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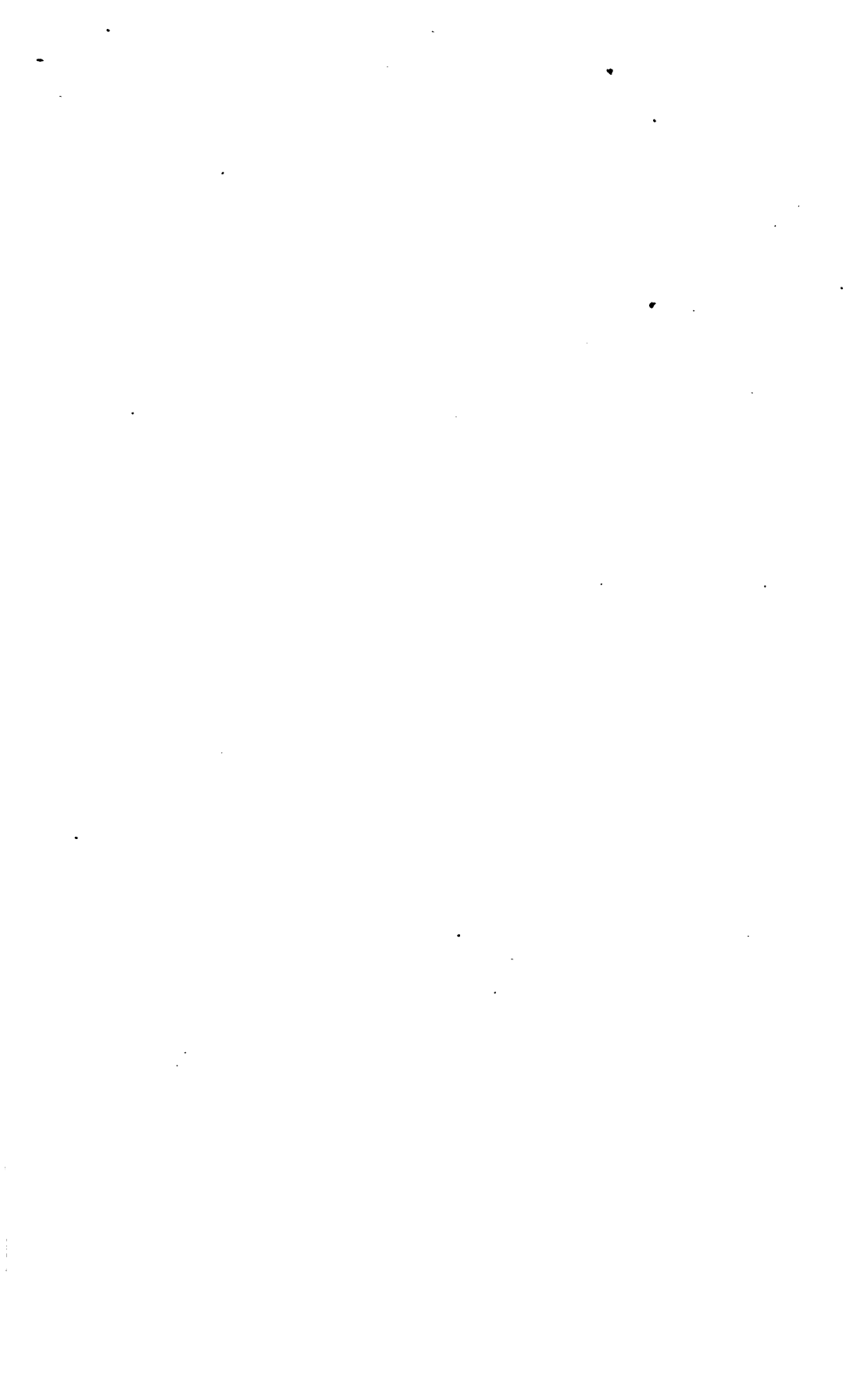
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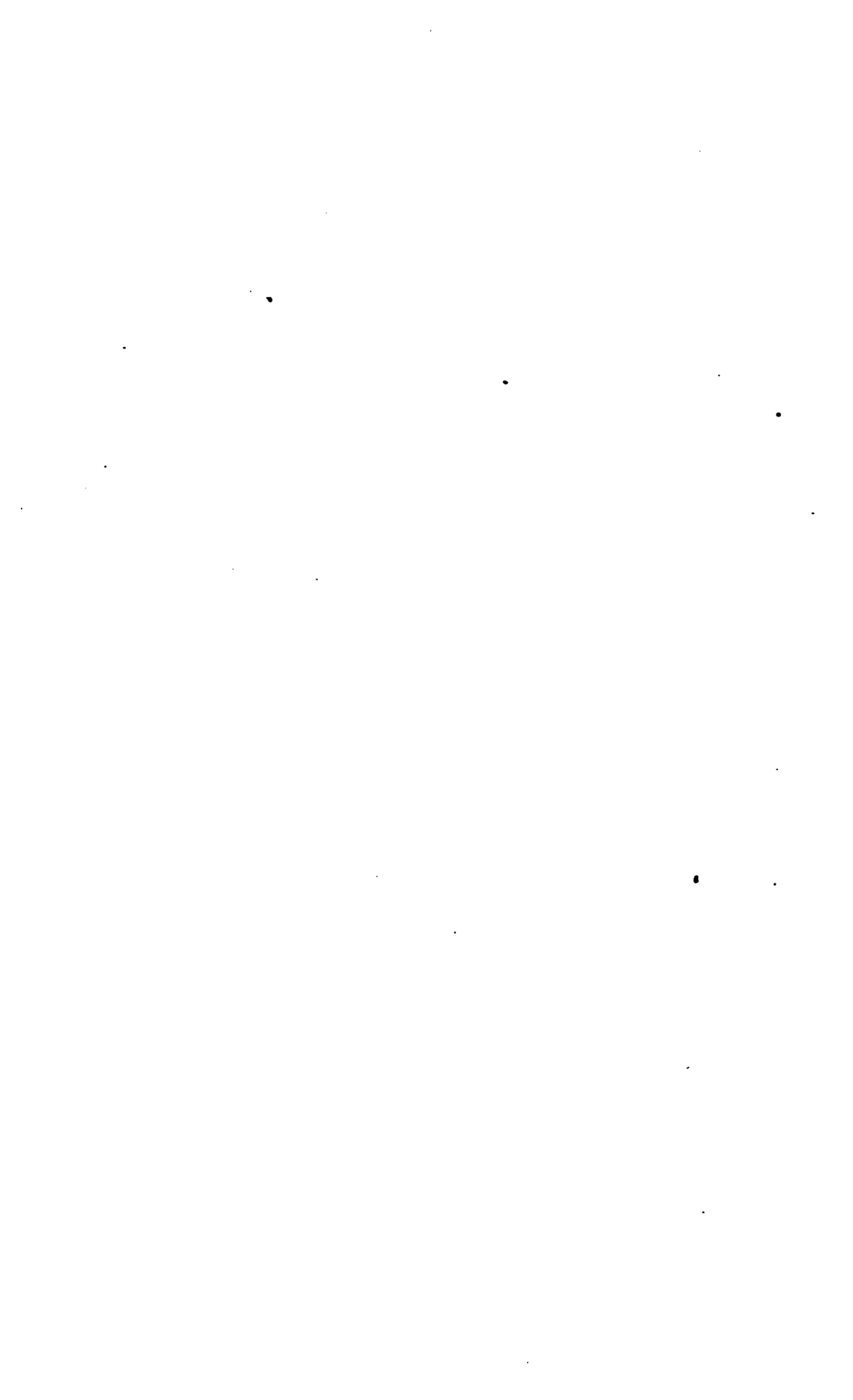
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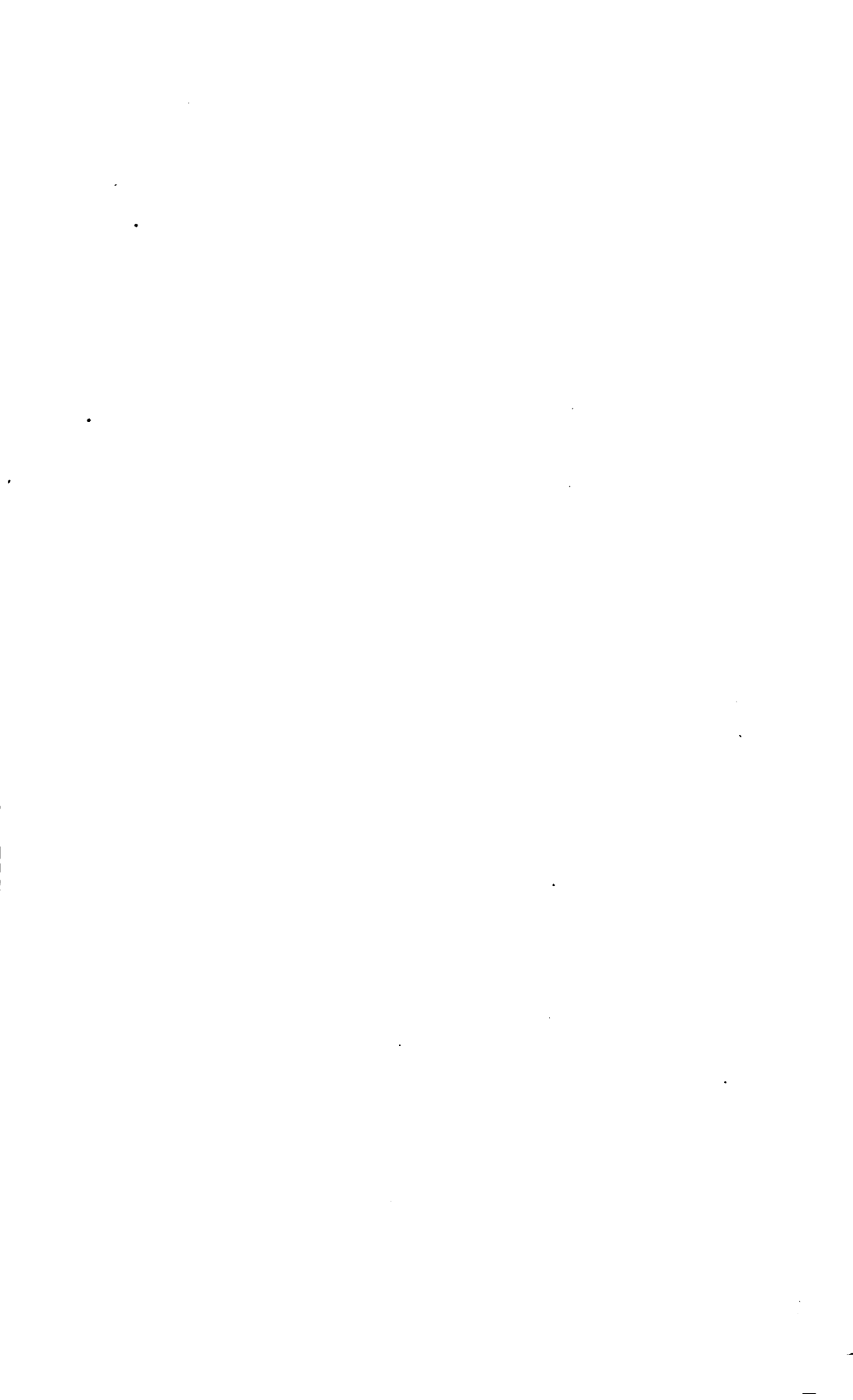
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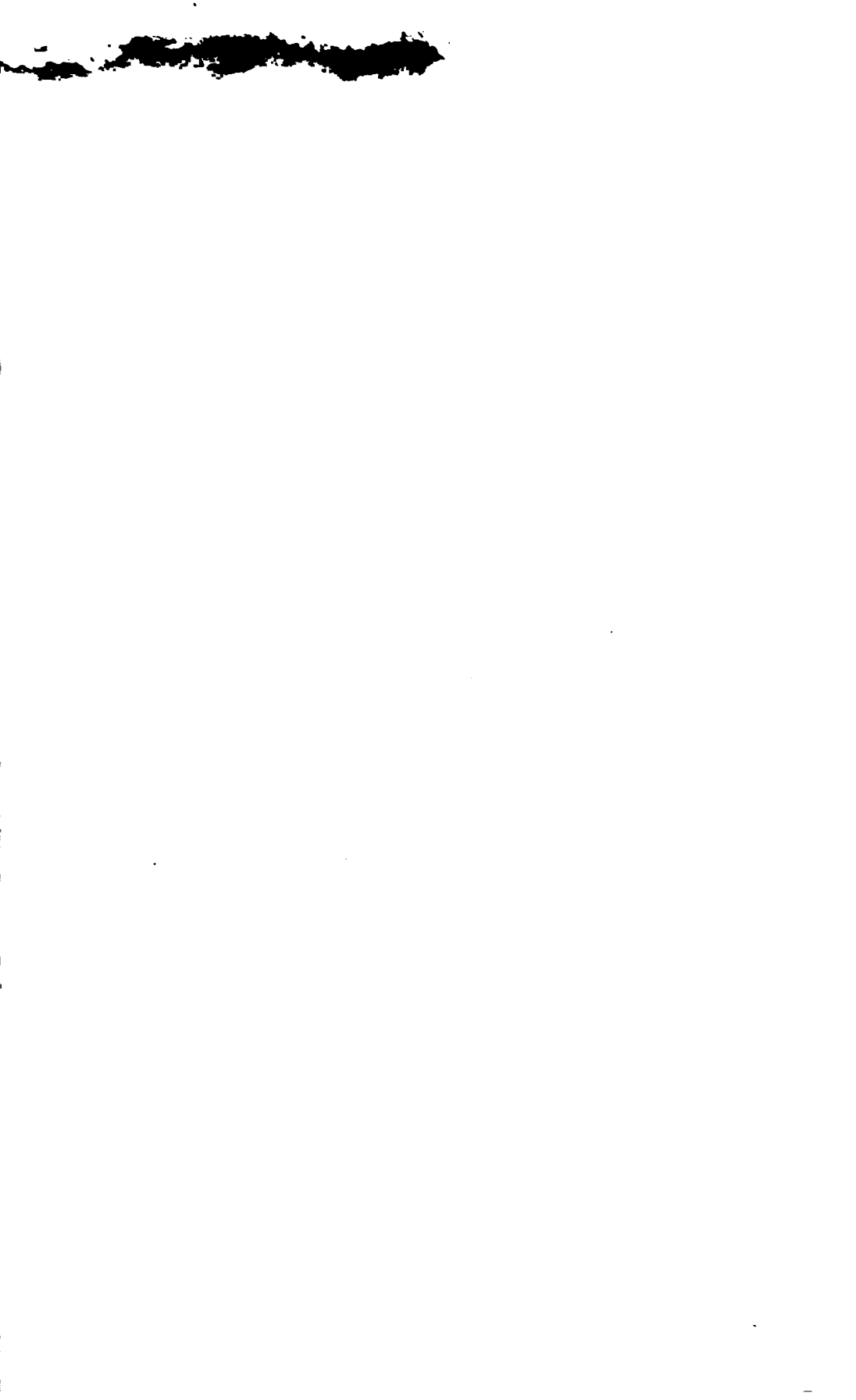
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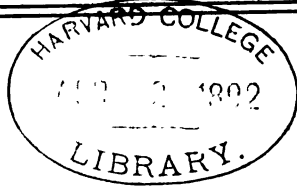
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CONTENTS.

