, don't!" she said, breathlessly, don't! You said that kind of thing once and I thought it was rather amusing in you—high-flown and that kind of thing. I didn't think it right, Nora. I didn't think of love in that way; I didn't understand or think at all, not even for that moment when I was really sorry. I was just shallow and selfish, and I wanted to be happy—that was all. I was excited, and I liked it, and I thought it was fun—fun! And now I can't forget his face! Oh, Nora—Nora, I didn't know then what it felt like to be hurt oneself."

She threw herself impulsively into Nora's arms, clinging to her in such an agony of crying as shook her little figure from head to foot. Nora, bewildered and distressed, could only hold her gently in her arms and try as best she could to soothe her.

Nora was a girl still, and Bertha was a woman, suffering with all the strength of the womanhood with which this self-revelation had come to her. Into this suffering girlhood could not completely enter. Nora could not wholly estimate the depths of Bertha's self-reproach over the thoughtless cruelty that could never be retrieved. She felt instinctively that there was no shadow of personal attachment, no regrets for what might have been in Bertha's grief, but beyond that negative conviction she understood nothing. She did not realise that Bertha's estimate of her old self and of her conduct to Ralph Charteris was a just and true one, and that in its truth and justice lay its keenest sting.

But her soothing, if incomprehending, was very loving, and though it had apparently little effect, Bertha's tears exhausted themselves at last, and there was an interval during which she clung round Nora's neck, resting her head on her shoulder in silence. Then she rose, and Nora never felt the change those fourteen months had brought about as she did at that moment, when Bertha, with her face white and still tremulous with crying, smiled faintly at her, and then walked quietly away to the window as she said, softly:

"I'm so sorry, Nora, dear."

She stood a moment or two with her back to the room and her hands tightly pressed together, and then she came back to the fireplace, her face quite composed and still, and her low voice quite steady.

"So you see," she said, simply, as though she were taking up the conversation at some earlier point, "you see, I feel that it's only just and right that things should have gone wrong with me. I deserve it all. It would not have been just if I'd been happy! I have known this a long time now. And it was too easy at the Dennisons'. I was settled there, as you thought, Nora, and I've had to come away—and that is justice, too." She paused a moment and then, looking straight into the fire, went on, in a very low tone. "I had to come away because he—Ralph Charteris—is a friend of theirs, and he was in England and coming to see them."

"Oh, Bertha!" cried Nora, pitifully. "Oh, Bertha!"

There was a short silence as Bertha stood gazing down into the fire, and Nora gazed up at her—though she could not see her very well for a mist before her eyes—and then Bertha said:

"And now I'll tell you what I've decided, dear. I feel as if the only thing I could do to—to make it right at all, was to be useful somehow, do you see? I'm not useful with children, Nora." A quaint little smile touched her lips. "I mean well, but I'm not good for them, I know. So I've decided to train for a hospital nurse."

"A hospital nurse!" Nora was thinking of the old Bertha, and if the little figure by her side had announced her intention of training for a double first-class at Oxford, she would have been less surprised. The new Bertha looked up again with a flash of that old Bertha's irrepressible fun.

"Do you think I shall shake the patients, Nora!" she asked. "I've thought it over very carefully and I've decided," she added, gravely. "I'm very strong, you know, and I'm quite young enough, and if I can make it easier for any one——" She broke off and Nora, watching her face, saw it soften into a look of wistful tenderness, that was very new to it. Then she said, briskly:

"I've settled it all to-day, Nora, dear, and next time you see me I shall be a probationer."

"I'm very glad if you really think you'll like it," answered Nora, sorely divided between the idealism with which most girls of her type invest the realism of a nurse's life, and a conviction that Bertha must have been very miserable indeed before she thought of such a course. "Does Monty know?"

"Not yet," returned Bertha. "I'm going to write to him. Ah, I believe there he is—come for you, Nora. Oh, I am sorry."

Monty Warrener came into the room as she finished, and, during the few minutes that followed, Bertha talked to them both cheerily and brightly, though she looked very little and worn out. Then, she and Nora went into the inner room where the latter had left her hat, and, just as Bertha was opening the door, Nora took her suddenly into her arms.

"Bertha," she whispered, "do you hear anything of him?"

Bertha shook her head.

"No," she whispered back.

With her refusal to Monty, fourteen months before, to allow of any proceedings whatever against the man who had deceived her, James Ward had passed out of her life.

CHAPTER X.

SUNSHINE IN A SHADY PLACE.

It was a still morning in October, a morning which held promise of a fine day to come; but at half-past seven there was as yet no sunshine, only a glimmer in the sky which had arisen with the dawn, and was rapidly penetrating everywhere. It came in through the open window of a tiny room in the top storey of a large building, and it fell on a very trim little figure standing before a small dressing-table there.

The figure was Bertha's, and the room was her bedroom, in the nurses' home adjoining St. Luke's Hospital.

The room was small and very simply furnished; a hospital nurse, having to act as housemaid to herself, is not given to superabundance in the matter of ornamentation. But all the necessary accessories inevitable to even the simplest woman's toilet were daintiness itself, and the little figure in its simple cotton gown and practical white apron and cap, harmonised perfectly with its surroundings.

It was two years since Bertha's interview with Nora, on that stormy afternoon when Bertha had first spoken of her determination to become a nurse—two years that had passed very quickly for Bertha.

She had entered one of the smaller hospitals—necessarily as one of the non-paying class—had signed an agreement binding her for two years, and had set herself to learn the work she had chosen with an energy and perseverance oddly characteristic of her in their bright briskness, facing the hard work and the many distasteful details that came in her way with a cheery laugh and a jest whenever such were possible, with an indomitable courage and endurance when they were not.

And, before she had been six months in the hospital, all her faculties were in such play as they had never known before. Small and slightly made though she was, her physique was excellent, and though she naturally suffered considerably at first from fatigue, she held valiantly to her work, and became before long physically hardened to it, as it were.

For the first time in her life, her quick intelligence was brought to bear on a subject on which her heart was also set. She found an unexpected pleasure in studying the science of her profession, and her knowledge and skill increased rapidly. And with her capacity for physical endurance and her growing skill, there kept pace—as is not always the case under a like course of training—the developement of that tender womanliness that trouble had first stirred in her. She lost, as it was inevitable that she should lose, the superficial sensitiveness that made her first months of practical experience very trying to her; but her sympathy, her patience, her constant desire to soothe the suffering humanity about her, seemed to grow only deeper with every day.

If hard work, a sense of growing usefulness and universal popularity can make two years pass pleasantly, the two years that qualified her for the reception of her certificate as a fully-trained nurse should have been very pleasant to Bertha. For she was a favourite with every one. From the matron and the most imposing of the visiting doctors to the youngest probationer and the newest student, her bright little personality attracted every one with whom she came in contact; and when, at the end of the two years, she received her certificate, and signed a fresh agreement as a ward nurse, every member of the nursing and medical staffs had something pleasant and congratulatory to say to her on the subject, and the patients in the ward in which she had for some time been acting as night nurse, got up quite a demonstration in her honour.

This had taken place two days earlier; and this October morning Bertha was adopting for the first time the slight final difference in dress that distinguished the fully-certified nurse from her partially-qualified sisters. As she looked at herself in her glass, while she handled the cap which she was to wear to-day with its difference, so trivial in itself, from that she had worn yesterday, so all-important in its significance in her hospital life, the impression given by her face in the glass was rather a sad than a merry one. But it was in expression only that Bertha looked the older for the passing of the last two years. Her little face, thin though it was, had recovered something of its softness of outline since the afternoon when she had told Nora the story of her repentance; she had little more colour—her childish bloom was gone for ever—but her pallor was no longer the pallor of weary suffering, and her features were no more worn with the restlessness of mental pain. But though it was restless no longer, the pain was still there, subdued into an abiding sadness that lived always in her large dark eyes. Even when the rest of her face was at its brightest and most animated, the eyes were always the same—very sad. They seemed to dominate her features altogether, and to bring out the little, thoughtful, resolute lines that study, responsibility, and constant contact and sympathy with suffering and death had brought her.

Strangers, seeing her face in repose, would take her for considerably older than she really was; seeing her laughing they would put her down as little more than a child until they met her eyes; meeting her eyes they would instantly feel their previous conclusion falsified, and they would wonder about her, curiously and interestedly.

She finished putting on her cap, contemplated the effect in the glass with no change in the gravity of her little face, and then turned away, left her room, and ran downstairs.

Half an hour later, little groups of nurses were passing in a continual stream across the courtyard from the block of buildings where the nurses slept and lived, to those in which were situated their respective wards, making, as they passed in the still soft light of the morning, a quaint and striking picture against the dark imposing buildings, the majority with their picturesque dresses, unhidden by any wraps, two or three with pleasant faces under the pretty caps, showing above dark cloaks. And the centre of one of the cheeriest of the groups, with her curly brown hair ruffled over her forehead by the morning air, and a greeting for every one, was Bertha. She stopped a moment on the threshold of her ward to nod merrily and encouragingly to a little probationer who was finding life rather a trial at the moment, and as she passed on into the ward more than one of the white faces on the pillows was turned with a pleased expectant smile towards her bright little presence. It was a large ward, with windows all down one side, under each of which the cupboards gave an effect as of wide window ledges. Upon these cupboards, in nearly every case, stood plants in pots; the fire burnt brightly in the wide fireplace, and with the same glimmering light that had reached Bertha's bedroom streaming in at the windows, the whole effect as the nurses moved to and fro was very cheerful.

The first two hours of a nurse's morning are as busy as any in the day, and to most of those white faces Bertha could only nod and smile cheerily in passing.

"I say, Nurse Bertha," exclaimed the first patient on whom Bertha's duties called her to spend a few moments, "how swagger the new belt looks! Aren't you proud of yourself?"

He was a pleasant-faced lad, who looked, perhaps, sixteen years old, with well-cut, refined features and honest grey eyes. His voice as he answered her told as plainly, as did his face, the fact that could have been gathered from none of his surroundings in the levelling atmosphere of a hospital ward—that he was a gentleman.

"Oh, are you going?" he continued, ruefully, as she, having answered his words with a smile, prepared to move on again. "Come back as soon as you can, won't you?"

The ward of a hospital is by no means a congenial place for a Harrow boy, nor is the knitting of the bones after even a simple fracture an enlivening process, and Bertha had been very sorry for the boy when he was brought in as a street accident case, accommodating himself to circumstances bravely, and confining himself to the confidential statement after the first weary day and night that it was an "awful bore" that none of his "people" were within reach. It had fallen to her share to do a great deal for him in the course of the last six weeks; they had become great friends, and he had taken the greatest interest in her elevation in the hospital scale.

It was considerably later in the morning, however, before Bertha found herself at leisure to remember his request, and when at last she returned to his bedside, he greeted her quite reproachfully.

"You've been no end of a time!" he said, "or else time is getting no end long. Well, how is every one getting on this morning?"

He took a lively interest in all his fellow patients, and Bertha was engaged in replying to his sympathetic questions and comments, expressed with curious incongruity in school-boy slang, when the same little probationer, to whom she had nodded on her first entrance that morning, came up to her rather tentatively, and hesitatingly apologised for interrupting.

"I'm so sorry," she said, shyly—it was only her second or third morning in the ward—"but Sister Elizabeth told me to ask Nurse Bertha."

"Don't apologise," said the boy, politely, as the girl drew Bertha a little away from his bed to state her difficulty and have it explained.

"How have you been getting on this morning?" asked Bertha, cheerily, when the explanation was concluded.

"Oh, pretty well," returned the other, to whom her work seemed considerably less overwhelming for Nurse Bertha's interest. "I don't believe I've done anything desperately wrong to-day yet. Dr. Clive was awfully good about that muddle I made yesterday. I suppose he'll be round directly, won't he?"

"It's nearly his time," returned Bertha.

They were standing now just opposite the fireplace with its high, narrow mantelpiece, and their low tones were out of earshot from any of the beds.

As she spoke, Bertha's glance wandered from the other's face and rested steadily upon the dancing flames.

"Don't you think it's a great pity he's going away?" continued the girl. "I think he's such a nice man; and I can't imagine why he should when he's so popular."

Then she suddenly remembered something she had heard, a day or two before, from a fellow-probationer of longer standing, about Dr. Clive and his possible reasons for leaving St. Luke's, and she coloured very hotly and guiltily, took her eyes hastily from Bertha's face, and, thanking her for her help, went quickly away.

"She doesn't look as if she liked it much," commented the boy, with his unflagging interest in his surroundings, as Bertha, unoccupied for the moment, returned to his bedside. "She's quite new, isn't she? I say, Nurse Bertha, must I wait for inspection before I get up? I really am jolly well."

Bertha laughed.

"You've asked me that question three mornings running," she said, "and every morning I've said 'No.' We'll ask Sister Elizabeth."

She turned with a smile to the rather pale-faced woman, in the dress of a ward sister, who passed at the moment.

"Mr. Easton wants to know whether he may get up?" she said.

The sister smiled faintly as she stopped.

"Not until Dr. Clive has been round," she answered; and she was passing on when Bertha followed her.

"Did you sleep well?" she said in a low voice. Outside her hospital life Sister Elizabeth had heavy troubles, troubles against which neither her mental nor physical organisation seemed to permit her to bear up with anything beyond resignation. She was an excellent nurse, however, and her private life and her professional life were kept by her rigidly apart. Bertha was certainly the only one of her associates to whom she had given her confidence, and Bertha herself had little or no idea how this had come about. She only knew that she had "somehow"—through her quick sympathies—become aware that Sister Elizabeth had private troubles, and that she had consequently been sorry for her, as she was sorry for every one who suffered either in mind or body.

The sister shook her head in answer.

"Not much," she said; and then she passed on up the ward.

Bertha crossed the ward to speak to a patient in the bed opposite that occupied by the school-boy, and, as she turned away, she met the very wistful grey eyes of the latter, and moved across to him again.

"Well," she said, brightly.

"Don't bother about me," he answered, cheerily. "I don't want to be a nuisance, you know. I've finished my book, that's all. If you'd get me another out of the locker when you're not busy, I should be no end grateful."

"What shall I give you?" asked Bertha, readily.

But before she could kneel down to search in his locker:

"Oh, hurrah!" he exclaimed, joyfully, "here's Clive at last!"

Bertha started slightly, but she did not look round, though her back was towards the door. There was a slight stir throughout the ward, for the morning round of the house surgeon was something of an event, and the sister moved down from the far end to meet the man who had just come in —a man of about forty, with a clever, sensible face and keen dark eyes. He began his rounds at the bed nearest the door, nearly opposite to where Bertha stood, and his work there, very kindly and pleasantly done—causing some subsequent suffering to the patient—Bertha crossed over, as he passed on, and did what she could to soothe and distract the attention of the sufferer. She was still standing there, and her ministrations had brought a faint smile to the drawn face on which her own was turned, when, the round over, Dr. Clive exchanged a few parting words with the sister, and prepared to pass out. He stopped a moment at the foot of the bed by which Bertha stood.

"Good morning, Nurse Bertha," he said.

"Good morning," she responded, quietly.

He seemed to hesitate for a moment, and then he left the ward.

The patient by whose bed Bertha was standing was in a very critical condition, and Bertha was with him a great deal during the rest of the morning. She was one of the first detachment of nurses to go to dinner, and on her return to the ward she went back at once towards the same bedside. Sister Elizabeth, who was standing there, turned as Bertha came in, and went to meet her.

"He is going on very well," she said, indicating with a slight gesture the patient she had just left. Dr. Clive wished to know how he went on, and I want you to go down and tell him, as you have been watching him this morning."

Bertha's lips parted quickly as though she were going to speak. They closed again, however, and she glanced quickly round the ward. There was only one other nurse beside herself—a comparatively inexperienced woman, by no means to be relied on to give the necessary details of the case to Dr. Clive, and in no case was it etiquette for a nurse to question the sister's word.

"Very well," assented Bertha, quietly. She waited a moment while the sister gave her, in a few technical words, the latest details of the case, and then turned and left the ward with her eyes a little brighter and her mouth a little firmer than it had been when she entered it. She went down the stairs and along the passages that led to Dr. Clive's private sitting-room, and knocked at the door without an instant's pause.

"Come in!" cried Dr. Clive's voice—a very full and pleasant one.

Bertha opened the door and stood on the threshold.

"Sister Elizabeth sent me," she began.

But she was interrupted. Dr. Clive had been sitting in a large arm-chair, in his hand a medical journal, of the uncut condition of which he seemed to be entirely oblivious. He had turned his head towards the door, and, as he recognised the little figure it revealed, he sprang hastily to his feet.

"Nurse Bertha!" he exclaimed. "Pray come in!"

Bertha very rarely coloured now—it was as though those hot, agonising blushes which had once swept over her little face had exhausted the capacity in her. But there was a tinge of colour on either cheek as she came a step or two farther into the room, still holding the door in her hand.

"Thank you," she said, with a touch of grave dignity in her manner. "I have brought a message from Sister Elizabeth." She gave the message and answered, in an increasingly matter-of-fact tone, Dr. Clive's two or three questions—each one less necessary and more agitated in manner than the last—and then she prepared to retreat.

Dr. Clive had been standing a few paces from the chair from which he had risen on her entrance, and as she moved he made a step or two towards her and said, simply:

"Would it be asking you too much if I begged you to let me speak to you again, at some future day?" He broke off suddenly, and then went on hurriedly: "Nurse Bertha," he said, "I am going—you know it; because I am not man enough to stay. Can you give me any hope whatever, that in the future—I will wait as long as you like—your answer could ever be different?"

There was an instant's pause. The soft colour faded from her cheeks, and she said, in a tone so gentle that it was almost deprecating, in her desire to soften the pain she was going to inflict for the second time—a week ago she had refused the proposal he then made her—"Indeed, I cannot!"

He looked full at her for a moment, with his face growing set and white; and she met his eyes bravely. He read his unalterable fate in the womanly steadiness and sorrow of her face, and accepted it.

"As you wish," he said.

There was another instant's pause, during which Bertha realised in every nerve the suffering she was inflicting. Then he said, quietly, though his voice was rather hoarse:

"You will tell Sister Elizabeth to continue according to my directions this morning, please."

A few moments later, Bertha was bending over the patient who had occupied her that morning, attending carefully and skilfully to her work, with a pitiful look in her eyes, and every now and then a quiver of her little sensitive face.

CHAPTER XI. CHOCOLATE AND NEWS.

It was nearly six o'clock in the evening, two days later; and Bertha, with three hours' leave of absence before her, rang the bell of a flat in Victoria Street, and asked for Mrs. Monteith Warrener.

Mrs. Monteith Warrener had existed as such for nearly two years. Monty and Nora had been married shortly after Bertha entered the hospital. Monty's choice of a wife had been anything but acceptable to his father and mother, who were strongly prejudiced against Nora Mansell, as being

Bertha's friend; but, as there was nothing else to be urged against her, old Mr. Warrener, after opposing the marriage to the verge of breaking altogether with his son, had finally declined to take that decisive step. He had, instead, carried out the agreement which had existed since Monty had first entered the office, by which he was to become a junior partner in five years from that date; and Monty, thus becoming possessed of a very fair average income, had set up his establishment in a flat in Victoria Street, with a mixture of boyish pride and an affectation of middle-aged nonchalance amusing to behold.

He and Nora had evidently been listening for Bertha's ring, for, as she came into the hall, the drawing-room door opened, and they came out together to meet her. Bertha's visits, though they were by no means rare, were always an event, though both Nora and Monty would have been considerably puzzled to say exactly why. She was always "poor little Bertha" to Nora now; yet Mrs. Monteith Warrener's bright self-confidence, toned down into a pleasant capability by married life, was never so nearly subdued into deference as in her intercourse with Bertha.

"Here I am!" cried Bertha, gaily, as she saw them. "I'm not late, am I? I had some shopping to do. How are you, Nora dear?" she went on, as she kissed Nora, tenderly. "Well, Monty!—Oh, Nora, you've had new curtains since I was here last!" she exclaimed, as they went into the drawing-room.

"Do you like them, Bertha?" said Nora. To any one but Bertha, though she was quite unconscious of that fact, she would have said, "They are nice, aren't they?" "We got them at Liberty's, didn't we, Monty?"

It was very prettily obvious, in the way in which she turned to her husband, that Mrs. Monteith Warrener, if she still retained some of her girlish sense of superiority to the rest of the world, included her husband in that superiority. Her pride and confidence in him now was a funny contrast to the time when she had looked down upon his words and ways with girlish, incomprehending contempt for them as "undeveloped."

Monty was standing on the hearth-rug, in a lordly attitude, which was always freshly comic to Bertha in its suggestion of his delighted consciousness that he was monarch of all he surveyed.

He implied, in a casual manner which ill concealed the satisfaction with which he contemplated his domain, that Liberty had so far benefited by his custom. "Well, B.," he added, as Nora turned the little figure towards the lamp, that she might look in her face for the signs of overwork that she always more than half expected, "and how are you? She looks well, Nora, doesn't she?"

She certainly looked very pretty; none of her girlish frocks had suited her better than the little bonnet and long cloak which were the out-of-door badges of her profession; none had given her little figure such quaintness and character. She laughed merrily, as she answered:

"I'm as well as well, Monty! Nora, I believe you would be quite pleased if you could say I looked overworked. It's a shame of me to be so disappointing, isn't it? And how is my godson? Not asleep, I hope?"

The most surprising son and heir that ever lived—in the estimation of his proud papa and mamma—had been added to the greatly enjoyed possessions of Nora and Monty about six months before; and Nora, who had an unmitigated contempt for what she called "silly mothers," and was quite unconscious that she considered him in her secret soul to be one of the most striking productions of the age, replied, promptly:

"I did think of keeping him up, dear—I knew you would want to see him. But I thought we should be going to dinner directly, and I don't believe you've ever seen him in his crib, have you? Come and take off your things and we'll go into the nursery. Oh, how about the certificate, Bertha, first of all? Is it all right?"

"Quite all right," returned Bertha with mock gravity and importance. "I am a highly-trained and perfectly reliable nurse for the sick, and I beg that you will revere me accordingly. I'm sorry you don't observe the increased dignity of my presence!"

"We might if you were rather taller," laughed Nora. "As it is it is always more or less difficult to see you! But I'm so glad, dear," she added, heartily. "Now we must make haste up to baby or dinner will be up."

The infant prodigy in question was awake when they reached the nursery. "Isn't that lucky for you?" exclaimed Nora to Bertha in all simplicity—and the exhibition naturally took a long time.

It was further necessary that he should

be inspected again when dinner was over, that his little godmother might admire him in his sleep. In Bertha's bright tenderness for the young mother—in all her intercourse with that happy young ménage from the very first, indeed—there had been about her such a persistent absence of self-consciousness, such a frank, simple, unreserved interest, that the contrast between their life and hers, and a sensitive fear of emphasizing it by words or looks that had haunted them during her earlier visits, had almost ceased to trouble Nora and Monty.

The drawing-room was empty when Nora and Bertha returned to it after their second visit to the nursery. Monty rather prided himself on the penetration and tact with which he invariably left them together for half an hour or so after dinner. Coffee was waiting for them, and as Bertha took her cup from Nora and ensconced herself in a particularly large and comfortable specimen of Liberty's upholstery, wheeled round for her reception, she said, interestedly:

"How did you get on at Porchester Square the other day, Nora?"

Mr. Warrener, senior, having ruled that there was to be no quarrel with Monty, Mrs. Warrener had necessarily received her daughter-in-law, but she had done so with very scant cordiality, and the relations between them remained, and were likely to remain, somewhat strained. But in Nora's standard of wifely conduct, which was very high and characteristically uncompromising, the duty of "getting on" with a husband's relations occupied a prominent place, and consequently no one but Bertha—certainly not Monty—had any idea of the disagreeables attending an interview with her mother-in-law. Bertha herself would hardly have known but for her own acquaintance with Mrs. Warrener's temperament.

The occasion to which she now referred was a visit of ceremony, having for its object the introduction of "baby" to his grandfather's house. Baby had unfortunately taken a violent dislike to his grandfather's house, and had screamed loudly, and Nora smiled at the recollection as she answered:

"Oh, it was very dreadful, Bertha! Baby roared, I'm sorry to say, a thing he never does, you know, and Mrs. Warrener told me I mismanaged him. She said he should be punished if he didn't obey."

"She was always a disciplinarian," Bertha said, with a little grimace. "I wonder whether Monty obeyed at six months; I know he didn't at six years."

She listened sympathetically to Nora's further account of the visit, and when Nora's eloquence was finally exhausted, there was a little pause, during which Bertha leant back in her great chair with her eyes fixed on the fire, as a certain wistful gravity settled over her face. At last she said, softly:

"Poor Aunt Matilda!" There was another tiny pause, and then she added: "Has she never mentioned me, Nora?"

"Never, dear," answered Nora, gently.

"She knows, of course?"

"Monty thought it right to tell his father, dear."

It was the first time that Bertha had alluded to her uncle or aunt in connection with herself and her spoilt life, and a long silence followed. Bertha lay back in her chair, quite motionless, with her face very still, apparently lost in thought. Nora, who had taken up some needlework—she had brought her practical capabilities to bear in many new directions since her marriage—glanced at her pityingly now and then, and her thoughts, too, were busy as her needle flew briskly in and out. It was she who finally broke the silence.

"Bertha," she said, bending her face over her work as she spoke, "don't mind my asking, dear, but have you ever heard of—him?"

There was a great difference between the way in which Nora asked the question now and the way in which she had said nearly the same words two years ago in Bertha's London lodgings. There was in her question now that curious familiarity, that acceptance of a painful fact, that time developes in the minds of all but the immediate sufferers, until the original horror becomes a simple matter of course. But Bertha was unconscious of this—she was unconscious even that the words had ever been used to her before. She did not move, it seemed as though the question blended naturally with her own thoughts, as she answered in a sad, far-away voice:

"No, nothing." Then she stirred, and turning her head, she fixed her eyes upon Nora. "Nora," she said, "I have thought that perhaps you are more likely to hear than I. He might write to Uncle William and you might hear of it."

Nora lifted her head suddenly, her breath almost suspended for the moment in her astonishment. She did not speak, waiting for Bertha to enlighten her, and after a moment the latter went on in the same soft voice:

"If you should hear, Nora, you will be sure to let me know, won't you? If I could hear that he was married, and—happy, I could begin to forgive myself."

The little voice ceased, and she turned her eyes back to the fire, while Nora attacked her work again suddenly, with almost feverish energy. She was grasping the fact that Bertha had taken her question to allude not to James Ward but to Ralph Charteris, and, woman-like, she felt without understanding the significance of the fact. A moment later, Monty came into the room; but Nora was rather silent during the short time that elapsed before Bertha was obliged to go, and, as she stood with her husband at the front door to watch her down the steps, she responded to his pleased comment on his cousin's looks, with a "Poor little Bertha," that was absent and grave in tone and manner.

But Bertha's face was bright enough—always excepting the pathetic brown eyes—as she opened the door of the nurses' sitting-room half an hour later. She carried one or two parcels in her hand—the result of the shopping she had spoken of on her arrival in Victoria Street—and from one of them, as she came down the room, she produced a large bunch of chrysanthemums.

"I've brought some flowers," she announced, as she nodded cheerily to two or three of the nurses, whom she had not seen before that day. "I wonder what we can get to put them in?"

It was not a particularly cheerful room, and flowers there were an innovation which Bertha had long proposed to herself, and which she was introducing now for the first time. It was nicely kept, and the arm-chairs about looked very inviting; but, partly owing, perhaps, to the absence of any ornamentation, partly to the fact that all its appointments seemed to be arranged with a view to obviate untidiness, it was difficult to realise that it was habitually used as a sitting-room by women; impossible to imagine that any individual woman took a pride or an interest in it. The room had been very quiet when Bertha entered. There were some eight or ten women there—nurses and probationers—some with books or papers in their hands, some fully occupied in resting themselves, all looking more or less tired and depressed. Every one looked up for a moment at least, however, at the sound of Bertha's voice, and the little fair-haired probationer, of whom the Harrow boy had said that she did not look as if she liked her new life, and one other girl, rather older, who was wearily turning the leaves of her book, jumped up delightedly, and came towards her.

"How delicious of you!" exclaimed the elder girl, who had been in the hospital for some months. "Shall I go and see what I can find for them? Oh, they are lovely!"

Bertha, pulling off her gloves briskly, offered sundry suggestions as to the quarter in which it would be well to apply for the desired receptacle, and as the girl departed, laughing, to try, two more girls, roused by the bright voice and presence, strolled listlessly up from the far end of the room to inspect the chrysanthemums.

"Does any one care about chocolate?" enquired Bertha, gaily. "If they do, here is some. Alice, don't jeer!" this to one of the girls who was laughing at the enquiry, "take some, do!" She had bought a large case from one of the big West End shops, and the next moment she was handing it laughingly round.

When "grown-up people" give themselves up to eating and enjoying sweets, the eternal sense of the fitness of things seems to infuse into their demeanour a certain light-hearted irresponsibility. The genuine carelessness and gaiety of childhood can never come again when once its hours are numbered with things past; but there are times when women—and men, too—will play at it with a childishness which leaves childhood itself in the shade.

Some of the elder nurses had at first accepted Bertha's chocolate with an air of concession to a freak which they felt to be doubtfully consistent with their dignity; but this very quickly melted away, and before the return of the departed probationer with the vase, they had become as gay and lively as the youngest girl, and the table, on which Bertha finally perched herself as she arranged her flowers, was the centre of a group of white-capped and aproned women, who stood about playing, laughing, and chattering fast and furiously with one another and with the droll little centre of the fun, as the chocolate passed from hand to hand.

"Have you heard about Dr. Clive's successor, Bertha?" cried a girl who stood on the outskirts of the group, when the consumption of the chocolate and the arrangement of the flowers were alike nearly over.

"Dr. Clive went away this evening, you know."

There was an instant's lull in the talk and laughter; nearly every one glanced sharply at the little figure on the table. Then, becoming aware of the hush, every one began to talk at once as Bertha answered, quietly:

"Yes, I know, of course. What about his successor?"

"He's very ill, it appears!" was the answer, "and can't come to-morrow. There's to be a substitute."

"A substitute!" echoed Bertha with a little grimace. "Oh, what a nuisance! Who is he, and where does he come from?"

"I don't know where he comes from exactly. Country practice, some one said. Nurse Constance heard that he was a friend of the new man, and awfully clever."

"What is his name?" asked Bertha, slipping off the table as she spoke, and turning to contemplate the effect of her flowers.

A new house-surgeon was quite an excitement in the hospital world, and several voices answered her question.

"Ward," they said. And then the girl who had begun the subject added: "James Carrick Ward. I saw it written on one of the notice-boards. Isn't it an odd name?"

Bertha was still standing, with her back towards the room, and no one could see her face. No one saw the little hand on the table clench itself as the whole weight of the little figure came suddenly upon it. No one saw the sudden horror that flashed into her face. The next moment the ten o'clock bell rang, and in the general movement of dispersal nobody noticed Nurse Bertha's deadly pallor. She went to her room, locked her door, and sat down on her bed. By-and-by she lifted her hand to push the hair away from her forehead, and touching her bonnet she unfastened it mechanically and laid it beside her. Then she rose, and, walking to the window, stood there looking vaguely out. Half-past ten came, and the light in the room behind her went out according to rule; eleven came, and twelve, and though with an unconscious movement of physical exhaustion she had let herself sink into the chair by which she stood, she was still looking out into the darkness with the deeper darkness behind her.

She was thinking, realising, looking back as across an impassable gulf at the past, revived for her in the sudden shock of the news she had heard that evening. After the first crushing shock came a reaction that made her say to herself that it was impossible—it was all a dreadful mistake—an extraordinary coincidence of name; but, back again with an intensity doubled by the short space of doubt, came the certainty that there was no mistake, that by one of the inexplicable turns of what we call Fate—which may possibly sometimes be better called Justice—here in the hospital, to-morrow, she and the man who had ruined her life were to meet again.

And gradually her deepest consciousness, her strongest conviction, became the consciousness and conviction of the immeasurable distance that lay for her between that past and her present. She sat there with every mental fibre stirred into keen sensation, and the misery and shame through which she had once lived, stood out for her again clear and distinct. But they stood out as a memory, not as a dull pain stirring into life. Long ago she had come to accept that misery and shame and the ruined life to which it had led as an inevitable retribution; she had accepted the position, and in dwelling on the wrong-doing for which her awakened womanhood so bitterly reproached her, she had ceased to dwell at all on the punishment with which it seemed to her to have been visited.

Her first revulsion from the man of whom she had thought for six short months as her husband, when she learnt the truth, had utterly destroyed the slight hold he had obtained over her girlish affections, and this revulsion had been succeeded by new thoughts and new emotions which had swept him even from her consciousness. In the new Bertha's inner life the thought of James Ward's individuality had hardly any place. It was just that she should have suffered, her wrong-doing and her suffering alike had come through him, and he had then passed out of her life for ever.

So she would have said yesterday, if she had been forced to analyse and give expression to her feelings. Now she faced the thought of meeting him again the past came very close to her; a shudder shook her, and she let her face fall forward on her hands. But it was only for a moment. As it had advanced it suddenly receded—receded to a distance that she had never realised, before leaving her senses composed and clear. The meeting, the contact before her must be most painful, most difficult—

she understood that well. She even sought carefully for any possible loophole of escape; but there was none—none but a confidence to the matron—and it was not in Bertha's nature to evade what could be bravely faced. But it was her intellect only which estimated the situation—her emotions—except for that one moment's last thrill of the anguish of long ago—were entirely unconcerned. It was her intellect, not her emotions, that was at work through all the long night hours, looking back and looking forward, and bracing itself for the ordeal to come. The emotions of the new Bertha James Ward had yet to touch—if he could.

CHAPTER XII. "BERTHA."

It is generally a more or less unsatisfactory task to act as another man's substitute; and James Ward's face, for all its veneer of easy pleasantness, wore its most cynical expression as he left the house-surgeon's private room, where he had taken up his temporary quarters, to go the round of the wards on the first morning of his locum-tenency.

The cynicism of his expression had increased by many degrees in the course of the last three years, and the lines about his mouth and eyes suggested that he had travelled a considerable distance along the road of moral deterioration. He was handsome still; but except when he was taking special pains, his good looks were no longer attractive. There were many people now from whom all his charm of manner and regularity of feature could not conceal something insolent and cruel about his eyes, and something coarse about his mouth.

He was taking little care as to his expression or manners as he walked along the passages and up the wide stairs with the dresser, who was showing him the wards. Three years ago it had been his principle to be popular with every one; but now, judging from the careless brevity of his replies to the information offered him by his guide, he no longer thought it worth while to take the necessary trouble. They entered the first ward on the list, and his manner changed completely. Popularity with the ward sisters was eminently desirable in his eyes, and it would have been impossible for any woman to have pronounced upon him, on the slight intercourse involved in making the round of a ward, any other sentence than that mentally formed by the first sister with whom he came in contact that morning.

"A most delightful man," she said to herself as he left her ward.

The round had begun with the women's wards, and it was more than an hour later when his guide, with his hand on the door before which he had just stopped, turned to James Ward and said: "This is the first men's ward—the Elizabeth." He had not found the temporary house surgeon responsive to gratuitous information, so he added nothing to his laconic statement, but opened the door and preceded James Ward into the bright, cheery ward, as he had done into all the former ones. Sister Elizabeth, as all the other sisters had done, came forward at once; but having received them, she said courteously:

"I am sorry not to be able to go round with you myself; but I am engaged for the moment. The nurse I shall send with you is thoroughly competent." She detained by a gesture a probationer who was passing at the moment, and said to her, "Fetch Nurse Bertha."

A moment or two passed, during which James Ward made on Sister Elizabeth the impression he had made on every member of the nursing staff with whom he had as yet come in contact; and then from behind him came a steady, cold little voice:

"You want me, Sister?"

James Ward did not start; not even his face altered at all, except for a slight hardening of the eyes natural to him in moments of intense surprise. He turned quickly, and Bertha confronted him quietly, white to the very lips, but with no trace of recognition, no feeling of any kind in her face. They stood so, face to face, as Sister Elizabeth said:

"This is Nurse Brand, Dr. Ward, one of our most reliable nurses;" and then, turning to Bertha, added, "You will go round with Dr. Ward."

No verbal acquiescence was expected from a nurse under such circumstances; and Bertha led the way to the first case on the list, and in a few composed, technical words, put the new doctor in possession of the necessary details. James Ward had followed her mechanically in his intense astonishment, and his attention to the patient was mechanical also, though professional care and science were second nature to him; and no one watching him could have guessed that his attention was not concentrated on his work. Methodically and steadily they went from bed to bed. Bertha's concise words of information were always ready; his brief professional questions were answered promptly; and not a word unconnected with the business in hand came from either, nor, after that first moment, did either look at the other's face. Only once was there the least change in Bertha's expression, and that once was when, shortly before the end of the round, they came to the bedside of a patient to whom the doctor's visit was always an occasion of suffering more or less severe. To James Ward his patients, particularly hospital patients, were rarely anything but cases; and, unless it was obviously desirable for him to assume a certain amount of tenderness, his callousness with regard to any pain he might inflict was often almost brutal. This morning, his touch was as rough as was consistent with perfect skill, and his disregard of the suffering he occasioned complete. And Bertha's face, as she understood the unnecessary agony inflicted, changed for a moment into an expression of intense disgust. It passed again, subdued almost immediately into a nurse's orthodox impassibility of countenance; and she stood by, quiet and unmoved in her professional demeanour, until the work was finished.

A little later, the round was over. Sister Elizabeth being still engaged, it fell to Bertha to receive the final instructions from the house-surgeon; she listened to the few necessary sentences James Ward spoke, with the same distant, quiet, regulation manner; and he passed straight out of the ward without another word.

There was not a trace of colour on Bertha's face as she turned away mechanically, but she knew that the worst was over for her. The strain had been far heavier, the shock far greater than she had anticipated. She had not been prepared for the effect the first sight of the man concerned would have upon her womanly appreciation of the tragedy which had fallen upon her girlhood, and that effect had been acutely painful. But it was essentially the result of the first meeting; no second one could bring the past into the same vivid relief, and Bertha knew this. She knew that in that first pang of womanly realisation she had passed through the only intense emotion James Ward's proximity could bring her, that for the rest she was utterly untouched by him. No sense of familiarity had revived at the sight of him to bridge the gulf between them, and her sense of distance from him was increased by his apparent acquiescence in her tacit repudiation of any previous knowledge of him. He was to her as a stranger towards whom her only feeling was a feeling of intense repugnance.

The afternoon brought round as usual the students and the visiting doctor, and, as a matter of course, in attendance on him came James Ward as the house-surgeon in charge. The etiquette of the visiting doctor's round demanded the attendance not only of the sister of the ward but of a nurse, whose business it was to prepare the patients for inspection and settle them again when the doctor passed on. There happened that afternoon to be no nurse available for this duty but Bertha, and for the second time that day she passed round the large ward in close professional contact with James Ward, a common business occupying both. This time, indeed, her position called for no words from her. But she was in waiting, as it were, at the service of James Ward, liable at any moment to receive an order or to be asked a question which would bring them into direct communication. He, however, apparently neither meant to look at her nor speak to her. His handsome features were as impassive as her own sensitive white ones, and his seeming unconsciousness did not alter. They had come to the last bed, and Bertha was looking forward to her release, when he turned to her suddenly, and looked her full in the face.

"Did you obey my instructions in this case this morning?" he said.

If he had calculated on taking her by surprise, he reckoned without his host. Bertha met his eyes calmly.

"Yes, sir," she said, quietly.

James Ward's estimate of the position had passed through several stages since his first intense surprise that morning. He had not the slightest fear that Bertha would report him to the authorities. He knew—though how he knew it is difficult to define, for the premises of such a man must necessarily be false where a good woman is concerned—still he did know, instinctively, that not one word of their former life would ever pass Bertha's lips. Nor was there—there never had been—a touch of remorse or regret in his mind for what he had done to her. Callous as he was in his dealings with his patients, in his dealings with women he was more callous still; purity and the spiritual in womanhood were simply empty words to him; the faculty for perceiving and appreciating the realities contained in them was altogether wanting. The feelings stirred in him as his first surprise evaporated, by the sight of Bertha in the hospital-ward, therefore, were merely renewals of the attraction she had had for him on board the "Philistia," quickened by the remembrance of his failure with her in their last interview nearly four years ago; and the tone and manner of her "Yes, sir!"—a tone and manner which had in it none of the agitation and distress he had cynically expected, but simply the immeasurable distance which lay for Bertha between them—added considerable piquancy to the situation in his estimation. She was prettier than ever now that he saw her again; her youth and her womanly self-possession were an irresistible combination; she had been his; and her quiet repudiation of the past common to both, her tacit relegation of him to the position of an utter stranger to her, simply served to double the exceptional fascination which, ever since he first met her, Bertha had exercised over him.

The meditations which succeeded his afternoon visit to the ward bore their fruit the next morning. He was aware, as soon as he entered the ward, that Bertha was not visible. Sister Elizabeth went the round with him, and when it was over he stood for a minute or two talking pleasantly to her. Sister Elizabeth's pale face was paler than ever that morning, and James Ward's keen professional eyes scanned her with unerring certainty of perception as he talked. Unnatural as were his plans with regard to Bertha, he told himself carelessly that it might be worth while to establish exceptionally friendly relations with the sister of the Elizabeth ward, and, accordingly, while he was alive to every movement of any of the nurses in the ward, he was skilfully guiding the conversation, until he was able to say, incidentally and gently:

"I am afraid I am likely to have a member of the nursing staff on my hands. Forgive my noticing that you are looking very ill. Can I not prescribe for you?"

Sister Elizabeth flushed quickly. There was nothing she disliked more than even the most sympathetic comments on her looks; and James Ward, for all the pleasant concern of his tone, had made a mistake.

"I am not well," she said, coldly. "But I will not trouble you, thank you. I shall probably be obliged to take a holiday." And she proceeded to change the subject by an enquiry as to one of the cases in her charge.

James Ward answered her question in such a manner as to give her immediate occupation, and then added, courteously:

"Don't let me detain you. I will just speak to Nurse Brand about number five. I see she is with him now."

Bertha had just come into the ward. She was pale, composed, and quiet, conscious in every mental fibre of Ward's presence with a consciousness that was a painful constraint upon her. Circumstances had obliged her to busy herself at once with a patient near the door, and she was bending over him, with her back towards the room, when she became aware that James Ward was coming up to where she stood. She turned to him, as she was bound to do, as he addressed her—in the unrecognising tone he had used on the previous day—and stood listening to the directions he gave her. They involved the use of a new battery, which, he told her, he had in his room downstairs, and he finished his explanation by saying, in the same formal tone:

"I will trouble you to come downstairs with me and fetch it, and I can then show you how it is to be used."

There was an instant's pause. Bertha's face had been raised to his as she listened with the necessary close attention to his rather complicated instructions, and she did not change colour or turn it away as she stood for that second of time facing him in silence. From such an order from a house-surgeon to a nurse there was no appeal, and they both knew it. Then she answered, quietly:

"Thank you, sir," and prepared to follow him out of the ward.

He went downstairs and along the passage before her in silence, opened the door of Dr. Clive's old room, waited for her to pass before him, followed her, and closed it, also in silence. And, as the door shut, Bertha's sense of distance, of separation from the man before her rose—in spite of the intense repugnance with which intercourse with him filled her—and gave her immoveable courage and self-control, as she realised with an instantaneous rush of conviction, born of this most trying position in which she had yet been placed in connection with him, that her emotions were utterly untouched. She stood by the table, waiting quietly, and after one glance at her, he seemed to alter his original intention, and going to the cupboard, he produced the battery for which she had come, and explained its working to her in a few technical words. She took in their meaning instantly, and with the necessary acknowledgement of his explanation, she was turning to leave the room.

But James Ward stopped her. So far, the words exchanged between them alone together in that room had been as absolutely formal in tone and manner as those exchanged between them in the ward upstairs. But as she turned away from the writing-table by which she had been standing, James Ward, who had stood opposite her on the other side, came quickly round it and advanced towards her. And as he moved, all the unrecognising professional formality disappeared from his face, as it did from his voice, as he said one word:

"Bertha."

Bertha, with her hand on the door, stopped suddenly and turned. She looked at him for an instant with a face in which there was no answering recognition, in which there was no change at all except that it grew whiter and the look of distant repugnance deepened on it. Then, without a word, she turned away and left him.