PAGE		PAGE		PAGE	
<p>A STERN CHASE. A Serial Story by Mrs. Caschel Hoey, 1, 29, 49, 73, 97, 121, 145, 169, 194, 217, 241</p> <p>Abernethy, Dr. 249</p> <p>Abbotsford Acton, Old Houses of Addison, Dr. 474</p> <p>African Arcadia. 150</p> <p>Africa, The Mountain Killimanjaro 151</p> <p>"Alabama" and "The Ker-sage," Fight between 406</p> <p>Alexia, A Serial story by Eleanor C. Price, 265, 289, 313, 337, 361, 385, 409, 433, 457, 481, 505, 529, 553</p> <p>Altona 409</p> <p>American Life and Manners 32</p> <p>Annandale 842</p> <p>Appartements a Louer. A Story. 461</p> <p>Archibald, Johnnie 253</p> <p>Aaron's Rod 54</p> <p>Agnew, The 538</p> <p>Arundel Castle 9</p> <p>Art Needlework 125</p> <p>Ascents of Mont Blanc 78</p> <p>Asia, Central, Travelling in 86</p> <p>Authors, Success of 540</p> <p>Authors, The Old and New 256</p> <p>BALLOL, JOHN 461</p> <p>Bath Road, The 103</p> <p>Battle Abbey 10</p> <p>Bayham Abbey 10</p> <p>Bedfont 66</p> <p>Bee Keeping 498</p> <p>Beggar's Opera 268</p> <p>Beltane Fair 417</p> <p>Belzoni 302</p> <p>Berrymead Priory, Acton. 130</p> <p>Bishops of London 63</p> <p>Bodiam Castle 10</p> <p>Books Most Generally Read 258</p> <p>Bokhara 98</p> <p>Border Tales. 199, 248, 292</p> <p>Bramber Castle 10</p> <p>Brentford 66</p> <p>Brent River, The 66</p> <p>Brides and their Old Homes 11</p> <p>Bright, Dr. 476</p> <p>Bright's Disease 474</p> <p>Brodie, Sir Benjamin 473</p> <p>Bruce Castle, Tottenham 159</p> <p>Bruce, Robert 491</p> <p>Busy Bee, The 498</p> <p>CADEMITE HILL. 415</p> <p>Caerlaverock Castle 345</p> <p>Canning, Elizabeth, Story of 161</p> <p>Cannon—Mons Meg at the Siege of Thrave Castle 464</p> <p>Canons, The Duke of Chandos at 105</p> <p>Caryle, Thomas, Marriage of 343</p> <p>Central Asia, Travelling in 86</p> <p>Chambers' Institute, The. 114</p> <p>Chateau Roman 438</p> <p>Chelsea 64</p> <p>Cheyne Walk 64</p> <p>Childer's Tomb, Opening of 126</p> <p>Children's Holiday 418</p> <p>Chippendale Mania 175</p> <p>Chronicles of English Counties.</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Sussex, Part III. 6</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Middlesex 63, 102, 158</p> <p>Chronicles of Scottish Counties, The 196, 248, 292, 340, 412, 460, 534</p> <p>Church Property destroyed at the Reformation 128</p> <p>Claudia, A Story. 253, 279, 299</p> <p>Cloeburn Castle 345</p> <p>Coldingham Priory 203</p> <p>Coldstream 199</p>	<p>Copes and Altar Cloths, The Gold on 193</p> <p>Country Holiday Fund 418</p> <p>Cowdray Mansion, Destruction of 9</p> <p>Cranford 103</p> <p>Cromwell, A Tradition About His Burial 104</p> <p>Crook Inn on the Tweed 416</p> <p>DAISY, A Story 494, 516</p> <p>Danes and Frusians, The War between 487</p> <p>Derwentwater House, Acton 132</p> <p>Devorgille 461</p> <p>Divination Rod 470</p> <p>Doctors, Celebrated 450</p> <p>Domestic Art 175</p> <p>Douglas, The Hold of the 464</p> <p>Drinking, A Gossip on 82</p> <p>Drumlanrig Castle 345</p> <p>Dryburgh Abbey 248</p> <p>Duel with Broadwords 293</p> <p>Duelling, Ancient and Modern 133</p> <p>Duel—Sheridan and Matthews 546</p> <p>Duke of St. Stefano 209</p> <p>Duke of the Sucepan, The 208</p> <p>Dumfries 340</p> <p>Dunsleil Inn, The Landlord of 203</p> <p>EDMONTON 160</p> <p>Egypt, Belzoni in 302</p> <p>Elbe, The River 469</p> <p>Embroidery 126</p> <p>Enfield Chase 161</p> <p>Krbrezzo, The Miracle of 226</p> <p>Ettrick Forest 292</p> <p>FADING FLOWERS 222</p> <p>Family Ghosts 17</p> <p>Famous Doctors 470</p> <p>Famous Duellists 136</p> <p>Famous Story 268, 326, 349, 511, 557</p> <p>Father Chrystal's Elixir 274</p> <p>Favourite Authors 258</p> <p>Fenton, Miss, The Actress 272</p> <p>Fire Old Moslem Gentleman 367</p> <p>Fire of London 322</p> <p>Flodden Field 199</p> <p>Flowers, Disappearance of 223</p> <p>Forty Hall 162</p> <p>France, The Roads of 401</p> <p>French Châteaux, The Old 420, 437</p> <p>French Novels, A Manufacture 438</p> <p>Fulham 63</p> <p>GALLOWAY 460, 534</p> <p>Gay, John, The Author 268</p> <p>Ghost Story, A 344</p> <p>Ghosts 17</p> <p>Gipay Fight, A 415</p> <p>Glass, Modern Taste in 175</p> <p>Gledstones Family, The 415</p> <p>Gold Brocade 126</p> <p>Goldsmith's "She stoops to Conquer" 326, 349</p> <p>Gordons of Lochinvar 462</p> <p>Gossip on Drinking 82</p> <p>Gretna Green 341</p> <p>Gunnersbury House 66</p> <p>HACKNEY 158</p> <p>Hadley Church 162</p> <p>Hall, Dr. Marshall 472</p> <p>Hamburg 469</p> <p>Hammermith 65</p> <p>Hampton Court 67</p> <p>Harsfield Place 105</p> <p>Harrow-on-the-Hill 106</p> <p>Haunted House. A Story 30</p> <p>Hawaiian Isles, Flowers of the 223</p> <p>Hawick 252</p> <p>Haves 104</p> <p>Hellgoland 466, 484, 509</p> <p>Hermitage Castle 252</p>	<p>Hereford and Norfolk, Dukes, combat between prevented 135</p> <p>Henry III., Coffin of 126</p> <p>Highways and By-ways 390</p> <p>Hilgate 135</p> <p>Historic Duels 589</p> <p>Hoffmann 293</p> <p>Hogg, James, The Poet 418</p> <p>Holiday Fund, The 491</p> <p>Honey Bees 11</p> <p>Home Sickness 11</p> <p>Honorius, Emperor, Funeral Robes of his Wife 29</p> <p>House Hunting 12, 36</p> <p>House in Horseferry Road, A 181, 204, 231</p> <p>House in the Euston Road 561</p> <p>House in Charlotte Street 33</p> <p>Hurry of Life in America 371</p> <p>IDLEBS, RECREATIONS OF 367</p> <p>India, Treatment of Natives in 196</p> <p>Ireland, Duelling in 346</p> <p>Iron Press of Louis the Sixteenth 250</p> <p>JRDBURGH 470</p> <p>Jenner, Doctor 82</p> <p>Johnson's, Dr., Love of Tea 249</p> <p>KELSO ABBEY 485</p> <p>Kenmure Castle 89</p> <p>Khiva 161</p> <p>Killimanjaro Mountain 127</p> <p>King John's Tomb, Opening of 342</p> <p>Kirkconnel Lee 462</p> <p>Kirkcoubright 537</p> <p>Kirkmaiden 818</p> <p>Knocks and Knockers</p> <p>LADY, GRIZEL BAILLIE, ME-MOIRS OF 201, 248</p> <p>Laleham 67</p> <p>Lammermuir 203</p> <p>Lansdell, Dr., in Central Asia 86</p> <p>Lauderdale 203</p> <p>Lawn Tennis Tournament, A Story 822</p> <p>Legend of Belkirk 298</p> <p>Letter Writing 107</p> <p>Lewes Castle 10</p> <p>Leyden, John, The Poet 251</p> <p>Liddisdale, The Men of 253</p> <p>Life in America 32</p> <p>Linton Church 250</p> <p>Literary Survival 256</p> <p>London, The Diocese of 63</p> <p>Louis the Sixteenth. Iron Press 346</p> <p>Loval, Lord 413</p> <p>Lunar Fancies 109</p> <p>Lynton, Peebles 417</p> <p>MACLANAN'S LEAP 416</p> <p>Magician's Wand, The 54</p> <p>"Maison Criminelle" 30</p> <p>Man in the Moon 109</p> <p>Mantelpiece, The 175</p> <p>Maximilian, Emperor, Execution of 485</p> <p>Mayfield, Sussex 10</p> <p>Medhurst 8</p> <p>Melrose Abbey 249</p> <p>Merlin, The Grave of 416</p> <p>Merry Devil of Edmonton, The 160</p> <p>Merse District, The 199</p> <p>Middlesex, Chronicles of, 63, 102, 158</p> <p>Mining Disaster, A Story 446</p> <p>Miracle of Krbrezzo 226</p> <p>Modern Taste 174</p> <p>Mons Meg 464</p> <p>Montrose, The Defeat of 297</p> <p>Moon, Fancies about the 109</p> <p>Morton, The Regent, Execution of 415</p> <p>Moses, the Rod of 54</p>			

	PAGE		PAGE		PAGE
Moslem Gentleman, A Fine Old	367	Scotch Relics	416	Thomson the Poet, Birthplace of	248
Mont Blanc Sixty Years Ago	78	Scott, Sir Walter, Father of	248	Thought-Reading	512
Mountain, Killmanjaro	151	Scrivener, Benjamin, Story of	108	Thrave Castle	461, 464
Muswell Hill	159	Seldirk	292	Tippling in Old Times	82
NATIVES, TREATMENT BY EURO-PEANS	367	Sheridan	541, 557	Tombs, Gold and Wool Embroidery found in	127
Needlework, Artistic	125	Shelley, The Poet	7	Top of the Hill, The	155
Neldpath Castle	418	Shepperton and Sunbury	67	Tottenham Cross	159
Newdegate, Serjeant	104	She Stoops to Conquer	326, 349	Traquair Castle	414
New York, Life in	33	Siberia, Dr. Lansdell in	86	Travelling Made Easy in Central Asia	86
Next of Kin. A Story	374, 390	Siberia, Prisoners in	138	Turnpike Gates	401
Norfolk, The Dukes of	190	Single Combats	463	Tweed, The River	199, 249
Noeey Blake and His Galaxy	177	Smugglers of Galloway	463	Tweeddale, The Lords of	113
Noetalgia	10	Solway Moss	341	Twickenham	68
Novels, A Manufactory of	438	Some Famous Plays:		UNSUCCESSFUL MEN	539
OGRES	444	Beggar's Opera	268	Unxbridge	104
Old Acton	130	She Stoops to Conquer	326, 349	VACCINATION	
On being on the Top of the Hill	155	The Rivals and School for Scandal	541, 557	Vambéry, Professor, in Central Asia	471
On Ghosts	17	South Mims Church	163	Verons, The Duke of the Saucepan	209
Outway, the Post	6	Spedlins Tower, Ghost of	344	Verons, The Miracle of Erbrezzo	326
Our Friend the Enemy	69	Staines, The Town of	66	Victims. A Serial Story by Theo Gift, 20, 42, 69, 91, 115, 138, 163, 185, 211, 234, 259, 282, 306, 331, 354, 373, 402, 427, 451, 475, 498, 523, 547, 567	
PASSION FLOWER OF TALVERE	420	St. Abba	203	WAGER OF BATTLE, THE	133
Paul Jones	462	St. Cuthbert's Tomb, Opening of	127	Wanton Brown, The Grey Mare	345
Peebles	412, 417	St. Ninian's Monastery	535	West Drayton	104
Peniel Haugh, Battle of	351	Stories:		What It Must Come To	420
Penneculk, Dr.	415	Claudia	253, 279, 299	Whiskey, Scotch Antiquity of	202
Perivale, The Village of	107	Daisy	494, 516	Whiteadder River	202
Philliphugh, Battle of	297	Father Chrystal's Elixir	274	Wigton Bay Martyrs	534
Plants, The Extinction of	223	House in Horsetery Road, 12, 36		Wizard's Wand, The	54
PLAYS:		House in Euston Road, 181, 204, 231		Woodcocks at Helligoland	510
Beggar's Opera	268	House in Charlotte Street	561	Wood Pavement	398
She Stoops to Conquer	326, 349	Iron Press of Louis the Sixteenth	346	Wood Green	159
The Rivals and School for Scandal	541, 557	Lawn Tennis Tournament	322	Wonderful Wands	53
Focock, Sir George	68	Mining Disaster	446	Wool Embroidry, Antique	193
Folwarth	200	"Maison Criminelle"	31	Wormiston Hill, The Dragon of	250
Pope's Villa	102	Next of Kin	374, 390	Writing of Letters	107
Prize Fighting	177	Our Friend the Enemy	69	YARROW, LEGENDS OF	295
Fugliatic Life	177	Passion Flower of Talvere	420	POETRY.	
Putney Bridge	64	Strawberry Hill	102	ALMOND BLOSSOM	157
READING, THE LOVE OF	256	Street Making	393	At Eventide	86
Bed Comyn, The	461	Stern Chase. A Serial Story by Mrs. Cashel Hoey, 1, 25, 49, 73, 97, 122, 145, 169, 194, 218, 241		Doubt	36
Recreations of the Unemployed	371	Studies of Over the Way:		Dreaming	561
Reformation, Art Treasures Destroyed at the	123	A House in Horsetery Road, 12, 36		My Lady's Picture	278
Roads and Road-making	397	A House in the Euston Road, 181, 204, 231		Moray and His Thirty	373
Rod of Moses	54	A House in Charlotte Street 561		Pot Pourri	420
Rods of Magicians, &c.	55	Superstitions:		Rondel	349
Romanes, The Manufacture of	438	The Divining Rod	55	Spring Song	204
Roman Roads	399	The Man in the Moon, etc.	110	Thy Voice	494
Roxburgh	248	Sussex Chronicles	6	Treasure	470
Royal School of Art Needlework	130	Sussex, The Weald of	9	Under the Chestnuts	133
Runaway Weddings	341	Seyd Ahmed Khan	308	When You Are Sad	12
SACVILLES, THE FAMILY OF	7	TALVERE, THE PASSION FLOWER OF			
Saucepan, The Duke of the	208	OF	420		
Sandy Island	436	Taste, The Modern	175		
School for Scandal	541, 557	Theobalds	162		
Scottish Chronicles	198, 243, 292, 340, 412, 460, 534	The Rivals	541, 557		