CHAPTER XIII. FACE TO FACE.

It was a morning early in November. The outside world was wrapped in a dreary mist of steady rain, and even the quiet, cheerful Elizabeth ward seemed to be touched by a slight reflex of the dreariness outside. The bright face of Nurse Bertha herself, as she passed down the ward, looked grave and pale, though it cleared, as if with an effort of will, as she reached the closed door of the room opening out of the ward occupied by the ward sisters, knocked and went in.

Sister Elizabeth was standing by the table in her ordinary sister's dress; but her cloak and bonnet lay upon the skilfully disguised sofa bed. She turned her face to Bertha with a mechanical smile as the latter entered, and Bertha, with an exclamation of sympathy at the sight of her haggard face, moved swiftly across the room and took the elder woman's trembling hands in hers.

Sister Elizabeth's private troubles had come to a crisis; she had asked for a fortnight's leave of absence, and the holiday had been granted with a readiness that had surprised her.

"It is something to be able to go away, isn't it?" said Bertha encouragingly, gently stroking the thin fingers as she spoke.

"Oh, it is, indeed!" was the agitated answer. "I never expected to manage it so easily. Do you know I think Dr. Ward must have persuaded the matron; he has been very kind about my wanting a holiday."

"It is not unlikely."

Bertha did not look up, and her voice, for all her efforts, was colder. Sister Elizabeth's fears, always easily excited, took a new course.

"I do hope," she began in her hurried, distressed tone, "I do hope that you don't feel it inconsiderate in me to throw so much upon you. I feel what an inconvenient time it is, just when there is so much illness among the nurses—which makes me all the more sure that Dr. Ward must have used his influence with the matron. And he has such perfect confidence in you, Bertha."

Ignoring the last sentence, Bertha looked up into Sister Elizabeth's face and answered her first words.

"I don't feel it is the least inconsiderate in you, dear, and I am quite prepared to undertake the charge," she said; and there was an undertone of resolution in her voice which struck oddly against the cheeriness of the face with which she was trying to reassure Sister Elizabeth.

"There is nothing very trying in the ward just now," returned the latter. "Number five requires a great deal of attention, but there is nothing complicated. Of course something may come in, but I hope it will all go well. And Dr. Ward will always be ready to help you, I'm sure."

"Don't trouble about it in the least," answered Bertha, again passing over the allusion to Dr. Ward. "Now, will you go over the cases with me?"

To Bertha, as the most competent nurse in the ward—or, indeed, in the hospital—was to fall the supervision of the Elizabeth ward in the absence of its sister. She had come now to receive her final instructions, and she and Sister Elizabeth had just concluded the roll of the patients of whom she was to take charge when a probationer knocked at the door.

"Dr. Ward is here, Sister," she said.

Sister Elizabeth rose at once from the easy-chair into which Bertha had gently placed her, and struggled to regain her usual manner. The slow effort she made at self command was a curious contrast to the instantaneous change that fell upon Bertha at the probationer's words, which altered her on the instant from the tender, womanly friend, to a self-possessed, impassive official.

"Dr. Ward will probably wish you to come round with us," said Sister Elizabeth as she moved towards the door. "You had better come with me." And Bertha followed her without a word.

James Ward was talking to a probationer. He turned as the sister's door opened and went to meet Sister Elizabeth.

"Good morning," he said, pleasantly. "I hope you are quite ready to go." And then he turned to Bertha, as she stood rather behind the sister. "Good morning, Nurse Brand," he said. "You are quite prepared to take charge here, of course?" If there was any hidden meaning behind the cold professionalism of his tone—and Bertha understood the look in the eyes, which she met so firmly—Nurse Brand ignored it.

"I am quite prepared, sir," she said; and beneath the quiet of her tone there was a ring of something very like defiance.

Three weeks had passed since James Ward's first coming to the hospital; and in that three weeks, over the outward attitude of each towards the other a subtle change had come.

Bertha's conduct, on his first attempt at a personal advance, her tacit refusal to acknowledge him in any way whatever, had transformed James Ward's careless sense of attraction towards her to a determination to force from her the hearing she had refused, mainly because she had refused it. He had imagined that, with a very little ingenuity on his part, she would be at his mercy as far as giving him that hearing was concerned; and it was when he found that, do what he would, they never met except in the ward, where she was fenced round invulnerably with professional etiquette, that his cold-blooded, relentless passion was stirred into life, and came to reinforce his instinct to succeed, by fair means or foul, with anything to which he had once set his intellect and his will.

It was this latter instinct, and this alone, that prevented his writing to her. There was something that he could tell her that would, he believed, make all further intercourse between them perfectly easy; but it was characteristic of the man that, having once set his determination against hers, not even the promptings of passion could cause him to forego the satisfaction of winning from her the interview that she denied him. She was in his mind incessantly, and her charm grew on him day by day. She was immensely difficult of attainment, and with that very difficulty her value in his eyes grew tenfold.

To Bertha those three weeks, with the constant self-control and the constant watchfulness they had demanded from her, had been inexpressibly wearing. She was not afraid of James Ward. It was not fear that made her shun another private interview with him; it was simply that her whole nature revolted against and found unendurable even the distant thought of the re-establishment of such relations between them as he had seemed to intend to re-establish in those brief minutes he had made her spend in his room when she fetched the battery. She had successfully avoided such another occasion hitherto; but the strain such success involved was heavy, and her first feeling of repugnance towards him had, with it, developed rapidly. There were times when she felt that she hated him.

And how much longer she might be able to save herself from that private interview, the avoidance of which had become as much a point of determination with her as was the forcing of it upon her with him, it was impossible to say. With Sister Elizabeth's absence, and her own assumption of the duties and responsibilities of a ward sister, her intercourse with the house-surgeon must necessarily become closer and more constant. No one would stand any longer between herself and him. She had known this well, and yet she had been unable to lift a finger to save herself; she could say nothing that would keep Sister Elizabeth at her post. She had known that James Ward knew it—that, as Sister Elizabeth had said, he had used his influence with the matron to obtain leave of absence for Sister Elizabeth, and what that leave of absence involved—her own temporary installation in the vacant place.

She knew it, and he knew it, and each was conscious of the other's knowledge, when that same evening she met him, as, in virtue of her temporary responsibility she was bound to do, to accompany him on his final round. She met him bravely, and he began the round with no variation from his ordinary distant manner, though his eyes were gleaming with triumph. And it seemed likely that all Bertha's courage and all her self-control would be needed sorely. For everything that James Ward could do to lengthen the round that night he did. He knew etiquette must keep Bertha, in the capacity of sister of the ward, in attendance on him. And every detail that could point the position, that could emphasize the direct professional relations in which they stood, he used. It seemed as if his intention was to tire her out, mentally and physically, and to wear out the notice of nurses and patients, that, later on, a private conversation might pass unheeded.

Finally, he declared his intention of trying on a patient a course of treatment that would keep him in the ward, with Bertha still at his side, for practically as long as he should choose to stay. But Bertha's quick wits came to her aid here as they had done many times before. Calling a probationer under pretence of making her study the treatment in question, she kept her with her for the short half hour that James Ward under the circumstances thought good to stay. He left the ward at last, and the expression in his eyes as he said good-night to Nurse Brand was not pleasant to see.

But fortune does not always favour the brave. Bertha had had only an hour's sleep when she was roused to attend to a bad accident case. Accident cases were of rarer occurrence than at the larger hospitals; the only really competent night nurse was fully occupied, and all Bertha's professional interest was alight on the instant. Hastily dressing herself, she went out into the ward, passed behind the great green screen drawn round the newly-filled bed, without a thought except of the suffering she was to relieve, and busied herself, with such help as the one probationer on night duty could give her, about the patient. He was terribly hurt, unconscious, and in urgent need of the doctor's assistance, and in her strong professional instinct, Bertha's personal feelings towards that doctor were almost submerged even when he finally came round the screen and joined her at the bedside. The first active measures were taken promptly and almost in silence, except for rapid orders from doctor or nurse to the waiting probationer. Then there came a pause in the action, and the latter said, hesitatingly:

"When you can spare me, Nurse Brand, Nurse Armstrong told me to say that she should be very glad of me."

Before Bertha had realised all that her answer to these words involved, James Ward, without looking up from the patient, had spoken for her:

"There is nothing more for you to do here," he said, pleasantly. "You had better go at once." And the girl passed round the screen and disappeared.

Her departure was succeeded by a dead silence. The screen drawn round the bed cut off the small section of the ward enclosed so completely that to all intents and purposes it became a separate room. On one side of the bed stood James Ward, his skilful hands fully occupied, his brain comparatively untaxed. On the other side nearer the head, supporting the patient in the required position, was Bertha, chained to her post by her occupation until James Ward should choose to release her. Between them lay the unconscious man.

The silence, unbroken except by the ticking of James Ward's watch as it lay beside him, lasted only for a couple of minutes, but in those minutes Bertha's face set itself like iron. The patient was in no immediate danger, nothing complicated was to be done, and the ordinary processes of surgery were too familiar to her to occupy her mind to the exclusion of consciousness of her position. The moment which she had so striven to avert had come, and there was no escape. Without taking his eyes from his work, without pausing an instant in it, James Ward began in a low, rapid voice:

"Bertha," he said, "I have waited for this opportunity for weeks, and you have refused it to me. Listen to me now, and understand how hard you have been."

There was no triumph in his tone. He had conquered her, but it was enough for him to feel his power. He was too self-controlled a man to make it felt, when a display of it might go against his further plans. Bertha, trapped and beaten as she felt herself, was gathering all her energies into a steady fund of self-command, and she made no answer.

"Bertha," he continued, in the same rapid tone, and even as he spoke his requirements with regard to the patient under his hand necessitated a slight answering alteration in her attitude which seemed to heighten the strain of the position by its assertion of their common object. "I know that no words I can say can win forgiveness for me. My love for you is no excuse for me in your eyes, it creates no pity for me in you, I know. But if I can atone—if there is one thing I can do to retrieve the past? Bertha, will you not listen to me?"

The mockery of the words addressed to

a woman for whom no escape was possible, who was absolutely at his mercy, stung Bertha to the quick. She did not speak, but she met his eyes as he looked up at her across the unconscious form between them, with an expression of contempt and disgust that contrasted oddly with the gentle touch with which she supported the injured man. But to James Ward the contempt on her face weighed nothing against the added beauty lent by the indomitable spirit shining out in the brown eyes. He did not look back again to his work, and his hands ceased to move, as he spoke the words which would, he believed, annul the distance that lay between them and make her his again.

"I am free, Bertha," he said. "Do you understand? She is dead! There is one thing and only one that I can do that can in any way redeem the past. I beg of you, for the sake of the love which maddened me, which maddens me now when I think of life without you, to come back to me. Let me marry you!"

His voice as he ended sank to a low, hoarse murmur; dramatic art could go no further. But as it had failed with her once before, it failed with her now; not that she recognised the art, but because she was utterly out of his reach. The words from which he had looked for so much touched her not at all. Without a shade of colour on her face, she looked at him across that gulf which he could never bridge, and gave him his answer in one steady word:

"Never!"

Refusal, or rather such a refusal, was so entirely unexpected that, for an instant, James Ward stood before her speechless. Then, recovering himself with instinctive coolness, he said, very quietly:

"That is your first answer; you will give me another?"

"Never!" Bertha did not waste her force in passionate asseveration. She spoke with the same immoveable steadiness. Then she bent suddenly and looked at the patient. "He is coming to," she said quietly; "he will hear what you say."

Back into the form between them—the form of a poor London labourer—the spirit was slowly struggling, and Bertha and James Ward were no longer alone.

CHAPTER XIV. THE "ACCIDENT'S" PAPERS.

THE house-surgeon's room at St. Luke's Hospital was a comfortable room enough, and during James Ward's temporary tenancy of it its air of comfort had been considerably accentuated. He was particular to the point of fastidiousness as to his personal arrangements, and every detail in the room that was his personal property appeared to be the specimen of its kind best adapted intrinsically and by position to serve the purposes to which its owner proposed to put it.

The microscope and its appliances, arranged on a table, were of the best kind, and so placed as to command a perfect light; the writing-table, with its double rows of drawers and its piles of medical books, was supplied with nothing ornamental, but with everything necessary disposed ready to the hand. And the bronzes, which, with a beautiful little presentation clock, occupied the mantelshelf, were perfect of their kind.

In the writing-table chair, on the morning following his strange interview with Bertha, sat James Ward. He had just returned from his morning round. He had seated himself deliberately, and he had set himself to think out the position of his affairs with regard to Bertha. There was no mask upon his face now. His brain was actively at work, and his expression was keen and intent; but it was also inexpressibly hard and relentless, and the cruel determination in his eyes was no longer disguised. He found himself for the moment in the position of a man who has followed a straight road leading apparently direct to his destination, when that road suddenly stops short with the distance only half traversed. He was standing still, as it were, as a man so placed might do, studying the country before him, that his new choice of a path might be the shortest and surest available.

In the twenty-four hours that had elapsed since their interview, his resolution with regard to Bertha had taken a new form. As he had determined previously that he would make her hear him by word of mouth, so now, with a determination still more relentless and indomitable in proportion to the greater stake for which he had to play, he resolved that he would marry her. His wife had died two years before, and he had never doubted that Bertha once aware of the fact, all difficulty with her would be at an end. He had been prepared to express unlimited penitence and adoration, to run through the whole range of the emotional remorse, devotion, and despair, which, as he cynically told himself, was "the thing with a woman," and he had had no doubt of success. But he had not been prepared for the firmness of the one word uttered by Bertha in answer to his eloquent appeal.

"'Never!'" he repeated to himself, as he sat there, erect and motionless, strung together physically by the action of his brain, and with no thought of bodily relaxation. A slight smile touched his hard mouth as he repeated the word, and his eyes narrowed curiously. "'Never!' And she meant it too. She has stuff in her; so much the better; it makes it more worth while."

He dwelt for a moment with an evil light of absolute pleasure in his eyes on the struggle to come; and then he set himself to plan out the lines on which he would conduct it. And here found himself utterly at fault. Think as he would, he could work out no satisfactory course of action. On every hand across his path started up that resolute "Never!" and his plans of the moment dwindled into futility before it.

Half an hour's hard thought had helped him not at all, and with a sudden movement of impatience he rose, his face lowering in his angry preoccupation, and walked to the window. His back, as he stood looking out, was towards the door, and he turned sharply at the sound of a knock.

"Confound it!" he said to himself. "What is it now? Come in!" he added, aloud, and the door was opened instantly by one of the porters.

"An accident, please, sir," he said, briefly.

"An accident!" echoed James Ward, harshly enough; the porter was not worth the effort which an assumption of his pleasant manner at that moment would have involved. "The ninth in two days, and they told me they were rarities here. Confound it!"

He had taken up his case of instruments as he spoke, and the porter followed him out of the room, not caring to explain that the accident average of the past week had indeed been higher than usual at little St. Luke's.

Two minutes' walk lay between the house-surgeon's room and the surgery, and as he opened the door the hard, preoccupied expression vanished from James Ward's face, and he became, by sheer force of will, his ordinary, popular self again. At the same moment his professional instincts rose mechanically side by side with his private anger and perplexity.

The injured man, who had been brought in apparently by the two policemen who stood now a little aside from the stretcher on which he was, lay exactly as he had been placed, in absolute unconsciousness. One of the nurses attached to the surgery was bending over him, and as James Ward came up, she said: "A bad case, I'm afraid, sir." James Ward, after one glance at the prostrate form—a glance that told him, among other things, that the man was a gentleman—turned for an instant to one of the policemen, and said, as he began a rapid examination:

"How did it happen?"

"Cab accident," was the reply. "Gentleman pitched on his head and got a kick."

"Ah," commented James Ward, tersely. "Compound fracture and concussion, nurse. What shall we do with him? Let me think."

"We're very full, sir," returned the woman, in some perplexity. "So many accidents this week. There's nothing but the private room attached to the Elizabeth."

"Private room, eh," said Ward, thoughtfully, with a glance at the unconscious man. "Well, it's the best chance for concussion. Have you got his name?" he continued, to the policemen, and on their replying in the negative, he turned again to the figure on the stretcher, and putting his hand into one of his pockets, drew out several papers. "Let's see," he said; and then, before he looked at them, he added, to one of the nurses, with a look in his eyes which showed how near the surface were his private affairs, for all his professional veneer: "Let Nurse Brand know."

As the woman turned away, his eyes fell upon an envelope which he had just taken from the injured man's pocket, and as he gazed at it he grew suddenly and curiously still from head to foot. The porter had withdrawn a little with the policemen that the necessary formalities might be gone through. No one else was in the place, and he and the "accident" were practically alone. For nearly a moment he stood motionless looking fixedly on the envelope in his hand, then he moved his eyes and looked down, with no less fixity, upon the unconscious face upon the stretcher. Ghastly as it was, with the closed eyes terribly sunken, and the good, strong features drawn and livid, James Ward knew it now, and he said, below his breath, in a curious, reflective tone, as if he were repeating something he had heard long before: "Ralph Charteris."

"Shall they take him up now, sir?"

Several minutes had elapsed, during which James Ward had stood looking down on the stretcher, thinking intently, and the surgery nurse had returned. James Ward lifted his head slowly, and looked at her; and the woman wondered what he could have found in the "accident's" papers to make him look so "strange," as she expressed it to herself.

"There is no other empty bed?" he said.

"No, sir," answered the woman, in surprise.

"Very good, then. Yes, they can take him." He turned away as he spoke, and entered in the hospital day-book: "Ralph Charteris, Esq., Carlton Club. Ward Elizabeth, private room. Concussion of the brain and compound fracture of the right leg."

Then he left the surgery, and, going back to his room, waited, with the same intent hardness of expression—as though he were trying to think out an unexpected complication of a problem—during the short interval which must elapse before he could pay the regulation visit to the new case. He waited the full time, and then he went upstairs, the intentness in his hard eyes growing with every step, and opened the door of the private room of the Elizabeth ward with no preliminary warning of his coming.

The injured man, still without sign of life, was lying on the bed, and busy about him was one of the nurses. Close by, overlooking, as her position of temporary sister made it her duty to do, was Bertha. Her face, as she stood behind the nurse, was little less white than the face upon the pillow, and her eyes were dark and wide. She was neither doing nor attempting to do anything for the patient, and the reason, to the keen, cruel eyes that scanned her as James Ward stood for an instant unnoticed on the threshold, was obvious. Her hands were tightly clasped together, and she had clasped them so to still their trembling. She was shaking like a leaf.

CHAPTER XV. A CASE OF DRUGS.

The days that followed seemed to Bertha to pass in one incessant dream of anxiety and pain. With the terrible shock of her instantaneous recognition of Ralph Charteris, as she gently uncovered the face of the "accident," she had passed out of the world of her everyday life into an inner world in which past and present were blended in a common suffering.

The wrong she had done to Ralph Charteris had been the background of her life for nearly three years. She had dwelt on it, and thence she had dwelt on him, incessantly, until he had become the centre figure on her mental horizon—a figure stern, sorrowful, and reproachful, injured beyond forgiveness. His face, as it had looked when last she had seen it, as he left her on the deck of the "Philistia," had been as present with her as the faces of the men and women with whom her daily life brought her into actual contact. In the passionate regret she felt when first remorse woke in her, that she had not had time to tell him "how sorry she was," she had thought at times of meeting that face again, of putting into words some of the shame and penitence with which her heart was full, to see it alter into some sort of cold forgiveness. It was before her now in very truth, and it lay hour after hour on the pillow in dead unconsciousness, and Bertha knew that the chance that that unconsciousness would ever yield to life was slight in the extreme.

She did not analyse her feelings; she never realised the intense, impelling longing that was in her to deserve, in some slight measure, that forgiveness—to deserve it by successfully defying the dark Messenger who stood so near to that unconscious man, and to bring Ralph Charteris back to life. Her only definite consciousness was the consciousness of an ever-growing pain and anxiety. All her work and responsibility in the ward, all her contact with patients and nurses, had become far away and unreal to her. Her duties were as carefully attended to as ever; but all her life was in that private room where Ralph Charteris lay.

There was little to be done for Charteris, little except to watch and wait; but to that little she devoted herself, to the exclusion of every external thought. The hospital was short-handed; the only nurse available for the case in the private room was a rather stupid woman, to whom it was perfectly natural that Nurse Brand, as head of the ward, should give all possible oversight to a critical case. And Bertha's immediate subordinate in the ward—a clever probationer—was only too delighted to do any quantity of work to make up for Nurse Brand's preoccupation.

One long day succeeded another, and, though Ralph Charteris showed no slightest sign of returning consciousness, yet he still lived; and with each morning that she returned to his side and found that there was still the hope that is only quenched with life itself, that hope became to Bertha a more absorbing passion; the thought of its too possible extinction a more unendurable dread. The nights, during which she was compelled to leave the night nurse in charge, and the times when her duties in the ward kept her from the private room, were times of sickening fear to her, times when she could only arm herself in an iron endurance, which made her face look like a mask and gave her voice a strange, far-away sound. In this endurance, together with the unhurried and careful performance of her work, all her energies were so concentrated that James Ward and her repugnance to him faded away into the dull, indistinct background of a long-past event. He was to her now, the doctor and nothing more. She was not even conscious of the keen eyes with which he watched her, nor of the unceasing watch they kept.

It was the sixth day of Ralph Charteris's unconsciousness, and Bertha was hurrying back to the ward after her dinner. She had already been away longer than she had intended, and she started violently when, rapidly going along one of the passages, she suddenly felt herself seized from behind by two soft detaining hands. It was the little fair-haired probationer, grown quite at home in the hospital now, who met her startled eyes with laughing blue ones. Bertha had given her a great deal of cheery encouragement and sympathy during her early days of difficulty, and had been rewarded with an enthusiastic gratitude and devotion.

"Did I startle you?" she said. "Nurse Bertha, it's so long since I've seen anything of you, and I wanted—— Oh!" she said, breaking off suddenly, "is there anything the matter?"

She had not, as she said, seen Bertha for several days, and the change in Bertha's bright face, particularly with that startled look upon it, was sufficiently noticeable. But Bertha reassured her hurriedly.

"Nothing!" she said, with a wan little attempt at her own smile. "You made me jump, bad girl. Do you want to speak to me? I'm rather in a hurry."

"I did," said the girl, shyly crimsoning as she spoke. "I—— it's about Mr. M'Culloch, and I thought you would—— Oh, Nurse Bertha," she said, suddenly hiding her face on Bertha's shoulder, "we're engaged!"

"Engaged!" echoed Bertha, with a far-away remembrance struggling through to the world in which she was living and suffering now, of the probable incompatibility between the finances of the youth in question—one of the students—and the support of a wife. "My dear!"

"Yes!" answered the girl eagerly, understanding and answering her tone. "I've been to see his people. They are very rich, you know, and they are pleased. Oh, won't you kiss me, Nurse Bertha? Nobody has ever been so kind to me as you."

Bertha kissed the flushed, upturned face with a passion which had no connection with Mr. M'Culloch and his affairs.

"Keep faith!" she said, in a low, breathless way that the little probationer often remembered afterwards, but never understood. "Minnie, keep faith!"

The next moment she had turned and was moving rapidly away along the corridor. The strange passion with which her face had quivered, as she spoke, lighted and moved it still when she reached the door of the private room.

She opened the door with a quick turn of the handle, and passed swiftly in. But just within the door she stopped, and a low cry broke from her.

"Oh!" she gasped, "is he worse?"

James Ward was standing by Ralph Charteris's bed, watching him intently. He lifted his eyes at the sound of Bertha's voice, and looked at her. Every trace of colour had left her trembling lips, and she was clinging to the door handle as if for support.

The sudden shock of finding the doctor with Charteris at so unusual a time, and the deadly fear which the sight brought with it, had deprived her utterly, for the moment, of her self-control. James Ward looked at her for a moment, looked straight into the terrified brown eyes without speaking, and a consciousness of her unnerved condition, her utter weakness, stole over Bertha, and she struggled to regain her self-command.

"No!" he answered, quietly; "he is no worse. What makes you ask?"

His eyes were still fixed upon her. She did not speak at once. She moved from the door and came on into the room, and tried, with an effort pathetic in its powerlessness, to blind the eyes that watched her, to busy herself with some arrangements on a table near the bed.

"It is not a usual time for visiting the wards," she said at length, fighting bravely for her usual formality of tone and manner.

"True!" he assented, watching her trembling hands with a slight smile. "But it is an interesting case. I hardly expected it to last so long. You find it interesting, Nurse Brand?"

He paused, forcing a reply from her. She was standing now with her back to him, apparently doing something on the table, but in reality with her hands clasped tightly together in the terrible struggle to regain her nerve.

"I am always interested in the patients under my care," she rather heard herself say than said deliberately.

"Oh!" returned James Ward in a slow, cold tone that cut like steel. "Quite so!" Then he stooped and touched the nerveless wrist of the unconscious man. "Well!" he said, as he dropped it again and turned away towards the door. "Well, I shall be curious to see what Arnold thinks of him by-and-by. There must be a change before long!"

He passed out of the room as he spoke, and there was a look of cruel satisfaction in his eyes.

Left alone, Bertha made no attempt to move. As the door closed all the agitation seemed to fall away from her and leave her still and quiet in a suspense too terrible for expression. James Ward himself—everything—was forgotten in her intense anxiety to save the life of this man, and the sense that before long, as he had said, the change must come. She stood there as he left her for many moments, seeing nothing, conscious of that one thing only, and then she turned, went slowly up to the bed and looked down on the unconscious face upon the pillow—the face so ghastly now that it hardly looked like life at all.

"Dr. Arnold!" she said to herself; "Dr. Arnold! What will he say this afternoon? What will he say?"

Dr. Arnold was one of the visiting doctors, a grave, stern, but very clever man. Bertha had the greatest respect for his science and skill, and when, after attending him round the ward about three hours later, she followed him into the private room, the strain was telling so heavily upon her that it seemed to her that Charteris's sentence for life or death was coming from those hard, severe lips. It was all she could do to retain her self-control, to steady her hand to give the assistance required in the examination; and, above all, to keep her eyes from watching the unmoved professional face with unprofessional intentness. The examination was long and thorough, and by the time it was over a strange frown had gathered on James Ward's forehead, and he looked keenly at his colleague. Dr. Arnold's face was very grave and thoughtful.

"What do you think of the case?" said James Ward quickly as Dr. Arnold raised his head.

There was an instant's pause. Bertha, who was standing on the opposite side of the bed to James Ward, with her head a little bent, lifted it suddenly as though she had forgotten everything in the suspense of the moment, and fixed her eyes on the face of the man who was to end it, her pale face twitching slightly. The question, asked in the speaker's ordinary tone, seemed to emphasize the unconsciousness of the figure on the bed, and Dr. Arnold glanced down at it with something like pity in his eyes. But there was no pity in the eyes which, from the other side of the bed, were watching Bertha with relentless keenness.

"There's nothing to be done," was the answer; "I see no chance for him, poor fellow!"

As Dr. Arnold's words broke the moment's silence, James Ward saw a terrible grey pallor spread over the little face on which his eyes were fixed. He saw the eyes darken and grow dim and wide with agony, and he read in them a truth of which Bertha herself was ignorant.

She did not faint, though for the moment watching her ghastly colour he had thought that she surely must; an instant later every vestige of expression died from her face as completely as though it had turned into stone. She acknowledged Dr. Arnold's parting directions in a cold, mechanical voice, and her set face had not altered or relaxed at all when the two doctors finally left the room.

There was no shadow of preoccupation about James Ward's manner as he finished the afternoon round. His skill was as ready, his pleasant manner — when he thought it worth while to be pleasant — was as easy and convincing as ever. It was not until he was once more alone in his own room that he relaxed his hold upon himself and allowed an expression of deep thought to settle on his handsome face. He flung himself down in his armchair and sat there with his hands clasped behind his head, thinking.

When he had recognised Ralph Charteris in the accident case under his hand in the hospital surgery, he had recognised him instantly as a distinct factor to be carefully reckoned with in the problem he was working out with regard to Bertha, and the more difficult to deal with in that he was necessarily unable to estimate its exact worth. Entirely ignorant as he was of Bertha's thoughts of Charteris, his first premise was right as far as it went, inasmuch as he told himself that her old lover would certainly be interesting to her, that old feelings, old memories, would inevitably be stirred by the sight of him. He had watched her closely, and before forty-eight hours had gone by all that was worst in him had been touched by what he saw. He felt that he himself had faded into utter insignificance in her life, that she was absorbed in Charteris, and that in her absorption she was hardly conscious of his existence, and he hated the unconscious man with the relentless hatred that only such a man can feel. It was for a little while only, he had told himself with an evil smile, over and over again, during the last few days. Charteris would never wake to consciousness again, and when he was once dead—— He never finished the sentence in detail, but its end was one indomitable resolve.

But now as he sat there, thrown back in his chair, he was looking at a possibility which was new to him. The question that he had put to his superior by Charteris's bedside that afternoon had been put in no spirit of professional respect, but from a personal desire to know what his colleague thought, and to watch the effect upon Bertha of the answer he had expected. In that cruelly keen-sighted watch he had made a discovery for which he had indeed been fully prepared, but which made of the possibility which had already arisen in his mind a poison that quickened into life all that was most evil in him. That afternoon he had, when Bertha found him alone in the private room for the first time, detected symptoms about Charteris, overlooked or under-appreciated by his superior, and too subtle for Bertha's medical knowledge. They were symptoms which he believed to involve ultimate recovery.

He rose suddenly from his chair, and began to pace to and fro across the room, his face growing harder with every step he took. If Ralph Charteris recovered, victory with Bertha would never be his, and he knew it; no determination would avail him then at all. He had resolved with himself that he would have her, and resolution with James Ward was not an idle word. It involved the deadly, unswerving concentration of an absolutely unprincipled and ruthless man. He walked up and down with no haste in his step, growing only colder and quieter as his hatred and passion intensified with the prospect of defeat, for nearly half an hour. Then quite suddenly he stopped in his walk, stopped in the middle of the room, and stood there for several minutes, as though considering something that had freshly presented itself. Then he walked slowly to the fireplace, and leant his elbow on the mantelpiece.

"He is so near," he muttered to himself. "He is so near."

The little presentation clock upon the mantelpiece chimed the hour, and then there fell upon the room a strange, dead stillness. The tick of the clock, the crackle of the fire seemed to grow louder, until their familiar sounds, striking against the silence, acquired something weird and horrible in the steadiness of their persistence. The clock ticked on and on, relentless and unceasing, registering those heart-beats of time itself which are so steady and pauseless, neither quickened nor retarded in the least with the fever or the ice in any human heart; and close to the little clock-case, in which that regular, unceasing pulse was beating, stood James Ward, his head supported on his two hands as his elbows rested on the mantelpiece, so utterly absorbed in thought, that life—such life as is visible to human eyes—seemed suspended in him; seemed, as it were, to have passed into the clock at his side, which, with its slowly-moving minute, and its dominion over the silence, seemed more alive than he.

It chimed the quarter-past, and James Ward moved and lifted his head. As he did so the tick of the clock sank back suddenly into its usual hardly audible reminder, and the intense personality of a determined man dominated silence and sound alike. On a table at the other end of the room was a small, new case of drugs which had reached James Ward that morning. He crossed the room swiftly and opened it. He turned them over in perfect silence, fingering and then replacing each small bottle and packet with a lingering touch. Last of all he unfastened a separate packet a little larger than any of the others. It contained drugs prepared in the most modern way—that of tabloids, or small compressed lozenge-shaped forms each different drug in a tiny glass phial, containing a dozen or so of the tabloids. There were among them some labelled morphia, strychnine, cocaine, and more than as many again of more technical name and less deadly power. James Ward looked at them for a long time in motionless silence; then he moved suddenly, and taking up the whole packet, placed them all in a small cupboard which stood against the wall, turned the key in it, and left the room.

CHAPTER XVI. COMPLICATIONS.

"Good morning, Nurse Brand."

"Good morning."

James Ward had just entered the Elizabeth ward on the following morning, and, for the first time during their professional intercourse, Bertha addressed him without the formal "sir." She had come swiftly down the long room on his appearance; and there was something altogether unusual about her manner. Beneath its external composure her white face was alive with an intensity of hope and fear. James Ward gave her one keen glance, of which she was as entirely unconscious as she was untouched for the moment by his personality; but before he could speak she said, quickly:

"Perhaps you will prefer to come into the private room at once. There has been a change!"

Professional composure fought desperately as she spoke with an almost feverish eagerness; and the cool deliberation of James Ward's tone, as he answered her, struck oddly against her manner.

"A change?" he said. "What kind of change?"

"There has been a short interval of consciousness," she answered. "I had sent for you."

"Ah!" returned James Ward, with the same calm deliberation of manner. "Yes, I will see him at once. You were with him, I suppose?"

A crimson flush rushed over the small face on which his eyes were fixed, and Bertha turned suddenly away towards the private room. "No," she said.

The interval of consciousness had been only an interval, and an inexperienced eye would have detected no difference between the heavy stupor in which Charteris lay to-day and that in which he had lain yesterday; but to the trained perceptions of the nurse—the nurse whose nominal charge he was was with him when James Ward and Bertha entered the room—as well as to the superior science of the doctor, the change was great. There was a brief technical colloquy between James Ward and the nurse, followed by a careful examination of the patient, during which Bertha stood by, holding herself quiet and motionless by a strong effort of will. The examination over, James Ward stood for a moment motionless; and Bertha's eyes were fixed on his impassive features in an agony of questioning hope. The nurse had turned away to a table for a moment.

"The symptoms are favourable?"

Bertha's white lips just formed the words; they were so low as to be hardly audible; but James Ward lifted his eyes from the patient, and looked at her as though their utterance had been perfectly conventional, as he answered, quietly:

"The symptoms are favourable. If no new complications arise, he will come through."

"He shall! he shall! oh, he shall!" Bertha was never certain whether or no she had given utterance to the words. She only knew that every pulse was throbbing and beating with the passion of hope that gave them birth. She was vaguely conscious that James Ward was preparing to look at the patient's broken limb; but no active assistance was required of her, and she was only recalled to herself a few minutes later by a few words uttered by James Ward.

"This looks bad," he said.

He had spoken several times to the nurse, and his voice had failed to rouse her; but those three words, or the penetrating tone in which they were spoken, went straight to her consciousness with a cold sense of shock and fear.

"The morphia, nurse, please," he said to the woman who was helping him; and Bertha started forward, with a low exclamation of dismay.

"Morphia!" she said. "Morphia!"

James Ward turned and looked at her quietly.

"Unfortunate, isn't it?" he said. "We never anticipated difficulty with the fracture; but this morning, I'm bound to say, it looks worse than the injury to the head." He turned away as he finished speaking; and Bertha, still with that cold sense of fear on her, followed his movements with startled eyes. The nurse had come up to his side with the bottle he had asked for.

"Now, then!" he said, as he prepared to take the bottle from her. Whether it was her fault or Dr. Ward's, the woman never knew; but the next instant the bottle was rolling at their feet, and a little pool on the floor was all that was left of the morphia.

The nurse's apologies and excuses were cut short almost peremptorily by Bertha. On her overstrung nerves the gravity of James Ward's tone, and the sudden revulsion it produced from an ecstasy of hope to a vague dread, had fallen with a jarring touch that had produced in her a fever of anxiety. Delay of any kind was intolerable to her.

"You had better fetch the ward bottle at once!" she said.

The woman was turning to obey, when James Ward stopped her with a gesture.

"There is no necessity," he said. "I have some tabloids of morphia in my pocket. Get me a glass and a little water."

Bertha had turned to him with a movement of feverish impatience as he detained the nurse. She stood quite still, watching him. The nurse, humiliated by the accident with the morphia bottle, brought the glass and water in silence; and a curious quiet fell upon the always quiet room. The sunlight, stealing through the half-closed blind, touched the unconscious figure on the bed, and touched also one of the figures standing by—the only moving figure in the group. The two women's figures, both so still, one with the stillness of uninterested stupidity and training, the other with the stillness of intense self-control, were in shadow. Full in the sunlight was James Ward. With his usual cool deliberation he put his hand into his waistcoat-pocket and drew out a phial labelled tabloids of morphia, and taking the glass from the nurse, he shook into it one of the grey, flat pellets it contained, and crushed it easily, adding a little water.

"That's right," he said; and the dead silence of the moment before had been so absolute that his voice seemed to ring strangely against it.

He drew the small quantity of fluid he had prepared into his syringe, and bending over the unconscious man, injected it carefully into his arm. Then Bertha moved for the first time. A sigh of relief escaped her, and at the same instant she shivered slightly, as though with sudden cold.

"Wash the glass at once, nurse." James Ward had turned away from the bed, and as he spoke he was carefully unscrewing and putting away his syringe. The woman withdrew to obey him; and he added formally to Bertha: "The ward now, if you please."

The round that followed seemed to Bertha interminable. Upon the strain of the last week, and the hopeless agony of the previous day, the hope of the morning had come with an overwhelming rush to carry her off her balance as nothing else could have done. She had told James Ward that she had not been with Ralph Charteris in his interval of consciousness; and she had told the truth. She had not told him what was known to herself alone—that she had opened the door of the private room, thinking to enter and find him in the same leaden unconsciousness; that she had been arrested, petrified for the moment by the sound of the voice she remembered so well; the voice that had rung in her ears constantly for the last two years, quiet and shaken, as she had heard it that day on the "Philistia." It was weak, but perfectly sensible, as Charteris asked the nurse to tell him where he was. Bertha had fallen back against the wall as she listened, overwhelmed by the flood of conflicting emotions let loose by that feeble sound, cold and shaking in every limb. And since that moment, the spark of hope so unexpectedly revived in her had been burning brighter and brighter, until everything else was lost in its light. The shock of fear given her by James Ward's dissatisfaction with the broken limb, and the strange treatment he had thought desirable, was infinitely more sickening for this hope that had preceded it. She moved from bed to bed at James Ward's side, doing all that was required of her absolutely mechanically, conscious only of one agony of prayer, "Let him get better."

The round was over at last. James Ward's last words—and they were very lengthy—were spoken, and as the door closed after him a long, low sigh parted Bertha's white lips. She stood still a moment, as though resting, in the sense that she was free at last, and then she walked up the ward, attending carefully, and without haste, to two or three matters needing her supervision. When they were done, nothing would remain to keep her from Charteris's bedside; and in the relief of that thought she could afford to be almost leisurely. She reached the door of the private room, stopped, with her hand on the latch, to give a last direction, opened it, and went in, closing the double doors behind her.

The private room attached to the Elizabeth ward was divided into two, of which the first and larger was devoted to the patient, and the smaller leading out of it held necessaries required in the nursing. No nurse was visible in the larger room when Bertha entered, and she was crossing to the door leading into the smaller room, when she suddenly stopped short. She had glanced instinctively towards the bed. A sudden startled horror sprang into her eyes, and a low cry of unutterable dismay broke from her.

"Nurse!" she cried, and the woman appeared in the doorway with a frightened face, as her voice rang strained and tense on the silence, "Nurse, what have you been doing? Fetch Dr. Ward! Quick, quick! Tell him that tetanus has come on. Go—go, and bring the ward bottle of morphia back with you!"

Ralph Charteris was lying just as she had left him, but a terrible change had come over the still unconscious face. It was drawn and convulsed, and all the muscles of the figure were contorting themselves spasmodically. Bertha had seen those symptoms before; she knew only too well what they foreboded, and for one instant, as the nurse left her alone, she threw herself down by the bed and hid her face on the bedclothes in an agony of fear; then she sprang to her feet. She would not face the thought, she would not own her dread. He should not—he should not die! There was nothing for her to do; she was absolutely powerless until James Ward should arrive, and she stood there with every nerve and muscle braced together, until at last the door reopened.

James Ward came rapidly up to the bed.

"Tetanus!" he said; "I thought so. Give me a glass, nurse; we must give more morphia at once. My tabloids will do."

His hand moved quickly to the pocket from which he had previously produced the phial labelled tabloids of morphia, when Bertha's hoarse voice arrested his movement.

"She has the ward bottle," she said. "It will be quicker." At the same moment the nurse, who was standing just behind Ward, offered him the bottle she held in her hand.

There was a pause so slight as to be hardly perceptible, and then James Ward filled his syringe from the bottle and injected the fluid quickly into the convulsed and agonised limb.

His movement was followed by a long silence. At last James Ward glanced once from the distorted face on the pillow to the little face, white as the cap that framed it, bent over it, and as he looked back again at Charteris the mask seemed to slip from his face for the moment, and the relentless malignancy in his eyes was terrible to see. At that moment Bertha, raising her head suddenly, looked at him, and the words on her lips died away for an instant. She could not see his eyes, but something in his hard, cruel features startled her. Then her one dominant passion swept everything else from her mind again, and she said, in a low voice:

"The convulsions are less violent!"

"Yes," was the answer; "the morphia is conquering—for this time."

A shudder shook Bertha, and she clasped her hands tightly. A few minutes more of silent watching, and then, as something approaching peace stole over the drawn face, she lifted her head again and turned to James Ward:

"Do you anticipate any return?" she asked.

"It is impossible to say," he responded. "I expected some such complication from what I saw this morning; but I thought it possible the morphia I gave then might stave it off." He paused and looked at her, and a slight smile just touched his hard lips. "It is most unfortunate," he said; "just when there seemed a chance for him."

He stood for another moment looking down at the unconscious Charteris, and Bertha drew back a step, with a new expression risen in her eyes, and a tightened grip of her two small hands on one another.

"He is glad," she was saying to herself, as her horrified eyes rested on James Ward's face. "He is glad."

Before she could define or expand that startled conviction, it was pushed out of her mind by a consciousness that James Ward was giving some final words of direction, and when, a minute later, he left the room, all thought of him, even of his attitude towards Charteris, left her with his actual presence.

Throughout the day that followed, Bertha scarcely stirred from Charteris's bedside. Hitherto some undefined instinct had kept her from letting it be understood that Charteris was known to her. Now, in the agony of hope and fear that the terrible symptoms of the morning had rendered almost intolerable, nothing mattered any more to her. The nurse nominally in charge of the case became aware that the patient in the private room was a friend of Nurse Brand's, and being a good-natured, if a stupid woman, she left her alone with him through most of the long hours, during which there grew on Bertha a dull feeling that she would go on in the same stony way, until Ralph Charteris's heart should cease to beat; and that on the same instant her own pulse also must stop. Only once in the course of the day did the remembrance of James Ward's look and tone of the morning flash across her, and that was when Dr. Arnold's daily visit brought him again into Charteris's room. Even then it lasted only for a moment before she was absorbed in watching Dr. Arnold's face as he studied the patient.

"It is curious," he said, at last. "I don't agree with you, Ward; I see no sufficient cause for tetanus. It is most singular."

The weary day wore itself out at last, and the time came when Bertha must leave Charteris to the night nurse, and go to her room. There had been no return of the convulsions of the morning, and though there had been no return of consciousness either, there was that about Charteris's appearance as night fell that strengthened the hope which was burning now with a consuming fire. Careless now of everything but the life and death struggle in which she lived, she sent one of the nurses with James Ward on his evening round; and when he finally entered Charteris's room, she turned from the bedside to receive him.

"There has been no return?" he asked.

"None," she replied.

He asked a few questions, and then walked up to the bedside and looked at Charteris.

"There is no need to disturb him," he said. "Good night, Nurse Brand."

"Good night," she answered, and he left the room.

The night nurse was busy in the inner room, and Bertha was alone with the unconscious man. She moved back again to the bedside, and bent very gently over the face, quite peaceful now, and then she turned away, spoke her final instructions to the night nurse, and left the room.

But arrived in the little room opening out of the ward at the other end, occupied by her now in her temporary position of ward sister, she made no attempt to undress. She shut the door, and then stood for a moment quite still. There was a great arm-chair in the room, close to where she stood, and all at once she slipped to her knees, laid her head down on the wide seat, and flinging her clasped hands over it, crouched there motionless and tearless. She had been kneeling there for half an hour, utterly unconscious of the passing of time, when quite suddenly she lifted her head, as if startled. Something had cut suddenly across the current of her emotion and arrested it on the instant. Why had she left him? she found herself saying, repeating the words over and over again. She told herself that she had had no choice, that she had been bound to do so; but reasoning was in vain. Stronger than reason, stronger than her self-command, was the conviction that seized her, growing more and more resistless with every moment, that she must go back; that she must go at once! Almost without conscious volition on her part, she opened the door of her room, passed noiselessly up the ward, and opened the door of the private room. No nurse was visible, but she did not pause until she reached the bedside. There lay Ralph Charteris, his eyes wide open, but with no sense in their awful stare. The good, firm features were distorted beyond all recognition, and there was no muscle in the strong, manly frame that was not in the horrible grip of some convulsive spasm.