THE EXTRA CHRISTMAS NUMBER FOR 1885,
CONTAINING A STORY BY WALTER BESANT,

ENTITLED

"SELF OR BEARER."

ALSO

THE EXTRA SPRING NUMBER FOR 1886,

ENTITLED

"A BUNCH OF SPRING FLOWERS,"

WILL BE FOUND AT THE END OF THE VOLUME.

THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR

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A Weekly Journal

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CHARLES DICKENS

No. 899. NEW SERIES.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 1866.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

A STERN CHASE.

A STORY IN THREE PARTS.

BY MRS. CASHEL HOEY.

THE THIRD PART.

CHAPTER II. AT THE PLAY.

THE unaffected enjoyment of a play by an unsophisticated person who has but few opportunities of seeing plays, is a pleasant spectacle to a kindly observer, himself not too much absorbed in the story on the stage to be able to look about him. The country cousin is even more easily recognised in the stalls of a theatre than in Bond Street or the Park, by a serious air of attention to the business of the stage, and silent, patient waiting, unrelieved by greetings and gossip, when the act-drop is down. If, by some happy chance, an habitu  recognises a provincial acquaintance, and saunters round to talk to her during the entr'acte, with what happy surprise and deferential attention are his scraps of information about what is what and who is who accepted by the pleased and flattered listener! There is, however, some nicety required in acting as guide to a fair stranger at the play; for the aspirant to that office has not only to show that he is acquainted with every branch of his subject, but is also under the necessity of suppressing an air of superior knowledge that might be humiliating and irritating to the stranger.

This happy medium had apparently been hit by a good-looking and well-dressed man, in talking to a young lady who occupied a place in the second row of the stalls at the Lyceum Theatre, on a certain crowded evening. The young lady would have been recognised as a stranger in a minute by any expert in spectacles of the kind; she paid such fixed attention to the

performance, she spoke with such respectful wonder of the actors, and she was so unfeignedly amazed at the conduct of some of the more distinguished portion of the audience, who, turning their backs on the stage, chattered and giggled as freely as though they had been in their own intellectual centres. If the young lady had been so fortunate as to attract the critical gaze of any of those personages, at whom she glanced with a timid curiosity, she would have been pronounced good-looking, though hardly pretty, and a person of no importance; a mere middle-class miss, in a home-made frock, whom nobody knew. And in all but the first clause this pronouncement would have been fair enough, for Millicent Denzil was a person of no importance, and her simple, pretty, becoming frock of some black, transparent, gauzy stuff, sparingly adorned with jet, had been made at home by her own clever fingers. But she was more than good-looking, and she had an air of refinement which was in flat contradiction to the so-called laws of heredity and theories of influence; for there was nothing in her birth, breeding, or surroundings to account for it. All who had belonged to Millicent Denzil were ordinary folk, plain units of the unmarked masses, and now there was nobody left who belonged to her. Her gauzy, black frock was the survival of mourning garments long worn for her mother; her finely-moulded arms showed very fair through the transparent sleeves, and the jetted frill sparkled against her soft white throat. Her face, a pure oval in shape, was rather winning than striking, with dark-grey eyes—there was no blue in them—a clear, fair, colourless complexion, and refined features of the order which vulgar people describe as "aristocratic". She is looking very animated and happy on this particular occasion, as befits an

intelligent girl, for whose behoof Miss Ellen Terry and Mr. Henry Irving are playing; but there is the capacity of pain in her expression, and the mark of it lies on her brow, though not deep enough to mar its beauty. Her hair, which is very dark, and waved upon the temples, is plaited into a large smooth roll at the back of the neck, and for that reason only, to say nothing of its luxuriance and gloss, her head contrasts with the frizzed, fringed noddles around her, looking like the head of a statue amid a wilderness of wax dolls.

The man who is talking to Millicent Denzil, and making the most of his time, for the rising of the act-drop is very near, and the people are coming back to the stalls, is elderly, but well preserved, and he does not proclaim his position and calling in life by any special feature of dress such as younger men affect. He can turn his head in his collar, and move his body in his clothes; his hair is not cut like a convict's, but to suit the shape of his head; he wears neither an eyeglass, an orchid, or an unmeaning stare. His manner is that of a man accustomed to society; and finally, there is nothing remarkable about him.

Nevertheless, this ordinary-looking person had produced a singularly disturbing effect upon a young man who had sat more than contentedly in the stall next to Millicent Denzil's during the first act, and had not been aware that he was in the theatre until the usual movement took place on its termination. Then the ordinary-looking person, availing himself of a gap in the front row of stalls, had approached the young man, unperceived, and slightly touched his arm with an opera-glass. The young man, who had been talking eagerly to Miss Denzil, turned sharply, and met the slight smile of the other with a start and a change of countenance, whereat that smile broadened. Miss Denzil had seen nothing of this; she was looking at the very newest beauty, who was "receiving" in her box, and her interest in the spectacle being twofold—for the very newest beauty was gorgeously arrayed—the sentences first interchanged by the two men were unheard by her.

"I am surprised to see you here, Courtland," said the elder man; "I thought you were on duty at Hampstead."

"So I was to have been," answered the younger; "but I got a reprieve just after I left you. They were going out somewhere unexpectedly."

"You don't know where, I suppose?"

"No."

"Look up at Box Twelve, cautiously, and you'll see."

"Are they there?"

"All four of them." At this moment Miss Denzil turned her head, and the elder man added, in a louder tone, "Courtland, pray introduce me."

With anything but a good grace the young man complied with this request, presenting his friend to Miss Denzil as Mr. Wyndham.

Mr. Wyndham began at once to talk to her of the play and the actors; but he presently turned upon his friend a look too significant to be ignored, and the young man, excusing himself to Miss Denzil, made his way out of the stalls.

"I fear I must get back to my place," said Mr. Wyndham, as the occupants of the front row began to drop in for the second act. He had made the interval very agreeable to Miss Denzil, and she gave him a friendly smile when he moved away; but she did not want him to stay, and she hardly noticed that the place by her side remained vacant after the act-drop rose, for Portia was on the stage, and Millicent's whole soul was with her while she suffered the ordeal of the caskets. Many a glance—some coldly envious, some pleased and sympathetic—fell upon the girl with the dark, smooth hair and the grey eyes, who sat absorbed in the play and wholly indifferent to her surroundings.

In the meantime, Mr. Wyndham had found his young friend in the lobby, as he expected, and accosted him in unceremonious fashion.

"You will have to explain this, Courtland," he said, "as, of course, you know; but this is neither the time nor the place. Have they seen you?"

"I don't know."

"Then you had better find out without a moment's delay. The girl can't be left alone in the stalls. Though what, in the name of folly, induced you to take her there I can't imagine. However, there is no use in talking about that."

"No, there isn't; and you need not trouble yourself to do it," retorted the young man, whose insolent tone imperfectly disguised fear and discomfort. "What am I to do if they have seen me, and what am I to do if they haven't?"

"Stay a moment, and I'll think," said Mr. Wyndham, ignoring the young man's irritation with cool disdain. "I have it.