For one instant, Bertha gazed down at the terrible sight as though it had frozen the very blood in her veins. Then she turned and rushed into the inner room with a face the nurse there never forgot.

"Morphia!" she cried. "Quick, quick!"

A case of instruments belonging to the room lay on a table near; and as the frightened girl put into her hand the bottle of morphia brought from the ward earlier in the day, Bertha snatched up the syringe and was back at the bedside. Without a moment's hesitation, she knelt down, and, filling the syringe, she gave the largest possible dose of morphia before the eyes of the horrified girl, who had followed her to turn white with dismay.

"Nurse Brand!" she cried. "Nurse Brand, what are you doing? Dr. Ward has just given him morphia!"

CHAPTER XVII.

DR. WARD GOES TO HIS ROOMS.

QUICK as thought, on the girl's words, Bertha sprang to her feet. Lighted as by a sudden vivid flash, with no conscious train of reasoning on her part, she saw again James Ward's face as it had startled her that morning; she felt again the irresistible rush of conviction with which she had said to herself, "He is glad!" She turned upon the girl, her face all alight and quivering with intense excitement.

"Dr. Ward has given morphia!" she said, rapidly. "Has Dr. Ward been here since I left?"

"He came back about twenty minutes ago," was the trembling answer. "He looked at the fracture, and gave morphia; and then he told me I need not watch the patient for half an hour or so—that he would do very well!"

"He told you——" Bertha's tense, unnatural voice stopped short. She stretched out one hand with a quick movement, and gripped the other's trembling arm in a clutch that did not shake at all in the intensity of the moment. "Did he use the ward bottle of morphia?" she said.

"No," replied the girl. "He said he preferred his own tabloids. He told me to wash the glass at once—that was what I was going to do when you came in. Oh, Nurse Brand, what are you doing?"

Without a word, with a sudden unutterable fear dawning in her eyes, Bertha released the girl, and crossing the room with rapid steps, took up from a table in the inner room the glass that she had indicated. A tiny drop of greyish liquid remained in it, and Bertha, with the swift instinct of a nurse, put her finger to it and tasted it. On the instant the dawning fear became such an intensity of horror as absolutely transformed her little face. With the glass still in her hand, and eyes that terrified the girl, Bertha turned to her:

"Do as I tell you," she said in a hoarse, uneven voice. "Do it at once! Go—just as you are and quick, quick, to Dr. Arnold—you know where he lives. Tell him he must come to me here at once; do you understand?"

Even as she spoke, there was a low knock at the door, and one of the night nurses from the ward appeared.

"Dr. Arnold has come round to see number five," she began, but Bertha interrupted her:

"Dr. Arnold!" she cried. "Dr. Arnold!" She moved swiftly towards the door as she spoke, and a moment later Dr. Arnold, with a look of surprise and keen inquiry, had followed her back into the room. "Dr. Arnold," she began, breathlessly shutting the door upon themselves and the young night nurse, over whom there was creeping a consciousness that something terrible was in the air, "Dr. Arnold, there is something wrong. I came back here half an hour ago and found the patient in frightful convulsions. There was not a moment to be lost and I gave morphia instantly, on my own responsibility. He is getting better; oh, thank God, he is getting better." She was bending over the bed as she spoke, and on the attentive face that listened to her a still keener expression dawned. "But—Dr. Arnold—it is not tetanus." She paused, struggling for breath in an agony of horror, and something in the unmoved judicial expression of the man she addressed seemed suddenly to overthrow her self-control.

"It is poison!" she cried, wildly. "Poison! Oh, do believe me—believe me! He gave him an injection from his tabloids this morning. Oh, he spilt the morphia on purpose; why didn't I understand?—and it was soon after that that the convulsions came on first. He came back to-night and gave him more, and he was dying, dying, when I came! Here is the glass he used, with the remains of what he gave him. Taste it, Dr. Arnold, test it! It isn't morphia."

She had poured out the words in a passionate flood of eloquence, her face in a white frenzy of excitement and dread, praying vehemently for belief with every tone of her vibrating voice.

The penetrating eyes to which she raised her own watched her narrowly, and as she finished Dr. Arnold took the glass and asked her one question:

"You are accusing Dr. Ward of poisoning the patient?"

There was an instant's pause, and then she answered hoarsely in one word that was like a cry of agony:

"Yes!"

"Then it is as well that Dr. Ward is on the spot to defend himself."

The cool, deliberate tones came from behind them as they stood together drawn away from the bedside, by which the night nurse, at a sign from Dr. Arnold, was watching; and as the first sound fell on her ears Bertha turned with a violent start. James Ward stood in the doorway, his handsome face set into an expression that was inexpressibly hard and composed. As she turned he looked for one moment full into Bertha's eyes. She faced him with all the horror of the foregone moment culminating in her wide, dilated eyes, and he came forward and addressed himself to Dr. Arnold.

"If there is anything unusual about the contents of the glass you have in your hand," he said, quietly and confidently, "the nurse has doubtless emptied something into it in the process of washing."

Without a word of reply, Dr. Arnold, as Bertha had done, touched the fluid in the glass with his finger and tasted it. There was a moment's pause, and then he turned to the young night nurse.

"Fetch me some nitric acid," he said.

With a speed borne of the sense of crisis with which the very air seemed heavy, the girl left the room, and reappeared almost immediately with a small bottle. Not a word was spoken during her short absence; the three were standing just as she had left them, the two men close together, Bertha, with her small hands clenched together, a pace or two apart. In the midst of a dead silence Dr. Arnold took the bottle from the girl, and poured a few drops of the liquid it contained into the glass which he still held. As the nitric acid touched the bottom, the tiny drop of greyish fluid, on which those four pair of eyes were fixed with such intentness, changed to a reddish brown.

A faint breath parted Bertha's dry lips. The nurse, with a little gasp, took a quick glance at James Ward, whose features remained set and impassive. Dr. Arnold looked intently at the reddish-brown liquid for a moment, and then he set the glass carefully on the table, and turned to James Ward.

"You are as well aware as I, Dr. Ward," he said, gravely, after watching the action of the nitric acid upon the sediment, "that that glass has contained not morphia—strychnine. The symptoms shown by the patient to-day, though possibly arising from tetanus, closely resemble the symptoms of strychnine poisoning. I can only trust that you will be able to clear yourself satisfactorily under the enquiry which must be instituted."

"You are very good," returned James Ward, facing his superior with not the faintest alteration in his impassive face, and with no expression in his voice but a hardly perceptible sneer. "Am I to understand that you propose to give me in charge immediately?"

Dr. Arnold hesitated. He was convinced that there had been foul play—he was convinced that James Ward was guilty; but esprit de corps in the medical profession is all-powerful, and a scandal in the hospital to be averted at almost all costs, and he could not instantly decide what course to pursue.

"You are at liberty to go to your rooms," he said, at last. "The information given by Nurse Brand will be lodged by me with the proper authorities in the morning."

"You are very good," said James Ward, again, with the same hardly perceptible sneer.

He turned, without another word, and leaving the room, passed down the ward, down the staircase, and along the passages, until he reached his room. He locked, and double-locked, the door, and sat down, still with the same deadly composure of manner, to think.

And that composure was not assumed; it was the composure of a strong nature, though strong only in evil, in the face of absolute defeat. The game was played out, and he had lost. He knew it, and he faced it with the iron resolution which, had his impulse been good instead of evil, would have made of James Ward a great man. The plan by which he had intended to remove Ralph Charteris for ever from his path had been laid with all the subtlety and skill of which he was master. Keeping his rival's present physical condition well in view, he had decided on administering strychnine as being the poison best calculated to produce symptoms such as might naturally arise from that condition. He was well aware that tetanus sometimes occurs in a case of compound fracture, and he was also well aware that the symptoms of strychnine poisoning and the symptoms of tetanus are, up to a certain point, nearly indistinguishable. For the rest, he had trusted to fortune and to his own skilful management. Fear had no place in his cynical nature. Having once decided with himself that some such desperate step was absolutely necessary if he was to carry into effect his resolution to make Bertha his wife, to risk the throw was a foregone conclusion with James Ward.

He had lost! And as he sat there, his face set and rigid in intent thought, the very stake for which he had played lay behind him, as it were, obliterated by that one unalterable fact, swept away as only a powerful nature can sweep away what is no longer fruitful. He had lost!

And the throw had involved his position, his reputation, the very possibility of life at all, save in some obscure, remote corner of the world. He accepted the situation. It was the hazard of the die! He must leave the hospital in the course of the next few hours, silently and unobserved—a fugitive from justice. If he were still there in the morning, he would be in the hands of the police before the next night fell. On this point, too, he was perfectly callous. Again, it was the hazard of the die, and he had lost!

He rose, and, going into the inner room he brought out a small travelling bag, and began to put into it some of the smaller and more valuable of his possessions. Quite suddenly, as he took into his hand, for transference to the bag, a small packet of valuable papers, certificates and testimonials, he stopped short.

Was it worth while? The question had flashed suddenly into his mind, and he stood motionless, just as it had arrested him, thinking it out. Then he slowly put down the papers—not into the open bag, but back upon the writing-table. He had lost where he had sworn to win. Why go any further?

A little cynical smile just touched his lips, as he stood there idly, turning backwards and forwards the papers on the table. There was not the faintest sound in the room. The fire was out. The clock that had ticked the moments so loudly on the previous day lay in the bag at his side, silent. At last he moved, and spoke aloud.

"It is not worth while!" he said.

There was another pause; and then he opened a drawer close to his hand, and took out a small case. He looked for a moment at its contents—two revolvers; then he closed it again with a snap and laid it down, and crossed the room to the cupboard where he had placed the packet of drugs on the day before. He took from it now a closely-stoppered bottle. "The simplest way!" he said, in a low, cynical tone, as though unconscious that he spoke aloud. "No more failures!"

Without an instant's pause, without a backward glance at the time that lay behind him, James Ward laid down the gift of life he had abused, and passed to the justice of eternity.

CHAPTER XVIII. THE DEBT PAID.

DECEMBER and January had come and gone, and twilight was falling upon a wet February day.

From Nora Warrener's drawing-room in the flat in Victoria Street daylight had nearly departed, and no lights had as yet been brought in. There was a blazing fire on the hearth, and the dancing flames seemed to defy the dreariness outside, routing it utterly at every point excepting only that at which the as yet uncurtained window expelled its flickering brightness and persistently asserted the greyness without.

"This little pig went to market, this little pig stayed at home, this little pig had roast beef, and this little pig had none."

A delighted baby laugh followed this statement; and the rapturous hug which concluded the performance was followed by the words, uttered in a rather weak little voice:

"We think there never was a game invented to compare with that, don't we, baby boy?"

The only occupants of the fire-lighted room were ensconced in one big arm-chair, and they were Nora and Monty's remarkable son and his godmother—Bertha.

"Again?" she said, as she perched the laughing child again on her knee. "Again, and again, and again, baby boy? Ah!" she broke off suddenly, as a knock came at the door. "Here's nurse," she added, as a woman's figure became visible in the light from the hall outside. "I'll bring him to you, nurse. He's been the best of boys."

She carried the child across the room, kissed him tenderly, and as she put him into his nurse's arms the round, fat hands were stretched out and clasped round her neck.

"You want to stay, my precious?" said Bertha. "It's bed-time. Good night, sweetheart."

She unclasped the little hands, and kissed them, and the next moment the nurse had disappeared with her charge, shutting the door as she went.

In the sudden cutting off of the light from the hall which this movement involved, the darkness of the room behind seemed deeper than it really was, and Bertha stood for a moment confused by it. The quiet, too, that fell upon it with the withdrawal of that restless baby voice and presence was noticeable by the force of sudden contrast. The fire had ceased to blaze, and the gloom of the window seemed to dominate everything in the room, as Bertha, getting accustomed to the darkness almost immediately, turned, and moving towards it, stood there looking down unseeingly at the wet pavements below.

Three months had passed since the night when Ralph Charteris and James Ward had gone down into that valley from which only one had returned, and for the first of those months Bertha herself had hovered on the border-line dividing life from death.

All through that night she had watched with Dr. Arnold by Ralph Charteris's bed, fighting a desperate battle with the poison which had so nearly done its work. One long hour had followed another, and still the issue had hung upon a thread, until at last, in the early morning hours, the balance slowly turned, and victory was won. As the first sign of returning life flickered over the white face, Bertha had quietly drawn away from the bed to stand in the shadow—waiting. She had waited until the tone of Dr. Arnold's voice as he addressed his patient for the first time told her that Ralph Charteris had recovered consciousness, and then she had passed softly out of the room to meet the news with which the whole hospital was ringing—the news that Dr. Ward had been found that morning dead in his room. The shock coming so suddenly upon the night she had passed through, the terrible climax of a terrible week, had told too heavily upon her. They had carried her out of the ward, her white face still and cold, no longer conscious of any pain or struggle, and, through the weeks that had followed, it had seemed more than doubtful whether any consciousness but the agonised consciousness of delirium would be hers again.

But her constitution was young and very strong, and she had struggled back to life—struggled back with that curious physical instinct with which mental volition seems to have so little to do, which carries a certain distance and then seems gradually to fail, leaving the victim no longer in danger of death indeed, but very far from full or vigorous life.

At some such stage Bertha had now arrived. During the first month of her convalescence she had progressed rapidly, and had quickly arrived at that point when all that was needed for her complete recovery was that she should gain "a little more strength." And for the last few weeks the smallest increase of that strength had persistently withheld itself; she grew no better.

Tired with even the slight exertion of carrying the baby across the room, she stood for a moment only at the window, and then turned away, and sank down into an arm-chair with an exhausted quiescence of movement which sat sadly on the little figure that had been so alert. It was very thin now, and the little face, refined away by illness, was pitiably small and white. She lay back against the cushions for a moment with her eyes closed. She always loved to have the baby with her, but the effort of playing with him was great, and she was tired. By-and-by, however, the great brown eyes slowly opened, and fixed themselves on the fire. Everything about her was very quiet, and she was quite alone. Her thoughts had gone back, as under such circumstances they always did, to the past.

It seemed to Bertha as though her life were over, that it lay behind her pressed into one week lived through in that private room attached to the Elizabeth ward. She never went beyond it in her thoughts. In the first moment of her return to consciousness, as her eyes opened upon Dr. Arnold's face, her lips had moved to ask one question, so feebly uttered as to be inaudible to every one but him, and he had answered, instantly:

"He is better."

Since then she had never spoken again of Charteris. It was enough for her to know of his recovery, and, knowing it, she never followed him in thought beyond that week from which the knowledge took all pain, leaving the spell untouched.

Of James Ward's death she never spoke, nor of the terrible discovery that had preceded it. The first shock had been deadened by her illness, and becoming gradually familiar with it as consciousness returned to her, she had given it the solemn acceptation due to so terrible a tragedy, and had dwelt on it not at all. She could sit alone, living in the past, as she was sitting in the firelight in Nora's drawing-room now, in a peace that was almost happiness. It was when she looked to the future that there stirred in her a restless movement as of intolerable pain. What did the future mean for her? She never asked herself the question consciously, but the answer would rise in her now and then and frighten her, although she would not look at it or listen to it. There was nothing before her—nothing, nothing! The centre figure in her mental life, the centre round which all her best and most elevating thoughts had risen during these years of her life had been Ralph Charteris and the wrong she had done him. Now unconsciously and involuntarily, with no reasoning or analysis on her part, that page of her life had become for her a page turned down. She had saved his life, she had paid her debt, the account was closed. Long years would roll themselves out one after another, and she would grow older and older, and all her life was behind her, nothing left of it but the constant restless longing which rose in her now whenever she tried to look before her and not behind her. She never analysed that strange new longing, she never thought at all what it might mean, she only knew that the brave little spirit that had carried her through so much failed her before it. And it must be faced. Again and again lately she had told herself that, too. She must take her courage in both hands and fight her way back to strength and active life, and all the dreary pain that waited for her there.

"Bertha! In the dark, dear? Oh, did I startle you?"

The door had opened suddenly, and Nora, coming quickly in, stopped suddenly on the threshold surprised at the darkness.

At the first sound Bertha had started so violently that a little cry escaped her, and as Nora finished in a tone of tender concern, she rose and came towards her into the light.

"It wasn't your fault, dear," she said, with what was a most pathetic imitation of her old bright manner. "If a person is so silly as to jump at nothing, it's the person's own fault."

"The person is very tired, I'm afraid," said Nora, looking anxiously at the pale little face.

"Very lazy, you mean," Bertha answered, with a playfulness that was inexpressibly sad in the thin, weak voice. "That's my complaint, Nora, and you'll have to keep me in better order. Here come the lamps. Now show me your purchases. No, I'm not going to lie down, I'm going to give up lying down."

There was something curiously unlike herself in the expression with which Nora watched her as they stood together in the lamp-light, something very tender, and strangely undecided. It softened the confident face and lighted the direct grey eyes all through the evening, as Bertha, still with that faint ghost of her old bright manner, held laughingly to her words while her face seemed to grow more weary with every half hour that passed, until at last, with a quaint little jibe, very feebly uttered, at herself and her "laziness," she let Nora take her to her room.

The "laziness" was more pronounced than ever, and Nora's face was very womanly in its sympathetic trouble as she came back to the drawing-room where Monty was sitting alone, and took up her needlework in silence.

The silence lasted for several moments, and then it was broken by Monty, who had been sitting apparently lost in thought.

"How is she, do you think?" he asked.

Nora lifted her face full of silent distress.

"She gets no better, Monty," she answered. "Not a bit better. Poor little Bertha!"

"You've never said anything to her, Nora?"

A pause had preceded the question. Monty was leaning back in his chair, gazing very thoughtfully before him, and there was about him an air of sympathetic reflection which sat oddly upon his young manhood as Nora answered, letting her work fall on her lap:

"I'm so afraid, Monty. It is so difficult to know what is right; and the wrong thing would be so dreadful. I'm so afraid of startling and upsetting her for nothing. It's dreadful not to know what to do!"

There was a ring of distress in her voice; but Monty did not speak again immediately; and she took up her work again with a sigh.

The dreadfulness of "not knowing what to do" had been weighing on Nora now ever since Bertha began to get better. On the first news of Bertha's illness—sent to Nora and Monty by the hospital authorities as the only friends of whom they knew—Nora had gone to her, and had hardly left her again during the first weeks of danger. She had arrived to find Bertha raving wildly in the delirium of fever, pleading incessantly, in a little, high-pitched, unnatural voice for "him" that he might get better; that he should not die; that he would forgive her, forgive her, forgive her—the last pathetic cry repeated over and over again. Then there would come a moment's silence, and a fresh train of thought would start in the overstrung brain. She would cry out passionately that he was killing him, that he was glad, that they must believe her, they must listen to her, or he would die.

Before twenty-four hours had passed, Nora knew who was the patient of whom she spoke, and gradually the outlines of the terrible tragedy, so nearly played out to the end, became clear to her, lighted by some incautious words let fall by the nurse. Nora had not ever known until then of James Ward's presence at the hospital; Bertha had avoided going to the flat in Victoria Street since his arrival, realising, without expressing the fact, that her contact with him was one of those strains endurable alone, but not endurable in sympathy.

And as Nora watched hour after hour beside that pitiful little figure, with its alternation of delirium and exhaustion, the whole story of the past six weeks became clear to her woman's perception. She knew what James Ward had known as he watched Bertha's face on that afternoon when Dr. Arnold had seen no hope for Ralph Charteris, and she saw in it the motive for his crime.

But in the hand to hand battle with the fever that was consuming Bertha's strength hour by hour, her actual physical life itself became the all-absorbing interest with Nora. As the crisis passed, and a weak, emaciated Bertha came back along the road to life, the slight advance which each day brought claimed Nora's thoughts to the exclusion of any mental consideration whatever. It was only when she awoke to the fact that Bertha, nearly well, was utterly out of her reach, that there was something about the wan face that made her hesitate whenever the idea of telling Bertha all she knew presented itself to her, that she realised the difficulty of the position. And the longer she waited, the less she could speak. After all, what was there that she could say?

She was asking herself the question now as she sat stitching mechanically in her drawing-room. She must do something! she had told herself so lately with growing frequency. She knew only too well what it was that stood between Bertha and complete recovery, and she must, she must do something! The question was what that something should be.

"Nora, Charteris is back again. I saw him to-day."

The words came from Monty in the same thoughtful tone. He had, of course, gone to his cousin in the hospital as soon as he knew of his presence there, and he had been down once or twice to Brighton to see him, when he was sent there by Dr. Arnold to recover completely.

"Is he quite well, Monty?"

"Quite well. Nora, he's going back to Australia next week."

Nora leant forward with a little cry:

"Monty!" she said, "oh, Monty!"

Then quite suddenly she rose, and coming towards him, stood with one hand resting lightly on the mantelpiece, erect and decided, looking down at him.

"Monty," she began, "you told him about Bertha?"

"You know I did, Nora, and—and an awkward business it was."

"What did he say?"

"Nothing," replied Monty, ruefully. "He—you've no idea what a quiet fellow he is!"

"You told him everything?"

"Everything; at least, I didn't say anything about the strychnine business, you know, Nora. I didn't see the use of raking that up."

There was a moment's silence, and then Nora said, abruptly, with a ring of intense determination in her voice:

"Monty, if he goes back to Australia and something isn't done, I shall just despise myself all my life. You're a man, dear, you see, and I think a man can't manage this. Tell me where Ralph Charteris is staying, and I shall write to him and ask him to come and see me."

If Monty's lips were parted to protest they closed again rather suddenly. A perplexing remembrance of something in the "quiet fellow's" manner of saying nothing, something in the "quiet fellow's" sad eyes which he was quite unable to define, caused the unuttered words to die upon his lips.

"What do you mean to say?" he enquired, tentatively.

"I don't know!" replied Nora, with surprising firmness.

Her firmness had become quite preternatural, perhaps to compensate for the haziness of her plan of campaign, when two days later, as she sat in the drawing-room evidently waiting for some one, the door was opened by the servant, and "Mr. Charteris" was announced.

Nora rose rather precipitately, and went forward to meet her visitor.

"I am very glad to see you," she said. "I hope you are quite strong again?"

"Thank you," returned Ralph Charteris, quietly, "I am quite strong again."

The four years that had passed since he left Bertha on the deck of the "Philistia" had greatly altered Ralph Charteris. With all the air of physical health, his face had a curiously worn appearance, and there was a look about the strong, well-cut features that spoke of a constant patient weariness. The hair about his temples was grey, and there were lines about the kind, steady eyes that made him look years older than his age.

With her heart beating furiously for all her calm decision of manner, Nora, no nearer than she had been before to any distinct plan of action, feeling only that the time had come, opened the conversation on the lines that were most natural under the circumstances, and that must also lead in the direction in which she meant to turn it.

"It seems strange, doesn't it, that we have not met before," she said, frankly, as they sat down. "I should have been to see you when you were ill, but—I was prevented."

The clear grey eyes were fixed full upon him as she spoke, watching keenly for any shade of expression that might guide her in the difficult task she had taken so bravely on herself. But there was not the faintest change in the grave face as Ralph Charteris answered:

"It was very kind of you to think of coming."

"Monty told you, I know, of our terrible anxiety?"

"Yes."

There was no alteration even then in the face into which she looked; but the absolute expressionlessness of the monosyllable with which he answered caught her alert perception in a moment. She was silent, hoping that he would think himself called upon to add something to his response; and after a moment's pause, he continued in the same expressionless tone: "I am very glad to know that — it is past."

A sudden resolution took possession of Nora, and nerved her for a bold stroke.

"Mr. Charteris," she said, "things go wrong so constantly that can't be helped, and one has to see them, and know there's nothing to be done, that when one sees a thing go wrong that could be helped it seems an awful thing to be afraid. I want to ask you a question that you'll think impertinent, I know. I don't mind that —I mean it can't be helped; but do, please, answer it. Have you forgiven Bertha?"

As she finished her speech, with its quaintly incongruous mixture of womanly feeling and youthful directness, she looked suddenly up at him. She saw the eyes, which had been fixed upon her as she spoke in growing surprise, change suddenly, and she felt, as she waited breathlessly for his answer, that he did not speak at once because he could not. At last he said, in a voice that was rather low and hoarse:

"I have never, since the first, felt that there was anything to forgive. The mistake—was mine."

"That is very generous."

"I love her."

The three words came from him in so low a tone that ears less desperately intent than Nora's could hardly have caught them; and then Ralph Charteris rose, and moving across the room, stood with his back towards her, struggling for the reserved self-control out of which he had been startled. There was a moment's dead silence, and then Nora's voice, very low and clear, broke it.

"There is something that I think you ought to know," she said; and then, without waiting for a word or sign from him she told him all the truth about his illness in the hospital, she told him how nearly he had met his death at James Ward's hands, and how he had been saved. And the story, as she finished it, pieced together from Bertha's delirious confession, from words let fall by the nurses, and from her own woman's instinct, was all alive with the unconscious womanly devotion of which it told, which it screened and sheltered even in the telling, to make it the more beautiful for that same screen.

Long before she finished Ralph Charteris had come up to her with a swift, abrupt movement.

"Why?" he said, hoarsely, "why? What does it all mean?"

"Find out," cried Nora, rapidly and incoherently. "Oh, if you love her as you say you do, ask her yourself. Don't you understand? Oh, don't you understand?"

She was all flushed and trembling with earnestness, and every line of her grave, sad face had broken up and changed as if under the influence of some tremendous feeling.

"What do you mean?" he said, harshly. "That—that isn't possible! She never did—she never——"

"She does," interrupted Nora. "I don't know when or how, but it is true. Oh, wait—wait here!"

And before Charteris had grasped her purpose she had left the room.

He stood for a moment where she had left him, his breath coming quick and fast, white to the very lips. Then he turned mechanically, and, walking to the

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fireplace, stood there looking down into the flames.

"It's a mistake!" he muttered; "a mistake. I'll go. What's that!" He turned sharply as a light touch fell upon the handle of the door, and as he turned it opened, and he found himself face to face with Bertha.

Without a sound of any sort or kind, she stopped in the doorway as though the face that met her eyes had turned her into stone. All her life seemed to be concentrated in the large startled eyes, and as the man before her saw the expression that leapt up in them, he, too, found the truth. They stood so, for a moment, gazing into one another's face, and then Bertha moved—whiter than she had been as she stood there in the doorway it was impossible that she should become, but her face grew curiously rigid as if with the force of the iron self-control in which she held herself, and she turned to go away, but Ralph Charteris stopped her.

"Bertha," he said, hoarsely; "Bertha, won't you speak to me?"

With her hand still on the latch of the door, she turned and looked at him, and over her little white face there crept a pitiful humiliation and a mute appeal. Then she came slowly back into the room.

"Have you forgiven me?" she said.

Ralph Charteris took two swift steps across the room, and standing close to the little trembling figure, he said, in a low, uneven voice:

"If there could be any question of forgiveness in my mind from me to you that must have been settled for ever when you saved my life. Bertha, there never has been, for I love you, dear. If my love is anything to you, if you care to have it, it is yours, and I am yours, now as I have always been since I asked you first to be my wife. If not—don't mind, dear."

Then, as she looked into the good, grey eyes before her, to Bertha, last of all, came the knowledge of the truth—the truth of which, until that moment, she had had no suspicion. She had asked her heart no questions; all its pain had been to her part of the old pain of remorse, in which the thought of the man who stood before her now had taken root, until it filled her life. In her first keen realisation of the wrong she had done, and the suffering she had inflicted so recklessly, there had been no touch of any other feeling for the sufferer than pity and self-reproach. Out of her pain and bitter repentance, out of the passionate sense of pity and protection with which his helplessness and danger had filled her, had grown, slowly and silently, in all unconsciousness, the one treasure that could pay her debt. She knew the truth at last. She knew that she loved Ralph Charteris.

She did not move or turn away her eyes; she simply looked at him, and as she looked, the little, set face softened and trembled, the white lips parted, and the brown eyes grew deep and dark as they had never been before. She did not speak; but Ralph Charteris suddenly stretched out his hands, and drew her into his arms.

"Bertha!" he said, "Bertha! is it possible?"

There was a moment of silence—a moment in which for Ralph Charteris time itself seemed to stand still; and there, with her shining eyes still fixed on his, she said one word:

"Yes!"

Gravely and quietly, as if his great and overwhelming joy had passed beyond the bounds where any demonstration can avail, he bent his head towards her upturned face, and in that first long kiss the debt was paid.

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CALENDAR FOR 1892.

DR. ZAMIEN AND HIS WARD.

PART I.

ON BOARD THE "STAR OF THE NIGHT."

CHAPTER I. DR. ZAMIEN'S GUEST.

THE afternoon was hot and sultry, with hardly a breath stirring, but with thunder muttering in the distance, as I sat in the coffee-room of one of the chief hotels at Weymouth, awaiting the arrival of the London train. By that train I expected the arrival of a friend, who had promised to join me in a cruise along the coast in my little yawl, the "Priscilla," which was lying at anchor in the roadstead. She is a smart little boat, and if you don't like her designation, I can only say that she had been a gift from my aunt Priscilla, whose name will have a pleasant sound to all who are acquainted with her.

The only other occupant of the coffee-room is a small, lissom, dark-featured man, who is called Jansen. From his name you would say—a Dutchman. But he looks more like a Chinaman, with his yellow skin, and obliquely set eyes. Jansen has made some overtures towards acquaintance, and, finding that I am from Cornwall, he has been asking me about affairs in my neighbourhood, of which he seems to have some knowledge, but not of a recent character. For instance, he has been asking me about the Mervyns—people only known to me by name, as they left the country long years ago. Also he seems to have some knowledge of my own relatives, as he mentioned the Pensilions—"fine, spirited girls."

And such a description might have applied to my two aunts fifteen or twenty years ago. Yet they are still charming, attractive women, and it has always puzzled me why they were permitted to remain single. But then one recalled their fondness for each other, and for their sweet old home, a place not far from Boscastle, on the Cornish coast, and called Fairview.

"A telegram for Mr. Bertram," said the head waiter, coming in at this moment. Exactly! As I expected, that wretched Bompas, the friend who should have shared my cruise, is detained at his office "by unforeseen European complications."

Mr. Jansen watched my dissatisfied visage and heard my muttered explosions of wrath. But he did not for many moments neglect to sweep the sea horizon with the powerful binoculars which he carried; they were better glasses than I could obtain for love or money. The man's interest in me annoyed me; I felt sure that in another moment he would offer to replace my missing friend, and that I should not have the moral courage to refuse his offer; for the man fascinated while he repelled me. So I rose and sauntered out of the room and down to the esplanade, where I hailed a boatman on the beach and bade him take me out to my little craft.

After all, I had no particular object in coming on board, except to get out of the way of that Mr. Jansen. The boat was anchored well out in the bay, in about six fathoms of water, and rather too much in the fairway to please me. As soon as the tide turned I would run her into the harbour and lay her up, for a cruise all alone would be dreary enough, and I could not think of any one to replace Bompas. In the meantime, with a book in my pocket and a pipe, I meditated reading and smoking; but instead I fell asleep.

When I awoke it was dark and chilly, not with the approach of night, but with the advance of a dense sea-fog, which had come up with the breeze and the tide. Surrounded by the fog, the position was critical, if not dangerous. I heard a fog-horn sounding and ships' bells being rung, and here had I been snoozing comfortably in the way of it all. Suddenly the air grew darker still, in a sort of deathly shade,

Like the hurricane eclipse
. . . Of the sun.

And this was caused by the huge sails of a large schooner yacht that was bearing down upon me, close-hauled, but racing through the water, that seemed to rush past her on either side like a whirlpool. Her stem, sharp and cruel, towered above my head, and the whole gave me the momentary impression of some huge bird of prey that was pouncing upon me; and yet she seemed no more substantial than the surrounding mist. But next moment she proved that she was no phantom ship. There was a cry or hail from the schooner, a sharp command to put down the helm; but it was too late, for down went the yawl, struck by the counter of the yacht, and down went I, something striking my head at the moment, which knocked the senses out of me.

Coming to myself, the feeling was of one entranced in a tomb, when the touch of a hand sent a thrill of life through my veins, and gave me power to open my eyes. "He will live," said a voice, with a soft but joyful intonation. "See, he awakes." And with that I did awake, yet not knowing where I was, or who or what had happened to me. But there was the form of a beautiful girl bending over me, her soft, dark eyes looking down into mine. "Had I lain for a century dead," as the poet has it, that glance must have wakened me to life. Then the lovely form disappeared, and I seemed to sink again into night, when a soft hand placed a cup to my lips and I was made to drink. The drink must have been an opiate, for I fell into a sleep that was deep and dreamless, and awoke with the perfect possession of my faculties.

The morning sun was shining in upon me through the port-hole of a cabin, and that cabin luxuriously but plainly furnished—everything within it being of the same hue, a neutral-tinted grey, with the suspicion of green about it, and the only ornament a silver star, with which, as if a crest, every article of the elaborate toilette apparatus was adorned. Somebody must have been watching me, for as soon as I raised myself on my elbow, and looked wonderingly about me, the door softly opened and a negro boy glided noiselessly in, surveyed me with a scrutinising glance, saluted, and retired. Next moment the door opened again with something more of state, and the boy announced in low and awestruck voice:

"Dr. Zamien."

And Dr. Zamien was a person whom, having once seen, you would not forget in a hurry! But he too seemed to partake of the general leaden hue of everything about his yacht. His face was sallow, but with a strange luminosity about it, so that, seen among other faces, it attracted attention. The features were chiselled, and of classic regularity, the eyes dark and full, the frame strong and well knit, but of moderate stature. The Doctor, without a word, took a seat by my bedside, examined me attentively, asked a few brief questions in excellent English—yet although his accent and intonation were perfect, he did not give me the impression that this was his native tongue. Then his manner changed to one of pleasant courtesy, as he alluded to the accident which had made me his guest.

"Repose is all you require," said the Doctor. "You can have it here. No one shall disturb you; but when you feel well enough to join our party, we shall be delighted."

And I, too, would be delighted, if the party comprehended the being who had been the ministering angel of my vision. But I was unprovided with anything but what I was wearing at the time—not even a complete suit of flannels, for sundry et ceteras had no doubt gone to the bottom with the boat. The Doctor, divining my embarrassment, said that he hoped that everything of mine had been recovered. He had an experienced diver on board, who had done his best. The boat, too, had been picked up, and the ship's carpenter was at work repairing the slight damage it had received. The schooner had anchored immediately after the accident, and the fog lifting, the Doctor had sent ashore for my baggage. A letter found in my pocket had supplied my name and address.

"But you are no unexpected guest," added the Doctor, gaily. "There were not wanting signs and wonders announcing your advent. Madame Valerien detected an arrival in her teacup, and Constance——" Here the Doctor paused. Ah, was that she, indeed—my heart gave a throb at the name—and what presage had occurred to her? But the Doctor passed on without specifying it further. "And Captain Riaz," he went on, "who consults the cards every night, distinctly foretold a tall, fair, and handsome youth to join our crew. And as for me," continued the Doctor, more gravely, "I had just expressed a wish. 'We are on a voyage of discovery,' I said, 'on the coast of an unknown country. Oh that we might capture some chieftain of the land, and compel him to act as our pilot and conductor, and to show us all the beauties of the sea and shore.'"

Well, I owned that I might be of some service in this respect, and everything urged me to accept the Doctor's gracefully offered hospitality.

Dr. Zamien took it all as a matter of course. Hours, he said, were optional on board, but the general meals were eleven o'clock breakfast, and seven or eight dinner.

When the Doctor left, a smart-looking negro boy in striped cotton garments presented himself, and without more ado began to unpack my things and lay them out.

"Me your boy now, sar," he said, showing all his white teeth in an amiable grin.

Having passed all my garments under review, he chose a pair of white ducks and a blue coat and waistcoat adorned with club buttons, as the morning's garments; and having endued me in these, and generally made me presentable, he surveyed his work with another gratified grin.

"Berry hansom now," he said. "Bell rung for breakfast; me show the way."

The way led into a small but daintily furnished saloon, charmingly adorned with exotic plants, and in the middle a table set with a service of silver and rich Oriental china, all marked with the same device of a star of seven points.

Dr. Zamien was already in his place at the head of the table, scanning the London papers, which had just been brought aboard. Opposite to him sat a dark, handsome, bronzed fellow whom he introduced to me as Captain Riaz. The Captain gave me a friendly grip of the hand, first, it seemed to me, consulting the Doctor's eye, like a mastiff who asks of his master, in mute fashion, whether a stranger is to be treated as friend or foe.

In another moment appeared a pretty little woman, perfectly dressed, followed by a tall, slender girl with a soft olive complexion, whom I at once recognised as the original of my feverish vision of the previous night.

"Madame Valerien," said the Doctor, turning to the elder lady, "permit me to make known to you Mr. Bertram. Constance, here is your patient—'bien portant,' as you see, rosy and fresh, and as little like a drowned man as can be imagined."

The meal proceeded, elegantly served by two or three dark-skinned attendants, with the daintiest dishes, and what seemed to be the choicest wines. Yet the time passed gaily enough. Madame Valerien was full of badinage, the Doctor responded in the most light-hearted way, and for me it was sufficient to drink in the light of the beautiful liquid eyes that were every now and then turned softly upon me.

And then we heard that the Customs launch was alongside, demanding some formalities; and the Doctor, who disliked interrogations of any kind, it seemed, hastened on deck to confront the officials. They had been civil enough to bring out a letter which had just arrived for me; it was under cover of one of the hotel envelopes, addressed in a handwriting that was possibly Jansen's. In addition to the enclosure, which was only a letter from Aunt Judith, was a slip of paper containing the words: "A friendly warning. You are on board an ill-fated ship. Get away while you can."

CHAPTER II. OFF PORTLAND ISLE.

The friendly warning—of which I doubted the friendliness—did inspire me with a little uneasiness. Especially when I saw the "Priscilla" hauled on deck and enclosed in a canvas cover with other boats on the main deck, while davits were hauled inboard, gangways stowed away, and everything made snug for sea. But although there might be something enigmatic about the Doctor's character, yet it attracted as much as that of Jansen repelled; and as for Constance, I would stake my life on her being all that was most sweet and estimable.

The yacht was standing out for sea and making fair progress almost in the teeth of the wind, which had freshened a good deal. The lofty but regular outline of the Isle of Portland was to windward of us, and in some of our boards we stood close inshore—so close that we could see bands of convicts, in their hideous yellow coverings, at work in serried lines at the quarries.

The weather was getting thick and drizzly, and not being wanted on deck, I made my way to the saloon; and there I found Constance alone, reading and snugly posed in a fauteuil, a lamp over her head throwing a radiant light upon her book and on her dark chestnut locks. Her slight and graceful figure, the charming curves of her neck, the face of a clear olive complexion with features of classic beauty, the dark and lustrous eyes, surcharged with sensibility and emotion. Here was the being of my vague longings and desires, whom I recognised at once as my fate; and there seemed to be a strong and subtle attraction on either side, which drew us together rather as long-sundered friends than as the almost strangers that conventionally we were.

Constance laid aside her book, and we began to talk, intermittently at first, with the tremor of the early impulses of passion — we had too much to say for fluent everyday talk. What concerned us most were our own immediate impressions and sensations. That the touch of her hand had given the first thrill of life to my frame, it delighted her to hear, and she was innocently curious as to the impressions I had received during this half-conscious state; and then we went on to talk of our previous lives, always with the tacit understanding that our first meeting had formed an era from which all the future would date.

First I had to tell the story of my life, although in truth, like the traditional knife-grinder, I had no story to tell that was worthy of the name. But such as it was, it seemed full of interest for Constance. First, as to my mother, who was one of three sisters, daughters of a tough old sea-dog, Admiral Pensilion, and how she fell in love and eloped with a poor engineer officer, one Lieutenant Bertram, to the great indignation of her father, who at once altered his will, and left all that he had the disposal of to his other daughters, and made these dispositions irrévocable by dying soon after. Yet the two elder sisters were good and loyal, and would have shared everything with my mother, but that she died shortly after her father, leaving me to the care of Aunt Judith and Aunt Priscilla.

If anything, these excellent women had been too careful of me. When I was fourteen they broke up their home at Fairview for a time, and went to live at Exeter, in order that I might attend the grammar school there. And when it became a question of sending me to the University, they would have gone to Oxford without demur, only they found that maiden aunts were not allowed in residence at any of the colleges. I was very glad not to go, for that matter, for I had no penchant for studies at all, except it were in natural science.

And so we all went back to Fairview with huge delight, and I set up a laboratory there, and a workshop, and made myself very busy at times. But more than anything else I loved the freedom of the sea, and adventurous voyages here and there in my own little craft. But I had not things quite my own way, I explained. I was managed by a committee or council of three, who sat upon me on every important occasion of my *life*. My two aunts formed part of the quorum, of course, and the third was Squire Bompas, generally known as Justice Bompas, on account of his being such an active and exemplary magistrate.

Constance laughed merrily as I described the solemn procedure of this high court. "But," she said, suddenly becoming grave, "you have a very happy lot. But with me everything is vague and uncertain. I am subject to the authority of one"—here she broke off abruptly, and added, after a moment's pause—"who is everything that is kind and good. But Madame Valerien calls me. Adieu, monsieur!"

CHAPTER III. ON THE DORSET COAST.

THERE is nothing very interesting about this Dorset coast, where a long breakwater of shingle, known as the Chesil bank, stretches for many miles, with a kind of lagoon behind it and a low coast-line, with a range of downs rising against the sky-line, and here and there a nearer hill crowned with some ancient tumulus or entrenchment. The Doctor seemed to be making a conscientious survey of the coast, for nothing escaped his observation, and he was especially on the alert for anything that bore the name of castle or tower; and finding on the map a certain Abbotsbury Castle, he made us all go on shore. But after a long walk and a climb up a steep hill, we found only immense earthworks, very imposing, and affording a striking view of sea and shore, but evidently not what the Doctor was looking for. Whatever might be the object of his search, it was evident that his ward had something to do with the matter. At every new point of view he would turn anxiously to Constance.

"Does the sight of all this excite any associations in your mind?" he would ask.

But Constance would shake her head.

"It is all very pleasant, and I think I have seen something like it before."

"Where?" cried the Doctor, eagerly.

"Oh, the Buttes Montmartre," said Constance.

"Bah!" said the Doctor, contemptuously. "You little Parisian cockney!"

We were all tired enough when we got back to the ship, and Madame Valerien at once retired to take her customary siesta. And while the yacht was gently gliding across the bay, with a beautiful panorama around of the bright sea sprinkled with sails and the distant hills tinged with a solemn evening radiance, Constance and I enjoyed on deck a delicious half-hour of mutual confidence and happy talk.

"I don't know," said Constance, lowering her voice, "why my guardian attaches such importance to my early recollections. They are, after all, but very vague and confused. It must have been in England that my first childhood was spent; but my strongest impressions are of a father whose figure I vaguely recall, and a home which was somewhere within view of the sea. Everything else about me is recent—of yesterday. For I hardly count the long years I spent at the convent of the good sisters in Paris. One long, tranquil, peaceful day succeeded another with intervals of tranquil sleep, and that was all. Yet I was happy, with a happiness that left no sting behind it. But at seventeen years old—on my fête day—the little festival the sisters had arranged was half spoilt by the rain, and thunder rolled through the air; when there was a loud knocking at the convent door, and the lay sister, who was portress, announced with awe and alarm that a calèche and four horses all covered with mud had drawn up before the door of the convent, and that a strange and awful-looking man had entered the lodge and demanded to see the mother superior. It was my guardian, as it turned out, who had not been heard of for ten years or more, except through his bankers. That very day I was to take my place in his household. He had provided a suitable companion and chaperon, Madame Valerien, who is the widow of some eminent professor. It was a terrible trial to be launched suddenly into the world, leaving behind all my former friends. And we have been travelling since, to Rome, to Venice, to Naples, and then we were suddenly hurried off to Havre, where we found this vessel waiting for us, and we had not been cruising many days when we picked up out of the sea—you."

This last word was accompanied by a soft yet doubtful glance in my direction, as if the speaker had not quite made up her mind whether the event were propitious or the reverse.

"And your guardian," I asked, "is he good to you? Do you love him as a daughter?"

"Hush!" said Constance, sinking her voice to a whisper, "he will hear. But why should I be afraid to speak? Yes, he is always good to me. He is even too lavish in gratifying all my whims. Yet he inspires awe—veneration rather than love. But I dread his displeasure more than anything in the world, and I should never dare to disobey him."

Just then the warning bell rang for dinner, and Constance hurried away, while Nero, the negro boy, came to look me up and array me for the solemn function; for on calm and propitious evenings like this, the Doctor liked to dine in state.

In the stillness and beauty of the night the crew, gathering into little groups, began to sing and dance upon the forward deck to the monotonous tum-tum of an Indian drum, or the more musical accompaniment of some tinkling guitar or banjo. A mixed lot they were—negroes ebon black, with white, shining teeth, Lascars, Malays, an Italian or two, and a Scotchman.

"Oh, they are a fair crew enough," said Riaz, replying to my looks rather than to any spoken words; "good workers and good fighters at a pinch, and that is what we want, for our cruises are not always in quiet waters. But there is one I rather mistrust. The quietest, best behaved of the lot, but there is a lurking devil in his eye that, as one used to these fellows, I don't like. His comrades call him Shiney; there he is coiling a rope; the fellow never takes his ease like the rest."

I followed the man with my eyes; he certainly seemed one of the steadiest of the crew, and not unlike Jansen in the face, although of a much more powerful frame.

Before long the music had ceased, the watch was changed, and the "Star of the Night" glided softly and silently over the sea. Dr. Zamien had come on deck and seated himself by my side. He listened complacently as I led the conversation to his ward. How sweet she seemed to me, how loveable, and what happiness to win the affection of so fair a creature!

"There are secret affinities," said the Doctor, after musing in silence for a while, "in thinking organisations, which resemble those familiar to us in chemistry when two elements, entangled perhaps in mechanical alliance with alien bodies, suddenly obey the inevitable laws of their being and combine in one harmonious substance. Such is the true union of souls. But it is not to be obtained without probation, trial, perhaps suffering. Are you content to undergo this ordeal? It is not merely to ask and to have. There are conditions attached which may displease you. If so, it is best to withdraw at once."

No conditions would be too onerous, I replied, which were consistent with integrity and honour.

The Doctor frowned. "I do not like these limitations," he said, "which imply a mistrust of one who is entitled to demand thorough confidence and obedience. I have confidence in you because I can read your nature. You have been brought up by pure and delicate women; you are not unfit to share the thoughts of a pure, unsullied nature. But before going further, t is fit that you should know the history of my ward, which involves certain episodes n my own life."

The Doctor lit a big cigar, which seemed to imply a long story. He smoked and spoke deliberately, and puffs of smoke did duty as commas and full stops.

CHAPTER IV. THE CIRCLE OF ZOROASTER.

In the semi-darkness of the clear and starlit night, Dr. Zamien's face shone out with strange luminosity, which seemed to cast a faint glow on the white rings of cigar smoke which circled above his head. His narrative began with an allusion to his own early days. His father, he said, resided, at the time of his birth, at the court of the Maharajah of Jupore, a tributary state, whose frontiers bordered on the mountains of Thibet. Here the elder Zamien exercised the functions of physician, astrologer, alchemist, a man of vast natural gifts, and of the profoundest knowledge. The Doctor himself, when of sufficient age, had been sent to Europe to study chemistry and physics under the most eminent professors in Paris, London, and Berlin.

During his residence in Europe the Doctor had been initiated into a society of a secret and mysterious nature, of which he would say no more than that it was called the Circle of Zoroaster, and that it possessed the secret and ancient lore of the brotherhood of the Rosicrucians. And to his surprise he found, on his return to India, that his father had long been one of the initiated, and that the fraternity had spread among the Parsees, and that circles had also been formed among the more enlightened of the Brahmans, as well as of the higher castes in general.

Suddenly a palace revolution was effected, the Maharajah deposed and imprisoned, perishing shortly after from the ill-treatment to which he had been subjected. The revolution was highly popular with the inhabitants, who showed their zeal for the new order of things by burning down the laboratory and the bungalows of the Frankish doctors, and killing the venerable Zamien, while his son, who was absent at the time, barely escaped with his life, and took refuge among the hills.

Driven into the wilds of Thibet, Zamien might have perished of hunger and exposure but for the accidental meeting with a Lama, or priest, who proved to be one of the initiated, and, thanks to the aid of faithful brothers, he passed safely through the terrible defiles and gorges of the great mountain ranges and reached the frontier of China proper.

"But in crossing," said the Doctor, who here takes up the narrative, "one of the highest of the mountain passes, where eternal snows rested among the outcrop of the blackest and most desolate rocks, the barking of the dogs of the Mongol caravan attracted attention to a sad and mournful sight. Two 'foreign devils,' as they were called by even the most polite of the Mongols, deserted by their guides and attendants, who had plundered them of everything, had been left to perish in this horrid waste. One was an elderly man with grizzled hair and beard, who had the first succumbed to want and cold. The second was still alive when we found him, but beyond the reach of any human aid to restore. A powerful stimulant and cordial that I administered revived him for the moment, and ere his dying eyes closed in their last sleep I had recognised and returned the sign of brotherhood. He, too, was one of the Illuminati.

"I bent my head to his lips, but could only distinguish 'Daughter—Constance'; but he pressed my hand, and I returned the pressure, accepting such as in the nature of a trust established between us. Then, as if strengthened and impelled to one last effort of the will, he whispered with his dying breath: 'Beneath the Tower.'"

So completely had these poor unfortunate travellers been robbed and stripped, that their very clothes had been taken away, and only some tattered, worthless rags left behind. Papers and valuables, whatever they might have possessed, had been ruthlessly carried off by the wretches who had led them into this terrible place. Zamien, however, had no time or means to follow up these villains. Already he had incurred some suspicion by his attentions to the dying Englishman, whom the others would have left to his fate as one accursed. Zamien carried away with him an old leather wallet, which the younger man had worn round his neck, containing some freshly dug roots and some specimens of plants recently collected; and on turning out its contents later on, Zamien discovered a scrap of paper, evidently torn from a letter, with writing in an unformed, childish hand, between two ruled lines, bearing an address, "Rue de Poisson Vert, Paris," and the words, "Cher Papa." Zamien had plenty to think of in securing his own safety, and had many hair-breadth escapes ere he succeeded in reaching one of the Treaty ports and taking ship for Europe.

He lost no time when he reached Paris, in finding out the Rue de Poisson Vert. And there, sure enough, was a young pensionnaire, Miss Constance Graham, aged five years and a half, whose father was travelling in foreign parts. Asked where was her former home? She had the vague notions of geography not inexcusable in five years and a half. It was by a train, a steamboat, and by other "voitures" that she had arrived "chez les sœurs." As for countries, nations, and their divisions, she knew nothing of them, except as places on the maps. Her schoolfellows called her "la petite Anglaise," but as for any notion of what province, race, or country she belonged to, she had never thought of the matter, and could not tell. She had lived "chez mon père," she said with dignity, and that was enough. But she had a vivid recollection of some of the features of her old home—the great waters where the sun sank to rest in a bed of purple and gold; and where sometimes great waves came dashing in mountains of foam towards her; and the garden where there was a little river, and where she used to hide behind the great fronds of the ferns.

"All things considered," said the Doctor, "the conclusion is suggested that Constance's former home was somewhere in the west of England."

But no further information transpired, and everything regarding her origin and connections remained a mystery. It was evident that her father had wished to establish her where no enquiries from her former home might reach her. And Zamien had at that time interests which he deemed more important to consider. Time passed on, and he formed no other ties, so began to value his position as guardian of Constance. He had realised abundant wealth; he could endow his ward with a fortune suitable to the future of a girl well born and well educated. And thus he had no interest to serve in making researches into the past. But circumstances had recently occurred which seemed to necessitate an exhaustive effort to discover the secret of the girl's origin. And this was the actual object of the present cruise.

The Doctor's conditions did not seem to me hard — I must serve him as pupil and neophyte for a year and a day—keeping all his secrets, obeying all his commands. At the end of that period, having earnestly striven to make myself worthy—if, in a word, I had remained faithful to my vows of initiation—then I might marry Constance if we were still both of a mind.

My assent to this was a foregone conclusion. I repeated the solemn formula which the Doctor dictated to me, and thus became a postulant for admission to a body of whose aims and methods I knew nothing. To me the object, however, was evident enough. It meant Constance—and hurried away by the strength of my passion, I left other consequences to take care of themselves.

CHAPTER V. IN LYME BAY.

A LOVELY summer morning dawned as the "Star of the Night" lay quietly at anchor off the Cobb at Lyme. Everybody knows the Cobb, which was originally a natural breakwater formed by the set of tides and currents, but now a bulwark of strong masonry, behind which the naval forces of Lyme Regis rest, secured from the tempest. Lyme itself has not much changed since the days of the great French war, when Jane Austen visits the place and sketches it with her quiet, feminine touch. "The principal street almost hurrying into the water, the walk to the Cobb skirting round the pleasant little bay, the Cobb itself . . . with the beautiful line of cliffs to the east. The scenes in the neighbourhood, Charmouth with its high grounds and extensive sweeps of country, and still more its sweet retired bay, backed by dark cliffs, where fragments of low rock among the sands make it the happiest spot for watching the flow of the tide . . . the woody varieties of the cheerful village of up Lyme, and above all Pinny, with its green chasms between romantic rocks." Since then, by the way, Pinny has almost effaced itself by sliding bodily into the sea.

Our next point was Branscombe, a pleasant, straggling village, among streams and hills, with the sea below opening from a quiet little bay. Here the Doctor found a population of lace-makers, and purchased as many specimens as he could find ready for sale, for most of the lace-workers were under contract to dealers at Honiton and elsewhere. And he left orders for more, and generally made a stir in the village, and especially when he began to prescribe for some poor bed-ridden people who had sunk into the state of chronic invalids, whom he cheered with his hopeful words, and bright, energetic manner; while to some he promised speedy cure if they would follow implicitly his directions; and with most he left medicines and money too, so that they might get the nourishment he prescribed. There had been no such stir and awakening in the village probably since its first settlement by the ancient Britons, and people attended the Doctor down to the beach in a wondering crowd, and cottagers brought their sick to their doors so that he might look upon them as he passed.

Altogether it was rather a relief to find that the Doctor confined his healing manifestations to obscure people and obscure places. At Sidmouth, where we landed next, among the genteel and conventional frequenters of a popular watering-place the Doctor was only remarked as that "distinguished" or strange-looking man. Here, indeed, the ladies of the party attracted more attention, and many were the admiring glances that were forwarded to their address by the men who were staying in the place.

While we were enquiring for some vehicle to take us to Budleigh Salterton, a lovely village, which everybody visits, I saw by the Doctor's awakened glance, which resembles that of a lion when looking out for his prey, that he recognised a face among the people. Turning round, I saw Mr. Jansen, who appeared to be scrutinising our party with watchful attention. He waved me a careless salute, but we took no further notice of each other, and we started on our drive, which proved to be a very pleasant one, over a rather wild and rugged country, intersected here and there by valleys rich in woods and meadows, with glimpses of a bright blue sea beyond.

By general consent we extended our visit to Sidmouth for several days. There was a strange kind of natural arch to be visited from the sea, and we made a short excursion by rail to Ottery Saint Mary, with views of the fair vale of the River Otter on either hand. And when we had seen the fine old church and the school-house—or perhaps it is the parsonage—reputed to be the birthplace of the poet Coleridge, we picnicked pleasantly in a shady nook by the river, and awaited the cool shades of evening for our return.

Captain Riaz was pleased to see us all on board again. He had experienced many uneasy moments while we were ashore, and a warning cone had just been hoisted along the coast presaging gales from south or south-east. He proposed, therefore, to run for Exmouth, where there was a good harbour, and where we might lie in safety till the threatening weather had cleared.

It came on to blow in the night, but by that time we were anchored off Exmouth. The sea was rising, and the yacht rolled and pitched a good deal during the night; and at daybreak, as the tide was full, the Captain signalled to a tug, which towed us safely into harbour. Madame Valerien's joy was great when she rose and found the yacht safely moored alongside a quay, and a bright and gay little town at her elbow, thronged with nice people, among whom toilettes had their value, with smart shops and all the resources of civilisation.

On shore, the wind, blusterous and fresh, was pleasant enough with the sight of the white horses, in the way of foaming surge, racing in towards the beach. Captain Riaz came on shore with us, and the Doctor proposed a walk up to the Beacon, which is a hill terraced with houses almost to the summit, and commanding at different points a fine panoramic view—the coast stretching on either hand, with cliffs and romantic combes, and Torquay in the distance, its roofs glittering in the sunshine. On a bench near the summit we came upon Mr. Jansen again, who was surveying the scene through his binoculars. Again he waved a courteous salute, and we passed on.

"I don't like the look of that fellow," said Riaz, when we were out of earshot. "He rowed round the yacht when you were all ashore. There were several people with him, and they asked to come on board, but I refused, without your sanction, Doctor. But I thought I detected signs passing between this man and the Chinese Lascar, Shiney, whom I always thought to be a cut-throat dog."

"We shall see," said the Doctor, thoughtfully. "It may be that the dangers of which I am warned lie in that direction. But this man is a friend of Bertram's," turning his eyes upon me in a searching way.

I hastened to explain that my acquaintance with him was only casual; that he had some knowledge of the people and neighbourhood around our place; but that I could not remember having ever seen him till we met at Weymouth.

"All this," said the Doctor, when we were alone together, "shows the danger we are in from having still to search, while, perhaps, the opposing power is working against us in full knowledge. I begin to doubt whether we shall ever attain a result from the unaided memory of my ward. To-night I shall try an experiment in which you and she are concerned. Keep your thoughts clear, and your mind in a state of repose, and we will see if our united intelligence be not sufficiently strong to penetrate the mist that surrounds us."

When we met just before dinner, I found that Constance had received a similar warning from the Doctor.

"Oh yes, I feel horribly frightened," she said. "Is it not what the 'Mère Supérieure' used to call sorcery, and solemnly warn us against? But I feel that what I share with you cannot be really wrong."

I told the dear girl that I hoped she would come to share everything with me in the future. Ah, if I could only obtain her guardian's consent to shorten the period of probation!

"Oh, do not ask him!" cried Constance. "His anger is terrible when his will is questioned; but no one is so kind when he has everything his own way."

CHAPTER VI. THE MAGIC MIRROR.

THE evening had come on wet as well as windy, and Madame Valerien had suggested the advantages of spending the night ashore. But the early tide next morning put this out of the question, and we were glad to get on board early, out of sight of sloppy, deserted pavements, and out of hearing of the noises of a river and dockside neighbourhood. The Doctor and Madame Valerien played écarté. Constance sat reading in one corner, and I in another, now and then exchanging vaguely questioning glances.

Soon after eleven Madame Valerien retired for the night, and presently we heard the Doctor's sonorous voice from the adjoining cabin: "Enter, my children."

About this after-saloon there generally hung a perfume of tobacco, with a faint tinge of the scent of fragrant woods, for the fittings were mostly of cedar, with elaborately carved panels of sandal-wood. To-night there was a prevailing odour of frankincense, such as to a sensitive brain slightly stimulates the imaginative faculties. The ports were shuttered, the curtains drawn, and in the centre was a small round table, with carved supports of dark oak, with two chairs placed opposite each other on either side.

"Seat yourselves," said the Doctor, pointing out these chairs. "You, Bertram, are permitted to think of anything you please; but for you, Constance, I ask you to concentrate your thoughts upon such scenes as you remember of your early life, and the home you lived in before you were taken to the 'sisters.'"

"Well, there is nothing terrifying in that," whispered Constance, with a nod in my direction, as the Doctor disappeared for a moment. He returned with a silver mirror, or such it appeared, curiously framed in ebony, and this he placed on the table between us.

"And now," he said, "each take the other's hands lightly, without pressure, and direct your gaze, both of you, into the mirror."

Obeying the Doctor's instructions, without making any difficulties, we found ourselves looking at each other, although with faces reversed; yet my eyes were at once and involuntarily riveted upon the eyes in the mirror, and as the hands of Constance trembled in mine, I fancied that the same strong, indefinite tension of the nerves was felt by her also.

The lights were arranged so as to illuminate our faces, while the rest of the space was in semi-darkness. The strain of the gaze which I could not withdraw soon became positive pain. Constance felt the same, I knew, and I would have broken away, but remained there, fascinated. Then there was a sudden flash of light, and the scene before me melted away, and instead I was conscious of entirely fresh surroundings. Yet I could hear the Doctor's resonant voice, but sounding as if it were miles away.

"What do you see?" asked the voice; and thus adjured I felt compelled to realise what I saw, though at the cost of a most painful effort.

"I see a confused jumble of things, like the pictures in a fairy tale—all mixed up together. The people are big giants, in fact, for they stoop down to talk with this little being. There are a number of terraces, some with white balustrades, and people are mounting from one to the other; and at the top is a tower—a high tower, for I can hardly see its summit."

"Ah, I thought we should come to the tower," said the Doctor, approvingly. "Go on, my son."

"And we enter the tower by an arched doorway, and we mount and mount—how steep the stairs are; one has to climb them with hands and knees—and at last we tap at a great oaken door, and somebody opens—a charming old man with a white beard. He must be very tall, for he stoops down to speak to us. And he says something, but I can't make out what, for all sounds are in a deep hollow murmur like the sea. But he leads us to a window—ah, how beautiful!—the sea all molten gold, the sun going down in glory; then against the glowing sea and sky, what dark mass is this of crag, and cliff, and dizzy ruin? Oh, I know it—it is Tintagel, and below, where darkness reigns, are the dark pine-trees; yes, we are looking from Mervyn Tower."

"Eureka!" cried Dr. Zamien.

I heard the cry, joyful, exultant, through all the whirling noises in my ears, for I seemed to be falling from a great height, and came to myself with a start and gasp like one awakening from a confused dream. And there sat Constance, looking pale and troubled, and leaning her head upon her hand, her eyes fixed upon me with an expression in which tenderness and reproach were strangely mixed.

"Well, my dear young friends," said the Doctor, suavely, "you have done very well for a first experiment; another time we shall do still better. Now tell me, that you are come to yourself, where is this place that you have told us about?"

"The scene was familiar enough to me. The tower belonged to an old house, not quite a ruin, but woefully out of repair. It had once been the residence of the Mervyns. There was a cove just below, a curious natural harbour, very deep, but with an entrance so narrow that it would hardly be noticed from the sea. But I had often been there in my boat; it was a favourite resort of mine, and standing on the knoll under the pine-trees, there was Tintagel rising like a giant's castle against the sky. But in the tower I have never been, for its entrance was bricked up, although once I had tried to climb up it by the ivy. The people said the tower was haunted, and that a magician had buried his gold beneath it, and when its shadow fell across the footway, they would go a good way round to avoid it. Anyhow, it was a good sea-mark, and by keeping it in a line with the cairn on the top of Megissey Hill you opened the entrance of the cove."

"The very place," cried the Doctor.

CHAPTER VII.

TO THE LAND'S END AND FURTHER.

WAKING next morning with a feeling of lassitude and oppression, Nero, my little negro boy, who had brought in hot water and was putting out my things, turned round with the broadest smile that he could compass, and that was saying a good deal.

"Fine breeze, sar, W.S.W. The ship am standing off and on, and the Capen ask if you like to take the young ladies ashore at Dawlish. And, sar, de Doctor am gone off."

Yes, the Doctor had actually started at daybreak for Exeter, and where he was going after that nobody knew; but he was likely to be away some days. And we were all like so many school-children when the dominie has taken holiday. Captain Riaz at once became lively and talkative. After we had landed at Dawlish, and taken a hasty glance at its beautiful cove, with its hanging woods and precipitous cliffs, we had the merriest breakfast imaginable. We said the most respectful and affectionate things of the Doctor; but we had the feeling that he might be conscious of what we were saying of him.

After breakfast we went ashore at Teignmouth, for there is a whole string of beautiful watering-places along the shores of this charming bay, and the coast, here trending strongly to the southward, as if intending to join on to the European continent, forms a series of bays and coves, like so many pearls on a string. And all through this summer-time the shore seems lined with happy, joyous people, and the talk and chatter mingles with the scream of sea-birds and the gentle murmur of the surge, while now the notes of bands of music, and now the roar of a train, as it whirls among cliffs and precipices, to settle shrieking among the roofs of some quiet town, come softly out to sea in one general note of festive celebration.

But Torquay was the surprise to all who had not already seen the place, with its sunny, riant aspect, and the wealth of its gardens and pleasure-grounds scattered over hill and dale, with houses everywhere showing pleasantly among rich and luxuriant groves. And sailing across Torbay we landed on Brixham Quay, and drank a cup of Bohea to the pious memory of William of Orange, who also landed there lang syne, which we were told was the proper thing to do. And from Brixham we drove across country to King's Wear, which is the ferry for Dartmouth, and in that noble estuary we found the "Star of the Night" riding safely at anchor, her captain satisfied for once with his berth, and willing to stay there as long as we liked, or, at any rate, until further orders from Dr. Zamien.

But sailing orders came all too soon. We had just sailed up the magnificent estuary of the River Dart to Totnes, and admired the pleasant old town on the hill, with its castle, keep, and fragments of ancient walls, and old houses with quaint gables and piazzas. But we had hardly explored all the ins and outs of picturesque Dartmouth, with its ancient churches and steep streets, which have been trodden by the Crusaders, and do not seem to have changed essentially since. But the Captain's orders were for Plymouth, there to await the Doctor.

And coming to weather Start Point, we found rather a heavy sea rolling in from the Atlantic, and dashing in foam against the huge cliffs, although the breeze was but light and fitful. The light wind and heavy sea were rather disconcerting to the Captain, who feared that the yacht would roll the masts out of her, or come to some other mishap, and he was glad to hail a tug, which took us to an anchorage just within Plymouth breakwater. But we had not long the opportunity of enjoying the life and movement of this noble basin, which Nature and art combined to render one of the noblest harbours in the world, when the Doctor was descried steaming out to us in one of the harbour launches.

The weather being favourable and the wind off shore, we were able to run pretty close to the rugged coast of Cornwall, and passed the Lizard by daylight, "speering" right into lovely Kynance Cove, with its sea-green waves and white floor of lovely sand, and its huge rocks with their strange metallic hues, and soon after opening out Mount's Bay, with Saint Michael's Mount rising grandly out of the sea, with Penzance shining beyond, glorified in the golden rays of the setting sun, which tinged all the coast with splendour.

But when once Nature had put the shutters up, it came on to blow, and we got the full force of a heavy sea. Luckily for us, the wind backed into the east, and we ran before the gale through the howling wilderness of waters, the moon rising over the bleak, dreary headland of the Land's End, and gleaming on the white crests of the surges that broke on the rugged barrier of rocks crowned by the Longships Lighthouse.

After rounding the headland the weather moderated a little, though still pretty bad; but the sight of the rugged, fearful shore along which we were running was not reassuring. Cape Cornwall is almost as grim as the Land's End; and all along that coast, according to the old saying, is a watery grave by day and night for the shipwrecked seaman.

What with the scream of the wind, and the ceaseless roar of the surf against cliffs and rocks, no one could sleep on board the "Star of the Night." Constance and Madame Valerien came on deck, and in the shelter of the poop they watched the grand but awful spectacle of the wild surf, illuminated by the moonbeams, beating against the rocks, and of the heavy seas that followed us incessantly, but which the good ship, speeding onwards, seemed always to outstrip. The lights that gleamed upon us from headland after headland were the only cheerful features of the scene, although these indicated where frowning cliffs forbade all hope of safety, or bristling rocks that threatened destruction to all who approached them.

"Mon Dieu!" cried Madame Valerien, drawing her cloak about her, as she shuddered at the sights and sounds about her. "And people traverse these dreadful scenes for pleasure!"

"Have no fear, madame," cried the Doctor, who stood behind us, and who understood the gesture if he could not hear the speech. "You are as safe here as in your arm-chair at home."

At this moment a sudden shock threw us all against the panels of the poop, the yacht seemed to leap into the air, and next moment she broached to, and a huge combing wave swept the deck from end to end, amid the crashing of timbers, a general sound of breaking and rending, and a sharp cry of horror forced from all the souls on board, which rose above the howling of the wind and the roaring of the sea.

CHAPTER VIII. IN SIGHT OF TINTAGEL.

I HAD seized Constance with one arm, while with the other I held on to a staunchion like grim death; but I expected nothing else than that the yacht was sinking under us, and that our graves were yawning for us in the dark waters. At that supreme moment our lips met in one long kiss; it was not so hard to perish together.

But the gallant ship rose bravely to the surface, shaking off the waters which dashed in torrents from her sides. The Captain's voice could be heard over all the din; he had sprung to the wheel and brought the ship to the wind. Masts and rigging were safe, although the sea had made a clean sweep of the decks, smashing the boats on the davits. The mainsail was threshing wildly about, threatening to knock the brains out of anybody who approached; but half-a-dozen seamen threw themselves upon it and secured it.

What had happened—had the ship struck on a sunken rock—were her timbers pierced—and was she even now sinking beneath us? No, it was an explosion that had done the mischief. There was a huge gap in the vessel's side. She was strongly built, and with water-tight bulkheads, or she would have gone straight to the bottom; as it was, she might float for a few hours.

The Captain was calm and full of resource. A sail was bent over the huge gap in the yacht's side, the pumps were rigged, and all hands set to work to clear the ship. There was no anchorage near at hand, no probability that a boat could live in such a sea, while the rocky coast was not likely to belie its promise of a watery grave to any thrown upon its mercies. Our best chance was to stick to the ship and keep her on her course.

The crew was mustered; one man was missing, Shiney, the Chinese Lascar. Soon after, his dead body was found in the wreck of the after-cabin. He had evidently perished in his anxiety to secure the success of the explosion. The cabins devoted to the ladies were wrecked from top to bottom.

Thanks to the measures taken by Captain Riaz, our chances were now fairly good. The wind had gone down with the tide, and the long combing swell from the Atlantic was now the chief enemy to fear. Riaz smiled when the Doctor called for the paraffin can, and began to dribble the oil gently on the waters from the broken stern. But the effect was marvellous; the oil spread a surface of unbroken water behind us. Another wave breaking over us would have probably sent us to the bottom. But thanks mainly to the Doctor's device, no other wave did make a break of it, and before long the carpenter had so far strengthened the temporary stopping of the gap in the ship's side that immediate danger was at an end.

Yet when day broke the appearance of things was forlorn and miserable enough. Where had been the gay saloon and well-appointed cabins, was now a wreck of shattered timbers, broken fittings, and fragments of lamps and mirrors. Yet the iron box in which the Doctor kept his valuables, that was safe, and when it was discovered among the wreck of things, Zamien's face lost its look of anxiety.

The sea had now moderated, and we were able to launch the deck-boats, including the "Priscilla," whose graceful form was pleasant to see after her seclusion, and both Riaz and I urged upon the Doctor that he should be put ashore with the ladies, while the rest of us tried to save the ship and bring her into port. We were now off St. Ives Bay, and landing would be easy, and at St. Ives there was a railway station, so that they might be all in London before evening. This advice the Doctor owned to be good. But first there was the body of the wretched Shiney to dispose of. On this nothing had been found either in the way of documents or personal belongings; but his clothes were of superior texture and material to those of the ordinary Lascar; and about his neck was found a silken cord curiously twisted, and very strong though fine, and knotted with seven knots. The Doctor regarded this with curiosity mingled, it seemed to me, with some inquietude, and took it into his own possession. Then the remains of Shiney were slung into the deep, attached to a heavy shot, and unattended by any benedictions.

I knew the way well enough into the port of St. Ives, and taking the tiller of the "Priscilla," our landing was effected without any difficulty. A train was on the point of starting, and the Doctor's treasure-chest was safely deposited in the luggage-van with Murad, the Doctor's servant, to watch over it.

"Waste no tears at parting," said the Doctor to his ward; "we shall meet again sooner, perhaps, than you expect."

But there were tears in Constance's dark eyes as I pressed her hands in mine, and Madame Valerien whispered:

"Do not lose sight of us, Monsieur Bertram, for we trust chiefly in you."

"'Hôtel Métropole' for letters," cried the Doctor; "and my compliments to your respected aunts." And away went the train, while I returned sadly to the shore.

The rest of the voyage passed without particular incident. The breeze fell light, the sea became calm. Off Padstow Head we were hailed by a tug from Bristol, and Riaz made an agreement with the captain to tow the yacht to that port, where she might be repaired and refitted. And as all danger was now over, and Padstow was conveniently near to Fairview, I determined to go ashore in the "Priscilla" and lay her up in her usual berth there. The evening was calm and golden; the yacht, with her tapering masts and cobweb tracery of rigging, lay becalmed on the purple sea; the tug, in a cloud of sulphurous vapour, hovered close by, ready to begin her homeward voyage. In the distance rose the craggy height of Tintagel, its round towers tinged with the roseate hues of sunset, and beyond we could just distinguish the crenellated summit of Mervyn Tower; and the stern crest of Megissey Hill, and the ancient cromlech on its summit, rising against the dark sky-line, caught the last rays of the setting sun.

PART II. MERVYN TOWER.

OUR MEPHISTOPHELES AT HOME.

CHAPTER I. WHERE GIANTS DWELT OF OLD.

To be home again! To come upon the calm and seclusion of Fairview, in the soft stillness of a summer morning! There is the old house, long and low, festooned with roses, with heliotrope in great purple clusters, with geraniums overhanging the porch, while its limits are lost in a thicket of myrtle and flowering shrubs. All round rise grim, dark rocks, their jagged summits peering over into this little paradise; and over all the bleak, black summit of Megissey Hill, and the monolith at the top that tradition said had been hurled there by some giant at Mervyn Tower, and there arrested by more powerful enchantment. And in contrast with the rude gloom of these surroundings was the dainty neatness and propriety of everything about Fairview. Aunt Priscilla, at work on crewels under the deodara, in a morning gown that is frilled, and puckered, and puffed in the most bewitching way; Aunt Judith, delicately simple, is writing up her diary beneath the shade of the laburnum, a rich Indian rug under her feet, and a white fleecy shawl about her neck, although the lawn is soft and dry as any carpet, and the air of the softest and balmiest. Matthews, their maid, is discreetly waiting for the moment when the one shall have finished her paragraph, and the other completed a critical stitch, to announce:

"Please, my ladies, luncheon is ready, and Master Arthur has arrived."

My good aunts welcomed me home with evident delight. But they would not hear a word as to my cruise, nor as to the attachment I had formed on board the "Star of the Night." They took up the gossip of the neighbourhood, they talked literature and art, but they ignored my recitals altogether; and when I attempted to relate any of my late experiences they fended me off in the adroitest manner. Justice Bompas, to give him his usual title, joined us before the meal was concluded; late as usual, he had been detained on the bench by an important case—an old beggar woman had stolen an apron off a hedge—and he, too, seemed to have received instructions not to listen to any of my adventures.

"Dear Mr. Bompas," said Aunt Priscilla, as she rose from table, "has promised to give us this afternoon for the discussion of important business. You, my dear Arthur, will please drive to the station to meet your cousin, Julia Danvers, who is expected by the 5.25 train."

Then I saw the little plot. Julia had been sent for as a sort of balm or medicament, to arrest the effect of what my aunts deemed an unsuitable attachment. Julia, as a young girl, had been rather angular and bony—her fists were hard, as I knew to my sorrow, although we had been great friends and allies at times; but the Julia who sprang lightly from the railway carriage at Holsworthy station was a charming and beautiful woman. She was Devonshire, real Devonshire—tall, majestic, yet not heavy; ox-eyed, only Julia's eyes were of a deep violet-blue, which is not common among oxen; and she had golden hair, and a complexion of milk and roses. There was something of a bustle at the station with loads of London people, who were coming to spend the season on the coast; but everybody turned to look at Julia, and I felt rather proud to be her charioteer. Ah, if one had not experienced the genuine passion of love, how easy to fancy oneself in love with Julia!

Julia rattled away during the early part of our drive; but as we approached Fairview she became somewhat silent and embarrassed.

"Arthur," she said at last, laying her hand on my arm, "I have a confession to make which I am afraid to make to my cousins. I fancy, do you know, that they have intended something different—and, Arthur, I have promised somebody else—I mean somebody they know nothing about."

"Well, there is no high treason in that," I remarked, for Julia's confession, although it certainly relieved me from a great embarrassment, had a somewhat chilling effect at the moment.

"But you think they had other views for me?" asked Julia, naïvely.

"I think they wanted you to marry me," I replied, gloomily.

"That is just what I thought," said Julia, who had the grace to blush; "and it would have been so nice in some respects. But, Arthur, I want you to help me out of my scrape."

"I will come and give you away, if that's what you mean."

"There is no question of giving away," said Julia, sadly. "I am the lass who loves a sailor, and he is, I fear, poor. You know I have next to nothing in the way of expectations; but Cousin Priscilla has always promised that if I married satisfactorily she would give me five thousand pounds as my very own."

"She thought it would all be in the family," I interjected.

"That is what I feared," said Julia; "and I am afraid she will refuse to consider my poor Eugene satisfactory as long as you are in the way. But could not you, Arthur, make it out that the obstacle is on your side, that you think me disagreeable and ill-tempered, as I dare say I am?"

"You are all that is charming and desirable, Julia, and I should not be believed if I asserted any other opinion. But I might plead a prior attachment."

"And who would believe that?" asked Julia. "Have we not known each other all our lives nearly? But if you are supposed to have refused me, no matter why, I am sure my cousin will console me handsomely for my disappointment."

I promised Julia that I would do all I could for her, although I did not see my way to pacify my aunts on my own account. There was a small dinner-party at Fairview that evening. Mr. Bompas had remained, of course, and Major Andrews and his wife were there, with Captain Polwele, R.N., elderly but sprightly, and supposed to entertain a hopeless attachment for one of the sisters Penaillion.

After dinner, as the evening was fine and the moon would rise presently, a walk was proposed over the hill to Mervyn Tower. Aunt Judith was engaged in a game of piquet with Captain Polwele, her sister and Mrs. Andrews were deep in a discussion as to stitches and fancy work in general. Julia and the justice, who was full of old-fashioned gallantry, paired off for the walk, and the Major and I soberly brought up the rear.

"Perhaps we shall see the ghost to-night," said the Major. "Old Jacob says he generally walks about the time of the full moon."

Old Jacob lived in the old lodge, from which there stretched an avenue of gnarled and twisted oaks, stag-headed, wind-wrecked trees, for nothing could resist the wild winds that often raged over the rugged promontory. To-night, though it was fine and fair, the roar of the surges formed a strange music in the air, the full diapason of which burst upon us as we reached the higher level. As Jacob was pretty sure to be asleep by this time, we took the liberty of entering the grounds by a gap in the wall, and by the weird and eldritch-looking avenue we reached the scarred and weathered front of the old mansion. The moss-covered balustrades of a terrace showed of a chill grey colour in the moonlight, and here and there a broken urn, and in the midst of an ancient grass-plat the basin of a fountain backed by an old yew-tree and a hedge of the same, once curiously clipped and shaped, but now all formless and overgrown.

"And now for the tower," cried Julia. "Arthur, a race to the tower." We knew the pathway well, which led through the old flower-garden, and through a postern-gate, whose wicket had long decayed; and then by a little glen that had perhaps once been a moat, for it encircled the old tower, and some fir-trees had found shelter and nourishment there, and surrounded the place with a dark band of foliage. We soon reached the rocky mound from which the tower rose, with its pointed doorway built up with solid masonry.

And below us, encompassed by the sea roaring hollowly in its deep caves and rifled chasms, rose the awful rock "of dark Tintagel by the Cornish sea," crowned by the ruined towers of Arthur's Castle; the grey walls touched by the moonlight and illumined by a faint meteoric glow from the glittering wreaths of foam that were tossed upwards by the wild surges.

But see, there is a light upon Tintagel rock, the blue and blinding gleam of a lightning flash, and thunder roars and rattles in deep volleys over our head. The tower against which we lean rocks and trembles to its base, and hollow reverberations sound from the ground beneath us as if from hollow caves or subterranean dungeons.

"This is a little too horrid, Arthur," cried Julia, "let us run for it." And run we did till we heard the voices of the other two, who had taken refuge in the porch of the house, for rain had begun to fall in huge drops, and presently there came a tropical deluge which kept us all in the shelter of the gloomy porch till it was over. Then the moon shone out again, and as we were hastening away we saw old Jacob with a lantern coming towards the house.

"Now you gentlefolk mustn't come here any more," he called, when he saw us, "'cause the place is taken. The fam'ly ain't coming back just yet, and so we got orders to let it."

"That is old Jacob's craze," said Bompas; "always the place is to be let because the family are not coming back just yet."

"And don't you git over the wall no more," continued Jacob. "Justices trespassing and gitting over walls ain't righteous dealing, neither. Just you come along by the gate."

Jacob let us out at the gate. But just at the turning of the road, we heard the cracking of whips, and the clatter of hoofs, and the rattle of wheels in the narrow, stony lane, and a chaise and four horses with postilions dashed by, all splashed and covered with mud. A lightning flash revealed the interior of the carriage for a moment, and there sat Dr. Zamien, or else it was Mephisto himself.

CHAPTER II. ANOTHER EXPERIMENT.

A WHOLE month had elapsed, and I heard nothing more of Dr. Zamien, except in the form of a short letter from Madame Valerien. They were in Paris, she and Constance, while the Doctor was away on some distant expedition. But it was quite true that he had taken Mervyn Tower, and before long we should all meet again. There was enclosed a brief note from Constance—affectionate but a little despondent. I wrote a cheering letter in reply, expressing more confidence than I felt in a happy ending to our love story.

The situation briefly explained, both to Julia and myself, by Aunt Priscilla, was this. Admiral Pensilion, my maternal grandfather, who, for capturing some fort in China, had been created Lord Tregunter, when he died left some three thousand a year, to be divided between his two daughters, leaving my poor mother out in the cold. But the two sisters, moved by a spirit of justice, had always put by a third of their income as a provision for their sister's child. The income of my own small fortune had been expended on my education and maintenance, so that the whole of these accumulations were now available, amounting to about thirty thousand pounds. This sum, with about a thousand a year out of the family revenue, the sisters proposed to settle upon me, with the family mansion of Tregunter, which had been let for a term of years, now about to expire. But before they gave me the control of all this, the sisters must have the security of seeing me married to some one of whom they could approve. As for marrying a girl descended as it were from the skies, and in the custody of a modern Cagliostro, half charlatan and conjurer, and half something worse, perhaps, it was not to be thought of.

"You are master of yourself and your own fortune, Arthur," said Aunt Priscilla, with mild severity; "but nothing of which we have the control will go in that direction."

By this time Julia knew the real state of the case, and professed to be very indignant with what she called my "dissimulation." On which side the dissimulation was may be judged when I say that Julia played the part of the slighted damsel to perfection.

Aunt Judith, however, was far more kind and sympathetic. In business matters she was guided by her more practical sister. But she had herself suffered from an unfortunate attachment in her youth, and she told me that no advantages of fortune could compensate for the extinction of a genuine passion.

And then one fine morning the news came up from the village that the tenants of Mervyn Tower had arrived. Such a cavalcade—a drag with four horses, a vanful of servants, fourgons loaded with baggage! For some weeks previously builders, upholsterers, decorators had been at work on the old mansion, and the result, according to popular rumour, was the transformation of the old house into a luxurious and well-appointed residence. The wall which surrounded the whole demesne had been repaired, and the stony lane full of ruts which had formerly done duty for the approach had been converted into a broad and convenient road. Old Jacob still retained his place at the lodge, but had been reinforced by a strong and buxom grand-daughter, who was placed in charge of the gate with orders to exclude all strangers unprovided with an order from the Doctor, but to admit freely all known inhabitants of the neighbourhood.

Hardly had the news of the Doctor's arrival reached us, when Nero, the negro boy, appeared in the drive, grinning a delighted recognition of his master, as he considered me. He bore a missive from the Doctor:

"DEAR BERTRAM,—Come to me at once, for I have need of thee. We all await thee impatiently.—Z."

Constance received me on the terrace with the brightest of smiles and welcomes. She was at home, she felt, in this rugged country. Every step she took awakened souvenirs of her infancy. Even old Jacob did not seem altogether unknown to her. Madame Valerien thought the place charming for the summer, if a little sombre, but for the winter, how desolate!

But the Doctor seized me by the arm and drew me into his study.

"We have made a good beginning, but there is much still to seek. That these old walls were the original home of Constance we may consider established. A sentiment is satisfied, but nothing follows. But consider, what motive had an affectionate father for secluding his daughter from all knowledge of her former home, establishing her under an assumed name, and taking every precaution to secure her from recognition? Was it not that she was exposed to some peril, followed, if you like, by some vengeance, which overtook the rest of the family, and which it was the father's hope to avert from this one delicate, innocent blossom, and yet, in spite of all, it discovered her and marked her out? To meet this danger, not to let it overtake us, is the object of my research. What clue have we? The feeblest and vaguest. But let us follow it. We have established the existence of a grandfather fond of the society of his grand-daughter, whom he permits to frequent the places of his cherished employments. Doubtless he talked to her often, told her many things which were above her comprehension. Constance remembers now that the good old man taught her many things—the names of the stars, some of which she still remembers. To such a quick intelligence as hers one would communicate many things. But the link has been broken, no effort of memory could recall them; but the record of them still remains."

"Where?" I asked, wonderingly.

"Recorded in the organs of that wonderful intelligence that we call the mind. Overlaid by thousands of subsequent records, but not obliterated. Now, it is your function to restore to light this record. Your mind supplies the power, the medium; hers the intensity of expression; the two being in sympathy, unsullied by dangerous passions, the one sees, hears, feels for the other. But I don't conceal from you that the experiment is far more difficult, yes, and painful than the last."

I cannot describe the intense repugnance I felt for the Doctor's new experiment. Every fibre in my body seemed to rebel against it. It seemed to me, too, a kind of sacrilege to rifle the bosom of a pure young girl of its inmost impressions, to apply rude force to the most delicate organisation of her intellectual structure. The Doctor seemed to read my thoughts.

"Alas! poor girl," he said; "she would die for you willingly, gladly, and you will not torture that inert brain of yours for a moment to save her, perhaps, from a fate that is worse than death."

"I am ready, then," I said, stung by the Doctor's words.

"Very well," said the Doctor; "you may soon be put to the test. And now for the tower," cried the Doctor, as if he had dismissed the subject from his mind. "Constance, come with us, we are going to explore the tower."

The masons had been at work here, too, and the stonework which had blocked the entrance had been removed, revealing a strong oaken door studded with huge nails. Jacob remembered that he had the key, which the Doctor now held in his hand, and with some effort the ponderous lock yielded, and the heavy door swung back, groaning dolorously on its rusty hinges. We entered a rude guard-chamber, vaulted and groined in stone, which contained little but some curious weapons of savage tribes, and the débris of a chemical laboratory—broken retorts and rusted furnaces, empty carboys of acid, and broken jars. In the corner was the door of the turret, which contained a winding stair. This also was locked, and the key was to seek; but Jacob found it at last, and filing up the steep stone steps we came to a pleasant, studious-looking chamber, with bookshelves, and a writing-table, and a great carved oak chair, pushed back, as if some one had lately risen from it. All this was seen by the green, dim light filtered through the ivy that had overgrown the window.

Again we ascended the turret stair, and came to a lofty room fitted up as a laboratory, with furnaces, alembics, retorts, and every kind of apparatus, a little antiquated, perhaps, but still capable of use. Here, too, was a kind of closet projecting from the wall, where hung some strange, antique instrument of astronomy or, perhaps, astrology. Some of these were engraved with arms and crest, and an inscription which declared them to have belonged to one Sir Marmaduke Mervyn, with the date 1645.