If they've seen you, say the lady is Mrs. Denzil, the wife of a friend of yours; if they haven't, say nothing at all. In either case you cannot join her again. I will stand just inside the entrance to the stalls. In the first case, you can point me out as the lady's husband; in the second, you need not point me out at all. In either, I shall take your seat; give me your pass—here is mine—and I will look after the lady. I'll keep her back in the crowd going out, and you can join us at the doors after your parents, guardians, etc., have started."

"How will you explain it to her?"

"Leave that to me. Only, as I shall want to know whether I am, or am not, an object of attention to your party, contrive to drop a programme if you fortunately find that you have not been seen. Mind you don't show in front of the box."

The young man turned away with sullen anger, and Mr. Wyndham slipped quietly into the place he had indicated and waited for the signal. Let the nature of the account which had to be settled with him by his friend be what it might, and his own cause of annoyance however tangible, Mr. Wyndham was not so much engrossed by these considerations but that he could follow out some train of thought that seemed to amuse him.

"It is odd, all things considered," he said to himself, "that I have never chanced to come across one of them since that day; yet I recognised them all instantly, and should have known each of them separately—except the child, of course—while I am not afraid of their recognising me. And yet I'm less changed than any of them. A good tailor and a balance at one's bankers are true magicians. And there's the silly woman that put their spells within my reach—talking to the young fool who is so easily kept in hand. She really wears surprisingly well."

From Box Twelve on the second tier a white paper dropped, and fluttered to the ground, falling into the orchestra. A girlish head bent over the edge of the box, watching the descent of the lost programme, and Mr. Wyndham observed, by the aid of his glasses, that the girlish head was crowned with rich black hair, ornamented with a comb set in pearls.

Mr. Wyndham slid into the vacant seat by Miss Denzil's side, and whispered:

"Courtland begs you will excuse him for asking me to take his place until the

end of this act. He has met his uncle and aunt, and cannot leave them immediately."

Miss Denzil merely nodded, without taking her eyes off the stage, and Mr. Wyndham felt that he had successfully made a bold stroke.

Miss Denzil evidently knew all about his friend's uncle and aunt, and was not in a position to be offended on the present occasion.

Good! Mr. Wyndham admitted to himself that he was for the present puzzled, but did not propose to remain so beyond the earliest hour at which it should be convenient to him to make his friend explain himself on the morrow. Nor was it his intention to leave the explanation entirely to the candour of that gentleman; he meant to extract so much information from Miss Denzil as would enable him to check his statements in case Courtland should again exhibit his innate foolishness by telling lies to a person who had on several former occasions demonstrated to him the uselessness of that method. For the present he permitted Miss Denzil to enjoy the play undisturbed, and gave his own attention, but covertly, to the glimpses to be obtained from the occupants of Box Number Twelve from his place in the stalls. These glimpses were precarious, his place was too far to the right, but the dark-haired girl was seated next to the stage, and she leaned over and watched the play as closely as Miss Denzil herself, only turning her face now and then to the lady who sat beside her, in the shade of the drapery, or raising it towards someone who stood back in the box: to both she was evidently expressing pleasure. Mr. Wyndham was enabled to see her at intervals pretty distinctly. When the next interval between the acts came, he devoted himself assiduously to Miss Denzil, and by implying in an unforced way his complete familiarity with Courtland, and assuming a quasi-paternal air towards herself, he acquired a good deal of information on which he rightly set considerable value. He was careful to give the conversation between himself and Miss Denzil all the false appearance of diversity that could be lent to it by roving glances, the turning of his opera-glass in various directions, and vivacious nods to nobody in particular; for he was sure that his friend, in the recesses of Box Number Twelve, was keeping a watch upon him. All this acting before the curtain was lost upon Miss Denzil, in

whose good graces Mr. Wyndham made steady progress, while every artless sentence which she uttered did but confirm him in the false judgment he had passed upon her at sight, and increase his impression that she was "as cool a hand" as he had ever met with. "Uncommonly good-tempered," though, he admitted, as the play came to a conclusion without his friend having made his appearance, and Miss Denzil displayed no ill-humour or sense of slight, and then he added: "or uncommonly well-trained."

It was very easy to induce Miss Denzil to allow all the other occupants of the stalls to pass out before her. She was too much amused by the spectacle of the moving crowd to object, and it was not until some minutes had elapsed after the evacuation of Box Number Twelve, that Mr. Wyndham led her, still talking with animation of the play and the actors, towards the great staircase, which they found still crowded. Pausing for a moment at the topmost step, they saw Mr. Courtland re-entering from the street. All was right; his "parents, guardians, etc." had been safely deposited in their carriage, and Mr. Wyndham's turn of duty was over.

At the foot of the stairs Mr. Courtland joined them, and, with a not very intelligible explanation of his having been detained until the end of the play, told Miss Denzil that her cab was waiting on the engaged rank not very far up the street. He proposed to take her to it to save time.

"I found Mary standing by the pillar when I came out," he added, "and put her into the cab."

He gave Miss Denzil his arm, and led her out of the theatre. His manner was confused and even irritated, but she did not seem to be disturbed by this. He had hardly spoken to Mr. Wyndham, who followed them, and walked up the street with them, along the line of cabs, until they came to one out of which a respectable-looking woman was leaning.

Into this vehicle Miss Denzil stepped; the two gentlemen bade her good-night, and the cabman drove off without having received any direction.

There was a lamp-post close to them, and the two friends, who looked strangely like two enemies, moved quickly away from the light, but without speaking. The younger man lighted a cigar before they had reached the turn into the Strand, and

found it somewhat difficult to manage. After they had walked a few yards Mr. Wyndham stopped and hailed a hansom.

"Good-night, Courtland," he said in a cold, dry tone; "I shall expect you at eleven o'clock to-morrow."

Mr. Wyndham and his friend were not the only persons among the crowded audience at the Lyceum Theatre that night for whom Box Twelve had attraction. Its occupants were not among the remarkable people in the house; for only one of the four was young, and the whole party wore a staid and reserved appearance. A white-haired gentleman, of an almost shadowy slimmness of figure, and with bent shoulders; a lady, a good deal younger than he, but quite elderly, white-haired also; and a second lady, with a face singularly intellectual and tranquil, but who had seen thirty-five years at least—these formed a group on which the roving glances of strangers surveying a crowd would hardly rest for many moments. The fourth member of the party had attracted, early in the evening, the attention of a gentleman who was for some time the solitary occupant of a box on the other side of the house, and exactly opposite to Number Twelve. He had seen the play twice already; he had come to the theatre this evening at the urgent request of a friend, recently arrived from New York with his wife and daughter, and here was the second act begun without the Whartons having made their appearance. He did not mind it much, and he did not imagine that anything had happened. Mrs. Wharton was generally late for everything everywhere, he had observed, and if Miss Effie had taken it into her head to prefer doing something else that evening, her obedient parents would not think of opposing her. So he waited patiently, and looked about him, first at the people opposite, at the serene lady in grey satin and black lace, and at the young girl in white, whose delight with the play the three seniors were enjoying with single-hearted sympathy. The lady in grey was unmistakably English, the girl in white had something foreign in her look; yet surely they must be mother and daughter: the girl's supreme importance to the lady could be seen at a glance.

"She's like a child at a pantomime," said the amused observer to himself; "as children used to be in my time. They're calmly critical now, I suppose."

The girl's right arm rested on the front of the box; the left was propped upon its dimpled elbow, and the raised hand slowly swayed a feather-tipped fan, with a peculiarly graceful movement, then furled it with the slightest turn of the wrist, and subsided softly on the cushion.

"Half-Spanish, for any amount of dollars!" muttered the looker-on opposite. "No Englishwoman ever did that. What hair, too, and what a fine carriage of the head and bend of the neck! A pretty little creature, and the mother so proud of her! Well she may be. I wonder whether the Whartons mean to come to-night at all. Ha! here's a visitor, and the seño-rita's glad to see him; so is the mother. Now, what are his relations to the party? and what the deuce business is it of mine?"

He turned his attention for a while to the stage, but again it wandered to Box Number Twelve, as the girl in white leaned forward and looked down into the orchestra with a movement which reminded him of something, someone—he could not tell what—in the vague, perplexing way of which we have all had experience. What was it? Who was it? A very dim and distant suggestion, surely—the faintest echo from the far, far past; but it annoyed him that he could not define it, could not catch its whisper with any distinctness.

Again the girl raised her head and looked up towards the dim figure of the young man in the background; and, as she did so, her hand crept towards the furled fan, and spread it with the same indescribable movement. Can he not catch the whisper of memory now? Can he not define the suggestion that was in those gestures? No; he cannot. He is impatient with his desultory mind for trying to do this; he will not go on doing it. The play's the thing, and he will mind the play. It is only that she has black hair, and wears a comb in it, as all Spanish women do, or did when he used to see them—how many years ago? They may be all different now, like the children. Someone had told him that bonnets were now worn at Madrid.

There, she lays the fan upon her mother's arm with a lingering, deepening touch, while her face is set towards the stage, and she hardly breathes for listening; and the observer is again, and more distinctly, conscious of the stirring of an old association with the past. But still he cannot seize

it, and now, as he hates to be forced to think when he merely wants to be amused, he gets downright angry with himself, and unreasonably vexed with the girl, shuts up his glass, and resolves to go away at the end of the second act. Really, it is preposterous that, because he sees a head crowned with dark hair, and a line of pearls amid its masses, he should be repeating to himself:

"She took our daylight with her,
The smiles that we love best,
With morning blushes on her cheek,
And pearls upon her breast."