Mounting a stage higher, we came to the roof of the tower, flat and covered with lead, and affording a most extensive prospect. Far away, on the dim horizon, were the faint outlines of the hills of South Wales. Nearer, Lundy Island looked like some gigantic creature swimming for the shore it had almost reached—a shore that stretched in rock and beaked promontory till it was lost in the bright haze over the Bristol Channel; while out of the haze crept forth white-winged ships, and others showed as bright specks on the far horizon; and out to seaward a great war-ship steamed majestically on to its destined haven; and below our feet

> The long wave brake
> All down the thundering shores of Bude and Bos—

gentle waves that gently murmured as they broke. And Tintagel Towers, putting off their wild and wizard-like aspect, smiled in the sunshine, as if with memories of great King Arthur and his table round. Some loaded mineral train was snorting among the hills behind us, and the melancholy clank of a mine-engine echoed from a distant height; and on that side black storm-clouds had gathered, and the lonely cromlech, a witness of long-forgotten ages, shone in hoary whiteness against their gloom.

A curious, if modern feature of the old tower was its lightning conductor, whose gilded point rose far above the conical roof of the turret, as if rather to invite than repel the electric stroke. Great pains had evidently been taken with its construction, for the rod was of unusual diameter, and gilded in all its length, while all points of attachment were carefully isolated by supports of glazed ware; and the rod, enclosed in a wooden case, could be traced from stage to stage of the interior of the tower till it disappeared beneath the paved floor of the guard-room.

By the time we had descended to the library on the first stage of the tower, Jacob, with the help of some of the housemaids, had given an air of comfort to the place. He had lit some faggots on the open hearth, the cheerful blaze of which dispelled the last suspicion of dampness from the air; dust had been swept up, and daylight admitted by cutting away the intrusive ivy from the window arch.

"I recall all this," said Constance, with awakened look. "Here is the low stool on which I used to sit at some one's knee."

"We will reproduce the scene," said the Doctor. "I will take the wizard's seat; you, Constance, sit down and draw your stool to my side. Shut your eyes, and endeavour to recall some occasion when, as a child, you sat and talked with your grandfather, as we will suppose."

Constance obeyed, but after a time she shook her head. "I can see and hear nothing."

"We must try the more sympathetic chevalier, then," said the Doctor, smiling bitterly. "Bertram, take my place, and fix your eyes upon the distant peak you see through the open window. Constance, place your hands in his, and look steadfastly towards him."

The situation pleased us both. Constance placed her hands confidingly in mine, and our eyes met in a loving glance before they sought their respective destinations.

"Now listen, Bertram," said the Doctor's deep voice, in warning accents; "listen for the long-buried voice."

A mist came over my eyes; I seemed conscious of some horrid presence close beside us of which I could not realise the shape or form, and a hissing like that of a serpent sounded in my ears. Then I heard the murmur of voices, and, by a painful effort, came to distinguish them. "Learn these words, my child, and repeat them y as you repeat your prayers. You ver little thing, and, when you grow older, you will find some one to tell you what they mean. Yes, the words are silly, perhaps, but say them all the same—

When lightning Mervyn Tower shall rend,
Long years of trial reach their end."

These words were followed by the echo of a low mocking laugh, and for a moment I saw distinctly the following picture: a grey-headed man sitting, as I was sitting, with a child at his knee, while the child, suddenly looking up, sees a face looking in upon them through the open window with an aspect of frightful malignity. Yet the face is familiar to the child—it is known also to the observer—it is the face of the man known to him as Jansen. Then the whole scene was lost in a blaze of light, which was followed by the rumble of a heavy peal of thunder, in the midst of which I came to myself with a start.

"Well, what message do you bring from the unseen world?" asked the Doctor, solemnly.

There was nothing imaginary about the thunder; it rumbled and rolled about the tower, and the yellow reflections of the clouds that had gathered around cast a luminous glow upon Dr. Zamiel's face, so that it shone out of the gloom like a star. As for Constance, her head reclined upon my arm and her eyes closed; she seemed to have lost consciousness altogether. But she opened her eyes as I bent over her, and sighed deeply as she raised her head and supported it against the arm of the wizard's chair.

"Repeat your message," said the Doctor, imperiously; and I gave the substance of what I had heard. When I came to the distich—"Yes, I remember that," said Constance, in a hushed, unnatural voice. "He made me repeat it after my prayers, and I did till the sisters changed my prayers and I forgot."

"Awake, Constance!" said the Doctor, taking her by the hand; and the girl came to herself with a shiver and start.

"Well done, my children!" said the Doctor, suavely. "With such pupils as you, what may not we achieve? Why should the future be any more a sealed book than the past?"

CHAPTER III. THE STORY OF THE MERVYNS.

From this time I was constantly drawn to Mervyn Tower, where all my mornings were spent with the Doctor in chemical researches. At the present time our attention was concentrated on the earlier researches of the former occupant of the Tower, to which some of the papers and chemical products we found gave us a certain clue. Especially was the Doctor struck by the frequent presence of specimens of a mineral substance which had frequently been the subject of experiment. This was no doubt graphite, more commonly known as plumbago, which is popularly classed as a metal, but which is probably a vegetable product, and actually carbon of the purest character, next to the diamond. The diamond, as is well known, is simply crystallised carbon, and it has long been one of the problems of chemistry to reproduce the process by which it has been evolved in Nature's laboratory. But the graphite of which we found so many specimens was of a peculiar character. It differed in substance from the graphite of Borrowdale, which first gave to artists the "lead"—really the carbon—pencil, and, indeed, from all known descriptions of graphite, showing traces, when placed in thin laminæ under a powerful microscope, of a distinct cellular character.

Certain indications led us to believe that our predecessor had discovered an extensive mass of this peculiar substance, of which these specimens were chips, and a paper I accidentally discovered threw light upon the subject. The graphite came from China, of which country the wizard Mervyn, as we may provisionally call him, had evidently an intimate knowledge. In effect, we found an edict, signed by the vermilion pencil of the Emperor, authorising a certain Mervyn to take possession of and carry away a certain black stone which was then in his provisional custody. A subsequent memorandum showed that in the writer's opinion an extensive deposit of this substance existed among the mountains of Thibet, in such and such a latitude and longitude. And here we had a kind of indication of the motives which had led to that expedition which had terminated so disastrously.

Another discovery which threw more light upon the matter was a kind of diary or record, which revealed the wizard's personality as that of a certain John Mervyn, born at Mervyn Tower early in the present century, and who had entered the Royal Navy at an early age. Tired of the slow advancement offered by the service, he had retired, and offered his services to the Chinese Government, then organising a small naval force. Gaining the confidence of the mandarins, he was employed in many hazardous enterprises, chiefly in repressing piracy in the China seas. The last of Captain Mervyn's exploits he recounts with regret and remorse, although it hardly seems that he was answerable for its result. A certain sect or secret organisation had come into existence which was called in native language the Brotherhood of the Seven Knots, a sect which practised murder as a religious rite, and honoured its professors according to the number of victims they had sacrificed. Captain Mervyn suggested that, in one form or other, the sect had existed from early ages, and originated, perhaps, in the great plateau of Mongolia, throwing out an offshoot in India known as the Thugs, and, following the stream of Tartar conquest, formed another nucleus among the mountains of Persia, where the sect of Assassins and their chief, the Old Man of the Mountain, attained a celebrity which has left its mark in English history as well as in romantic literature. However this may be, the sect of the Seven Knots took, in Captain Mervyn's time, a sudden and alarming increase. The chief seat of the sect was upon an island of the China seas, which was rumoured to contain a temple devoted to their horrid rites, and a sacred stone devoutly worshipped by the brethren.

Captain Mervyn, with an English-built ship, mounted with powerful ordnance and accompanied by a number of junks, attacked the stronghold from the sea, soon setting fire to the stockaded village and destroying its defences, upon which the troops were landed to complete the work. At the first attack, only men had been seen in the village; but it soon became terribly evident that the place was full of women and children, who ran screaming hither and thither pursued by the flames, and hurled back into the blazing mass by the relentless soldiery, of whom Captain Mervyn had now lost all control. Only one human creature escaped—a boy of tender years, who reached the sea and swam out to the Captain's boat, who saved him, but with greatest difficulty, from the swords and spears of his own men.

The horror of the scene, and the remorse that he had taken part in such butchery, so affected Captain Mervyn that he determined at once to quit the service, and he returned to England, bringing with him the Chinese boy and the great black stone from the shrine of the destroyed village. The boy had become exceedingly attached to his preserver and seemed of a gentle and amiable disposition, and it was the Captain's care that he should be brought up as a good Christian, and trained to virtue and obedience. But he had displayed a good deal of natural jealousy when the Captain married, and still more so when a little boy was born some time afterwards. The Chinese boy was sent to school, but proved an intractable pupil, and soon after he ran away and was supposed to have gone to sea. About this time Captain Mervyn lost his young wife, and in the grief and trouble that followed this event, the history of his life was discontinued.

But here existing memory came into play. Questioning my Aunt Judith, I found that she knew a good deal about the Mervyns, although the subject was to her a painful one. Her father had known John Mervyn well; as middies they had served in the same ship, and the Admiral had often spoken of the Chinese boy. In Aunt Judith's memory the elder Mervyn was a quiet, but pleasant gentleman, very much of a recluse, and devoted to his laboratory in the old tower. His only son, George, was a noble boy, who grew up to be a fine young man. Aunt Judith and he formed a mutual attachment; but the Admiral would not hear of such a marriage, and Aunt Judith, as a dutiful daughter, gave up her lover. And George Mervyn went on his travels. He became a great botanist and explorer, spending some years in South America, collecting plants and making drawings. And after a time he came home with a young wife—a beautiful creature of Spanish extraction.

Soon after George's return, the Chinese boy reappeared; now a well-grown, reputable-looking man. He had, according to his own account, prospered as a Chinese merchant's clerk in one of the Treaty ports, and had been sent to England to gain experience. He became a great favourite with the old man, although George's wife had an unaccountable dislike to him. But she, poor thing, died suddenly and mysteriously, leaving one little girl. And then father and son, moved by the restless spirit they had inherited from roving buccaneering ancestors, resolved on an expedition to the further frontiers of China, of which Yan Sing, as the erst Chinese boy was called, was to be the guide.

"But," continued Aunt Judith with a sigh, "George came to see me before he went—perhaps had we both spoken our minds he need not have gone—and he brought with him his daughter, a sweet, dark-eyed little thing. He was sadly depressed, and spoke of the future gloomily. He hinted at some fatal destiny that seemed to follow the Mervyns, and that he hoped to save his daughter from its effects. He had found, he said, a place of security for the child, and he made me promise that if ever she needed a friend she should find one in me. But I never heard anything more of her from that day to this."

"And this day," I cried, when Aunt Judith had finished her story, "you shall have news of her. I shall bring her to you, dear aunt, for she is Constance, and my promised wife."

If Constance inherited nothing else as the heiress of Mervyn Tower, she acquired the affections of Aunt Judith, as the daughter of an old friend and once lover. And this was an acquisition of no small value to the poor girl, who found at once that genuine love and sympathy that no masculine affection can altogether replace. Aunt Judith, too, was fully convinced of the hidden danger—the sword suspended by a thread that hovered over the head of the last of the Mervyns. She was the first to advise me to marry Constance privately, and take her abroad to some place where we might live secretly till such time as the danger that seemed to threaten her was past. At Mervyn Tower the danger seemed to be intensified; for there, if anywhere, was concealed the black fetish stone of the idolaters, and to recover that, as well as avenge the fate of their co-religionists, would probably be the aim of the brethren of the Seven Knots. But against this proposal was the determination of Constance not to disobey the commands of her guardian. His influence over her was too great to be disregarded; and then there were my own engagements with the Doctor, which I felt it impossible to break. Yet that the Doctor's influence over both of us was a source of peril it was impossible to doubt. It was evident that he would continue his experiments in physical science at our expense. He would use us up as one burns oil in a lamp, leaving us poor, exhausted creatures, without sap or vitality, and incapable of any healthy emotion. He would sacrifice us as freely at the altar of what he termed "human progress," as our other enemies at the shrine of their black demon.

Time went on. Summer had passed, and autumn was closing in upon us without any material change in the situation.

Julia had gone back to her own home, leaving Aunt Priscilla under the impression that she carried a secret sorrow with her in the shape of an unrequited attachment. But Constance heard from her sometimes, as the two had contracted a sentimental friendship, and admired each other cordially without the slightest jealousy on my account. And one day Constance was permitted to reveal to me Julia's secret. Her sailor lover was no other than Captain Riaz, late of the "Star of the Night." They had met in London, where Riaz was visiting his mother's relations, for Señor Riaz, his father, who owned a vast ranche in one of the South American States, had married an Englishwoman. By a curious coincidence, too, we found that a sister of this Señor Riaz had married an English traveller and naturalist, Mr. George Mervyn; and thus, when she married Riaz, Julia would become Constance's cousin, an additional inducement to take that step, she declared with effusion.

And where had Riaz been all this time? Well, the "Star of the Night," after a thorough repair and overhauling at Bristol, had been taken round to Cowes, where she was being redecorated and refitted. And Riaz had taken command, temporarily, of a fine steamer on the line between Havre and the River Plate, which vessel was expected to touch at Plymouth on her return voyage, when Riaz would hand over the command of his ship to her regular captain, and run down to Mervyn Tower. And Julia had arranged to come on a short visit to Fairview just then; for she thought that Aunt Priscilla would be charmed with her Captain, if he were properly introduced to her. For that artful Julia had still an eye to the five thousand pounds. And then Riaz, although he had obtained his father's consent to his engagement, and the promise of a handsome income—the señor being one of the richest men in the state—did not feel as if he would be comfortable till the arrangement had received the Doctor's sanction; such was the influence that this extraordinary man exerted over all of us.

CHAPTER IV. IN THE TOWER DUNGEON.

The equinoctial gales had blown with more than usual force that year; but they had blown themselves out at last, and a few calm, still days, soft and mild, at the beginning of November, gave promise of an old-fashioned Saint Martin's summer. The lovely weather had tempted us out for a sail—Constance, and Julia, who had arrived at Fairview the night before, myself, and Nero the negro boy, who was a handy lad in a boat. We ran out of Boscastle Harbour with a gentle breeze, and when we cleared the headland we came in sight of a long, low, rather dirty-looking steamer, which was anchored off the point, in what seemed rather a dangerous position. Calm as was the day, there was a long treacly roll on the water, which broke heavily on the strip of beach beneath the cliffs with a low hissing murmur that died softly away in the distance. The boat had her steam up, and from a tinkering noise we heard on board we came to the conclusion that she had anchored to set right some trifling mishap to her machinery; but there was not a soul visible on board, and though we hailed her with a view to a little cheerful conversation, she took no notice of the civility.

We had intended to land on Tintagel rock, but the ground swell made this a risky undertaking, and so we put about, and finding the set of the tide too strong for us to make Boscastle Harbour again with such a light breeze, we determined to run for Mervyn Hole, which is a deep and safe little cove but with an awkward entrance—a cleft or chasm hardly a boat's length across. It is rather an awful-looking place as you come under the loom of the huge cliffs, and we had an anxious moment as the breeze failing at the wrong time, down went the sail and out went the oars, and Nero and I pulling lustily, brought the boat's head round, and we went in on the top of the swell as it dashed with a resounding roar against the sides of the chasm. We were well up the slope of the little sandy beach before the suck of the receding wave had caught us, and hauling the boat up high and dry, we began to ascend the steep but not dangerous path that followed the windings of the ravine till it came out near the foot of Mervyn Tower.

The ravine ended suddenly, blocked, as it would seem, by some ancient outwork of the tower, and from that point the ascent was by a rough kind of stair formed of the ruins of the massive masonry that were scattered plentifully in all directions. Julia and the boy were some distance ahead and had reached the higher level, when Constance, whom I was helping in the ascent, suddenly gave me an involuntary pinch. "I have been here before, Arthur," she whispered. "I remember the place; and there is another way, a long passage and steps."

The place was all overgrown with ferns and brushwood, which flourished luxuriantly in this sheltered spot; but as the girl spoke, I discerned a faint track that was lost in the wilderness of foliage that grew around. But I made Constance follow in Julia's track, and saw them both safely to the hall door and in charge of Murad the trusty before returning to investigate the clue thus unexpectedly presented.

Following the indications of the faint track on the herbage, which might, after all, have been made by foxes, or perhaps rabbits, I came to a huge boulder which seemed entirely to prevent all further passage, overgrown as it was with stout saplings, presenting an impenetrable barrier. Yet in one corner a broken twig and withered stalk showed that some living creature had passed through, and stooping down and crawling through the tangle I came to a face of rock in which there was a fissure just wide enough to admit one crawling on all-fours. Beyond this tight place there opened a passage, roomy and airy enough, for there were many crevices that admitted light and air. The passage, indeed, seemed to be a kind of natural fissure, which opened in the direction of the tower, and was continued in an artificially cut vault, which descended rather steeply into the bowels of the earth, and looked dark and gruesome enough. But lighting a wax match and seeing that the flame burnt brightly enough, I followed the passage without difficulty till I came to a vaulted chamber which a little reflection showed was the subterranean dungeon of the tower. It was evident that this secret passage formed part of the original plan of the defences, and was, no doubt, intended either as a means of retreat for the occupants of the tower, or to effect an unexpected sally upon besiegers. Its evident connection, too, with the little cove suggested other uses. If the occupants of the tower had been devoted to piracy or smuggling, here was the very place for their purpose.

A curious part of the structure was a massive cylinder or pillar, which occupied the centre of the vaulted chamber from floor to roof, and which seemed at first sight as though built as a further support to the superincumbent mass. That some communication existed between the dungeon and the interior of the tower seemed certain; and groping carefully along the wall, I came to a narrow opening, where massive iron staples and sockets cut in the freestone showed that a strong door or barricade had once existed. A narrow flight of broken steps led upwards through the thickness of the walls; but it looked so dark and dangerous that I determined to obtain lights and a companion before making further explorations; and I had groped my way back to the opening by which I had entered, when I heard the noise of footsteps echoing along the vaulted passage, and saw the gleam of a lantern in the distance.

Not without an inward tremor, I effected a retreat to the doorway of the secret stair, and scrambling up a few steps, so as to be concealed from observation, I awaited events. A bright light soon illumined the dungeon, and through a chink in the stones I saw two men, one of whom I recognised at once as the man I had known as Jansen, but whose real name, no doubt, was Yan Sing. His companion I recognised as a miner, a dissipated, worthless, but clever fellow, who had recently arrived in the neighbourhood from foreign parts.

"Well, this is a regular Guy Fawkes job," said the miner, with a grin, as he threw down his tools with a resounding clang, and more carefully deposited a leather bag in one corner. "Now, master, what's the business—to break through this here stone pillar? Well, I don't think that need take long." He selected a steel drill or chisel from his bag, and a heavy hammer. "Here, master, call one of your Johnnies to hold this drill." A guttural word of command from Yan Sing, and another Mongol appeared, who squatted down by the pillar, holding the chisel against the stone while the miner struck it vigorously with his hammer. The stone flew in all directions; but after a while sparks flashed from the hole, the chisel flew out of Johnnie's hands, and the miner with a curse dropped his hammer and began to blow on his fingers. "What's this?" he cried, examining the hole. "Six inches of stone casing and a hardened steel cylinder inside. Tell you what, boss, this is a engineering job."

"You will break through it," said Yan Sing, sullenly.

"Not with these tools, I can't," said the miner. A few minutes' pause of silence followed, during which the miner seemed to be cudgelling his brains, while his companions watched him darkly and doubtfully. "Tell you what, boss," said the miner at last, "if you only want to crack this here crib, and don't mind lifting the roof off the place"—Yan Sing nodded energetic approval—"we'll drive a dozen holes in all round, load 'em well with dynamite, and tamp 'em well, and if that don't hoist the whole blessed concern, you may hoist me too, mates."

"How long?" asked Yan Sing, curtly.

"A matter of six hours," replied the miner.

"Go ahead!" said the other.

The miner set to work with care and deliberation, while the others, for there were two or three more now visible, squatted down and began to smoke.

The acrid fumes from their pipes soon reached my place of concealment, and made me cough in spite of every effort. Seeing that discovery was now inevitable, for all sprang to their feet at the sound, I made a dash from my place of concealment, knocking the men to right and left. But I was soon overpowered by numbers, and should have been despatched by the ruffians' long knives; but here the miner interposed vigorously. "No murder, mates," he said, "that's a hanging job; remember the 'Flowery Land' business. Keep him dark till the job's finished, if you like." After a muttered consultation I was taken by head and heels, being by this time incapable of further resistance, hurried along the hidden passage, and finally brought to the shore of Mervyn Cove. Here a smart-looking whale-boat was waiting, with a couple of men in charge, and I was flung in, and the whole party embarked, with the exception of two or three, I fancy, who were left to watch the miner.

The tide was now on the turn, and there was no difficulty in running out of the cove. The rascals obligingly took the "Priscilla" in tow and cast her off when we had cleared the rocks; she went drifting here and there, and presently, no doubt, or perhaps not for days, would be picked up empty and her owner reported as lost. The men gave way with a will, and we were soon alongside the long black steamer which I had noticed in the morning. I was hauled on board with as little ceremony as before, and bundled into a corner by the wheel, the men grinning and making mouths at me, and threatening me with their knives.

A more refined torture was that inflicted by Yan Sing himself, who took a seat beside me and began to unfold his plans. "It is the great fire festival of you island devils," he said—which was true enough, for it was the fifth of November—"we shall mix among the crowd who are performing their unholy rites; in the confusion we shall seize upon Miss Constance and bring her on board to share your captivity." Then the fiend went on to describe the outrages and tortures he would inflict upon his victims before they were finally sacrificed to appease the ghosts of his ancestors, murdered and deprived of burial, and to avenge the insult offered to his tutelary deity and that of his tribe.

It was a well-laid plan, for it had been arranged that there should be a great bonfire on the hill, by the old cromlech, and the Doctor, who had been away for some days, but who was expected to return that afternoon, had promised a display of fireworks from the terrace, and the grounds of Mervyn Tower were to be thrown open to the world in general. As I lay there helpless and bound, I kept my eyes fixed on Mervyn Tower, fervently praying that some power might arrest the fate that threatened one so dear.

As the short November day came to a close, with an angry scarlet flush in the west, and the gloomy shades of night ascended, the blaze of lights from the old house cast a glow over the surrounding region and flickered upon the crested billows that rolled between. Before long a deeper, ruddier gleam arose from the hill behind, and scarlet tongues of flame began to lick the dark sky. The great bonfire had been lighted, and the boys and girls were dancing merrily around it, no doubt.

Yan Sing had now gone ashore with most of his crew, and the rest of them, gathered at the bulwarks, were watching the blaze of light on the hill, and no one but myself noticed the terrible glow of a coming storm in the opposite direction. The storm of that night will long be remembered along the coast for its appalling suddenness, and the destruction that it wrought on land and sea. Two or three violent blasts roared past us, and then the full fury of the tempest was let loose. It was a tornado, in fact, rather than an ordinary storm, and attended by the same electric disturbance. Lightning the most intense flashed from cloud to cloud, the roll of thunder overpowered the noise of wind and sea, and all this was accompanied by rain that stung like whips, and blinding showers of hail. As the dark clouds rolled over the hills, an intense and terrible flash darted down upon Mervyn Tower, which stood out in appalling blackness for a moment, and then seemed to melt away in fiery ruin. The deafening roar that followed echoed far and near, and it seemed as if Tintagel itself must be shaken to its foundations.

The next flash revealed to those on board that their own boat, with its crew, was pulling hard for the ship. But the gale was in their teeth, and great seas were sweeping before it. A great roller concealed the boat from view; when it had passed, the boat was gone, and all its occupants were swept away, of no more account in the rage of the elements than so many wisps of straw.

The men on board gave a great cry when they saw the fate of their comrades; but I, although I felt sure that Constance, too, had perished, felt a strange kind of joy. Not long, and we should be once more united in the depths of the sea. For nothing could now save the ship, which had snapped its cable and was rapidly drifting to the shore. Her engines were now at work in a futile effort, but the next sea that swept over her carried off her hatchways and drowned her fires, and, a mere helpless tub, she drifted under the cliffs, and in a few moments only a few fragments of twisted iron remained to tell her fate.

In the few minutes that sealed the fate of the ship, one of the crew, not such a miscreant as his companions, had cut my bonds, and, just before she struck, I took a flying leap into the sea. Instinctively I struck out for the shore, and, borne upon the crest of a huge wave, a lightning flash revealed a blackened fragment of Mervyn Tower and the old cromlech aligned together. If my strength held out I should reach Mervyn Cove. But I remember nothing more.

Again I awoke to life at the touch of a soft hand. Again I heard the same joyful voice: "He will live." Live! Of course I shall live now that Constance is safe. But how did it all happen, and what has become of Mervyn Tower? Well, Constance escaped, owing to the happy arrival of the Doctor upon the scene, accompanied by Captain Riaz and half a dozen of the crew of the "Star of the Night." The Doctor, with his fine intelligence, scented Mongolia in the crowd, and put Riaz on guard to look carefully after his cousin. And so, when a small crowd of the Celestial pirates gathered around and attempted to hustle the young lady away, they were beaten off and driven to their boat. And as rumour had it that I had gone out in the "Priscilla," and was likely to be driven ashore by the gale, the fishermen were on the watch all along the coast. But it was Nero, the black boy, who was on the look-out by Mervyn Cove and who, when a wave flung me ashore, dragged me to a place of safety.

The old tower was sadly shattered by the electric fluid, its foundations torn up, and several of the old fir-trees at its base were splintered and riven in all directions. Workmen were clearing away the débris carefully, when they came upon the body of Yan Sing, who had apparently been killed by the lightning shock, for there were no marks on his body, except that upon his neck and chest there was burnt into his flesh an impression of the silk cord he wore with its mystic seven knots.

"And is that," I asked, "to be taken as a fulfilment of the mystic doggerel:

When lightning Mervyn's tower shall rend,

etc.?"

"That is not how I read the riddle," said the Doctor, "or how its author meant it. John Mervyn was a bold experimenter, and the trial alluded to is a scientific one. Mervyn's object was the crystallisation of carbon. In other words, the manufacture of diamonds. Having obtained a mass of almost pure carbon, under the form of graphite, he imagined that by placing it under strong and continuous pressure, and driving through it an intense electric current, he would reproduce the conditions under which the diamond was originally formed. In his day there were no artificial means of producing a current sufficiently strong, and he conceived the bold idea of utilising the lightning. Hence the tall gilt rod; but this is the first time, in all these years, that the electric flash has visited it."

"And how did he keep up the pressure?" asked Riaz, in an incredulous tone.

"By hydraulic force, which he obtained by iron pipes from the spring on the hill. Jacob was charged to look after the works, and faithfully fulfilled his trust, although he knew nothing of its purpose."

By this time the workmen had cleared away an entrance to the dungeon chamber, and the Doctor, inviting the rest of us to follow him, led the way to the place, carefully excluding all gaping observers. So strong and massive was the structure, that the shock had not materially damaged the chamber; although it was filled with fragments of stone and iron. In the midst of the débris lay what looked like a big cinder about the size of one's head. The Doctor took a hammer, and with a few skilful blows broke it in two. Within, like the kernel of a fruit, lay a "pure and perfect chrysolite," an immense diamond, that shone in the darkness like a star. The Doctor uncovered reverently, and stood in rapt admiration of the gem.

"Star of the night," he whispered, "shine upon us evermore."

Months have elapsed since the destruction of Mervyn Tower. Summer has come again, and just a year has passed since I first saw Constance, and made the acquaintance of Dr. Zamien. Our little church is all bedecked with flowers, and the way down to the village and the haven, and the deep blue sea that lies beyond, is lined with country people and fisher-folk. As you may guess, the occasion is the marriage of Arthur Pensilion (né Bertram, as you may say) with Constance Mervyn, the representative of that ancient house. But it is a double wedding, if you please, the Caballero Eugene Riaz also leading to the altar the lovely and accomplished Julia Danvers.

From the fact that I have assumed the name of Pensilion, it may be guessed that Aunt Priscilla has declared herself satisfied with the match, and that all is right as to family arrangements. And Julia seems also satisfied as to future prospects. But Constance and I are not going to live at Tregunter, which is away inland, and a big, ugly place. We are going to live at Mervyn Tower, with the sea always in view, and the rugged shores of old Cornwall, and the mystic battlements of Tintagel.

But the rustic gathering has another object besides that of seeing the wedding folks and cheering the newly married couples. A rumour has gone forth that on this day Dr. Zamien takes his leave of our hospitable country. A boat, manned by twelve stout rowers, is in the harbour, the men in their smart uniforms of white and blue, and their white caps, in each of which is the badge of a silver star.

"You hadn't ought to leave us, sir," cries the spokesman of the fisher-folk. "Stop along with we," shouts the fugleman of the agricultural division. For the Doctor has endeared himself to the people. He has cured or assuaged their rheumatics and lumbagos; he has helped them in their needs, and sympathised with their sorrows; and they are all reluctant to see him depart. Dr. Zamien smiles and shakes his head, and wipes his eyes, dimmed by emotion; smiles again, and struggles through the throng, where all are anxious to shake his hand or even touch his garments.

But he has taken his seat in his boat. The men push off; the harbour mouth is cleared, where everybody is cheering with might and main; the white jackets gleam on the crest of the waves, and then the boat reaches the yacht, and is soon swinging on the davits. The yacht makes sail; she is soon only a white spot on the horizon; and so, "bon voyage," Dr. Zamien.

He has taken the diamond with him, by the way. It is of no use anybody coming to look for that at Mervyn Tower.

SOME TOURISTS' TALES.

AN ADVENTURE IN WALES.

Everybody would scout the idea of brigands in Wales, and properly so, for there are none—at least of the pattern that still lingers in remote parts of Eastern Europe. But you may drop into the path of desperadoes anywhere, and run risks that in retrospect make you shudder. Although my experiences of foreign travel include a brush with genuine bandits, I never came so near to losing life as in a Welsh adventure.

Six weeks were at my disposal before I was due at the important function of a friend's marriage at Liverpool. That gave ample time to potter pretty thoroughly about the northern part of the Principality, and especially amongst the mountains. If plan I had, it was to work round a rough square, the corners of which were at Conway, Bangor, Beddgelert, and Bettws-y-Coed. And I proposed to wind in and out at caprice, and mix up coast "bits" and secluded gems of lake and summit. I was mostly doing my tour on foot, and only using the rail as the occasional staff, and not crutch, which it should be to the man who means to get the greatest gains from such rambles.

But I found myself one sultry August day on the line, booked from Penmaenmawr to Aber. The object immediately before me was to visit the falls a few miles from Aber village, and perhaps push into the passes at this point and climb Carnedd Llewelyn. Good business is done in a summer as reasonably fair as this was by all these railways of many stations. But in this instance a crowd was on the Penmaenmawr platform and the train was full to suffocation. There was a fête or other al-fresco function at Llanfairfechan, and a gay gathering of villagers promised to be present. The excursionists were packed in anywhere and anyhow. Classes were abolished for official convenience, and a motley half-score were in my carriage. There was prospect of speedy deliverance, and I was rather interested than vexed. My neighbours were mostly a study in various shades and degrees of pleasure. I particularly noticed one girl, whose age I guessed to be nineteen, perhaps. Her face had a delicacy of feature and complexion that was exceptionable. In her prettiness was a touch of something beyond the rustic type. But when she talked to her companions, a half-formed fancy of high birth reared in poverty floated away. The voice was scarcely refined in texture, and had a very country accent. The impetuous gossip in which she indulged proved her a thorough lass of the locality, and so did her name, which I soon heard. It was Elsie Rees.

One passenger had been in the compartment when I entered it, and he seemed surly over the invasion.

"Confoundedly hot for this sort of thing," he growled to me. I was his vis-à-vis at the opposite end of the carriage to where Elsie Rees sat.

"Yes, but it'll soon be over," I said; "they all leave at Llanfair. And I understand it is properly their train. We are the interlopers really, and shall have to change for Aber and places beyond."

He made no answer to that. I sent one glance over his suit of seedy black, his high cheek-bones and stubbly reddish beard, the sallow skin and the phenomenally deep V-shaped crease on his forehead when he frowned. Then I settled that nature had written churl in large characters upon him, and returned to watching the others.

Elsie Rees was impatient. She pulled out a smart little gold watch and peered at its hands. Then she shook her head as if its story of flying time did not please her. She wanted to be at the end of the journey.

We were going through dark arches, and a buxom woman pulled up the window. It was too much for my scowling fellow-passenger. He got upon his feet, muttered what sounded like an oath, and went straight to the offending sheet of glass. It soon dropped with a clatter and thud.

The action was obviously resented by the lady's husband; but he received a nudge to let it pass, and no quarrel ensued.

In a few minutes Llanfair was reached, and a lively throng tumbled out pell-mell. Suddenly I heard a sharp cry from Elsie Rees.

"Oh, my watch is gone! And it was Evan's present. He will never forgive me for losing it!"

The last words were only intended, I suppose, for a girl friend's ear. But Elsie had forgotten other bystanders. Poor little, loyal heart, shaken by a sharp storm of grief and dread with no warning, and when everything had been so merry and so bright!

A group collected, and many questions were asked. Elsie was in tears, and could only repeat the fact of her loss. It was an awkward season to obtain much attention from railway men or police. They had numberless demands made upon them in other directions.

"Stolen very likely as you stepped out of the carriage by some one who pushed by," said a constable. "It's all bustle to-day, and you may easily have a rogue at your elbow."

He took down particulars of the missing article and the names of such of her fellow-travellers as the girl knew. But he held out little hope of a recovery. While he was talking to Elsie, I searched the throng to find the morose traveller who had opened the window. He had disappeared.

The train for Bangor and Menai Bridge was announced. It steamed in, and I had to leave the excitement and mystery on the platform, never expecting to know more of Elsie Rees or of her watch.

At Aber, according to programme, I forsook the railway for many days. As I passed the ticket collector, two men stood on one side. I recognised the taller. It was Jabez Perkins, a Scotland Yard man. He once tracked and captured a rascal who forged my signature. Perkins was spruce and rather horsey as to attire. It was quite possible that he, too, was taking a holiday in Wales. He did not seem to know me again, though with the trained instinct of his calling he took stock of all who went by.

More formally and fully the Carnarvonshire hamlet which I now entered is called in gazetteers and the like, Abergwyngregin—Stream of the white shells. But custom allows an abbreviation which suits the laziness or stiffness of visitors' tongues. The rather prosaic shore-line of Anglesea extends opposite, and the Straits are somewhat narrow; but turn inland up the glen, and beauty is piled on beauty, and the stranger soon admits that here a Welsh wonderland begins. For two miles you can follow the winding track up the valley until you are in the bosom of the mountains. The situation and surroundings of the Aber waterfalls are charming every way. The nearer hills have their slopes wood-clad, and the greens and browns harmoniously blend. There is the rushing stream, milk-white repeatedly amongst its boulders; behind, there are glimpses of a silver sea flashing in the sunshine; high above the falls is a wild, elevated gorge where the river has its narrow bed. The precipices are grand, but dangerous; a steady head and sure foot are needed by those tourists who would break away from the beaten route. And I found that caution was needed in the district in other respects just then.

The glen was a delightful haven of rest, and I spent two days in local explorations. It seemed at first a forlorn hope to find a spare bedroom. The few Aber lodging-houses had no room; but I succeeded at last in impressing a cottager with my determination, and I got a make-shift couch. That was Tuesday. On the Thursday afternoon I shouldered knapsack and went up the vale, taking the line to the left of Moel Wnion, and making for the mighty crest of Llewelyn. The advice I had received erred, if at all, in its thoroughness. So many details were given, and so many landmarks referred to, that it was a trifle bewildering; but I flattered myself that the coil would straighten when I was actually on the ground. I believed that I had a good general grasp of my problem.

It may have been so. I am willing to think that it was the weather that threw me so entirely out, and fixed my fate for a deadly peril that night.

The majestic panorama of the earlier stages of the journey must be stamped on the memory of any traveller who surveys it. At one point, where the brook babbles down the mountain, heedless of the rocks so near, the eye ranges out over a sweeping curve of noble peaks. Snowdon is there, a grey, shining mass, framed behind Crib-y-Ddysgyl. The height of Penmaenmawr and the Great Orme lift themselves from the sea-line. Carnedd Llewelyn and Carnedd Dafydd stand shoulder to shoulder. And then to the right, straight over the Penrhyn slate quarries, the outline of Carnarvon Castle can be seen.

Probably I lingered longer than I ought to have done. There had been a half whisper in the morning of rain before another sunrise; but I understood that seven hours was sufficient time to allow for crossing Llewelyn to Capel Curig, and I had booked a room for the night by letter at Guest's Hotel. The sky continued cloudy, but not specially threatening, a state of things that had already lasted for half a week.

But as the day wore on a change was perceptible. The clouds seemed to melt into haze. This floated lower and thickened. I grew uneasy and put on speed. Soon I felt the sharp sting of rain-drops, and the obscurity was growing alarming. I had mastered my mountain, and was making, as I imagined, for the ridge that led down to the Bangor road, and so into Capel Curig. But dusk descended, and I was sure of nothing except that I was intensely weary and was stumbling amongst dangerous rocks, and had consciously parted with every clue to my path.

"What's wrong? Lost on the hills, mister?"

There are times when the harshest and most grating human voice has music in it for a listener's ear. This was such an occasion; yet I was considerably startled at first; but, peering into the rain-mist, the shape of a low hut became visible. I was almost opposite the black cavern where a door should have been.

"I am afraid so," I answered. "Can you guide me to Capel Curig?"

"Whew! You've come up the valley instead of going down it. I know that much, though I'm not Welsh."

"Is there any shelter here?"

"No—I'm thinking not." The man seemed to hesitate.

"I can pay. Make your own charge."

It was a speech of desperation, and rash.

"Maybe my mate'll manage it."

He stepped back, and a colloquy began in tones too guarded for me to catch. The time of my suspense seemed interminable, and the storm was getting worse all the while. My outlook was dismal anyhow.

Another person now appeared. He was a big, square-shouldered fellow, muffled in a rough, nondescript garment that I set down, probably in error, to be a dress affected by shepherds of the country. His face was effectually protected from my curious gaze by the gloom and by a soft felt hat, pulled down to the level of the brows.

"My mate, Mr. Jones, will show you to a house," said the voice that had originally caused me to halt.

"Thank you."

Steadily Jones and I trudged on. He was oddly taciturn, I thought. I asked about the distance, the character of the house where I might expect shelter—was it an inn?—and as to the locality into which I had blundered. I received the curtest replies, oftenest a monosyllable.

It has been a marvel to me many times on review that no suspicion of mischief brewing crossed my mind. Perhaps the relief of being in touch with my kind, after fearing that I should be hopelessly benighted in the wilds, prevented me from reading the right meaning into certain sinister omens. I did not doubt the bona fides of my guide until I was forced to do so. Apparently we were climbing up amongst the precipices again, and for some space I silently pondered the riddle. The mists broke away and were rolling underneath us; the weather cleared; a young moon had risen overhead. But around all was grey, rocky, and desolate. There was no sign of any human habitation. My fatigue was such that I scarcely knew how to drag one foot after its fellow. I had practically been walking since noon. At last, in a new onset of despair, I bluntly challenged the moody man at my side.

"Come, I don't like this. Where are you taking me to?" I demanded.

"You wanted lodgings?"

"Yes."

What chord of reminiscence was stirring in my brain? There was no falsetto in these tones now, and surely I had heard them elsewhere? As in a flash I had it. The voice belonged to the ill-natured fellow-passenger whom mentally I had marked as the purloiner of Elsie Rees's watch. A thrill of apprehension went through my veins, and was, I submit, inevitable and not to be charged as timorousness. And mechanically I said:

"You were on the rail with me yesterday."

"Eh, you know that!" was the quick, vindictive answer. "And what then?"

Defiance, and a vibration which seemed like triumph thinly disguised, characterised the words and manner.

It was on my tongue to accuse him then and there of the theft. However, I restrained the impulse and only said:

"Let us find this cottage; then we can talk."

"Indeed! At your pleasure, you think," he retorted, with jarring irony. "But I will not be spied upon and informed against by any of your set. I am the wrong man. And if you won't go further, one place is about as good as another. It's a short shift."

As the scoundrel spoke, my wits, alive to the danger, tracked his meaning with a timely swiftness that was my salvation. I noted the hand thrust into the bosom of the loose cloak. The gesture might be innocent or otherwise. I soon learned.

The menacing words ceased in a sibilant sound that escaped his shut teeth. A bent metal bar swung in the air. If my watch had been less narrow, or my response a second later through surprise or indecision, I should have been felled like an ox. But my stout mountaineering stick went up in the old fencing attitude, and I was not yet wholly at the ruffian's mercy. No doubt remained of his purpose. It was murder—here, amongst the débris of some old cataclysm. Then, when I was discovered on the morrow or many days after, it would appear as if I had strayed from my path—as I had—and wandered over the edge of a precipice. He might rifle my pockets and still hear that a verdict of "accidental death" was returned at the "crowner's quest."

Not that these thoughts occurred to me in the first moments of the crisis. I was not conscious of reflection at all, only of a dogged reluctance to be put out of the way by my treacherous adversary.

The blow crashed through my defence, but spent its force in shivering the old favourite companion of many a jaunt. It just grazed the side of the soaked tourist cap I wore, and stung my ear like a false hit in a boxing match. The pain roused the animal that slumbers in every one of us. I had but the stump of a staff remaining, and the iron bar was firmly griped by my foe. One resource only presented itself. Before he could disengage his arm and have room to strike again, I had him in a tight wrestler's clasp. It was not for nothing that I had practised the art under the guidance of the finest amateur of his day in Cornwall. "Mr. Jones" was the heavier weight, and had, no doubt, measured my inches with contempt in the railway carriage. But he left science out of his reckoning, and thereby muddled his strategy. Do what he would, he was unable to shake me off. Every trick that he tried I met by a counter artifice.

It was a terrible struggle. We were evenly pitted, and the question was, who would be exhausted first? I had cause to fear that superior stamina was on my enemy's side, and that though I might protract the contest, I could not avert a foregone conclusion. Whenever I yielded a couple of yards or so, it was probable that my body would be hurled over the shelf of rock to destruction. The end stared me in the face. Panting, wild-eyed, with our hot breath on each other's perspiration-bathed faces, we wrestled on. And the soft moonlight widened, and gave us light to see the look of hate and irrevocable purpose, and of fierce, proud determination to die hardly.

Was that thunder—the low rumble that, I take it, we both heard? I remember that a strange coolness and detachment of thought, with a preternatural acuteness of sense, had in my case taken the place of the early confusion. Every nerve and muscle was at extreme tension, but the mind seemed to have escaped the domination of the body.

A noise filled the air, the ground shook, parted; all was a chaos of falling stones, splitting rocks, dust, hurtling masses of earth. The finish had come in another fashion than I expected. We two were together flung to the ground—we had no chance to relax the grip—and then over the ledge.

The fall was fearful, and must have been fatal if we had reached the bottom. But a stunted bush with its mass of earth had gone first, and lodged on a narrow barrier midway. It saved two necks.

Stunned and bruised, it was some minutes, I imagine, before I came to. Then I made out where I was, in danger yet, though not from my recent assailant. He lay still enough, and it was only by putting my hand over his heart, underneath the garments, that I could tell he was alive.

What to do I scarcely knew, but I fancied it was possible to clamber over a neighbouring ridge, and so find at least a safer station. With great difficulty I accomplished the feat. I stood on a little plateau, which, as I took the bearings of the land, was evidently an approach to quarry cuttings. The secret of the convulsion was disclosed. Workmen had exploded a mine to remove hindrances to their toil. The night-time was the season for it, and strangers were not expected.

There was a white track over the plateau. Did it lead to a highway?

Somehow I had a presentiment of deliverance. Nothing revives more quickly than hope. It was a weary business getting into the bottom, but when there a raised road was in view, running up from the base of the hill, and turning sharp off to the left. Better still, the rattle of wheels was audible. Had the vehicle passed, or was it approaching? How eagerly I hearkened to determine that all-important question.

"Coming!" was the exultant cry that slipped involuntarily from my lips.

A dog-cart with three men appeared at the corner. I shouted and waved both arms frantically. I learned later that the Welsh driver thought it was the geni of the hills, and was rigid with terror.

Jabez Perkins had no such superstitious notions. He was in command, and compelled his shivering poltroon of a Bethesda ostler to pull up. Alighting, he came up over the boulders with the alacrity of a man much younger. He stared with ludicrous amazement as he saw me. It was the first and only time I caught Perkins off his guard.

"Dear me, Mr. Fellowes, what does this mean?"

Briefly I told my story. By the time I was half through he was rubbing his hands and chuckling.

"It won't be a wild-goose chase, after all," he said. "It's our man without a doubt. I had fairly given him up."

"May I ask you to explain?"

"Why, Jones is an alias. It is Mr. Dinas Roberts, as clever and unscrupulous a rogue as the kingdom can produce, who has mauled you. A precious near thing it has been, I'll warrant. Gully, up there, and I have been tracking him for close on a month. You saw us at Aber?"

"Yes. But did you recognise me?"

"Of course! It's my trade to fix faces in my memory. I always do it. But I didn't look as if I knew you. That was business again. But Dinas Roberts was too cute. He had a friend who spotted us, and I dare say a signal was arranged. Where or how he left the line I do not know."

"It was at Llanfair," I said.

"Since then we have been poking round the mountains entirely in vain; couldn't strike the trail even. This is a fortunate capture!"

"What has he done?"

"Ask what he hasn't done. He's wanted for burglary at four or five places—at Rhyl last. And he is a noted utterer of false money, and a suspected coiner. What you have gone through shows that he is quite prepared to commit murder. You are a little like John Gully, another of our officers, Mr. Fellowes; and as he knew the pursuit was hot, he may have taken you for Gully. Or he wanted to rob you. Cash was necessary to clear out of the country, perhaps."

Perkins blew a whistle softly, and his colleague also left the cart and joined us. I led the way to the perilous ledge which Roberts was destined to leave only for hospital and a prison. He was perfectly unconscious, and could offer no resistance to his captors. But it took the four of us to bring him down the slope to the cart, and it was a marvel then that there were no broken bones. Perkins at once searched his prisoner. In a secure pocket beneath his vest Roberts had a lady's gold watch hidden.

"The one stolen at Llanfair—or at least discovered to be missing there," I said. "I should like to have a hand in restoring it."

"You have already," Perkins answered; "and if you choose to send it back, I'll take the responsibility of saying that it is at your disposal, subject to proper identification. Our light-fingered acquaintance will be tried on other charges than that of stealing a girl's trinket, if he lives."

It was not the only "take" through these events. Dinas Roberts had an accomplice who not merely endeavoured—and with considerable success—to secure his retreat in these mountain fastnesses, but was himself obnoxious to the law. The indications which I was able to give of situation, vague as they seemed to me, were sufficient to direct the police to this man's haunts, and he exchanged his eyrie for a cell.

Dinas Roberts proved to have sustained serious internal injuries, and could not be arraigned for many months. He ultimately received a heavy sentence of penal servitude.

In spite of the shock, a week's rest put me to rights, and I went on my tour with undiminished zest and buoyancy. It would be something to be able to tell the guests at my friend's wedding festivities at Liverpool how nearly he had been under the necessity of selecting another "best man."

Before that date I was properly empowered to restore the watch to Elsie Rees. Her winsome face and Arcadian simplicity had interested me. I went to Llanfair and got the address. Elsie hailed from Penmaenmawr. When I found her and explained my errand, it was as if a cloud of care floated away from her sweet brow.

"Oh, I am so very glad!" she said; "Evan gave it to me—I am to marry Evan. He is a sailor, and away now. He is to be back next month. It seemed so terrible to have to tell him I had lost his present."

Six weeks after that I was in London once more, and at my rooms I found a letter which had taken a roundabout route, coming through the hands of the local police and Perkins to me. It was in the joint names of Elsie Rees and Evan Evans, and in great scrawling characters and much formality of phrase it thanked me on behalf of both for the little service I had fortuitously been the means of rendering. There was a postscript in another hand.

"But if it hadn't been found, Evan was true and kind," it said.

Is there anything so sweet and ingenuous as rustic courtship?

A SIREN OF THE RHINE.

THE soft light of a golden evening was over the scene, as the Rhine boat full charged with passengers panted slowly upwards against the magnificent rush of the Rhine stream. The boat had passed Saint Goar, where the river is at its grandest, and where, in the noble sweep of the stream, the castled crags, the rush and turbulence of the river, and the serene beauty of wood and rock glowing in the rich hues of sunset, all the beauties of the region seem to culminate. But there is still a climax beyond this, which the next bend of the river promises to reveal: the rapids where the waters swirl and seethe among sunken rocks, and splintered crags, and where the famous Lorelei rock rises more than four hundred feet above the stream, in one huge precipitous mass, with the rich tints of its rocky sides and the luxuriant vegetation that clothes its slopes.

The fore part of the boat is crowded with people, who are eagerly looking out to catch the first glimpse of this famous scene, for we are in the height of the tourist season, and the prevalent language is English, or perhaps more strictly American. The clatter of teacups and the popping of wine-corks are hushed for a moment, and the waiters, of irreproachable broadcloth and snowy shirt-fronts, have ceased their regular functions for a moment to point out to their patrons the objects to be particularly noticed. Among the crowd is one Frank Seaton, a young English artist, who flatters himself that he has secured a good place for looking about him, not having yet made up his mind where to stop to do a little sketching. Suddenly there appears a little party consisting of two ladies, heralded by the conductor of the steamer himself, and followed by a lady's-maid and a jäger in green and gold, who carries, furled, over his shoulder, two immense umbrellas of a brilliant carmine hue. Evidently, says Frank to himself, these are some of the high mightinesses for whom the after cabin of the steamer was reserved. But he was a little disconcerted when he found a couple of seats plumped down in front of him; not that it mattered, for he was tall and could see over people's heads. But when the jäger, with a flourish of the arm, opened out the two huge red umbrellas, and placed them over the two chairs, where the ladies had now seated themselves, the matter became more serious, for certainly he could not see over the edges of the umbrellas, and the glare of their crude colour was painful to the eyes; and he was about to seek a more favourable position with a muttered objurgation at high mightinesses and their umbrellas, when he saw that one of the ladies had risen, and turning her back to the Lorelei rock, had thrust her sunshade aside and was looking straight before her with a rapt, yet eager expression in her beautiful eyes. She was in the full bloom of womanhood and beauty—a beauty of the rarest Germanic type, with a flush of pale gold in the massive clusters of her hair. The pose of the figure, its expression struck the artist with admiration. If I can only seize that happy pose, he thought, and he opened his sketching-block under the cover of the big umbrella, and with some bits of coloured chalk he dashed off a charming little sketch. "Never mind the rock," he said, sotto voce, "I have got the siren."

As Frank gazed at the siren, her eyes suddenly darkened and softened into an expression the most enticing and bewitching. The look was not meant for him, but the arrow is none the less fatal that it is aimed at another. "Siren, I am thy slave for ever," whispered Frank.

"I will buy that bicture, you sir," said an imperious voice, and looking up, Frank saw that there stood over him a tall, bronzed warrior, with steel-blue eyes and handsome, haughty face, an appearance none the more pleasing to the young artist, as he realised that it had called forth that divine expression on the siren's face.

"The sketch is not for sale," said Frank, ruffled at the other's impolite address.

"But I insist. I am the Baron von Graben, and I will pay what you shall ask. But is it to be permitted that you shall carry away the picture of one illustrious lady in your portfolio?"

"Oh, what is the matter, Otto?" said the siren, interposing. "Is it a sketch that you admire? May I be permitted to see it?" with a gracious smile for the artist.

"It is unworthy of the subject, but it is my best," said Frank, submissive to the smile of beauty.

"But it is charming," said the siren, scrutinising the drawing attentively. "And what effect with such simple materials! Ah, how I envy such power and grace!"

"Honour me by accepting it, madame," said Frank, delighted with such discriminating praise.

"With grateful pleasure," rejoined the siren, smiling still more thanks. "And if you will, enhance its value by signing the drawing."

Frank added his name, which the siren, perhaps, had never seen before, but anyhow she looked as if she had, and smiled still more thanks, while she called the Baron to her side and spoke to him earnestly in her native tongue. Frank sank back among the crowd, believing the incident to have terminated, and only anxious to get a good view of the Lorelei rock and its surroundings, for the steamer was just opposite, labouring upwards against the foaming rapids, and waking all the echoes with the roar of steam and the clank of machinery. But as the mighty rock was lost to sight in a bend of the river, and the charming town of Oberwesel appeared, its old walls and pinnacled towers, and romantic surroundings, the Baron again approached with lofty courtesy. His wife, the Baroness, was anxious to make the acquaintance of an artist whose works she so much admired. Would he pardon the liberty taken, and humour the wishes of one who unfortunately was an invalid? Frank complied, wondering a little at this description of one who looked the picture of health and feminine vigour. But it was not to the siren that he was first presented, but to her companion, who was noticeable for the expression of settled melancholy which rested on her pale, emaciated features. Yet a strong, if feverish lustre burnt in her large, dark eyes, which seemed acquainted with tears and sufferings, but to remain still unsubdued. The siren bore the name and title of the Gräfin von Liebenstein, and her charming and vivid manner contrasted with the subdued languor of her companion.

Seated beside two accomplished and pleasing women, the voyage passed all too quickly for the artist. Every part of the scene was familiar to his companions, and they felt a kind of patriotic and personal pride in pointing out its beauties and attractions. The pleasant raillery of the siren brought out the serious earnestness of her friend, to whom the old legends of sorrowful, mysterious burden seemed in some way true with an inner and terrible significance. There was much to be pitied evidently in the condition of the poor Baroness. The Baron, though outwardly attentive and solicitous for her comfort, was unmoved by any tenderness in her behalf, and as cold and hard as ice, while his devotion to the Gräfin, and his delight in her beauty, he hardly took the trouble to conceal. But Frank came sagely to the conclusion that there was no corresponding affection on her part. She repelled or eluded all the Baron's attentions with such ease and indifference; and then what tender sympathy she showed for her invalid friend; the latter a little peevish, perhaps, under such demonstrations, as invalids are apt to be at times.

As for Frank, while actually ascending the Rhine, he was metaphorically descending the stream of passion at a furious rate. The beauty of the enchantress intoxicated him—the subtle charm of her manner, the provocative smiles, the alluring glances. It was all mere midsummer madness, he told himself; it was part of the glamour and beauty of the scene. In a time all too short he would awake and find himself alone in the crowd, left stranded, with only the memory of a divine presence to console him. Only that! Why, no, Mr. Frank, what of that more mundane and practical affection which possessed you just now? What of that pleasant, gossipy, affectionate letter that you snatched with such delight at the wicket of the post office this morning? What has poor Mary Blake done, who is charming, too, in her quiet, modest way, and who loves you well, as you believe, and who, at all events, has reason to believe that you love her? Well, who is responsible for the progress of a dream? Frank would have urged; and if in such a dream there appears a goddess who says, "follow me," what can a poor mortal do but follow, over stock and stone, and bush and briar? But there, it is all ended now, the stopping-place is at hand—the man and maid are collecting books and wraps, the conductor is at hand to remind Herr Baron that his destination is almost reached.

And then, with a certain hesitation in her manner, the Baroness turns to Frank: "Remain with us for a little while. There are charming scenes about Castle Gravensberg, which will derive additional charm from your pencil. It is asking much, perhaps, but still remain;" and the siren echoed with alluring earnestness, "Ah, yes, remain!" And thus it was that Frank Seaton became an inmate of the Schloss Gravensberg.

Life at the Schloss went on quietly enough, with a homely kind of state and ceremony. The Baron was a courteous host, although he evidently regarded with secret annoyance the growing intimacy between the Gräfin and the artist. Between the pair there was the bond of a common pursuit. The lady was in every way an accomplished amateur, but in painting she looked up to Frank as a disciple to her master. In music, again, the position was reversed. The siren, as was to be expected, had a magnificent voice and sang divinely, while she was an accomplished executant on the violin and piano. Frank sang a good tenor, but his voice was untrained, and the Gräfin set herself zealously to work to improve his method. And while the long summer days were devoted to drives and rides, and to rambles in search of picturesque subjects for the artist's pencil, the evenings were devoted to music; and in the great drawing-room of the Castle there assembled, almost every evening, a large circle of friends and neighbours, most of whom were able to take a respectable part in any improvised concert.

Although engrossed by the charms of the siren, yet Frank conceived a strong friendship for the Baroness, who was a woman of strong emotional faculties, and who, on her part, felt a compassionate regard for a young man with so many amiable qualities, but who, she felt, and partly blamed herself, was on the slippery path of a dangerous passion. She would gently warn him at times, and yet she herself was much happier for his presence, for her husband, nettled by the fickle coldness of the mistress of his heart, had become much more affectionate in manner towards his wife, who, in her devotion to him, was thankful even for small mercies. "But Louise is naturally cold and fickle," she would say bitterly to herself; "she will come back to Otto when I am gone, and when she has assured herself that he will inherit all the wealth I brought him; and the handsome young artist will have a lesson, salutary but bitter."

But for the Baroness, suffering from what was deemed an incurable malady, there came a gleam of hope. Some famous professor at Munich had studied such cases intently; he had been successful in many cases. Friendly voices urged her at once to put herself under his care. The Baron was equally anxious that every means should be tried for his wife's cure. He himself would accompany her and remain with her, and this prospect alone would have induced the poor woman to embrace the opportunity with joy.

That evening there was no company at the Castle, and Frank and his Countess indulged themselves in a long, romantic walk by a forest path, which led to a lonely rock that jutted out right over the rushing Rhine stream. They were still within the domains of the Castle, which stretched for miles on every side—a noble property, which the Von Grabens had alienated by extravagant courses, but which had been bought back by the wealth of the great heiress. The crumbling ruins of an ancient watch-tower occupied the summit of the cliff, thickly overgrown with ivy and shaded by a group of noble pines. And beneath its walls some former Von Graben had placed a bench of carved stone, now almost overgrown with honeysuckle and woodbine; and let into the wall above was a slab carved with curious volutes, like a sepulchral monument, all green and lichen-covered, and upon it inscribed the one word, "farewell."

"Fond lovers have parted here, perhaps," said Frank, as he deciphered the inscription.

"Yes, it is farewell," said the Countess, seating herself on the bench, and suggesting, with a graceful movement, that her companion might find a place beside her. All was silence except for the deep murmur of the river as it swept through the rocky gorge, coming into sight in a broad reach where meadows stretched between the hills, and a little town with mediæval walls and pinnacled turrets lay bathed in happy sunshine. "Yes, it is indeed farewell, for to-morrow I return to Liebenstein."

"To-morrow! Oh, it's sudden," cried Frank, his eyes darkening with emotion. "And these halcyon days; yet why should they end? Will you not be mine always, dearest Louise?"

She turned upon him her eyes of ineffable blue, charged with irresistible tenderness. "And dost thou really love me?" she whispered, as she resigned her lips to his, and they met in one long, sweet caress.

"Yet we must be prudent, dear friend," said the Countess, after a while. "We must keep this love of ours, so sweet and precious, a secret from all the world. To-morrow I must go to Liebenstein. Would you know my life there? It happened thus: At sixteen I was given in marriage to the Graf—he was old and crabbed—but if I was his wife I was not his slave. But what a tyrant he was! Yet how I defied him; and even now that he is dead he would rule my life. As far as he could he deprived me of all control of my revenues. Every year I must reside six months at Liebenstein, and with his sister the Princess. A widowed vestal I must remain, or farewell the broad lands of Liebenstein. Ah! do not mar the beauty of the hour," she cried, as Frank was about to speak, "by any talk of money-bags and settlements. Only you must not come to Liebenstein. The Princess would devour you, my poor Frank. She is a monster, an ogress."

"Then I am the more bound to rescue you."

"No, no," cried Louise, peremptorily. "Listen. To-morrow the dear Baroness will inform you of her projected visit to Munich, and she will beg you to make the Castle your home for as long as you will please. But that must not be. You would be lost in that desolate place, and without me; for how could I meet you among so many prying eyes? But in the forest, half-way between this and Liebenstein, there is the forester's house. The forester's wife is my foster-mother, and loves me in all things. There are two rooms there that my brother occupies when he comes for the hunting, and which at other times the forester lets to artists or professors, or any who seek solitude and retirement. And these are your passion also, are they not, dear friend? And if now and then a lady rides over to see her dear foster-mother, need she know that a handsome young artist lies perdu in the thicket? There, my lord, does that suit your fancy? Am I not good to you?"

"You are too good to me, dearest," whispered Frank. And yet, when the intoxicating presence of the siren was removed, he doubted whether it were good at all, or whether it were not some dreadful evil towards which he was rushing with eyes wide open. Only in that case, he said to himself, "Evil, be thou my good."

Behold our artist now, installed in his forest abode. It is a pleasant home in a wide glade or clearing, of stone, with ancient gables and a thatched roof, where wild flowers have sprung and the blue iris crowns the roof. Before the porch, in the sunshine, sits the good frau forester, with her snowy curls, busy with her knitting, while pigeons flutter about, and an old hen clucks from her coop in the grass to a little brood of lovely pheasant chicks. A wing of the old house forms the hunting-lodge, where Frank has his quarters. There is a big salon, cool and polished, with panelling of silver pine, and floor of inlaid woods. Fruits and flowers, of rarest scent and hue—daily renewed from the hothouses of Liebenstein—adorn the rustic stands. Books and papers of the newest strew the tables, and a little library, choice and classic, adorns the wall. Easels and canvases are ranged in picturesque confusion, and a grand piano occupies a corner. Beyond, there is the forest for a studio, with its peaceful glades where the trees whisper mysterious nothings, or a glimpse of the river valley opens out, with hills softly swelling in the distance.

A few small landscapes has the artist drawn, but they are all of scenes which have been consecrated by the presence of Louise. The rock by the river, the bridge where the rapid stream dashes down to the Rhine, or a little forest scene where he has lingered with her and drunk in long draughts of love. But his hand is hardly in earnest for work; he can only linger and wait for the coming hour.

The hour approaches; a horse's hoofs sound hollowly in the forest glade, or the tinkle of grelots announce the approach of my lady's ponies. The goddess descends from her car or springs from the saddle into the arms of him who awaits her.

It is a delicious idyll, and yet Frank is impatient of its progress. Why should all this sweetness be stolen and snatched at intervals? He has a castle, too, which, if it shines only in the air, is as real and precious as any castle on the Rhine, and which may outlast the strongest of them. Let the lands of Liebenstein go; he has enough and to spare, and his palette is a richer domain than them all. But Louise silences him with a soft caress. "Hush! You do not understand. We must wait. Are you not happy, sir?"

Yes, happy for one hour of the twenty-four, and the remainder devoured by unrest and regret. And soon the hour itself is lost, replaced by a message—a sweet little intoxicating note: "Things are happening; still he must wait." And at last there comes a little agitated scrawl: "Meet me at sundown by the Farewell Rock."

A boding presentiment seizes upon him. He feels sure that he will never return to the forest lodge. He arranges his affairs as if it were the eve of his execution, burns all the little notes and souvenirs that he has treasured. These drawings are for the Countess at Liebenstein—it is all the revenge he will take if she is faithless—in memory of the days that are passed. Such and such things are to be sent to his house in London should he not return. The old forester receives the young Herr's instructions with twinkling eyes. "Has his excellency," he asks, "heard the sad news from Gravenstein? The Baroness is dead. Poor lady! she underwent an operation that was to cure her, and she died of it, and the Baron, they say, is half frantic with grief. Still, he has much to console him, for everything is bequeathed to him except a handsome sum for the poor.

Ah! she was always good to them, poor lady!"

Frank's last occupation was to write a letter to his old sweetheart, Mary Blake. There was no bond between them except that of mutual affection. It was not his fault, that, for her parents had strongly objected to him as a being too impulsive and untrustworthy to be received without a long probation. Well, they had been right, it seemed, and Frank wrote a short, pathetic letter, excusing his long and cruel silence, and leaving her free to choose one more worthy than himself; and with this letter in his pocket, and resuming his pedestrian garb, he started on foot for the rock by the Rhine.

The evening lowered dark and stormy, and a smart shower had made the footing slippery and uncertain as Frank strode up the path to the ruined tower. The lamps of a carriage gleamed among the trees below. The lady was there before him, and met him pale and wan, but with a cold resolve in eyes that now shone steely blue. All was over between them, circumstances had been too strong for her will. Sweet would be the memory of his affection, but it could only be a memory now. Yet even then, as she stood cold and unapproachable, she seemed dearer to him and more desirable than in her softest moods. A wild desire seized upon him to clasp her in his arms and leap into the foaming flood beneath. She saw the wild gleam in his eyes, and for the moment trembled. "Go," she said, pushing him from her with her white, strong arm. He staggered backwards, and losing his footing on the slippery grass, fell backwards over the cliffs.

Yet although it seemed impossible that any one could survive such a fall, some special providence saved the poor fellow's life. A projecting tree broke his fall and landed him in a crevice in the rocks, and here he was found by a search party, who, with lights and torches, urged on by the Countess, searched the river brink. They took him, maimed and insensible, to the nearest house, which happened to be that of the Protestant pastor. There were skilful surgeons soon at the young man's bedside; for them the case was charmingly complicated, a compound fracture here, and lacerations there, with concussion of the brain upon it all. It was a credit to the faculty who brought him through it, and also to the skilful nursing of a charming young English lady, who had been summoned to the spot. And this was Mary Blake, to whom the pastor had written, finding her address in the injured man's possession.

Yet months elapsed before Frank was sufficiently recovered to hobble about in the pretty garden of the parsonage, where, between the foliage of the cherry and walnut-trees, one caught the gleam of the rapid river. The fair-haired children of the parsonage were playing about him; they had adopted Frank as one of themselves, and Mary Blake as an elder sister. It was a day of fête; boats and barges, draped with flags, were on the river, the steamers as they passed displayed all their bunting, and from the massy woods of Gravensberg came the sounds of martial music, and ever and again the guttural hochs of the crowd.

"It is the marriage celebration," said the good pastor, who had joined the party, "of our good Baron Gravensberg and the beautiful Gräfin von Liebenstein."

Soon after the joyous shouts of the children announce that Mary Blake had come to join their sports. But no, she was in a graver mood, and sent the little inquisitive crowd to the further end of the garden.

"Now that your highness has sufficiently recovered," said Mary, cheerfully, "I have come to take my leave."

"To leave!" cried Frank, dismayed; "but why, when we are so happy and every one so kind?"

"But I have got my congé," said Mary, holding up a letter—it was the one that Frank had written in his trouble. He took it from her hands and tore it into a thousand pieces.

"Take me as I am, dear Mary," he said, seizing her hands once more, "in my sober waking senses, and forgive the delirium of a dream."

A TALE OF SWANAGE.

Above the little town of Swanage the hills present a strange and weird appearance to the stranger, who, quite ignorant of this ancient quarry land, cannot help thinking that the beauty of the landscape is much marred by the untidy-looking heaps, like huge rabbit burrows, which thickly dot the undulating ground.

But when one of the steep streets has been climbed, and the stranger finds himself in the very midst of the ancient and modern quarries, he discovers that the nearer view brings the enchantment, and that among these strange pit-mouths, over which luxuriant ferns, flowers, and even fruit-trees spread their beauty to hide, as it were, the naked earth, he will better understand the love the old quarrymen have for their pits, and how they prefer to work in their low, damp galleries below ground, rather than to become tillers of the ground, like their brethren at picturesque Studland.

These quarries are handed down from father to son or son-in-law; they are their own possessions, more beautiful in their eyes than a lordly castle, and have so become part of themselves, that to them every portion is beautiful.

There are curious laws and customs pertaining to the working of these underground shafts and galleries; the family rights are jealously guarded, and a severe apprenticeship of seven years must be passed before the full-blown quarryman can be recognised as such, and become one of his order.

When the stone has been quarried out—that is, released from between the layers of soil—it is raised from the pit with the help of simple machinery and the strong horse that makes almost one of the family. Round the pit's mouth a semicircle of simple sheds is built with refuse of the quarried stone, and in these sheds the son, perhaps, splits and tools the stone, whilst the father may be below, releasing the large blocks; and thus between them, and with no great outlay, they work on till the father himself has to lay down his tools and to return to the earth he loves so well. Then the son's little chap begins at the beginning, till he too knows all the process and the strange rules of the order, and in time, he too becomes a Swanage quarryman.

Thus all might be peace and harmony; but besides the usual difficulties of the young men setting their affections on things on the earth, as represented by the prettiest maiden in the village, there are the underground matters of disaffection. One man may quarry too far ahead, and so he may meet his neighbour's gallery, or the two may approach so near to each other as to necessitate an adjustment of claim, and they may feel disinclined to wait till the next Shrove Tuesday, when the great meeting at Corfe Castle takes place.

Here disputes may be settled, and here too there will be talk of the old days when they used to beat the bounds by kicking a football from Langton through Corfe, or over the heath to Ower. Now the ball is prosaically carried by hand, and with it is brought the pound of pepper for the Lord of the Manor—once doubtless a valuable gift, but now serving only to make him sneeze, if so be he ever sees it.

Peter Luff and John Melnoth were both quarrymen, and, sad to say, they were mortal enemies. Their quarries lay side by side, and they were both "set" on Priscilla Corban; pretty Pris, whose dark eyes were like the dancing waves of Peverll Point when the sun shone, and whose dainty feet thought nothing of running up to the pits on a summer afternoon to see if her father wanted something. Her father, also, was a quarryman, possessing the keen intelligence which is almost general among the men who, as they work beneath the earth, have time to meditate and see things as they really are, and have time too, alas, to brood over their wrongs and to dream of revenge.

Pris knew that to get to her father's pit she must pass first close by the Luff quarry, and then by climbing a low bank she found herself in John Melnoth's property. The pits were somewhat lightly fenced or hedged round, so that on dark nights it was dangerous work to wander about this uneven land. Often as not, the entrance to the sheds, close round about the quarries, was left open or only slightly barred across. This was a land where no one feared his neighbour's dishonesty, and, indeed, had a man so wished, it is not easy to carry off the heavy blocks of the solid stone; but pretty Pris had stolen, not Purbeck stone, but two brave hearts, and she knew so well the times and seasons of the quarrymen, that, according as she chose, she appeared at the moment when either Peter or John were working above in their sheds instead of their fathers. The Luffs were three in number, but John Melnoth was an only son.

Unfortunately, there was generally one of the Luffs working in their sheds, and they would report to Peter how Pris had been chatting to John Melnoth, and so jealousy was doubled by certainty. And the two young men now hardly spoke to each other when they met, as they did almost daily. What made things worse was that Luff and Melnoth the elder had come to high words about the near proximity of their galleries, and the sons gladly espoused their quarrels. Thus hatred grew, and pretty

Pris, when she tripped up the hill, bringing her father's dinner or tea, if he did not wish to go home, added fuel to the fire, for her bright eyes only smiled when some dark hint was thrown out that, "It would be worse for some one if they didn't mind their business!"

At last old Corban began to hear of the feud which his daughter was helping to increase; so he consulted his wife, who was ruled by Pris, but who was still more the echo of her husband's mind.

"It mustn't be, wife, Pris must choose the one or t'other. I've no quarrel, personally, with either, both are of the ancient stock. Pris shan't marry among the new-fangled builders, as wish to turn the old country into places for the rich folk to idle away their time in, I don't hold by Swanage being made one of the fashionable places; but Luff and Melnoth are both honest quarrymen, though they can't agree among themselves, and Pris must take her choice."

"She's over young, Benjamin; but, as you say, the girl is old enough to choose."

"There's winter a-coming, and I'll not mind having a son-in-law to help a bit. Jesty's not a bad fellow, but a hired hand is not so good as your own kith and kin."

"That's true, Benjamin. I'll call Pris, and tell her what you say."

"Yes, call the girl, and I'll tell her myself, wife."

Pris came from the garden, where she had been hanging out some clothes, and the round, rosy face looked smiling enough. Pris herself had no jealous feelings, seeing she had two lovers, and no rival in their affections.

"Look'ee, girl," said her father, "you'll wed one of your lovers in a month or so, so just'ee make up your mind which it will be."

"Oh, father! Marry in December! That'll be dull enough. And, for the life of me, I'm not so sure which I love the most."

Old Corban was not to be put off with a jest.

"Then I'll take the choice on myself, girl. Peter Luff has a brother, and so he'll be more willing to work with me. There's not enough for three strong hands nowadays. Trade's not what it was."

"And what will John Melnoth say?"

"That's naught to me, girl. You've had your say, and I've had mine, and that's enough."

Pris returned to her washing, still smiling.

"Father's choice is father's choice, and none of mine. I can tell Peter Luff that, if he thinks it's settled; and I will too."

When Peter had had a private interview that very day with old Corban, his heart leaped within him. He had won Pris, and he had got the better of John Melnoth, whom he hated.

As he passed the Melnoth quarry that chilly afternoon, he could not help saying to John, who was putting away his tools:

"Good evening, John Melnoth. Have you seen Pris Corban to-day?"

"No," said John, shortly.

John was tall and strong. His broad chest and sinewy arms told their tale of honest labour. He had a light brown beard and kind eyes, which could, however, gleam suddenly, like flashing light upon a dark pool.

Peter Luff, on the contrary, was shorter, but well made. His face, full of intelligence and keenness, was more taking at the first glance, for there was oftener a smile on his lips than on those of big, tall John Melnoth.

"Pris is a bit coy," said Peter, smiling, as if he knew nothing of the enmity which existed between himself and John. "She's a winsome lass enough when she chooses, and now that we be going to be married——"

"It's a lie!" said John, suddenly casting down his tools. "Pris would have told me herself, if so be she had made up her mind."

"Pris Corban isn't likely to put up with your temper, John," said Peter, lightly.

Then he strode off towards his own cottage, meaning to clean and smarten himself before he went courting. He was not devoid of courage, and thought it best to end John's hopes at once.

When Peter was gone, John carefully put away his tools, and ran down the hundred slippery steps leading to the bottom of the quarry. His father still worked on at the end of the gallery, and the thud of the pickaxe resounded along the low passage.

"Be 'ee coming up, father? I'm off. Don't 'ee wait supper for me."

"Eh?" said Melnoth, surprised at John's unusual conduct; for the clockwork regularity of their habits was dear to him.

"No. Maybe I'll be late, and maybe I'll come back and work to-night. There's

; order for stone as we must get on ı."

Don't 'ee fret yourself about that, n."

ut John had now run up the flight of e steps, and, as he did so, he heard the d moaning along the line of pit-covered s, like some spirit of evil bemoaning ıins.

I'll go and ask Pris," he said; and n Melnoth, though slow, was terribly . "If she's thrown me over for Peter, as God's above, there'll be words ween us—and between him and me. has to marry me. I'm the first one he walked with, and so much the worst Peter if he thinks he can have her."

he wind, keen and piercing, was blow- from the sea, rushing up from Peveril nt and over the downs, and mercilessly eping round the desolate heaps and pit- iths of the neighbourhood. The white res raised their angry crests as they ched into the sheltered bay, apparently nful of finding a quieter haven upon ch to enter and calm themselves.

It's a rough night," muttered John, as went for a little way along the crest of hill, dodging in and out among the losed pits till he reached the spot ich led him straight down to Pris ban's home.

Ie knocked at her door, and Pris her- opened it. The big quarryman felt denly frightened before the girl, so ng, so pretty, so fragile, as it seemed him. He had no need to introduce his ject.

Pris, what's this I hear? You have mised yourself to Peter Luff? By God, shan't marry that man without saying lied to me and that your sweet words nt nothing."

ris was frightened.

I've promised neither the one nor her," she said, trying to laugh; "but ıe in, John, it's windy to-night and l; it's blowing up a storm."

You never promised him?" asked n.

No, I never did." Pris was alarmed at n's voice, and said 'No" again. ore she could say more, the big man turned and was striding back towards quarries. He was saying to himself: Peter Luff lied to me, and he'll have nswer for that lie."

Jnfortunately, Peter Luff, after having dged off towards his home, which was very far from his pit, discovered that he had forgotten his watch, which he had hidden on a shelf, as he usually did when he went down to the pit. He was going to dress up in his best to go a-courting, and without his watch and chain the effect of the whole would be spoilt. With a muttered oath at his ill luck, he ate his supper and then started off to retrieve his mistake.

Thus it happened that John Melnoth, whose huge strides soon covered the ground, was just entering his own enclosure when he heard a footstep behind him—a footstep which his strong feelings helped him to recognise.

He paused and peered into the semi-darkness, then saw the dim outline of his rival hurrying up the hill.

"Liar," muttered John. "He lied to me so that I might feel the devil within me. Ay, so I do, but not because of Pris. Pris ain't promised herself; it's not Pris as 'ull tell a lie."

John stood at the entrance of his semicircle of sheds and waited; certainly the devil was within him.

The hill was steep just there, and Peter stopped to take breath; John heard the footsteps pause, and wondered what Peter was coming back for. The Luffs never worked at night as did the Melnoths. As he wondered, John lifted the long pole, that was placed across the opening in a low wall that surrounded the pit, and placed it upright against the shed. Then he put his hand in his pocket to see if he had his matches, after which he strode out and found himself face to face with Peter Luff, who, thinking only of his watch and how soon he could get home again, was startled at the unexpected sight of his rival. He wished now he had not roused him by his bald announcement. Not that Peter was afraid; fear was not part of the inheritance of the miners. With an oath, which, however, was more uttered from force of habit than anger, Peter exclaimed:

"And what do you want of me, John Melnoth?"

"Not over much, except this—Peter Luff, you are a d—— liar!"

Peter's blood was up in a moment. As far as he knew this man was insulting him without cause, and he would be revenged.

"You're another, and a coward besides."

"A coward," laughed John, ironically. "Come on, then, and see. Pris ain't a-going to marry you; and you are a liar, there, I say it again."

"She will, then, and you'll see what she says to you. There, take that, you blackguard!"

It was Peter who struck the first blow; but as the wind howled and whistled around the desolate pits, those two young men, regardless of everything but long pent-up hatred, began their deadly struggle with a fury which it was fortunate the darkness hid from curious eyes. Peter was more agile, if smaller, but John's strength was proverbial. Still they were not ill-matched, for anger gives fictitious strength, and Peter's anger at the insult hurled at him was not feigned. John, too, was blinded with rage, for though Pris had denied a promise, Peter's assurance meant, of course, that she had been more affectionate than usual; and this feeling stung him like hail.

Oh, the storm that hatred can raise, the useless passion; for, to give them their due, neither wished to injure the other permanently, but merely to strike out straight and true. The wrestle with flesh and sinew seemed to allay the mental anguish.

All at once Peter aimed so well that John felt the well-directed blow stagger him. He reeled, and for a moment he found a momentary support against the angle of a shed; but then, with a mighty effort of mind over matter, he righted himself, and dashing forward he seized Peter firmly.

"You will have it. Well, then, there, take it, and go to—hell."

The pit's mouth was unprotected, and the young quarryman unprepared. Before another word could have been spoken, Peter Luff felt himself falling backward into the dark abyss, and he knew only too well that he must fall, down, down that pit till the bottom was reached.

There was a piercing shriek, the shriek of a man who feels he is doomed; the horrible dull thud was heard, and then—silence.

John Melnoth had struck out again with his right arm as if his enemy was still within reach. He met nothing but space, and then that sudden shriek arrested him; it seemed to him to ring upwards, as if through a hollow tube placed close to his ear, then to be echoed and re-echoed again and again from all the pits' mouths. Suddenly a dizzy feeling overpowered him; he made no more struggle to keep up, but fell heavily to the ground, striking as he did so his head against a great bar of stone which was lying near by. This caused a terrible gash across his temple, from which the blood flowed over the ground, and for the time being John Melnoth remembered no more.

When he came to himself it was some few moments before he could recollect where he was, and why he was out of doors. The wind had abated, and a cold rain was falling steadily upon him, giving him a strange feeling of returning consciousness. Suddenly the whole scene flashed upon his mind, the storm of jealous anger, the meeting with Peter Luff, the fight, and then that dull thud. It was down in that pit, close to him. Good God! what had he done? Was he a murderer, and all for—for what? Because Pris loved Peter better than she loved him? He, John Melnoth, a murderer, he who was so fond of children that they ran after him in the street; he, who knowingly would not hurt a living creature! In spite of the cold rain a feeling of burning fever passed through him. He made an effort and sat up; then knelt down. The moon was rising, and shed a faint light around him. He was close to the pit's mouth. He crawled a few steps nearer to look down into the black abyss. The rain pattered quickly on the bare branches of the plum-tree which he had planted just below the edge when he was a youngster. He noticed one branch was broken off; then in a low, horror-stricken voice, he called out:

"Peter! Peter Luff! Aye!"

There was no answer, and John called louder:

"Peter, for God's sake, answer, if so be you can." No answer, and John stood up. He felt stiff and weak; he put his hand to his head and knew that he touched congealed blood. He knew he must have bled freely to make him feel so weak. He looked down upon the hundred slippery steps that led to the bottom, and knew he must go down and see—O God! see what?—but would his strength last out, or would he, too, fall or slip before reaching the end? He must not think further. Slowly he began the descent, grasping at every little help by the way, and pausing to allow his head to become clearer, and every now and then he called out:

"Peter! Peter Luff!"

Just as he reached the last step he paused and looked for his matches. He tried to strike one, then another, but they were damp and would not light; then the big quarryman stooped down and began feeling about the wet soot-strewn earth, repeating, mechanically:

"Peter! Peter Luff!"

Suddenly his hand touched something soft, and tremblingly John felt him—the man he had thrown here—softly over. Was he dead? Could it be possible? He called gently in his ear:

"Peter! Peter Luff! it's me as be calling of you. Just you say a word. There's Pris a-waiting for you. Peter!"

But there was no answer.

John then lifted his rival's head and laid it gently on his breast, warming and chafing the cold form as a mother might have done, rubbing it softly till his hand paused, and a strange blindness—even in this dark pit—seemed to overtake him; and then great, warm drops fell slowly upon his hand. After this John forgot everything except with his last effort to clasp young Peter Luff's cold form in his arms.

John had said he would work down the pit this night, that was right enough; but where was Peter Luff? His young brother went to Pris Corban's house, then back to his own, then on to the Melnoths' cottage; but no Peter was there. He was out on the spree then, so all went to bed; but it happened that Tom Luff woke at five o'clock with a start and in a cold perspiration. He had seen Peter lying at the bottom of the pit, cold and dead, and, without saying a word, he took a lantern and slipped out of the house. He ran up to the quarries, and did not take long to go down their own pit. No Peter there; then he thought of John and the quarrel about Pris Corban. With trembling steps the lad went to the next quarry. It was open, the bar across the pit's mouth was removed; he hastened down, noticing various strange signs as he went; the branches were broken, the steps had been lately used. On he went, and then his light fell upon two forms looking so ghastly in the strange darkness that the boy drew back, calling faintly:

"John Melnoth! Peter! Peter!"

Peter's head rested against his enemy's breast, and John's head had sunk down and rested against Luff's curly mop; but over both the red stream had trickled slowly, leaving its awful mark.

The boy went up to them again and touched them.

They were cold—cold as death. Then, with a wild cry, the lad rushed away up the steps, and ran home to call for help.

There's a gentle-eyed girl at Swanage that every one loves, and to whom the quarrymen all pay marked attention and respect.

"It's Pris," they say; "Pris Corban. She be just a bit dazed, is Pris, but she's the quarryman's best friend. There's no one as can nurse as Pris can; and for soft words, why, she can't abear quarrels. She turns white as a sheet if she hears any rough words. It all comes along of that story. Don't 'ee know the story of the two lovers? Ay, but it's sad! If you come down the old pit—the pit as ain't worked now—you'll see it. There's a pool there as is always red. They have baled it out, and dug it out, but the red comes again. Both killed? Ay, but John lived long enough to tell Pris rightly; but he died with Pris's kisses on his lips. She loved him best, they say; but you see it was right as it was. He called hisself Peter Luff's murderer. Two first-class young men they were. And Pris won't ever marry; you see she is still a bit dazed, is Pris."

AN EXPERIENCE AT SCARBOROUGH.

CHAPTER I.

They were winding up a prolonged wedding-tour at Scarborough. And after six months spent in the closest *communion*, they had come to the conclusion that decidedly they had not been made for each other. It was awkward. Six months is a mere unconsidered trifle out of a lifetime. He had thrown up a very good berth, in a wealthy and irascible old uncle's office, for the sake of art, and was an outcast from that elderly gentleman's favour in consequence. At times this fact was very patent to his inner consciousness, when one more of his pictures found no purchaser, and some further retrenchment in daily expenses had to be made in consequence.

She, though she had never yet breathed a word, even in her most wayward moods, on the subject, secretly regretted that berth in the wealthy relative's office, and—more heinous offence still in a husband's eyes—as he again divined, was not certain of the talent which had led him to forsake all vulgar, worldly considerations to worship at the holy shrine of art.

But to look at them, they were, physically at least, a splendidly matched couple, and as yet the discontent brooding between them had never burst into open flame.

They arrived at the Grand late one autumn afternoon. The hotel was still full, and as they entered the dining-room they excited the usual interest that they roused wherever they went.

Next to them at dinner sat a young lady and a young man who had also only arrived that afternoon. The man was a good-looking young fellow, while the woman, about twenty-seven, was undeniably pretty, with wonderful colouring of copper-brown hair, and dark eyes and eyebrows, and creamy skin.

They were Americans.

"What a lovely girl!" said the young man, as they rose from table and sauntered away among the other visitors.

"Yes. And did you notice that diamond ring? It was magnificent! And yet she was discontented!" said the pretty woman with an odd little laugh, as musical as her voice. "And what a splendid-looking husband! And yet she had nothing to say to him!"

CHAPTER II.

THE next day Miss Gould spoke to Mrs. Carey as they met on the staircase; after that the acquaintanceship grew rapidly.

The Careys found the Goulds genial, well-informed people, and excellent companions; and the Goulds were as well pleased, apparently, with their society. They were nearly always together, young Gould generally drifting to Mrs. Carey's side, while Miss Gould and Mr. Carey sauntered off together.

This pleasant state of affairs went on for ten days. At the end of that time Mrs. Carey made a remark to her husband one morning on their return from the esplanade:

"I don't like Miss Gould!"

He glanced at her quickly.

"Why not?" Then, after an almost imperceptible pause: "I thought you were the best of friends!" with a slight laugh.

"Because I talk to her!" with a touch of tartness in her manner. "There is something I don't understand about her. She is so sharp—so bitter, sometimes."

"No wonder, poor thing!" involuntarily.

She wheeled round from the glass before which she was arranging her hair for luncheon, and looked questioningly at her husband. There was a faint, vexed self-consciousness in his face.

"She has had a sad life," he said.

She turned back to the glass.

"Her brother told me something about it," he went on, as if feeling bound to give some explanation of his knowledge. "She cared very much for some fellow, who threw her over in the most blackguardly manner. She was very ill after it, and is only now recovering. That is why they are travelling."

"I dare say it was mostly her fault," said Mrs. Carey, fluffing out the pretty golden-brown hair into the fashionable fringe.

"How savage you women are to each other!" said her husband, irritably. "She is very nice, and so is her brother," with the slight sense of superiority that a man feels on the subject of the other sex's jealousy of each other.

The fine weather was breaking. About luncheon-time the rain began to fall. After luncheon, finding that it was raining too heavily to go out of doors, one of the visitors started an amateur concert, in aid of a sad case of destitution of which they had heard that morning.

Mr. Gould, who had a very fine voice, and Mrs. Carey, were among the performers. Mr. Carey and Miss Gould did not go in to the performance, but sat outside of the drawing-room, talking together.

They could hear the music in the distance of the great room. They talked in the lowered voices into which they often dropped when they talked together.

"It is sad that disillusion must come," she said, in that low, sweet tone of hers that thrilled him with its sympathy. "But isn't it worth all the pain and blankness of unfulfilled endeavour, just for that brief glimpse that untried youth gives us into the world of Truth and Beauty?" She looked at him, her great dark eyes, which had often a pathetic sadness in them, lustrous and earnest. "And is not it better to say 'I have tried,' than to be contented with the dead level of a commonplace existence, with no thought save of the loaves and fishes of the world's market?"

He looked into the shining eyes, every pulse beating faster for this passion of sympathy that responded to his own belief in art and himself.

Then her expression changed, a look of startled, acute pain swept over it, the straight brows contracted.

"Ah!" between her teeth, turning her head in the direction of the drawing-room.

"It is my wife singing," he said, grimly.

He was bitterly ashamed of the speech the moment it was uttered. He coloured, and bit his lip.

"The piano is pitched very high," she said, with ready tact, "and it is put in an absurd place." She rose and made some remark about going to find her brother. In the midst of his anger and shamed mortification for his unchivalrous speech, he was keenly conscious of her delicacy and good breeding.