This was not in the play, and how had it come back to him? When had he remembered the lines, or quoted, or been reminded of them, before? The young man was standing at the back of the girl's chair now, and she had slightly changed her position as he bent down and said something to her.

Are there no bonny dames at home,
Or no true lovers here,
That he should cross the seas to win
The dearest of the dear?

"Cross the seas!" It was coming now, like wind over wastes: the whisper grew distinct, the suggestion definite. It was of "Fair Ines" that the girl reminded him—of her who "had gone into the West", with her English lover, so many years ago, and since then into oblivion. "Fair Ines," as he had seen her in the theatre at Santiago, in her white dress, with her coronal of dark hair crossed by a line of pearls, and a furled fan lying under her dimpled hand. As he had seen her just before the earthquake shock, she came to his mind's eye now, after twenty years, radiant, beautiful, beloved, triumphant, as when

The smile that blessed one lover's heart
Had broken many more.

The box-door was opened, and a gorgeous vision displayed itself to the hitherto solitary occupant—Mrs. Wharton, arrayed in the newest confection devised for theatre-dress by the latest infallible authority, and escorted only by a mild old gentleman in a brown wig.

"I'm dreadfully late," said Mrs. Wharton, "but I'm sure you don't mind, because I always am. So glad we got here between the acts, so that we disturb nobody! Where's Paul? Oh yes, I forgot. Effie thought she'd like the opera best, so he had to take her there, and Mr. Dexter kindly came with me. I believe you have not met. Allow me to— Mr. Dexter—Mr. Rodney."

CHRONICLES OF ENGLISH COUNTIES.

SUSSEX. PART III.

THE central plain of Sussex, enclosed on either hand by the bold ridges of the Downs, resembles nothing so much as a great river-valley, and when from some neighbouring height you look down upon the wide and varied plain, the eye instinctively seeks for the broad, majestic stream that should wind with graceful folds through the bright country. And if, perhaps, a gleam of sunshine chases the shadows of the clouds; as it glances upon some silvery pool or mere, the imagination seizes upon the missing link, and endows the scene with the vivid life of the great river that might be there. There seems a kind of perversity, indeed, in the course of such streams as wander through the plains, which, instead of following the natural contours of the country, break through the hills on either side, and find their way to the sea in insignificant independence.

From Emsworth to Kent Ditch the length of this great woodland tract, the centre and pith of Sussex, stretches for some seventy-six miles—a country once abounding with almost impenetrable forests, among whose fastnesses there is no doubt that a considerable number of the earlier settlers in the land contrived to exist through successive layers of invading races. The iron works survived, as we have seen, to recent times, and we may perhaps trace a remnant of the ancient inhabitants of the forest in the wild and half-civilised people who long formed a distinct element in the population of the wilder part of the county.

At the narrowest point of the great forest tract stands Midhurst, which is in some way the metropolis of this Sussex weald—originally the middle wood, indeed, rather than the middle city—a central station between the forests of Sussex and those of Hampshire, as well as on the old Roman way from Chichester to London.

It is certainly singular that this mid-Sussex region should have been the birth-place of so many poets.

The author of *Venice Preserved* was born close by Midhurst, at Trotton, and was the son of Humphrey Otway, rector of the adjoining parish of Woolbeding. The poet describes his early years, as the

only son of affectionate, high-minded parents, with some fervour :

Alone I lived, their much-loved, fondled boy.
They gave me generous education. High
They strove to raise my mind.

As a Westminster boy, and then as a student of Christ Church, Oxford, the education of young Otway must have strained the resources of a country parson of the seventeenth century, so that we may perhaps conjecture some generous patron in the background, whose death cast a blight over the young man's prospects. Anyhow, he had to leave college without taking a degree.

The world was wide, but whither should I go ?

Otway's predilections urged him to seek his fortune in London.

To Britain's great metropolis I strayed,
Where fortune's general game is played.

And here he first sought popular applause as an actor, but made no success in this, although he seems to have made his way among the gay people of the Court.

I missed the brave and wise, and in their stead
On every sort of vanity I fed—
Gay coxcombs, cowards, knaves, and prating
fools,
Bullies of o'ergrown bulk and little souls.

In the midst of folly and dissipation, alternating with squalid misery and want, Otway still found the inspiration of his genius at work within him. He was conscious of lofty aims in strange contrast with his loose surroundings.

No beauty with my Muse's might compare.
Lofty she seemed, and on her front sat a majestic
air.

Awful, yet kind; severe, yet fair.

This description of his muse, however, will hardly be recognised by the student of his plays, although there are sometimes touches of the fire and dignity of the elder dramatists among the coarse licence of the hack playwright. But Otway pleased the town with *Don Carlos*, and secured a solid success with *Venice Preserved*. But now he had arrived at the critical point in the career of the literary artist. His original inspiration had failed him, and the study and labour that should supply its place were impossible under the conditions of his life.

At this period we may conjecture that he returned for a while to his native country, among the rustics, who were ignorant of his fame, and to whom he was only old Parson Otway's lad, who had taken to more or less disreputable ways. And so he wandered, neglected and alone,

among the hills familiar to him in boyhood.

To a high hill, where never yet stood tree,
A wandering bard, whose muse was crazy grown,
Cloy'd with the nauseous follies of the buzzing town.

From his vantage-point, had he not been preoccupied with his own miseries, the poet would no doubt have seen over the great stretch of wooded plain the dwelling-place of a brother bard, of no greater calibre, but of much more happy destiny.

The Sacvilles were a thoroughly Sussex family, originally of the smaller county gentry, one of whom, taking to the law, raised himself in the Augustan age of Elizabeth, to the council of the Queen and high office under the Crown. The lands of the Sacvilles lay mostly about East Grinstead; noted for its beautiful church, whose tall and elegant spire dominates the surrounding plains; and when Elizabeth, with grudging hand, raised her Lord Treasurer to the dignity of a baron, he took his title from the old manor-house among the woods, and became Lord Buckhurst. Under the first Stuart king he was advanced at once to the dignity of Earl of Dorset. The son of Elizabeth's wary councillor, a dignified and pious nobleman, left at his death large sums to the poor, and founded at East Grinstead a college or hospital for the poor which still exists to preserve his memory. With other times came other manners; and the present Earl—speaking of Otway's days—had been noted in his hot youth for his dissolute excesses.

But with all his wildness there was a fund of generous humour about Sacville, with a true poetic verve which has raised him to the ranks of the minor poets, while his sea-song, *To All Ye Ladies Now on Land*, will be remembered when many more pretentious works are forgotten. And, while his satire was sharp, his hand was generous, and even lavish to most of his brother bards:

The best good man, with the worst natured muse.

All this time the ancestors of a greater poet than either Otway or his possible patron were living in the thick of the forest country, small county gentry, acquiring somewhat in one prudent generation, and dissipating somewhat in another less prudent, but never rising or aspiring higher than the rank of esquire, justice of the peace, or *custos rotulorum*. There might have been Shelleys who had gone as crusaders or palmers to the Holy Land,

and so had acquired the coat-of-arms which bears, however, not scallop-shells, but others of a spiral character. But, perhaps, the lively imagination of the College of Heralds is responsible for the shells. Anyhow, the Shelleys of that day recked not much of blood, whether of Crusaders or of others of high degree, but went on marrying and giving in marriage, among the sturdy respectable franklin families of Sussex. Among others, Roger Bysse, of Fen Place, had a daughter and heiress who married one of the Shelleys, who thus acquired Fen Place, and brought into the family a name which has since become illustrious. Timothy, the son of this marriage, seems to have departed from the stay-at-home traditions of the family, and we find him in America, where he married a wife, Joanna, rather vaguely described as daughter of—widow of—Plum, of New York.

From this marriage sprang a son of by no means ordinary character. Bysse Shelley, the grandfather of the poet, inherited the family faculty of pleasing womankind, and put it to a good account by marrying a pair of heiresses—the first of a sound Sussex family, with a good rent-roll and respectable, if commonplace pedigree; the second—of course after the death of the first—no other than Miss Perry, the heiress of the estates and traditions of the illustrious Sidneys. And both these marriages were runaway love-matches—the first not being perhaps out of the way in the heyday of youth and passion, but the second certainly a feat of high enterprise on the part of a widower with a young family. Sir Bysse was thus the founder of two wealthy and aristocratic families; the line of baronets of which was the poet, although he did not live long enough to succeed to the title, and the family of Sidney Shelley, of Penshurst.

Percy Bysse Shelley was born at Field Place, on the outskirts of St. Leonard's Forest, a fragment of Andred's weald that still retains much of its primitive wildness and solitude.

We have accounted in some way for Bysse and Shelley, but why Percy, may be asked. We may claim, indeed, the Percys as a Sussex family, even the Percys of Northumberland, Hotspur, and the rest of his kin. For Petworth, close by, is the original home of the race. Long ago, Petworth was part of the possessions of the almost royal seat of Arundel, and when

Queen Adeliza and her husband, Albini, had the castle, they bestowed Petworth on a kinsman of the Queen, Joceline, of the princely house of Lorraine. This Joceline married the heiress of the Percys and assumed their name, and his descendants were the bold feudal chieftains who so long held almost royal sway on the Borders. But they always retained Petworth among their possessions, and when the towering ambition of the Percys had been finally quenched in blood, Petworth became the favourite family-seat for which the feudal towers of Alnwick were deserted. The line which began with a Joceline ended with a Joceline, and Petworth coming, by marriage, into the possession of a former Duke of Somerset, was alienated from the northern estates.