He went into the smoking-room, and by degrees, as he sat moodily smoking, the sting of self-humiliation grew fainter as his thoughts centred on Miss Gould. How perfectly high-bred she was! What a charming woman! And then her passionate devotion to art. A man with a woman such as she by his side might achieve something. Such a woman would never tremble for the safety of loaves and fishes; would never paralyse the arm she should inspire with the doubt and foreboding that chilled herself. Then he flung the end of his cigar away, and started to his feet. A few moments later he was out of the house, walking, with a queer look in his eyes and set pale lips, against the wind and driving rain.

The battle with the elements seemed to do him good; as if they drove some poisonous cobwebs of thought and doubt out of his heart and brain.

By the time he reached the Castle, the fever that had set his pulses beating in unhealthy excitement had sunk.

The storm ceased late in the afternoon, and after dinner they went down to the esplanade. Carey, for reasons of his own, did not wish to join the Goulds that evening, and they left the hotel alone; but as they strolled through the crowd, listening to the music, they came across the Goulds, and a little later they paired off in the usual order.

Mrs. Carey and Gould started on down the esplanade, leaving the other two to follow. The sea, which had not yet calmed down, broke with thundering noises on the sea-wall, its foam dashing at intervals right on to the footway.

"I think you ought to have sung to us before," she said, as they discussed the afternoon's concert.

"You never asked me," he said. He spoke quietly, but perhaps she resented something in the remark itself.

"I should certainly have done so if I had known that you had such a beautiful voice," she said, carelessly. "What a magnificent sea it is!" She stopped, looking over the sea-wall at the grey foam-flecked waves breaking against the wall below. "I should like to see it in winter."

"You should stay on here. Carey could do some fine seascapes. How devoted he is to his work! I wish I could stick at anything half so well," with a half-lazy, half-amused laugh.

Her face seemed to harden in the moonlight. It was not a good look to see on a young wife's face; it was so dangerously near contempt. She understood enough of painting to feel the lack of the divine touch of genius in her husband's work; but she would not betray her want of faith to a stranger.

A cloud drifting across the moon shadowed her face for a moment. When the shadow passed it was smiling.

"Yes; he loved his brush well enough to risk offending a wealthy old uncle, who has cut him out of his will. He paid in a thousand pounds to my husband's account at the bank, and then told him to go and starve. The thousand is still intact, and we haven't starved yet."

"Ah, he'll paint a picture yet which will make the old gentleman proud to claim him again," said Gould, with a pleasant laugh; but his eyes said that she was a plucky woman.

"She hasn't the smallest faith in her husband's talents," he said to his sister afterwards.

"I told you that the first night," she said. "But she will hate you if you show her that you have found it out. She is beginning to hate me already."

CHAPTER III.

The next afternoon Carey started for a walk along the sands. Whether his stroll had anything to do with the fact that half an hour previously he had seen Miss Gould walking alone in the same direction, he did not ask himself.

But the curious wave, half pain, half pleasure, which swept over him as he caught sight at last of the slight, graceful figure standing down by the edge of the sea, ought to have warned him.

She did not hear his tread on the firm, smooth sand, for the sea-wind was still soughing under the cliffs.

She turned with a start as he addressed her, and then he saw that she had been crying. Her eyes were red and swollen; but she greeted him lightly.

"All alone?" she asked. "You didn't go with Mrs. Carey and the others to the Castle? My brother wanted me to go, but I——" he fancied the tears had had something to do with her wish for solitude. "I am tired," she said the next moment. "I shall go and sit up there under the cliff."

He walked with her, and they found a sheltered seat.

"We are going away to-morrow," she said, abruptly.

"Going away!" with a startled look.

"Yes," her eyes averted from his face. Then, under her breath, "I am sorry."

"So am I," he said, hardly knowing what he said. Then he began to fling pebbles with a rather savage energy at a drift of brown sea-weed some distance before them.

"It has been such a pleasant time," she went on; "and to think that it has ended so sadly," with a catch in her breath.

"What do you mean?" a little unsteadily, looking at the fine profile, and the creamy tint of the rounded cheek, faintly tinged now with rose, as the sweet salt breeze swept it.

She hesitated; then with a sudden impulse: "I don't know why I should tell you," with a sad little laugh, and a glance from under the thick fringe of curled lashes, that brought the colour into his own face. "There was a man once whom I——" she stopped, looking seaward again. "I had a letter this morning from—his wife. He is ill—dying, they say. But there is one chance—to get him out of the country; but they are penniless—and she wrote to me to ask help for him, praying that I would forgive—— She wants two hundred pounds, and I——" the beautiful mouth quivered; but she steadied her voice again. "In two months I could have given it to her; but—at present, I—— Oh, how hateful it is that so much depends on money! To think that he may die, because I can't give him a few pounds. And my brother—he will not help me. He says that he behaved badly to —— as if his death were needed to expiate any wrong he may have done me!" Her face crimsoned, her voice vibrated with passionate scorn and indignation.

There was a queer sense of blankness at his heart. It had no right there. Nor had he any right to ask the bitter question that he did.

"Do you still care for that—fellow?" harshly.

She turned quickly to him.

"No! But——" her eyes drooped before something in his. "I would not have him die! Would you—if you had once cared for any one?" in a lowered tone.

"No," he said, looking at the ruffled, wonderful-coloured hair, as the wind stirred it, and noticing the blue veins on the white temple.

"Let me be your banker," he pleaded, eagerly.

She turned to him indignantly. Then again that faint confusion seized her. How lovely the childlike, sorrowful lips were! A man might kiss them into happiness and laughter, and forget for a moment that he had a soul. He pleaded more eagerly, more earnestly as she resisted.

"You can pay it to me back," he said, "when the money that is due to you comes," bending nearer her.

"Oh, how good you are!" she said, unsteadily. "If I accept——" She rose to her feet.

He followed more slowly. He was almost glad that she had moved.

They walked back to the hotel. In the hall they met Gould. He had left the party at the Castle and returned home alone.

"I am going upstairs to rest," she said to him. "I am tired."

Carey followed her after a few moments. The Careys' rooms and those occupied by the Goulds were near each other.

She was going into hers as he reached the head of the staircase. He went to his own room and took out his cheque-book.

A moment later there came a tap at his half-open door. Miss Gould stood there, deadly white.

"I wish you would call my brother," she said, faintly. "I feel so ill. He knows what to do—please go at once," half impatiently, as he rushed to her side with offers of help.

He obeyed her and hurried downstairs, leaving his door open.

He wasted some precious minutes looking for Gould, who had disappeared, and then, dashing after a chambermaid, and procuring some brandy, he hastened upstairs again.

Miss Gould had gone back to her room, and the chambermaid entering, found her feeling a little better. She took some of the brandy, and asked the maid to thank Carey for his kind thought. He had lingered outside till the girl came out with the message. Then he returned to his room and finished writing the cheque, feeling very strange and shaken.

A little later, just before dinner, he had an opportunity of giving it to her. He found her coming out of her room, quite well enough, so she laughingly declared, to go down to dinner, though she still looked pale.

"Oh, I can never thank you enough," she said, impulsively, holding out her hand. He caught it and left a burning kiss on it. She snatched it away, and he turned and hurried off, feeling that he had offended her past forgiveness, and in passionate dread lest she should not accept this service from him. She did not come down to dinner after all, but, to his infinite delight, she did not return the cheque. He had grown reckless, and felt that all he cared for, for the moment, was to serve her, and he would not listen to any troublesome voices of his inner consciousness.

If there was anything strange in his manner, Mrs. Carey did not notice it. It must be confessed that she came back in a thoroughly bad temper. She was so ruffled that, for the first time, she was genuinely rude and snappish to her husband, and, though he did not know this, lay awake half the night crying.

The Goulds left early the next morning. Mrs. Carey did not see them. She said she had a bad headache, and did not get up till after they had left. Carey had the delight of a few words with Miss Gould, by which he found she had forgiven him.

A day or two later he received a startling communication. A cheque—his first draw on the thousand pounds nest-egg in his London bank—was dishonoured. A lady, calling herself Mrs. Carey, had called there three days before and cashed two cheques—one, endorsed Marian Gould, for two hundred pounds, the other made payable to self for eight hundred pounds. She had seen the manager, and had brought him a note from her husband, giving a very plausible reason for his demand. The lady had even appeared in great distress, and had said that, owing to an unfortunate betting transaction of her husband's, he was forced to withdraw all that he had. Mr. Carey's last cheque had roused their suspicions, and the manager requested him to come up to town immediately, in case there had been anything irregular about those two former cheques.

Mrs. Carey was in the room when her husband received the bank messenger. She listened in scared silence. Then a startled exclamation broke from her, and she left the room. Her husband, with a hasty apology to the man who had brought such news, left a few minutes later in search of her. He found her lying senseless on the floor, her open jewel-case beside her; its most valuable treasure had gone.

Two days before the Goulds had left, she had had a curious wager with Miss Gould, that she could not forego the pleasure of wearing such a ring for a month. If Miss Gould won the wager, she was to send five pounds to the charity for which they had got up the concert. As the messenger spoke to her husband, a whole host of horrible suspicions swept over her, prompted, probably, by the intense hatred which had sprung up within her during the past few days for Jonathan Gould.

When her husband, terrified at the sight of her lying unconscious there, knelt down beside her, remembering that she was his wife, and glanced at the jewel-case, the ghastly doubts already in his own mind became, too, a conviction. They had been hideously duped, cheated, robbed. He had given Miss Gould one of the cheques, the other had been taken from his cheque-book while he had gone to look for Gould. It had all been a preconcerted plan between them. When Mrs. Carey came back to consciousness, she found herself in her husband's arms, and there she sobbed out her remorse and entreaties for forgiveness.

"It was all my fault," she said. "I was growing bad, wicked, horrid—and—and—oh! how can I say it? He kissed me that day up at the Castle, and I have hated him—hated him ever since! And then—oh! he might have had all the rest if only that hadn't happened!"

"And I——" He looked away, crushed with shame and that miserable remorse which had been with him ever since that day on the sands.

"Don't say it! I can guess. Oh, Jim! what idjots we have been!"

There was little doubt of that.

On further inquiries being made, Mr. and Miss Gould were discovered to be under various aliases and disguises—some of the 'cutest subjects the New York detectives had had to do with.

"Bless you, sir, you might almost not mind being taken in by them!" said an encouraging but baffled detective who unavailingly tried to track them down.

"They'd beat the old gentleman in person, especially she! She's a stunner! and men are like wax in her pretty fingers."

But the burning shame and mortification of the deception practised on them, and their own conduct in the matter, scorched up the petty selfishnesses and intolerances that had been undermining the sympathy between husband and wife. Greater patience, greater tenderness, sprang from their ashes, and a great and wonderful event which a few months later came into their lives did the rest.

It should be remarked that the loss of that thousand pounds, with the necessity of a third and most important life to provide for, drove Carey back to the office desk, where he was received with open arms. There is no lack of loaves and fishes to-day. Not that Carey has given up art; he only pursues the beautiful in an easier and different fashion. He and his wife are to be seen at all picture galleries, and his collection is beginning to be noticed. His wife is still fond of music, but she does not sing much now, and then only the songs that please her husband. Her children's voices, perhaps, make the sweetest music to her to-day.

A
ROMANCE OF THE SOUTH COAST.

CHAPTER I.

THE clear, brilliant sunshine was sparkling on the sea in a million flashes of gem-like lights, glinting on the military canal that flowed sluggishly along, touching the old martello forts with its golden glamour, and the hoary stones of the church that towers above all the surrounding buildings at Hythe, and is such a prominent feature in that part of the Kentish landscape. It beat down on the uneven pavement of the narrow streets, and filtered through the thick leafage of the trees in the Lady's Walk, falling in chequered patches on the soft green turf that looked so inviting; but out beyond at the ranges, where once the sea pulsed and beat, and now all is arid and bare, the sun's rays were rather too much, and Captain Jocelyn lifted his cap more than once to cool his brow, as he stood there by his men, watching them as they aimed at the bull's-eye, for he was instructor of musketry to his regiment, and his was the pleasant task of standing there in the broiling sun, instructing his men in the art of how to "pot" an enemy off the reel without chance of a miss.

He had wished for the post six months before when his regiment had been ordered to Shorncliffe, because he wanted plenty of employment and no leisure to think. For the fact of the matter was, the gallant Captain had been unfortunate in his love affairs, the lady who won his heart being an heiress, and ward of a gentleman who sternly refused to allow her to marry a man whose income, all told, was about five hundred a year, and who hadn't the ghost of an expectation. The lady was under age and helpless, being bound by the terms of her father's will to obey her guardian; and so the lovers had parted with vows and protestations of unalterable affection, and Captain Geoffrey Jocelyn accompanied his regiment to Kent, burning with indignation against the callous, grey-headed, hard-hearted guardian, who, while he lived, was to exercise such absolute power over the disposal of Agnes Woolmer's hand. He had not corresponded with her—even that crumb of comfort had been denied him by Mr. Cardross—and for six long months he had heard not a single word about the woman he loved, Mr. Cardross having carried her off to a dungeon-like house he had in the wilds of Yorkshire.

Jocelyn rebelled fiercely against the decree of the guardian, and his temper became variable and uncertain, while he sought eagerly for any amusement or distraction that would take him out of himself as it were, keep his thoughts from dwelling on the past and his lost love, who would have been his but for the mulish obstinacy of a narrow-minded old man.

The Captain was an extremely good-looking young fellow, with gentlemanly, pleasing manners, and he found plenty of fair demoiselles in Hythe, Sandgate, Folkestone, and other places contiguous to Shorncliffe, ready and willing to console him for any sorrow he might have suffered; and being sore and irritable, he allowed himself, rather unfairly, to be soothed and petted by such members of the gentler sex as came in his way, and raised hopes in more than one fair bosom, doomed, alas! never to be realised.

Sorrow is wrought by want of thought,
As well as by want of heart.

That was exactly it, and Geoffrey Jocelyn never thought how much mischief he might do, seeking to salve his own smarting wounds.

He was particularly irritable that bright summer's morning, and gave the word of command with unusual abruptness, while he experienced a positive sense of relief when the last shot was fired, and the men fell in, and set off on their homeward march to the camp. As he stepped out beside them his mind, as usual, was full of Agnes Woolmer, and he started rather violently as a soft voice said at his side:

"You won't forget to come to us at four o'clock this afternoon, Captain Jocelyn?"

"I won't forget, Miss Robinson," he returned, coming down from the clouds with precipitate suddenness, and saluting an extremely pretty girl who had paused for a moment to speak to him, and whose eyes were as blue as the sun-gemmed sea, and as bright. "I shall be with you at four," and then he passed on.

But during the remainder of his march to Shorncliffe, his thoughts wandered a little from his old love, and dwelt on Mary Anne Robinson, a girl most men looked upon as dangerous, by reason of her extreme good looks, and her parents. They were not particularly well-bred, had been in business, which proving lucrative, Mr. Robinson retired with a comfortable competence, and having four daughters of a marriageable age, three of whom were possessed of a fair share of comeliness, while the fourth was absolutely lovely, he decided upon Hythe as the place where he would live, as there was always a number of young officers about the School of Musketry, while Shorncliffe and Dover were conveniently near, and he wished to get his pretty girls well and comfortably married.

A picturesque, but decidedly draughty and cold antique wooden cottage was secured with a small bit of garden in the front, and a large bit at the back; and thither they went and laid themselves out, as far as it lay in their power, to keep open house. Mrs. Robinson, being a clever woman, with an eye to business, always had a tasty luncheon between one and two, and contrived that her suppers should be perfect, and let any of the officers who were young and marriageable know that they might turn in at any time to Woodbine Cottage and find a warm welcome, and something more substantial as well; and after a time, when the Robinsons had fought their way into some sort of society, it became a habit with many of the younger officers to turn into the cottage to get a glass of wine, a cup of tea, or a regular square meal as the case might be, just as they would at an hotel, only with the pleasant difference that at Woodbine Cottage they hadn't to pay for anything, and were waited on by four Hebes; and Mary Anne was always so charmingly dressed, and so charmingly sympathetic, her manner caressing and soothing to Jocelyn's wounded spirit, that though really in love with one woman, it appeared as though he was desperately enamoured of another. Without knowing it, the handsome Captain was getting himself finely talked about with Mary Anne, and his brother officers betted freely on the chances of his marrying beneath *him*. The girl herself was dazzled, and pleased by the half-jesting, half-serious attentions he paid her, and tried to persuade herself that he was really in love with her, though sometimes her common-sense told her that he was only amusing himself. Which was a fact. She was one of, if not the prettiest girl in Hythe at that time, and set her cap at him in rather a barefaced manner, and he found it hard, as any young man would have, to reject the advances of a lovely girl, especially when the girl had not much breeding, was thick-skinned, and did not mean to have her advances rejected.

He was miserable, and she took him out of himself as it were, distracted him from an unpleasant retrospection. So he went to the cottage, laughed at her lively sallies, called her Mary when they were alone, gave her presents of flowers and *bon-bons*, accepted buttonholes from her, squeezed her hand, looked straight down into her big blue eyes, and behaved altogether in such a way that it was hardly surprising Mère Robinson queried almost daily "Has he proposed?" and felt justified in giving vent to a few angry exclamations when her daughter said, "No!"

CHAPTER II.

It was close upon four o'clock that afternoon as Geoffrey Jocelyn sprang out of his dog-cart, threw the reins to his groom, and proceeded to walk to Woodbine Cottage.

He had only fifty or sixty yards to go, but in the few minutes it took him to walk that distance he saw what made him feel twenty times more miserable than he had been before. Three ladies and a gentleman were coming towards him on the opposite side of the road. An elderly lady came first, close beside her was a girl, while behind came another girl leaning on the arm of a young man, who was bending down and whispering in a very lover-like fashion. They all carried sticks, wore thick boots, and looked as though they were on a walking tour. The lady being tenderly supported by the handsome youth was Agnes Woolmer, and Geoffrey's first impulse was to dash across the road, seize both her hands, and tell her he still loved her madly. But as he saw the smile on her face, upturned to her companion, he muttered rather a wicked word instead, and lifted his hat in a formal way when her eyes fell on him, and she bowed, blushing and smiling.

"That's the man Cardross married her to, I suppose," he groaned, as he strode on, every nerve quivering with pain. "What an ass I am to adore her still! It's all over with me, so here goes," and dashing back the frail gate at Woodbine Cottage, he went up between the trim garden beds in a very reckless mood.

It was wonderfully soothing to be greeted enthusiastically by Mary Anne, who was looking like a wingless angel, in a white gown and a blue sash, and who brought him an easy wicker chair and a cup of tea, and deserted an adoring circle of lieutenants, who threw black glances in Jocelyn's direction, and wished him at Jericho.

"Mary, you are looking lovely," he told her, as she sat beside him in a carelessly graceful attitude, that displayed a pair of fairy-like feet cased in dainty patent shoes.

"Am I?" she responded, with a blush and a delighted smile, which heightened her attractions, if that were possible; for, with her glowing peach-like colour, big blue eyes, and mass of golden curls, that twined like the tendrils of a vine about brow, and ears, and throat, she was about as beautiful as a woman could be.

"Yes; charming."

"I am glad. You like my frock? It is a new one."

"Perfect. You will turn everybody's head this afternoon."

"I don't want to turn everybody's head," she pouted, adding, in a lower tone, "only one body's."

"Uncommon modesty on your part," he smiled.

"Is your tea sweet enough?" she asked, a little irrelevantly, as she played with a spray of honey-suckle.

"Yes, naturally," he replied, in that half-impudent, wholly familiar manner which men adopt towards those women whom they like, but have no very great respect for.

"What do you mean?"

The brilliant blue eyes left the spray of honey-suckle, and travelled upwards till they rested on his handsome face.

"Why, you poured it out, and you looked at it. Isn't that enough?"

"No; I should not think it would be honey enough for you," she retorted.

"My fair friend," he laughed, sarcastically, "as a rule you don't undervalue your charms."

"No, indeed. Why should I?"

"There is no apparent reason why you should," he told her, with a bold glance at her lovely face. "Your uncommon and surprising humility struck me. That was all."

"I am not often humble," she laughed.

"True, you are not."

"Perhaps you have forgotten that you told me last week that the claret-cup was not to your liking."

"Surely not; I never could have been so rude."

"You did."

"Impossible! I won't believe it. A glance from those eyes would sweeten anything, Miss Robinson."

"Don't call me that; you know I hate it," she said, pettishly, the delicate tint in her cheeks deepening.

"What, hate the name of your forefathers?" with mock surprise.

"Yes; it's an abominable cognomen."

"There's one reflection you can console yourself with."

"What is that?" fixing her eyes enquiringly on his face.

"That you will change it one day."

"I may not," she murmured, with well-affected embarrassment.

"Sure to. Such a sweet blush-rose as you are will never be left to pine on the parent stem." A speech which filled the girl's foolish heart with joy; and many more of the same sort he whispered in her ear, as the hot hours of the afternoon went on; and they played tennis and Cozzaré, and flirted, in common with all the other young folk there.

That didn't matter much, flirting there in the open; but after the cold spread, that took the place of dinner, at which sparkling wine flowed freely, Jocelyn did a fatal thing. He took Mary Anne up into the tower which was built at the extreme end of the garden, "far from the madding crowd," wherein a former occupier of Woodbine Cottage had been in the habit of studying the stars; and the Captain, instead of occupying himself in that safe celestial pursuit, must needs study Mary Anne's eyes, and, flushed with champagne, of which he had taken a trifle too much to keep cool—miserable, excited, careless—he talked folly to his lovely companion, and she led him on to jest and woo, and, while he meant nothing serious, she chose to take it so, and played a desperate card by telling him she loved him.

For a full minute he sat petrified at the result of his folly, and then collecting himself he quietly suggested that they should go down and join the others, though inwardly he quaked, for he knew he had spent the best part of two hours alone in that old wind-blown tower with Mary Anne, and what would Père and Mère Robinson say to such a proceeding?

He was cool enough as he walked from the old tower to the lawn, his companion hanging on to his arm like grim death; but the realisation of his fears was infinitely worse than the anticipation. Mr. and Mrs. Robinson advanced to meet them, a ghastly grin further disfiguring the latter's face.

"My dear son—we may call you son now," she commenced, in loud, distinct tones, that made him wince as the sight of an enemy's gun never would have, "what have you been doing with our Mary Anne all this time in the old tower, eh, son?"

"Studying the stars," he returned, jocosely, trying to subdue his qualms and be equal to the occasion.

"Ah! we understand, don't we, William?"

"Ay, we understand," assented William. "Still, of course, I expect Captain Jocelyn to explain his intentions with regard to our Mary."

"This is hardly the place to explain them in," rapped out the Captain, with extreme irritation.

"Then come into the house," suggested Mr. Robinson, meekly, for he was between two fires—his wife, who rated and scolded him soundly if he failed to please her, and the Captain, of whom he stood somewhat in awe, and he faced round and walked towards the cottage with his spouse by his side, Jocelyn and Mary Anne following.

The girl, however, was hardly elated in this the hour of her triumph; and though she marched the whole length of the garden hanging on her supposed lover's arm, followed by the envious glances from such of the Hythe demoiselles as were there, and the questioning glances of Geoffrey's brother officers, the set look on her companion's white, angry face cowed her and kept her silent, while intuitively she guessed that the long, labouring breath he drew as they entered the house and were hidden from curious eyes, was one of intense and unspeakable relief.

Had she made a mistake? After all the pretty nothings he had whispered in her ear, did he not love her? The expression on his stern, despairing face hardly looked like it, and at that minute the girl's soul woke to the misery of a love given unsought, undesired, and unreturned; while Geoffrey's rebellious thoughts strayed to Agnes as he had last seen her, when they parted, in a white gown that took a sheeny shimmer in the moonlight, with a great bunch of dewy roses at her breast, the dewdrops glittering like the tears in her dark eyes, as she held out both hands to be clasped in his, and told him she would love him always and be true to him.

He had hardly been true to her or to himself; and yet, how madly he longed to have that slim graceful figure, in the sheeny white gown, once more in his embrace, held close to his heart, enfolded in his strong arms, and instead——? Well, instead, he crossed the threshold of Woodbine Cottage with Mary Anne Robinson hanging on to his arm, and went like a soldier, and a brave man, to meet his fate.

CHAPTER III.

"WHAT shall I do? What shall I do?" Jocelyn unbuckled his sword and flung it from him into a distant corner, and throwing himself face downwards on to a couch in his room, gave himself up to utter and complete despair.

It was the morning following the catastrophe at Woodbine Cottage. He had had a bad night, and rose unrefreshed, after a couple of hours' restless sleep, to attend morning parade. When that was over, walking slowly and heavily from the parade-ground to his quarters, he had been confronted suddenly by a young lady on a fidgety chestnut, whose groom pulled up at a discreet distance.

"Oh, I am so glad to meet you, Geoffrey, to see you alone. I suppose you were afraid to speak to me yesterday as I was with a little crowd of friends, or were you in too great a hurry to stop?" asked Agnes Woolmer, for it was she, bending down towards him, with the old sweet, well-remembered smile.

"I did not know whether you wished to speak to me, or—if Mr. Cardross would object to it," he rejoined rather stiffly, feeling a hundred degrees more miserable as he gazed at the pure, proud face of the woman he loved, and thought of his folly of the night before.

"Poor Mr. Cardross!" she ejaculated with a little sigh.

"You pity him?" he asked, angrily. "The man who parted us?"

"He is dead, Geoff," she answered, gravely, a shade falling over her winsome face. "He can never interfere between us again. I am quite free now. I was twenty-one last month, you know."

"Dead!" he echoed. "Then who was that young fellow you were with yesterday?"

"My cousin, Wilfred Braden. He is engaged to Polly Harcourt, that girl who was walking in front with Mrs. Montrose. She is my duenna, my dragon. But I won't want a dragon for long, shall I, Geoff?" she said, with a rippling peal of laughter.

"I hope not," he answered, dully, for he was suffering agonies. His darling, the one love of his life was free, free to come to him whensoever he willed it, and he, oh, fool! fool! had only the night before thrown away his precious liberty, engaged himself to a girl whose parents were certainly not in his set.

"You will come and see us soon, won't you?" she said, softly. "I have so much to tell you, and I want to hear all you have done since we parted."

"Yes, dear," he agreed, mechanically. "Are you staying at Hythe?" he asked a moment later, praying inwardly that they might not be, as there she would inevitably hear about Mary Anne Robinson.

"Oh, no, at Folkestone, at the 'Pavilion Hotel.' We have been on a walking tour, to Mrs. Montrose's disgust, and now we have settled down here for the next month or two. I knew you were at Shorncliffe, and that was why I came here," she concluded, with an extremely tender glance at him.

"That was right," he said, smiling at her in rather a ghastly fashion, for he was torn and racked by the conflicting emotions of love and honour.

"You must come and see me this afternoon."

"Yes," he agreed, eagerly, love getting the better of his scruples.

"I am going to lecture you," she said, fondly. "You are looking wretchedly ill. I know what it is, you have been fretting. But all necessity for that is over now."

"Yes, all over now," he agreed, with a contraction of the muscles of his face, which by no stretch of the imagination could be called a smile, and then she waved her hand to him and galloped off, and he stumbled forwards to his quarters like one stunned or blind, and unbuckling his sword, flung himself on the couch to "dree his weird" as best he could, man himself to fight the battle between right and inclination, the grim, stiff battle that lay before him.

That afternoon Mary Anne waited in vain for her intended to arrive. While she lounged in the shady old garden at Hythe, momentarily expecting him, he sat in Miss Woolmer's private sitting-room in the "Pavilion Hotel," Folkestone, listening to the soft, modulated, well-bred tones of the voice he loved, answering her questions, telling all he had done since they parted, all save those fatal passages of mock love-making with Mary Anne Robinson.

The latter found him a very cool and unsatisfactory lover in the fortnight that followed. He was haughty and distant to her family, cold to her, never kissing her or using any term of endearment when alone with her, while he went very seldom to Woodbine Cottage, and was barely civil when he was there. All her pretty little ways and graces were lost upon him, or received with cool contempt, that wounded her to the quick, for she loved Geoffrey Jocelyn as never had he been loved before, as never would he be loved again in all the years of his life, and it made her wretched to see that he thought himself trapped, caught like a fly in a spider's web, that he loathed the tie that held him to her.

His engagement was freely commented on in the regiment, and the chief, who had been a friend of his father's, and had borne him out of the furious mêlée at Cabul when he was wounded unto death, came to his old comrade's only child one day some couple of weeks after his engagement took place, to hear the rights of the case, for Geoffrey looked upon him as a second father, and the old bachelor Colonel loved the young man as well as if he were his own son, and knew of his affection for Agnes Woolmer.

"So I hear you are engaged," said the chief, seating himself on a rickety chair that groaned under his weight.

"Yes, unfortunately," acknowledged the Captain, with an impatient sigh.

"Unfortunately, Geoffrey," echoed the Colonel, regarding him steadfastly. "Why, what do you mean?"

"Made a fool of myself, sir," he rejoined, rather shortly.

"Do you mean that you've been caught by that pretty little Robinson?"

"That is exactly it; and you know, Colonel," lapsing into a familiar style of address there in the privacy of his own room, "that I am really attached to Miss Woolmer."

"This is a bad business altogether, Geoffrey—engaged to one woman, in love with another. This will never do. You must tell me everything, and I will try and help you."

"Yes, help me," exclaimed the young man. "I can't bear to think of her sorrow. Agnes still loves me, she is near here at Folkestone. Oh, Heaven! sometimes I think I shall go mad."

"Don't excite yourself," advised Trelawney, "let us see what is best to be done."

For over an hour the two men talked very seriously, and then the Colonel got up, and strode out of the camp on to the road to Hythe, and arrived at Woodbine Cottage somewhere about four o'clock. Tea was being dispensed by Mrs. Robinson and her four daughters to sundry officers; but Trelawney managed to lure Mary Anne out in the garden, and then he began in plain and straightforward terms to tell her that the man she was engaged to loved another woman, had done so for some years, a woman in every way worthy of him, and a desirable match.

"You need say nothing more, Colonel Trelawney," said Mary Anne, drawing up her lithe figure to its full height with an air of dignity her companion had not given her credit for. "I understand. Captain Jocelyn loves another. I am not a fitting match for him, he wants his release. Well—he shall have it."

"That's right, Miss Robinson," exclaimed the Colonel, rather cruelly. "Believe me, you'll make a happy man of him if you give him back his freedom."

"Yes, I will give him back his freedom," she said, firmly, though her face was white like that of one newly dead, and her lips trembled, "because—I love him."

"My dear, I am sorry for you," said the old man, simply; yet he nevertheless carried away in his breast coat pocket, when he left Woodbine Cottage, a hastily scrawled letter of release, and with it all poor Mary Anne's hopes of happiness.

Geoffrey was wild with delight when the chief put this letter into his hands, and in a marvellously short space of time he was bowling along the upper Folkestone road on his way to the "Pavilion Hotel," giving no thought, alas! manlike, to the unhappy girl who had given him back once more to love, and life, and hope.

"Tell Agnes all," had been the Colonel's advice; and so, kneeling at his darling's feet, his head resting against her knee, both her hands clasped in his, he told her all his folly and misery.

"Agnes, my dearest," he murmured, "can I hope for forgiveness?"

"Yes, Geoff," she said, softly; "if there is anything to forgive I forgive it fully and freely; the fault was not yours, but that of the man who parted us;" and, bending down, she laid her lips on his brow to seal their reconciliation; and he, loosening her hands, drew her arms about his throat, and held her in a close embrace as though he never meant to let her go again.

Mary Anne Robinson never married, to the great and unfeigned indignation of her mother. The girl's whole nature seemed to change from the day on which she gave up Geoffrey Jocelyn. Her frivolity and lightness dropped from her like a cast-off garment, and she gave herself up entirely to works of charity.

At the present time, in the Z—— Hospital, in one of the busiest parts of East London, is a sweet-faced, blue-eyed sister, whose curly golden locks are tucked away demurely under the prim white cap, whose azure orbs yet wear a sad, wistful look, as though, despite her busy life and constant occupation, she often indulges in a mournful retrospection; thoughts of that unforgotten, unforgetable past—those golden summer days, when for a brief while she fancied herself beloved even as she loved.

She is called Sister Marguérite, but once she was known to the world as Mary Anne Robinson.

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TABLE OF EVENTS, 1890-1891.

SEPTEMBER, 1890.

2.—British Mediterranean Fleet entered Toulon Roadstead, receiving a very cordial welcome at the great French naval port.

3.—Worthing incorporated a borough.

German Emperor reviewed German and Austrian Fleets at Kiel.

3, 4.—Destructive fire at Salonica, greater part of the town being destroyed.

10.—Sudden death of Canon Liddon, aged 61. Interred in St. Paul's Cathedral.

Serious rioting at Southampton by dockers on strike. Troops called out, who only succeeded in clearing the streets after desperate and prolonged resistance.

The Doncaster St. Leger, for which fifteen ran, won by the Duke of Portland's Memoir, the Duke of Westminster's Blue Green being second, and Mr. Gretton's Gonsalvo third.

The match at Lord's, between M.C.C. and Australians, for benefit of Cricketers' Fund, ended by club winning, and £696 added to the fund.

At Paddington, W. C. Jones, of Polytechnic Club, bicycled a mile in 2 min. 20⅕ secs., beating record by 6⅕ secs.

20.—News arrived of two terrible maritime disasters off coast of Japan, the Turkish frigate "Entragroul" and a large Japanese mail-steamer having both foundered in a gale. Of the latter's crew, all perished save one, and of those on board the warship, only 63 saved out of 650.

The Lancashire Plate of £11,000 won by Amphion, who beat eight others.

The concluding match of the Australians, played at Manchester, against an eleven of English professionals, ended in a draw. During their tour, the Australians played 38 matches, winning 13, losing 16, and drawing 9.

27.—The glove fight for £1,000 and Championship of the World between Slavin, an Australian, and McAuliffe, an American, at Ormonde Club, resulted in victory of the Colonist, after contest of only six minutes.

28.—During service in St. Paul's Cathedral, a clerk, named Eastwood, committed suicide by shooting himself with a revolver.

29.—Mr. Alderman Savory elected Lord Mayor for ensuing civic year.

30.—Sir Thomas Farrer elected Vice-President of London County Council.

OCTOBER, 1890.

1.—Arrival of German Emperor in Vienna on a visit to Emperor of Austria.

2.—Visit of Queen of Roumania to the Queen at Balmoral.

3.—At Kempton Park the Great Breeders' Produce Stakes, value £6,000, won by Blavatsky, twenty starting.

8, 9.—At Newmarket, Middle Park Plate won by Gouverneur, seven running; and Cesarewitch, by Sheen, in field of twenty-two, Alicante being second and Judith third.

13.—Disastrous fire in middle of the day at hat manufactory in Smithfield, eight young women losing their lives, and many other persons being injured.

14.—Count von Moltke's ninetieth birthday celebrated in Berlin, a great crowd of Royal and distinguished personages taking part in the splendid festivities. The veteran soldier received numerous costly gifts, including a magnificent Field Marshal's baton from the Emperor.

22.—At Newmarket, the Cambridgeshire won by Alicante, who beat Belmont, Tostig, and twenty-six others.

29.—Mr. Gladstone presented with the freedom of the City of Dundee.

New Royal Infirmary of Liverpool, erected at cost of £170,000, opened by Duke of Clarence and Avondale.

31.—By collision off coast of New Jersey, between Spanish steamship "Vizcaya" and a large American schooner, ninety-seven of those on board steamer were lost.

NOVEMBER, 1890.

4.—The City and South London Electrical Railway opened by Prince of Wales.

5.—At Royal Aquarium, W. J. Peall, in an "all in" billiard match, kept in for a day and a half, and completed the extraordinary break of 3,304, the best ever made.

6.—Liverpool Autumn Cup won by Lady Rosebery, who beat nine others.

10.—Lord Mayor's Day, the Prime Minister making the usual political speech at Guildhall banquet.

Terrible naval disaster, H.M.'s "Serpent" totally wrecked during night on the Spanish coast, only three sailors out of the entire crew reaching shore alive.

Serious fire at Wellington Barracks, in the married men's quarters, several persons being badly injured.

15.—Mr. Goschen elected Lord Rector of Edinburgh University, and Mr. A. J. Balfour of that of Glasgow.

17.—The divorce suit, O'Shea *v.* O'Shea and Charles S. Parnell, M.P., was undefended, and decree nisi pronounced.

19.—At Berlin, the marriage of Princess Victoria, sister of the German Emperor, and granddaughter of the Queen, with Prince Adolph of Schaumburg-Lippe, celebrated with much pomp.

At Tipperary, Mr. W. O'Brien, M.P., and Mr. Dillon, M.P., sentenced to be imprisoned for six months, under Crimes Act, in absentia, several others being also condemned to imprisonment for various periods.

At the inquest on two children who died in hospital from injuries sustained at the recent fire at Wellington Barracks, the jury censured War Department for not having attended to reports which had been made on dangerous condition of the building in which the married soldiers were quartered.

21.—At Lambeth Palace, the Archbishop of Canterbury pronounced judgment in case of the Bishop of Lincoln, charged with Ritualistic practices. On two issues the Bishop was found to be in the wrong, and absolved on all others.

22.—The Manchester November Handicap, for which nineteen competed, won by Parlington, with Shall We Remember and Ringmaster second and third.

23.—Death of King of Holland, aged 73, his successor being his only surviving child, Wilhelmina, aged 10 years, Queen Emma being appointed Regent during her minority.

25.—Parliament opened by Royal Commission.

DECEMBER, 1890.

4.—At the Hague, the funeral of the late King took place with much state, many Royal and Princely personages being present.

Opening of New Olympic Theatre in Wych Street, a commodious building under management of Mr. Wilson Barrett.

5.—Death of Mrs. Peel, wife of Speaker of House of Commons; and of Mr. Baron Huddleston, Judge of the High Court.

6.—Mr. Justin McCarthy elected chairman of the large section of the Irish Parliamentary party who repudiate the leadership of Mr. Parnell.

9.—Parliament adjourned to 22nd January.

10.—Influential meeting at Guildhall, presided over by the Lord Mayor, to protest against Jewish persecution in Russia.

12.—Sudden death of Sir Edgar Boehm, the eminent sculptor, in his studio, in Brompton Road, aged 56.

15.—At Reading, the Duke of Clarence and Avondale installed Provincial Grand Master of Berkshire, by his father, the Prince of Wales, Grand Master of English Freemasons; a large body of the craft present.

19.—Great snowstorm in London.

20.—The remains of the late Sir Edgar Boehm, R.A., buried in St. Paul's Cathedral, by desire of the Queen, his grave being in "Painters' Corner," near where Landseer, Turner, and Reynolds lie interred.

21.—Fatal fire in passage off the Strand, which, although confined to one room, resulted in its occupants, a tailor named O'Hara and his three children, losing their lives.

22.—Great strike of railway workmen in Glasgow, Edinburgh, and other places in Scotland, several thousands having ceased work.

23.—Arrival of Czarewitch at Bombay, where he was received with great ceremony and high honours.

North Kilkenny election resulted in return of Sir M. Pope Hennessy, Anti-Parnellite, Mr. Parnell's nominee being defeated by a majority of 1,162.

Mrs. Pearcy executed in Newgate for the barbarous murder of Mrs. Hogg and her infant child.

25.—Death of Dr. Thomson, Archbishop of York, aged 72.

26.—Bank Holiday. Thousands of Londoners spent the day on the ice in the parks, all the theatres and other popular places of entertainment being crammed, as usual on Boxing Night.

JANUARY, 1891.

1.—Frightful disaster at a school entertainment at Leeds, the dresses of fourteen young girls, composed of cotton wool to represent snow, catching fire one from the other, only three of the unfortunate children surviving the terrible injuries they sustained.

2.—Death of A. W. Kinglake, the historian of the Crimean War, aged 80.

3.—About 240 clerks in Post Office Savings Bank suspended for refusing to work overtime, but afterwards reinstated.

5.—Lord Zetland, Viceroy of Ireland, and Mr. Balfour, Chief Secretary, published appeal for charitable aid in relieving the great distress existing in the sister kingdom.

10.—Dr. Magee, Bishop of Peterborough, appointed Archbishop of York.

19.—Sir James Hannen, for many years President of the Probate and Divorce Court, appointed a Lord of Appeal, the high office carrying with it a life peerage.

22.—Reassembly of both Houses of Parliament.

23.—Sudden death in Brussels of Prince Baldwin, heir to the Belgian throne, aged 22, deeply lamented.

27.—Terrible explosion in colliery near Philadelphia, 150 miners being killed.

29.—Funeral of Prince Baldwin in Brussels, in presence of enormous crowds.

Termination of Scotch Railway Strike.

30.—Death of Mr. Bradlaugh, junior Member for Northampton.

31.—Opening of Mr. D'Oyly Carte's Royal English Opera, Shaftesbury Avenue, a very commodious theatre, Sir Arthur Sullivan's grand opera, "Ivanhoe," being performed for the first time before a large and enthusiastic audience.

FEBRUARY, 1891.

9.—At instance of Russian Ambassador, Lord Salisbury returned to the Lord Mayor his letter and City Memorial which he had forwarded to the Czar on subject of Jewish persecution in Russia.

12.—Mr. Dillon, M.P., and Mr. O'Brien, M.P., arrested at Folkestone, and conveyed to Ireland to undergo the six months' imprisonment to which they were sentenced at Tipperary in November last.

16.—Mr. John Morley's motion of censure on the Government, for the action of the Irish Executive in connection with the recent political prosecutions in Ireland, defeated by 75 votes.

19.—Tokar occupied by the Egyptian troops commanded by Colonel Holled Smith, after severe fighting with a strong Dervish force under Osman Digma, which was decisively defeated with loss of 700 killed, all their principal Emirs being among the slain. Our losses were thirteen killed, among whom was Captain Barrow, and five officers and about fifty men wounded.

20.—The proposal of Mr. Pritchard Morgan to disestablish the Church in Wales, which had the support of Mr. Gladstone, rejected by majority of 32.

21.—Waterloo Cup won by Colonel North's Fullerton, last year's winner, and who also divided in 1889 with his kennel companion, Troughend, a truly extraordinary record.

Death of the Earl of Albemarle, aged 92, one of the few last survivors of Waterloo.

Terrible explosion in Springfield Colliery, Nova Scotia, 120 lives being lost.

26.—The Queen, accompanied by Prince of Wales and others of the Royal Family, visited Portsmouth Dockyard, and performed the ceremony of launching the first-class cruiser, "Royal Arthur," and powerful ironclad battle-ship, "Royal Sovereign."

MARCH, 1891.

6.—By special command, Mr. D'Oyly Carte's Savoy Company gave a performance of "The Gondoliers," in Waterloo Chamber of Windsor Castle, before the Queen and a large and distinguished company.

7.—Annual football match, under Rugby rules, between England and Scotland, won by latter by three goals to one.

9, 10.—Great snowstorm and gale in London, and nearly over whole kingdom; many shipwrecks and considerable loss of life.

17.—Mr. John Hare and the Garrick Company attended at Windsor Castle "by command," and performed "A Pair of Spectacles," and "A Quiet Rubber," before Her Majesty, and her Court and visitors.

Terrible catastrophe in the Mediterranean, the large British steamer "Utopia," from Trieste to New York, being sunk in the Bay of Gibraltar, by collision with H.M. ironclad "Anson," 536 persons being drowned—all Italian emigrants—excepting twelve of the crew.

Death of Prince Napoleon in Rome.

18.—Lincolnshire Handicap won by Lord George in field of twenty-one, Seraphine II. and Nunthorpe being second and third.

19.—Liverpool Grand National won by Come Away, twenty-one running.

In House of Commons, a resolution in favour of opening London museums, etc., on Sundays, rejected by large majority.

21.—University Boat Race won by Oxford in 21 mins. 48 secs., after splendid struggle, Cambridge being defeated by short half-length only.

At the Oval, in presence of nearly 30,000 spectators, the Blackburn Rovers won the Association Football Challenge Cup from the Notts players, by three goals to one.

The House of Commons Point to Point Steeplechase, near Daventry, resulted in Mr. Pease winning prize for the light weights, and Lord Henry Bentinck that for the heavy division.

23.—Departure of the Queen from Windsor for Grasse, in the South of France.

24.—Serious military disaster in Assam, the small British force at Manipur having been suddenly attacked by overwhelming numbers of natives, a considerable number of our Indian troops and one British officer slain, and Chief Commissioner of Assam and his civil staff treacherously seized and murdered. The other military officers and the ladies on station succeeded in reaching place of safety.

30.—Easter Monday. Bright weather favoured holiday makers, who crowded the various places of recreation about London, 75,000 having gone to Crystal Palace alone.

31.—Death of Earl Granville, aged 76.

APRIL, 1891.

8.—City and Suburban won by Nunthorpe, beating Bullion, Workington, and twelve others.

10.—At Sandown Park, Prince of Wales's Pierrette won the valuable Esher Stakes, the victory being heartily cheered.

12.—Admiral Wallis, G.C.B., the senior Admiral of the Fleet, and who was second lieutenant of the "Shannon" when she fought her memorable battle with the "Chesapeake," off Boston, as long ago as 1813, attained his hundredth year.

21.—Lord Salisbury, Grand Master of the Primrose League, addressed an important political speech to a vast meeting of the members in Covent Garden Theatre.

23.—The Chancellor of the Exchequer made his annual financial statement in House of Commons, and announced surplus of about two millions, one-half of which he proposed to devote towards free education in elementary schools, £500,000 to the construction of barracks, and £400,000 to the withdrawal of light gold from circulation.

In House of Lords, Sir Wm. Whiteway, Prime Minister of Newfoundland, was heard at the bar in opposition to Newfoundland Fisheries Bill.

24.—Sudden death of Field-Marshal von Moltke, in Berlin, aged 91.

26.—Manipur occupied by British troops, who found place deserted, and within the Rajah's dismantled palace were discovered the heads of the British officers treacherously seized and murdered on 24th March.

28.—Funeral of Count von Moltke, in Berlin; an imposing military pageant, the Emperor taking part as a principal mourner.

29.—At Newmarket, the Two Thousand Guineas, for which nine started, won by Lord Alington's Common, with Orvieto and Peter Flower second and third.

30.—Return of Queen to Windsor, after five weeks' residence in South of France.

MAY, 1891.

1.—The One Thousand Guineas won by Mimi, beating Melody, Siphonia, and nine others.

2.—Royal Naval Exhibition at Chelsea, opened by Prince of Wales.

Annual dinner of the Royal Academy.

4.—Great and orderly demonstration of Eight Hours' Labour League in Hyde Park.

5.—Death of Dr. Magee, Archbishop of York, who was translated from See of Peterborough as recently as January last.

6.—Chester Cup won by Vasistas, beating Tommy Tittlemouse, Burnaby, and nine others.

At Central Criminal Court, Captain Verney, M.P. for North Bucks, pleaded guilty to an offence under Criminal Law Amendment Act, and sentenced to twelve months' imprisonment.

9.—At Kempton Park, the Great Jubilee Stakes fell to Nunthorpe, who defeated Martagon, Rusticus, and sixteen others.

Interment of Dr. Magee in Peterborough Cathedral.

12.—Captain Verney, Member for North Bucks, unanimously expelled House of Commons.

13.—Newmarket Stakes won by Mimi, twelve starting.

18.—Whit Monday. Wintry weather prevented large attendances at open-air places of amusement; but those under cover were largely patronised.

Queen Natalie of Servia expelled Belgrade, and conducted across Hungarian frontier.

Dr. Maclagan, Bishop of Lichfield, appointed Archbishop of York.

20.—Lord Salisbury presented with the freedom of the City of Glasgow.

21.—Visit of the Queen to Derby, where she laid the foundation of new infirmary.

22, 23.—Manchester Cup, for which thirteen ran, won by Lily of Lumley; and Whitsuntide Plate by Rueil, ten starting.

23.—By upsetting a paraffin lamp in his house in London, Lord Romilly and two female servants lost their lives.

24.—Seventy-second birthday of the Queen.

French Derby won by Ermack.

26.—Lt. Grant, of Indian Staff Corps, promoted to rank of Captain and Brevet-Major, and awarded Victoria Cross, for "conspicuous bravery and devotion to his country," during recent operations in Assam.

27, 29.—At Epsom, the Derby, run in heavy rain, easily won by Sir F. Johnstone's Common, beating M. Blanc's Gouverneur, Sir J. Duke's Martenhurst, and eight others; and the Oaks, by Mr. Fenwick's Mimi, who defeated Corstorphine, Lady Primrose, and three other fillies.

JUNE, 1891.

1.—Extraordinary Cricket at Lord's, the M.C.C. defeating Notts in one day by an innings and thirty-seven runs, Ferris taking in all eleven wickets for thirty-two runs. Notts only scored twenty-one in first and sixty-nine in second innings.

7.—Great strike of employés of London Omnibus Companies, their chief demands being increased pay and hours of daily labour limited to twelve.

Grand Prix de Paris won by Clamart in field of twelve.

Death, at Montreal, of Sir John Macdonald, Prime Minister of Canada, deeply regretted throughout the Dominion.

Violent earthquake shocks in Italy, those in province of Verona causing great damage and some loss of life.

9.—The action for slander brought by Sir William Gordon-Cumming, against two ladies and three gentlemen, for alleging that they had seen him repeatedly cheat at the game of baccarat at a private country house, and in which the Prince of Wales had taken part, resulted, after a seven days' trial, in verdict for defendants.

9, 12.—At Ascot, the Prince of Wales's Stakes won by Melody; Ascot Stakes by Houndsditch; Royal Hunt Cup by Laureate II.; Gold Cup by Morion, who beat Queen's Birthday, Gonsalvo, and two others; Wokingham Stakes, for which twenty-four ran, by Rathbeal; and the rich Hardwicke Stakes by L'Abbesse de Jouarre, four others starting. Brilliant weather throughout.

12.—End of Great London Bus Strike.

Gazette Notice that Lieut.-Col. Sir William Gordon-Cumming had been removed from the Army, "Her Majesty having no further occasion for his services."

14.—Very dreadful railway accident near Basle; a passenger train precipitated into the River Birse by collapse of the bridge, and nearly a hundred of its occupants killed, and about a hundred and fifty injured.

15.—The native commissioned officers of Major Grant's gallant force in the Manipur Expedition, admitted into Second Class of Order of British India, and the non-commissioned officers and men into Third Class of Order of Merit, they also receiving grant of six months' pay.

23.—Dr. Hermann Adler installed Chief Rabbi of United Hebrew Congregations of British Empire, in Great Synagogue, Aldersgate.

24, 25.—At Gosforth Park, Northumberland Plate won by Queen's Birthday, and Seaton Delaval Plate by Persistive.

24.—In presence of thirty Bishops and an otherwise large and distinguished assemblage, the Duke of Connaught laid foundation stone of Church House, Westminster.

Celebration at Eton of 450th anniversary of foundation of its College.

Emperor of Austria visited British squadron at Fiume, and lunched with Admiral Hoskins on flagship "Victoria."

30.—Lady Macdonald created a Peeress of United Kingdom in recognition of the long and distinguished services of her late husband, Sir John Macdonald.

The annual University Cricket Match at Lord's won by Oxford by two wickets.

At Newmarket, the July Stakes won by Flyaway, beating seven others.

JULY, 1891.

1.—Arrival of German Emperor and Empress at Amsterdam, where they were warmly received by the Queen Regent, the young Queen, and by all classes.

2.—Mrs. Grimwood—whose husband was one of the officers murdered at Manipur—received by the Queen and decorated with the Royal Red Cross, "in recognition of her services to the wounded" at Manipur.

3.—The match at the Oval, between Gentlemen and Players, won by former by an innings and fifty-four runs.

4.—Arrival of German Emperor and Empress at Port Victoria, being met and cordially welcomed by Prince of Wales, his brothers, and elder son, who accompanied them to Windsor on visit to the Queen.

Lawn Tennis Championship won by W. Baddeley, beating J. Pim in final; Mr. Hamilton, the holder, not competing.

6.—Marriage of Princess Louise of Schleswig-Holstein, second daughter of Prince and Princess Christian, to Prince Aribert of Anhalt, solemnised with much magnificence in St. George's Chapel, Windsor, before the Queen, German Emperor and Empress, Prince and Princess of Wales, and a great assemblage of distinguished people.

News received from Sydney that, on twenty-ninth June, by bursting of a gun on H.M.S. "Cordelia," during firing practice, two lieutenants and four men were killed, and twelve men injured.

7. — Collision, near Dover, between British steamers "Dunholme" and "Kinloch"; former sunk and seventeen of crew lost.

King and Queen of Italy visited H.M.S. "Benbow," at Venice, and entertained at lunch by the officers of British Squadron.

Carlow election resulted in the return of the Anti-Parnellite by large majority.

State banquet in St. George's Hall, Windsor, given by the Queen to German Emperor and Empress.

Four executions by electricity in New York, and death instantaneous in each.

8.—State entry of German Emperor and Empress into London, receiving a magnificent reception. Their Majesties afterwards attended a state performance at the Royal Italian Opera given in their honour by command of the Queen.

Return match at Lord's, between Gentlemen and Players, resulted in a draw, owing to continuous wet weather.

Prince of Wales unveiled fine statue of late Lord Napier of Magdala in Waterloo Place.

9.—Garden Party at Marlborough House, attended by the Queen, German Emperor and Empress, and numerous Royalties and high society generally.

At Leicester, the Prince of Wales's Stakes won by Révérend, beating five others, the favourite, Mimi, not being placed.

10.—State visit of German Emperor and Empress to City, where they received a cordial address of welcome enclosed in a splendid gold casket. At the Guildhall luncheon the Emperor made an important speech, declaring that his object, above all, was the maintenance of peace.

At Sandown Park, the Eclipse Stakes of £10,000 won by Surefoot, after magnificent struggle with Gouverneur and Common. Nine started.

11.—At Wimbledon, 30,000 troops, of whom over 23,000 were Metropolitan Volunteers, reviewed by German Emperor, accompanied by Prince of Wales, other Royal Princes, and a brilliant staff, who afterwards proceeded to the Crystal Palace to witness parade of fire brigades from all parts of the country, and a splendid display of fireworks designed for the occasion.

At Lord's, the annual cricket match between Eton and Harrow, won by the latter by seven wickets.

12.—Visit of the German Emperor and Empress to Lord and Lady Salisbury at Hatfield.

13.—Farewell visit of German Emperor, accompanied by the Empress, to Queen at Windsor, the Emperor afterwards leaving London to join his yacht at Leith, and the Empress proceeding to Felixstowe, where her children were residing.

15.—Private visit of German Empress and her youthful sons to Queen at Windsor, returning to Felixstowe in the evening.

16.—Review of 10,000 troops at Aldershot by the Queen, many thousands witnessing the brilliant military spectacle.

F. J. Osmond, Amateur Champion Cyclist, covered 23 miles 1,260 yards in one hour, beating all records from mile inclusive.

At Newmarket, the Midsummer Plate won by Orvieto, Chesterfield Stakes by La Flèche, and July Cup by Memoir.

17.—Fiftieth anniversary of the publication of "Punch."

18.—Shocking accident on Ince section of Manchester Canal, a train of waggons having been precipitated down a cutting upon men at work below, ten being killed outright and others badly injured.

21.—Opening of Victoria Law Courts, Birmingham, by Prince of Wales.

At Bisley, the Queen's Prize of £250, with gold badge and medal, won by Private Dear, Queen's Edinburgh.

Census returns show population of United Kingdom to be 37,740,283.

Arrival in London of Prince of Naples, Crown Prince of Italy.

22.—Launch at Hull of H.M.S. "Endymion" by Marchioness of Salisbury.

Liverpool Cup won by Rathbeal, and Great Lancashire Stakes by Lady Morgan.

Prince of Wales laid the foundation of South-West London Polytechnic Institution.

23.—Arrival of French Squadron at Cronstadt, meeting with enthusiastic welcome.

Fifty Miles Safety Bicycle Championship Race, won by F. J. Osmond in 2 hrs. 28 min. 16 secs.

24.—Visit of Prince of Naples to Queen at Osborne.

25.—The Wingfield Sculls rowed over by Mr. G. Nickalls, the holder not competing.

26.—Terrible railway collision just outside Paris; forty-eight killed and over a hundred seriously injured.

At Friar's Goose Chemical Works, Gateshead, by collapse of six condensers, seven men killed, six instantaneously.

27.—Mr. Atkinson, Member for Boston, suspended from the service of the House for a week for addressing insulting communications to the Speaker.

Glove fight for £1,000 and Championship of England between Edward Pritchard and "Jim" Smith, won by former in third round.

At Lacy Green, High Wycombe, three men killed by a flash of lightning, and several others injured.

28-31.—At Goodwood, the Stewards' Cup, for which twenty-four ran, won by Unicorn; Richmond Stakes by Orme; Goodwood Stakes by White Feather; Sussex Stakes by Orvieto; Goodwood Cup by Gonsalvo, five starting; Prince of Wales's Stakes by Orme; and Chesterfield Stakes by Goodlake.

30.—Ministerial banquet at the Mansion House, Lord Salisbury making the political speech customary on the occasion.

Launch at Chatham of H.M. first-class battle-ship "Hood."

AUGUST, 1891.

3.—Bank Holiday. Fairly favourable weather, the occasional showers not preventing the various places of amusement from being very largely attended.

After an interval of very many years, the Dunmow Flitch awarded to three claimants, the trial and presentation being conducted strictly according to ancient custom.

4.—The Royal Yacht Squadron Queen's Cup won by "Cetonia," beating five others.

4, 5.—At Brighton, the Stakes won by Veau d'Or, eight starting; and the Cup by Nunthorpe, beating three others.

5.—Parliament prorogued by Royal Commission.

8.—Professor Higgins, a well-known parachutist, killed near Leeds by fall from his balloon.

Annual meeting of the National Artillery Association at Shoeburyness.

10.—Opening of the seventh International Hygienic Congress in St. James's Hall, under presidency of Prince of Wales.

Death sentences passed upon the Senapati and the Tongal General of Manipur, for complicity in the recent murders of our officers at that place, confirmed by the Viceroy of India in Council, the two other capital sentences being commuted to transportation for life.

The Union Company's new steamship, "Scot," accomplished the voyage from Southampton to Cape Town in fifteen days two hours and ten minutes—the fastest passage ever made.

Two members of the Chichester Cyclists' Tourist Club, en route from Paris to Vienna, crossed the Stelvio, the highest of the Alpine passes, and which connects the Tyrol with Austria at the height of 9,126 feet.

11.—Death of Dr. Elliott, Dean of Bristol, aged 91.

Mr. A. J. Balfour laid foundation stone of a working man's Constitutional Club at Plymouth, and was afterwards entertained at luncheon by the Plymouth Conservative Association.

Conversazione at the Guildhall to the members of the International Hygienic Congress, at which 4,000 guests were present.

11, 12.—At Kempton Park, the International Breeders' Two-year-old Stakes won by Flyaway in a field of seven; and the City of London Breeders' Foal Stakes, for three-year-olds, by Bumptious, six starting.

12.—Death, at Boston, U.S.A., of Mr. James Russell Lowell, the popular author, and who was American Minister in London in 1880–5, aged 72.

The White Star Company's steamer, "Majestic," arrived at New York, from Queenstown, in five days eighteen hours and eight minutes—best time on record.

13.—Public execution of the Senapati and the Tongal General at Manipur.

15.—The Bath Road Club Hundred Miles Cycling Race, for which eleven started, won by C. A. Smith, Bath Road Club, in 5 hrs. 59 mins. 11 secs., fastest on record.

17.—The Roman Catholic Total Abstinence League of the Cross celebrated its seventeenth annual festival at the Crystal Palace, a great gathering, which included Cardinal Manning, being present.

Another disastrous railway accident in Switzerland, the Paris express having dashed into a special excursion train near Berne, fourteen persons being killed and about twenty-five seriously injured.

18.—Seventy naval cadets from French training-sloop "Bougainville," lying at Spithead, with their commandant and other officers, visited Naval Exhibition, Chelsea, meeting with a most hospitable reception from the executive committee.

Owing to a "Cloud-Burst" in the Tyrol, fully half of the village of Kollmann destroyed, and forty persons drowned.

19.—The French Squadron, under Admiral Gervais, anchored in Osborne Bay, receiving an enthusiastic reception from the British war-ships at Spithead.

The British Association met at Cardiff, Professor Huggins, the eminent astronomer, delivering the presidential address.

20.—Banquet at Osborne to Admiral Gervais and his principal officers, the English Admirals and Captains, and many other distinguished persons, being also Her Majesty's guests.

Terrible cyclone at Martinique, 400 persons perishing, and property to enormous amount destroyed.

Death of Duke of Cleveland, aged 89, the title becoming extinct.

21.—The French and English fleets off Portsmouth inspected by the Queen.

22.—By collapse of a house in New York, nearly a hundred persons perished.

French Admiral and officers entertained by the Mayor at a banquet in Portsmouth Town Hall, a brilliant company assembling.

24.—Death of Mr. Raikes, the Postmaster-General, and M.P. for Cambridge University, aged 53.

Desperate fighting just outside Valparaiso between the Insurgents and Government troops, immense loss in killed and wounded being reported.

Dinner to French petty officers and seamen in Portsmouth Town Hall, the greatest enthusiasm being displayed by the visitors.

25.—The English Admirals and officers entertained on French flagship, the Dukes of Cambridge and Connaught and the French Ambassador among the Admiral's guests.

25, 26.—At York, the Prince of Wales's Stakes won by El Diablo, sixteen running; and the Great Ebor by Buccaneer, thirteen running.

26.—Death of General Whichcote, aged 97, who was lieutenant at Waterloo.

Departure of the French Squadron from Spithead.

27.—Disastrous railway accident in North Carolina, owing to train leaving line; thirty persons reported killed and many injured.

28.—Sanguinary battle on the outskirts of Valparaiso, resulting in total defeat of the Government troops, the flight of the President, and capture and occupation of the city by the Insurgent forces, the loss of the two armies in killed and wounded being estimated at 5,000 men. Santiago afterwards occupied by the Insurgents.

29.—Close of the first-class county cricket season, Surrey being left champion county, Lancashire coming next, but far behind.

31.—By a colliery explosion at Bedminster, Bristol, ten were killed.

OBITUARY FOR 1890-1891.

The death of Miss **Marianne North**, in her sixty-first year, on the 30th August, 1890, deprived the world of an accomplished naturalist, traveller, and artist, of whom a permanent monument remains in the "North" Gallery at Kew Gardens.

In September died in America the once famous actor and dramatist, **Dion Boucicault**, after a brilliant but troubled and eccentric career. He was born in Dublin, A.D. 1820.

Early in October died **Mrs. Booth**, the wife of the well-known Salvation Army General, an amiable and devoted woman. **Professor J. E. Thorold Rogers**, who died in the same month, was in his sixty-eighth year, and occupied the chair of political economy at Oxford. His work on "Agriculture and Prices" is a valuable contribution to the history of the subject. **Sir Richard Burton**, who died on the 20th October, was a man of extraordinary energy and enterprise, which were combined with unique attainments in Oriental languages and literature. He was born 19th March, 1821, and entered the East India Company's military service in 1842, but was soon permitted to devote himself to travel and exploration. In 1852 he made the pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina, and in 1858 he was exploring Central Africa with Captain Speke, and joined in the discovery of Lake Tanganyika. In 1860 he married the wife who shared so many of his subsequent travels and adventures. In 1869 he was appointed Consul at Damascus, and in 1872 removed to the less congenial region of Trieste, where he died. In October also died **Mr. C. C. Mudie**, born 1818 at Chelsea, the founder of the extensive subscription library known as "Mudie's." In the same month of October died **Henry Courtney Selous**, an artist who lived and worked during the greater part of the century, having exhibited a picture at the Royal Academy, Somerset House, in 1818. Mr. Selous died in his eighty-eighth year.

The death of **Mr. Shirley Hibberd** on the 16th November at Kew, in his sixty-sixth year, removes a fascinating and picturesque writer on floriculture and gardening topics.

On 12th December, 1890, died **Sir Joseph Edgar Boehm**, R.A., Bart., who was born July 6th, 1834, of Hungarian parentage, at Vienna. Sir Edgar first settled in London in 1862, where his works in terra cotta and bronze soon obtained favour and fashionable recognition. Of late years Sir Edgar seems to have had almost a monopoly of the public statues of the Metropolis, most of which are respectable in design and execution, if they reach no very high standard of excellence. On December 25th died **Dr. Thomson**, Archbishop of York, aged seventy-one. He was raised to the dignity of Primate of England in 1862.

A remarkable career, that of **Dr. Schliemann**, was terminated by death in December, 1890. The future explorer was born 6th January, 1822, of humble parents, in Mecklenberg, and began life as a grocer's apprentice, but pursued unremittingly his classical studies, while he embarked in business with such energy and success that in 1863 he retired from the business he had founded in St. Petersburg with a handsome fortune. Henceforth he devoted himself to his chosen career of exploration among the buried cities and hidden tombs of the ancient world. The Doctor's books and the antiquities which he collected remain to bear witness to his discoveries.

In the new year of 1891, January 2nd, died **A. W. Kinglake** in his eighty-first year, whose earliest work, "Eothen," a fascinating record of Eastern travel, had an extraordinary success. He wrote in later years a lengthy history of the Crimean War. January 4th died the well-known "Punch" artist, **Charles Keene**, who in humour and graphic power was a worthy successor of John Leech. Mr. Keene was born at Hornsey in 1823. On the 11th of the same month death overtook the famous Prefect, **Baron Haussmann**, the creator of modern Paris, of which the boulevards and lofty buildings are his monument.

On the 17th January died **George Bancroft**, author of the "History of the United States of America." On the 30th January died **Charles Bradlaugh**, M.P. for Northampton, whose long struggle with the House of Commons for his seat will be freshly remembered. The great artist **Meissonier** died on the last day of January. He was born at Lyons on the 21st February, 1815. The death on the 15th March of **Sir Joseph Bazalgette**, aged seventy-two, and on the 2nd June of **Sir John Hawkshaw**, in his eighty-first year, removes two of the leading engineers of the century; the former of whom carried out the main drainage of London and the Thames Embankment, while to the latter is due the Severn Tunnel, and many other mighty works of railway construction.

The great showman of the century, **Mr. P. T. Barnum**, died 7th April, 1891, in his eighty-first year. The great strategist of the age, **Von Moltke**, died on the 24th of the same month, at the age of ninety years.] **Keeley Halswelle**, a popular artist in lake and river scenes, died on the 11th April. **Mr. Barry Sullivan**, an actor of distinction in the serious drama, died on the 3rd May. On the 5th died **Dr. Magee**, Archbishop of York, notable for eloquence and humour. **Mr. Edwin Long**, R.A., who died on the 15th, aged fifty-two, found his subjects in the antique world. **Mr. Henry Sampson**, the famous Pendragon of the sporting press, died on the 16th.

In June died **Sir John Macdonald**, the Canadian Premier, a native of Glasgow, in his seventy-seventh year, and on the 16th of the same month the **O'Gorman Mahon**, a patriotic Irishman of the old school, aged eighty-nine. **Mr. W. H. Gladstone**, eldest son of the eminent statesman, died July 4th, aged fifty-one years. **James Russell Lowell**, of the "Biglow Papers," died 12th August, in his seventy-third year. And on the 24th died the **Rt. Hon. Henry Cecil Raikes**, born 1838, whose administration of the Post Office in a period of change and agitation was marked by firmness and impartiality.

CALENDAR FOR 1892.

BISSEXTILE OR LEAP YEAR.

JANUARY.

1	F	Circumcision.
2	S	J. C. Lavater died, 1801.
3	S	2nd Sunday after Christmas.
4	M	Roger Ascham died, 1568; born, 1515.
5	T	Edward the Confessor died, 1066.
6	W	Epiphany. Twelfth Day.
7	Th	Princess Charlotte born, 1796; died, 1817.
8	F	Duke of Clarence born, 1864.
9	S	W. P. Frith, R.A., born, 1819.
10	S	1st Sunday after Epiphany.
11	M	Sir Hans Sloane died, 1753.
12	T	Auguste Comte born, 1798.
13	W	St. Hilary.
14	Th	Bishop Berkeley died, 1753; born, 1684.
15	F	Dr. John Aikin born, 1747; died, 1822.
16	S	Richard Savage, poet, born, 1697; died, 1743.
17	S	2nd Sunday after Epiphany.
18	M	Sir Samuel Garth died, 1719.
19	T	James Watt born, 1736; died, 1819.
20	W	John Howard died, 1790.
21	Th	Louis XVI. beheaded.
22	F	Lord Byron born, 1788; died, 1824.
23	S	Coquelin aîné born, 1841.
24	S	3rd Sunday after Epiphany.
25	M	Robert Burns born, 1759; died, 1796.
26	T	Charles John Bernadotte born, 1763.
27	W	German Emperor born, 1859.
28	Th	General Gordon born, 1833.
29	F	John Hughes, dramatist, born, 1677; died,
30	S	Walter S. Landor born, 1775. [1720.
31	S	4th Sunday after Epiphany.

Moon's Phases.

7th.	First Quarter	..	1*h*.	12*m*.	Morning.
14th.	Full Moon	..	3	27	Morning.
22nd.	Last Quarter	..	3	43	Morning.
29th.	New Moon	..	4	39	Afternoon.

FEBRUARY.

1	M	Partridge and Pheasant Shooting ends.
2	T	Purification. Candlemas Day.
3	W	Marquis of Salisbury born, 1830.
4	Th	George Lillo, dramatist, born, 1793.
5	F	St. Agatha.
6	S	Henry Irving born, 1838.
7	S	5th Sunday after Epiphany.
8	M	Samuel Butler born, 1612.
9	T	Martyrdom of Bishop Hooper, 1555.
10	W	Queen Victoria married, 1840.
11	Th	Archbishop Thomson born, 1819; died, 1890.
12	F	Charles Darwin born, 1809.
13	S	Richard II. murdered, 1400.
14	S	Septuagesima.
15	M	Jeremy Bentham born, 1748; died, 1832.
16	T	Philip Melanchthon born, 1497; died, 1560.
17	W	Duchess of Albany born, 1861.
18	Th	Charles Lamb born, 1775.
19	F	Henry, Prince of Wales, born, 1593; died,
20	S	David Garrick born, 1716. [1612.
21	S	Sexagesima.
22	M	James Barry, artist, born, 1741; died, 1806.
23	T	Samuel Pepys born, 1632.
24	W	St. Mathias. G. F. Handel born, 1684; died,
25	Th	Earl of Essex beheaded, 1601. [1759.
26	F	Prince Ferdinand of Bulgaria born, 1861.
27	S	H. W. Longfellow born, 1807.
28	S	Quinquagesima. Shrove Sunday.
29	M	Edmund Cave born, 1692; died, 1754.

Moon's Phases.

5th.	First Quarter	..	9*h*.	39*m*.	Morning.
12th.	Full Moon	..	7	38	Afternoon.
21st.	Last Quarter	..	0	15	Morning.
28th.	New Moon	..	3	47	Morning.

MARCH.

1	T	St. David. Shrove Tuesday.
2	W	Ash Wednesday.
3	Th	Sir Fitzjames Stephen born, 1829.
4	F	Edward IV. installed as king, 1461.
5	S	Sir Henry A. Layard born, 1817.
6	S	1st Sunday in Lent.
7	M	SS. Perpetua and Felicitas.
8	T	William III. died, 1702.
9	W	William Cobbett born, 1762; died, 1835.
10	Th	William Etty born, 1787.
11	F	Torquato Tasso born, 1544; died, 1595.
12	S	J. L. Toole born, 1830.
13	S	2nd Sunday in Lent.
14	M	King Humbert of Italy born, 1844.
15	T	George Dyer, poet, born, 1755.
16	W	Duchess of Kent died, 1861.
17	Th	St. Patrick's Day.
18	F	Laurence Sterne died, 1768; born, 1713.
19	S	Sir John Denham, poet, died, 1668; born,
20	S	3rd Sunday in Lent. [1615.
21	M	Robert Bruce born, 1274; died, 1329.
22	T	Rosa Bonheur born, 1822.
23	W	Richard A. Proctor born, 1837; died, 1888.
24	Th	Queen Elizabeth died, 1603.
25	F	Annunciation B.V.M. Quarter Day.
26	S	W. E. H. Leckey born, 1838.
27	S	4th Sunday in Lent.
28	M	Damiens executed in Paris, 1757.
29	T	Marshal Soult born, 1769; died, 1851.
30	W	Don Carlos born, 1848.
31	Th	Descartes, metaphysician, born, 1596.

Moon's Phases.

5th.	First Quarter	..	7*h*.	15*m*.	Afternoon.
13th.	Full Moon	..	0	55	Afternoon.
21st.	Last Quarter	..	5	16	Afternoon.
28th.	New Moon	..	1	18	Afternoon.

APRIL.

1	F	Prince Bismarck born, 1815.
2	S	Emile Zola born, 1840.
3	S	5th Sunday in Lent.
4	M	Oliver Goldsmith died, 1774; born, 1728.
5	T	Algernon C. Swinburne born, 1837.
6	W	Dr. Busby died, 1695.
7	Th	William Wordsworth born, 1770.
8	F	Lorenzo de Medici died, 1492.
9	S	Adelina Patti born, 1843.
10	S	Palm Sunday.
11	M	George Canning born, 1770.
12	T	Rodney's victory off West India Isles.
13	W	Fort Sumter taken, 1861.
14	Th	Princess Beatrice born, 1857.
15	F	Good Friday.
16	S	A. Thiers born, 1797.
17	S	Easter Sunday.
18	M	Bank Holiday.
19	T	St. Alphege, Archbishop and Martyr.
20	W	Napoleon III. born, 1808.
21	Th	Louis Kossuth born, 1802.
22	F	Henry Fielding born, 1707; died, 1754.
23	S	St. George's Day.
24	S	Low Sunday.
25	M	St. Mark, Evangelist and Martyr.
26	T	T. H. S. Escott born, 1844.
27	W	Edward Gibbon born, 1737.
28	Th	Charles Cotton, poet, born, 1630.
29	F	T. A. Trollope born, 1810.
30	S	Duke of Argyle born, 1823.

Moon's Phases.

4th.	First Quarter	..	6*h*.	21*m*.	Morning.
12th.	Full Moon	..	6	26	Morning.
20th.	Last Quarter	..	6	0	Morning.
26th.	New Moon	..	9	46	Afternoon.

MAY.

1	S	2nd Sunday after Easter.
2	M	Leonardo Da Vinci died, 1519.
3	T	Invention of the Cross. Holy Rood.
4	W	Sir Thomas Lawrence born, 1769.
5	Th	Empress Eugénie born, 1826.
6	F	Battle of Prague, 1757.
7	S	Robert Browning born, 1812; died, 1889.
8	S	3rd Sunday after Easter.
9	M	F. Schiller died, 1805.
10	T	Louis XV. died, 1774.
11	W	Partial Eclipse of Moon, vis. at Greenwich.
12	Th	Execution of Strafford, 1641.
13	F	Old May Day.
14	S	Henry IV. of France assassinated, 1610.
15	S	4th Sunday after Easter.
16	M	Felicia Hemans died, 1835.
17	T	Dr. Edward Jenner born, 1749; died, 1823.
18	W	King Edward murdered at Corfe, 979.
19	Th	"Christopher North" born, 1785.
20	F	John Stuart Mill born, 1806.
21	S	Albrecht Dürer born, 1471; died, 1528.
22	S	Rogation Sunday.
23	M	Elias Ashmole born, 1617.
24	T	Queen Victoria born, 1819.
25	W	Princess Helena born, 1846.
26	Th	Ascension Day.
27	F	Countess of Salisbury executed, 1541.
28	S	William Pitt born, 1759; died, 1806.
29	S	Sunday after Ascension.
30	M	Viscount Cross born, 1823.
31	T	Frederick William I. of Prussia died, 1740.

MOON'S PHASES.

3rd.	First Quarter ..	*7h.*	*12m.*	Afternoon.
11th.	Full Moon ..	10	59	Afternoon.
19th.	Last Quarter ..	2	53	Afternoon.
26th.	New Moon ..	5	49	Morning.

JUNE.

1	W	Capture of *Chesapeake* by *Shannon*, 1813.
2	Th	Thomas Hardy, novelist, born, 1840.
3	F	Prince George of Wales born, 1865.
4	S	George III. born, 1738.
5	S	Whit Sunday.
6	M	Bank Holiday.
7	T	J. Rennie, engineer, born, 1761; died, 1821.
8	W	J. E. Millais, R.A., born, 1829.
9	Th	Count Zinzendorf died, 1760.
10	F	Prince James born, 1688.
11	S	St. Barnabas, Apostle and Martyr.
12	S	Trinity Sunday.
13	M	Frances Burney born, 1752; died, 1840.
14	T	Battle of Marengo, 1800.
15	W	Edward, Black Prince, born, 1330.
16	Th	Corpus Christi.
17	F	John Wesley born, 1703.
18	S	Battle of Waterloo, 1815.
19	S	1st Sunday after Trinity.
20	M	Accession of Queen Victoria, 1837.
21	T	Bishop Stubbs born, 1825.
22	W	Julian Hawthorne born, 1846.
23	Th	General Cluseret born, 1823.
24	F	St. John Baptist. Quarter Day.
25	S	H. C. E. Childers born, 1827.
26	S	2nd Sunday after Trinity.
27	M	Sir Geo. B. Airey born, 1801.
28	T	Coronation Day. P. P. Rubens born, 1577.
29	W	St. Peter, Apostle and Martyr.
30	Th	Sir Joseph D. Hooker born, 1817.

MOON'S PHASES.

2nd.	First Quarter ..	*9h.*	*51m.*	Morning.
10th.	Full Moon ..	1	32	Afternoon.
17th.	Last Quarter ..	9	1	Afternoon.
24th.	New Moon ..	2	7	Afternoon.

JULY.

1	F	Gaveston beheaded, 1812.
2	S	Arthur Locker born, 1828.
3	S	3rd Sunday after Trinity.
4	M	General Garibaldi born, 1807.
5	T	Sarah Siddons born, 1755.
6	W	Sir J. E. Boehm born, 1834; died, 1890.
7	Th	Frederick W. Walker born, 1830; died, 1875.
8	F	Mrs. Alfred Mellon born, 1824.
9	S	Henry Hallam born, 1777.
10	S	4th Sunday after Trinity.
11	M	Bombardment of Alexandria, 1882.
12	T	Josiah Wedgwood born, 1730; died, 1795.
13	W	Marshal MacMahon born, 1808.
14	Th	Storming of Bastille, 1789.
15	F	St. Swithin. Cardinal Manning born, 1808.
16	S	Sir Joshua Reynolds born, 1723; died, 1792.
17	S	5th Sunday after Trinity.
18	M	Francis Petrarch died, 1374.
19	T	John Martin, artist, born, 1789.
20	W	St. Margaret.
21	Th	Matthew Prior born, 1664.
22	F	St. Mary Magdalen.
23	S	Marquis of Hartington born, 1833.
24	S	6th Sunday after Trinity.
25	M	St. James, Apostle and Martyr.
26	T	Earl of Rochester died, 1680.
27	W	Thomas Campbell born, 1777.
28	Th	Alexandre Dumas, fils, born, 1824.
29	F	Relief of Derry, 1689.
30	S	Samuel Rogers born, 1763; died, 1855.
31	S	7th Sunday after Trinity.

MOON'S PHASES.

2nd.	First Quarter ..	*2h.*	*13m.*	Morning.
10th.	Full Moon ..	1	44	Morning.
17th.	Last Quarter ..	1	48	Morning.
23rd.	New Moon ..	11	31	Afternoon.
31st.	First Quarter ..	7	45	Afternoon.

AUGUST.

1	M	Bank Holiday. Battle of the Nile, 1798.
2	T	Thomas Gainsborough died, 1788.
3	W	Sir Robert Peel born, 1829.
4	Th	Battle of Evesham, 1265.
5	F	Queen of Saxony born, 1833.
6	S	Duke of Edinburgh born, 1844.
7	S	8th Sunday after Trinity.
8	M	Martyrdom of Prochorus.
9	T	John Dryden born, 1631.
10	W	Rt. Hon. G. J. Göschen born, 1831.
11	Th	Dr. Richard Mead born, 1673; died, 1754.
12	F	Grouse Shooting begins.
13	S	St. Hippolytus.
14	S	9th Sunday after Trinity.
15	M	Sir Walter Scott born, 1771.
16	T	Andrew Marvel died, 1678.
17	W	Frederick the Great died, 1786.
18	Th	Execution of Balmerino and Kilmarnock, 1746.
19	F	Henry Kirke White born, 1785; died, 1806.
20	S	Robert Herrick born, 1591.
21	S	10th Sunday after Trinity.
22	M	Dr. E. B. Pusey born, 1800.
23	T	Louis XVI. born, 1754.
24	W	St. Bartholomew.
25	Th	Bret Harte born, 1839.
26	F	Prince Consort born, 1819; died, 1861.
27	S	Lord Exmouth's victory at Algiers, 1816.
28	S	11th Sunday after Trinity.
29	M	Decollation St. John Baptist.
30	T	Louis XI. died, 1483.
31	W	Thomas Miller, novelist, born, 1808.

MOON'S PHASES.

8th.	Full Moon ..	*11h.*	*57m.*	Morning.
15th.	Last Quarter ..	6	37	Morning.
22nd.	New Moon ..	10	59	Morning.
30th.	First Quarter ..	1	29	Afternoon.

SEPTEMBER.

1	Th	Partridge Shooting begins.
2	F	Henry George born, 1839.
3	S	Lord Halsbury born, 1825.
4	S	12th Sunday after Trinity.
5	M	Robert Fergusson born, 1750.
6	T	Stratford Jubilee, 1769.
7	W	Comte de Buffon born, 1707.
8	Th	Nativity B.V.M.
9	F	Prince Jerome Napoleon born, 1822.
10	S	Mungo Park born, 1771.
11	S	13th Sunday after Trinity.
12	M	Sir Robert N. Fowler born, 1828.
13	T	Henry Stacey Marks, R.A., born, 1829.
14	W	Holy Cross Day.
15	Th	J. Fenimore Cooper born, 1789.
16	F	F. S. Haden born, 1818.
17	S	Frederick Goodall, R.A., born, 1822.
18	S	14th Sunday after Trinity.
19	M	Lord H. Brougham born, 1779; died, 1868.
20	T	Sir E. J. Reed born, 1830.
21	W	St. Matthew, Apos., Evangelist, and Martyr.
22	Th	Jas. Thomson, poet, born, 1700; died, 1748.
23	F	Wilkie Collins died, 1889.
24	S	Samuel Butler died, 1680.
25	S	15th Sunday after Trinity.
26	M	C. T. Sidney, R.A., born, 1803.
27	T	George Cruikshank born, 1792; died, 1878.
28	W	F. T. Palgrave born, 1824.
29	Th	St. Michael and All Angels. Quarter Day.
30	F	St. Jerome.

MOON'S PHASES.

6th.	Full Moon	..	9*h*.	7*m*.	Afternoon.
13th.	Last Quarter	..	0	50	Afternoon.
21st.	New Moon	..	1	16	Morning.
29th.	First Quarter	..	6	19	Morning.

OCTOBER.

1	S	Pheasant Shooting begins.
2	S	16th Sunday after Trinity.
3	M	George Bancroft born, 1800.
4	T	F. P. G. Guizot born, 1787; died, 1874.
5	W	Horace Walpole born, 1715.
6	Th	St. Faith.
7	F	Battle of Lepanto, 1571.
8	S	Lord Rowton born, 1838.
9	S	17th Sunday after Trinity.
10	M	Kosciuszko fell, 1794.
11	T	Duncan's victory, Camperdown, 1797.
12	W	Sir H. Drummond Wolff born, 1830.
13	Th	Translation of St. Edward the Confessor.
14	F	Sir W. V. Harcourt born, 1827.
15	S	Allan Ramsay born, 1686.
16	S	18th Sunday after Trinity.
17	M	Duchess of Edinburgh born, 1853.
18	T	St. Luke, Evangelist.
19	W	Leigh Hunt born, 1784.
20	Th	Christopher Wren born, 1632; died, 1723.
21	F	Battle of Trafalgar, 1805.
22	S	St. Salome.
23	S	19th Sunday after Trinity.
24	M	Marquis of Ripon born, 1827.
25	T	James Beattie, poet, born, 1735.
26	W	Count von Moltke born, 1800; died, 1891.
27	Th	Captain James Cook born, 1728; killed, 1779.
28	F	SS. Simon and Jude.
29	S	James Boswell born, 1740.
30	S	20th Sunday after Trinity.
31	M	John Keats born, 1795.

MOON'S PHASES.

6th.	Full Moon	..	6*h*.	12*m*.	Morning.
12th.	Last Quarter	..	9	37	Afternoon.
20th.	New Moon	..	6	24	Afternoon.
28th.	First Quarter	..	9	26	Afternoon.

NOVEMBER.

1	T	All Saints' Day.
2	W	All Souls' Day.
3	Th	Mikado of Japan born, 1852.
4	F	Eclipse of Moon, partly vis. at Greenwich.
5	S	Battle of Jemappes, 1792.
6	S	21st Sunday after Trinity.
7	M	Battle of Prague, 1620.
8	T	Edmund Halley born, 1656; died, 1742.
9	W	Prince of Wales born, 1841.
10	Th	Martin Luther born, 1483; died, 1546.
11	F	St. Martin. Martinmas.
12	S	Richard Baxter born, 1615; died, 1691.
13	S	22nd Sunday after Trinity.
14	M	Pitt, Earl of Chatham, born, 1708; died, 1778.
15	T	Edwin Booth, actor, born, 1833.
16	W	John Bright born, 1811; died, 1889.
17	Th	Queen Charlotte died, 1818.
18	F	David Wilkie born, 1785.
19	S	Ferdinand de Lesseps born, 1805.
20	S	23rd Sunday after Trinity.
21	M	Empress Frederick born, 1840.
22	T	St. Cecilia.
23	W	St. Clement. Old Martinmas.
24	Th	John Knox died, 1572.
25	F	St. Catherine.
26	S	William Cowper born, 1731; died, 1800.
27	S	Advent Sunday.
28	M	Leslie Stephen born, 1832.
29	T	Sir Henry Ellis born, 1777; died, 1869.
30	W	St. Andrew, Apostle and Martyr.

MOON'S PHASES.

4th.	Full Moon	..	3*h*.	49*m*.	Afternoon.
11th.	Last Quarter	..	10	2	Morning.
19th.	New Moon	..	1	19	Afternoon.
27th.	First Quarter	..	10	28	Morning.

DECEMBER.

1	Th	Princess of Wales born, 1844.
2	F	Emperor Pedro, Brazil, born, 1825.
3	S	Sir Frederick Leighton, P.R.A., born, 1830.
4	S	2nd Sunday in Advent.
5	M	Henry W. Lucy, journalist, born, 1845.
6	T	Professor Max Müller born, 1823.
7	W	Allan Cunningham born, 1785.
8	Th	Mary Queen of Scots born, 1542.
9	F	John Milton born, 1608; died, 1674.
10	S	Grouse Shooting ends.
11	S	3rd Sunday in Advent.
12	M	Colley Cibber died, 1757.
13	T	Duke of Rutland born, 1818.
14	W	Prince Consort died, 1861.
15	Th	George Romney born, 1734.
16	F	Jane Austen born, 1775; died, 1817.
17	S	J. G. Whittier born, 1807.
18	S	4th Sunday in Advent.
19	M	Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild born, 1842.
20	T	Alfred Bunn died, 1860.
21	W	Lord Beaconsfield born, 1805.
22	Th	Thos. Banks, sculptor, born, 1733; died, 1805
23	F	Duke of Guise assassinated, 1588.
24	S	George Crabbe born, 1754.
25	S	Christmas Day.
26	M	St. Stephen, Martyr. Bank Holiday.
27	T	St. John, Evangelist.
28	W	Innocents' Day. Childermas.
29	Th	Rt. Hon. W. E. Gladstone born, 1809.
30	F	John Phillips, poet, born, 1676; died, 1708.
31	S	Sir W. W. Gull born, 1816.

MOON'S PHASES.

4th.	Full Moon	..	2*h*.	17*m*.	Morning.
11th.	Last Quarter	..	2	30	Morning.
19th.	New Moon	..	8	13	Morning
26th.	First Quarter	..	9	22	Afternoon.

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