It was to some connection—actual or traditional—with these Percys of Petworth that the poet owed his first christian-name. But unfortunately for our present purpose, only a small and fragmentary portion of our poet's history is connected with Sussex. Field Place is still standing, with its gardens, where dwelt an ancient serpent, one of young Percy's familiars, that was supposed to be descended from the famous dragon of St. Leonard's Forest. And there still stands the parish church of Warnham, to whose vicarage used Percy daily to resort for instruction. The parson was a Welshman, one Mr. Edwards, who may have had some Celtic fervour in his veins to counteract the general bucolic dulness all about. The grandfather, Sir Bysse, lived at Horsham, in an eccentric kind of retirement, a sort of district ogre, of strange, unapproachable habits. The ogre, who had once been such a squire of dames, lived on till he was eighty-five, and being close-fisted in his family relations, there was cheeseparing necessary with sober living at Field Place.

Once launched on his college life, Percy came back no more to the parental nest. One flying visit, indeed, he made when his father was safely out of the way. For Percy's daring independence of thought and action had placed him under the ban. Sussex was accustomed to looseness of morals combined with correct principles, and ready enough to condone it, but the example of one with pure life but theories accounted loose was not to be endured. And nothing more of a comforting nature is heard of Percy Bysse Shelley till the news comes of his early death in the deep blue sea.

Far the less happy was the death of the

earlier poet Otway, whom, by the way, we have left for an unconscionable time upon the lonely hill, where he took up his position at least two centuries ago. Back to town he went, to the haunts of wretchedness and poverty. His faithless muse had for ever flown. Destitution came upon him—actual starvation, and in his last haunt—a low tavern on Tower Hill—he was choked by too eagerly swallowing a crust that the charity of some pitying friend had procured him.

To return, however, from this excursion among the Sussex poets to the more solid facts of county history, we find ourselves here at Midhurst, close to one of the most interesting ruined houses of the county—a noble mansion, the equal, almost, of a royal palace, left desolate by fire; a desolation accentuated by the verdure and luxuriance of the surrounding scene.

Cowdray passed from the De Bohuns to the Nevills of the king-making race; and through them it came to their descendant, one of the last of the Plantagenets, that unhappy Countess of Salisbury, whose death on the scaffold forms such a terrible picture in our memories of the reign of bluff King Harry. Cowdray, then falling to the Crown, was granted again, with other forfeited estates, to the heirs of a collateral branch of the Nevills, the former owners. These heirs were all daughters, and were rare prizes for the courtiers of the day. The fourth daughter, Lucy, who had Cowdray for her share, married, first of all, a Sir Thomas Fitzwilliam, and secondly a noted lawyer, Sir Anthony Browne, from whom are supposed to be descended all the extensive family who spell their name with an "e".

There was a son by the first husband, Sir William Fitzwilliam, who inherited Cowdray in due course, and spent the substance of the Fitzwilliams in building a magnificent house there—a great Tudor quadrangular mansion, with its chapel, its great stables, its pleasure-gardens and fruit-gardens, its galleries, terraces, alcoves, and cascades of water, a second Kenilworth in the south countree.

Fitzwilliam built, but Browne inherited—a Browne, whose descendant was created Viscount Montagu; and here lived a long line of Montagus, who embellished and adorned the place, collecting about them a host of heirlooms and precious relics. Towards the end of the last century—in the year 1793, that is—the reigning

Viscount was a young man who had but recently come of age, and who was now performing the grand tour with his friend, young Sedley Burdett. The young Viscount was about to ally himself with the financial aristocracy of the period, and was on his way home to be married. Wealth and good taste might be expected to open a new career to the ancient mansion, and its somewhat faded splendour would surely be revived. But one night—the night of the 24th September—the housekeeper was awoken by the glare of fire. The beams and woodwork of the ancient structure were alight both aloft and alow, and, for all the parish engine could do, and the rows of rustics, with buckets, who presently came upon the scene, Cowdray was consumed to its bare walls.

The young Viscount never knew the misfortune that had happened. News travelled slowly in those days, and before the letter arrived announcing to his lordship the destruction of his ancestral mansion, with its priceless relics, he was himself drowned with his travelling companions in the falls of the Rhine, of which, with British rashness and obstinacy, they had persisted in essaying the passage in a tiny skiff.

If we turn from the great plain of the Weald, with its central forest ridge—with its innumerable hamlets and churches—it will be remembered that the number and riches of the churches in the Weald excited the ire of the great enemy of mankind, who forthwith set to work to drown the country by cutting that great dyke, near Brighton, which still bears his name. In this the great enemy resembled the daring engineers of the early railway days, who would cut through a hill rather than go round its flank. For, in truth, there are many gaps in the great chalk escarpment which a skilful engineer, with the resources of his great exemplar, might easily turn to account. With a little alteration of the sea-level the waters would pour in and the Weald would once more become—what it has probably been in remote ages—a great lake, with wooded islands and fenny slopes, the haunt of aquatic birds and monstrous amphibians.

Each of these gaps on the seaward side has its strong castle. To begin with, there is Arundel, as nobly placed as any feudal fortress in the realm. The approach is admirable—the broad buttress of the downs rising sheer from the marshy plain, while, with a graceful curve, the riversweeps past a rich nook of prairie and pasture,

and the clustering towers rise above a grove of noble trees.

A haze of tradition hangs over the origin of this great fortress, as it was in the olden time—traditions of giants and necromancers, who vaguely recall its perhaps British origin. King Alfred held it once, and at the Conquest it fell to one of William's most trusted barons, Roger de Montgomery, who held its earldom with seventy-seven dependent manors. Robert de Bellesme, that evil-minded descendant of the great Roger, forfeited the castle by his rebellion against King Henry the First, and King Henry gave it to his Queen, who, in turn, brought it to her second husband, Albini. Something traditional attaches to this really historical personage, for as such we must class the wonderful story of his tournament before the Queen of France, when, winning the prize from all other knights, he won also the heart of the beautiful Queen. His loyalty to his own fair mistress, so the story goes, steeled his heart against the love-lorn Queen, who in the anger of despised beauty contrived that the victorious knight should be shut up in a grotto with a fierce, uncaged lion. Albini with naked hands met the ferocious beast, and tore its tongue from its throat. Hence the lion without a tongue which the brave knight bore as a device upon shield and pennon ever after.

But there is nothing apocryphal about the story of the Queen Adeliza and her guest, Matilda, the Empress, when King Stephen, swooping down upon the castle, invested it with all his force. The Queen appealed to Stephen as a knight and gentleman to let her guest go free and give her so much law. The King, touched on his weak point, consented, and presently the Empress was among her friends in the West, and setting the kingdom in a blaze.

Considering the weak and intermittent way in which the great Norman families were continued, the great castle of Arundel has been in remarkably few different hands since the Conquest. The family of Albini lasted till the middle of the thirteenth century, and then an heiress carried the great possessions of the earldom to the Fitzalans. For a short time the castle was in the hands of "Butcher Mowbray", when the then Fitzalan suffered with the Duke of Gloucester for conspiracy against Richard the Second. But Bolingbroke reversed the attainder, and the Fitzalans, restored to their possessions, lasted well into the reign of Queen Elizabeth, when

an heiress carried their lands and honours to the Howards. And to the Howards the castle still belongs. The castle itself was a good deal knocked about in the great civil wars, having been twice taken and once lost by the Parliamentary party, and it had been long abandoned as a habitation when, in 1791, the eleventh Duke of Norfolk undertook its restoration. And thus, like its rival, Alnwick Castle, in the north, it is rather a revival of an old castle than a veritable antiquity.

The next fortified gap is Bramber, now a quiet little hamlet, with a few fragments of old towers appearing on the green castle-mound. Here was a noble castle in olden times, a castle built by the De Braose, which afterwards went by marriage to the Mowbrays. But when the Jockey of Norfolk lost life and everything on Bosworth field, the castle fell into decay. The lands and rents belonging to it are all carefully preserved, no doubt, and go to some great family; but as a seat of feudal state it has ceased to exist. But there is something attractive in an old castle left all to itself, about which one can wander at will, and linger over, and bask in the sunshine under its old walls.

There is no other break now in the great sea-wall of downs till we come to Lewes, with another strong castle already described, and beyond that we come to the coast-line protected by the Cinque Ports, where great barons and their castles had no place.

But the most charming of all old castles is Bodiam, although it never had much importance as a fortified post. Rising among low-lying fields and woods, it seems more like a castle of enchantment than an actual building of hewn stone; and as you approach, the castle seems so perfect and untouched in its massive strength that you can almost fancy that the warder is still looking out from the battlement—the porter still at the gate to lower the massive draw-bridge. And this in the quiet repose of a secluded country, with only the croaking of the frogs, or the plash of some great pike among the weedy margins of the moat, to break the stillness. The castle, still almost perfect in all its details, was the work of a successful soldier in the French wars of King Edward the Third. Sir Edward Dalynruge, a knight of no great territorial possessions, had accompanied his father in the campaigns against the French, had fought at Cressy and at Poitiers, and then took service on his own account in a band

of free lances under Sir Robert Knowles, and gained some wealth in ransoms and in plunder in Normandy, Brittany, and Picardy. And from the spoils of France Sir Edward built himself this castle, one of the latest examples of the feudal fortress. To the Dalynruges succeeded the Lenknors, and Sir Thomas Lenknor, attached to the Lancastrian cause, was attainted by Richard the Third for having raised men for Richmond.

The castle was seized by the King, probably after offering some resistance, and it is said to have stood a siege during the civil wars, although the handiwork of Cromwell's generals is hardly to be traced in its still perfect enceinte, and the walls bear no sign of having been battered by artillery. But the records of this really fascinating building are few and scanty, and leave a good deal to the imagination.

Not far off is Battle, with its abbey, and the marshy grounds, a scene of always vivid interest to those of English blood. The high altar of the abbey stood on the very ground where Harold pitched his standard, and where he fell beneath the Norman arrow.

Another interesting spot is pleasant Mayfield, with remains of the ancient palace of the archbishops, with traditions, too, of famous St. Dunstan, and relics of the hard-headed anchorite—his hammer, his anvil, and his sword. St. Dunstan's Well, where the holy hermit slaked his thirst, still flows as freely as ever, and is carefully preserved and walled round.

Just on the borders of Kent, and partly in either county, are the remains of Bayham Abbey, endowed in the year 1200 by Robert de Thurnham for Pre-monastrian canons. And we may gaze at a distance at the pretentious mansion which occupies the site of Eridge Castle, once a seat of Harold's, and later on a hunting-lodge of the old Nevills; while Sheffield Place has more modern memories as the favourite retreat of Edmund Gibbon; and in Fletching Church we may find the tomb of the great historian, with many other fine monuments of the men of still more ancient days.

NOSTALGIA.

ONE of the most prominent features in the literature of the present day is the number of words unpronounceable to the uninitiated, and hard to be "understood

of the people", scattered throughout its pages. The other week, while reading a theological work by a popular author, I came upon so many words which I had never even seen before, that the dictionary was in constant requisition.

When I first saw the word "nostalgia", I was younger by a good many years than I am now, and had no idea what it meant.

I looked at it from every side, repeated it aloud, wondered—with a hazy remembrance of having once learned "roots"—what its derivation might be, read and re-read the context, hoping to have some light thrown on its meaning, and finally did what I should have done at first—went for my lexicon. That, however, was useless, as being an old-fashioned one it did not contain the word, so I hopelessly forbore any further enquiry, being surrounded by a family as ignorant and badly educated as myself, trusting to time or accident to enlighten me. But by one of those freaks of nature—convenient freaks, sometimes—one no sooner comes in contact with a hitherto unknown word or place, than one is sure to encounter it again in a day or two—I found my new friend, nostalgia, mentioned in a newspaper, with its explanation, "home-sickness," considerably given in the same sentence.

Nostalgia, home-sickness, "heim weh"—no matter what you call it—"a rose by any other name would smell as sweet"—is an unmistakable fact, though philosophers may sneer, and callous-hearted persons laugh.

It is a disease, as much as neuralgia or fever are diseases; it baffles the cleverest doctors' skill, and admits of only one complete cure, and that is by removing its cause.

Sheer strength of will may keep it in abeyance, hard work may turn aside its course for a while; but sometimes, at odd moments, in unexpected places, it asserts itself with an uncontrollable longing, a sickening thirst for home, which will neither be repressed nor appeased.

A floating scent in the air—a scent laden with the memory of a bygone day, a sunset flush in the sky, an old melody borne on the breeze, have been known to bring on an access of this strange illness, almost unbearable in degree. Reason has little or no effect in subduing its feverish excitement; friendship the closest, love the tenderest, cannot turn aside its current; music has no power to soothe its bitterness, nor the distractions of gaiety to rouse it from its melancholy. It is something out-

side the sufferer's body, outside himself, his feelings, his reason; it is a sickness of the soul, a longing to outstrip time and space, to leave the laggard body behind and fly to the native air, the loved associations and early friends of childhood.

Lonely ranches in wild Mexican mountains have echoed to its sobbing cry; under the glare of a tropic sun, amid the brilliant colouring of tropical foliage, in scattered homesteads, in far Australian plains, men and women have pined and sickened—aye, and even died of this mysterious illness. It is strange that an ailment, which to all appearance is connected with the nerves, should not be more common among the weaker sex, but men suffer from it in a greater degree than women, and the more hardy the race the more they seem to suffer. Northern races experience its deadly symptoms more than the warmer-blooded southerner; indeed, I have heard that the Esquimaux have such a deeply-rooted love of their cold and barren country entwined among the very fibres of their nature, that they can hardly exist for any length of time out of it, and dwindle away physically and mentally till they return.

I remember once, in a far foreign country, seeing a man who moped, lost his appetite, and looked generally wretched for days, but who, on being questioned as to the cause of his melancholy, replied that he was in perfect health. Afterwards, when the fit, which was fortunately merely a temporary one, had worn itself out, he told me that it was a heart-longing for home which had suddenly taken possession of him; that it seemed to him he could not again be happy till he heard the old tones and paced the old garden-walks—if only for a day or an hour, it would have contented him. He could again have assumed the harness of daily toil, and spent the necessary years of exile in a foreign land, could he for one day have drunk at this refreshing well.

It is not only in foreign countries and far-away scenes that this sickness is felt. I have known new-made happy brides suffer from it, and often I was not surprised. I do not think half enough is thought of the sacrifice entailed on many a young girl who quits a home full of brothers and sisters, and life, and gaiety, and marries a man who is absorbed in his business or profession from morning till night. She is expected to be "as happy as the day is long", because the supposed mission of her life is fulfilled, she has got a settlement, a husband, and a home. But what a change!

She may be heart and soul in love with him, but, in the daily seven or eight hours of enforced solitude, she is left to fill her time as best she may, and, in a newly-furnished house, without children to occupy her, there is not much in a domestic way to employ her hands or her mind. How her thoughts must go back to the home she has just left, filled with the merry laughter and jests of young lives, their amusements, occupations planned, consummated, and talked over in hours filled to the brim with a thousand and one different interests! If, in these tedious, long-drawn-out hours her eyes brim with tears, and her heart yearns sometimes for the old life of her girlhood, with something approaching to home-sickness, who can blame her?

I knew a lonely young bride like this once; she had married the man of her choice and loved him to adoration, but she told me that in the first year of her marriage she was almost miserable. She had left a house full of bright, devoted sisters, where a stream of friends and cousins came and went all day, where talk and laughter made the week one long sun-beam; and after the short honeymoon was over, she was transplanted to a lonely country village, in the suburbs of a large town, in which her husband spent the day at his office. She had scarcely any friends with whom to interchange a word, a church-yard bounded her garden, and the passing-bell, as it tolled dismally out, was the only sound which broke the long, terrible stillness; and the contrast of the full, gay life, which had made her twenty summers so happy, with the miserable, lonely hours she spent now, used to come upon her with such force of home-sickness, that she lay helplessly crying day after day, and when the young husband returned in the evening, expecting to find the liveliest and brightest of wives—and thinking, as most men in their convenient inconsideration do, that a woman must be perfectly happy in a home of her own—instead he found a limp and doleful creature, worn out from many tears, and ready to throw herself into his arms, and shed a few more from sheer weakness.

It is not the gently nurtured or the weakly temperaments alone to whom this subtle disease comes. Strong men, of herculean frame, have been shaken by it; peasants with little refinement, and seemingly less feeling, have trembled in its grasp; adventurers, men whose lives have proved a failure, those black sheep found

under every clime, reckless, careless, hardened, have "sickened of this vague disease", and longed, and agonised, and prayed for one glimpse of the old country to greet their dying eyes, one breath from some breezy upland, one waft from some flowing river, to cool their fevered brow. Some—aye many—headstones there are in every continent and colony in this wide world with only rudely-carved initials to mark their identity; some little mounds without any headstones at all; but if the green grass or stately palm growing over them could speak, they would tell sad tales of the pining away of many a brave young life, and nobody knew but God and themselves that the breath which had blasted them was the deadly one of nostalgia.

WHEN YOU ARE SAD.

WHEN you are sad, I ask no more
The lavish rights I claimed before,
When sunrise glittered on the seas,
And dancing to the wooing breeze,
The laughing ripples kissed the shore.

The morning glow of love is o'er;
Oh, rosy dreams we dreamt of yore!
I do but ask the least of these,
When you are sad.

Let the fresh darling you adore,
With joy's light footstep cross the floor;
But hear the last of all my pleas,
And shut for all but me the door,
When you are sad.

STUDIES OF OVER THE WAY.

A HOUSE IN HORSEFERRY ROAD.

IN TWO PARTS. PART I.

IT may be remembered, perhaps, by some of my readers, that I once went to reside on the breezy heights of Islington, Dr. Clausius having told me that living on high ground was good for indigestion, and that I found him to be as ignorant in the matter of hygiene as he was in metaphysics. Therefore, when I left my lodgings in Crabbe Street, I determined to see whether I should do any good by acting diametrically opposite to the counsels of my would-be mentor, and I took rooms in a street very little above the level of the Thames at high water—to wit, Horseferry Road, Westminster. My new apartments had many advantages. They were very quiet, and very light when there was no river-fog about, but their chief claim to approbation was that they were a long way from the Caledonian Road, the neighbourhood in which Dr. Clausius then had his dwelling.

Horseferry Road without doubt possesses, as a thoroughfare, a certain individuality. It boasts of certain mock marine characteristics. The numbers of loafers, half bargee, half dock-labourer, wearing real blue guernseys, and affecting the nautical walk, that one sees about, and the smell of pitch that steals up the street when a barge is being caulked, suggest that a bit of the real port of London must have got adrift, and floated up on a high tide to Westminster. But there is, after all, a theatrical air about the mercantile enterprise of the Horseferry Road, a sort of playing at being sailors. Those brown-sailed craft, almost sinking under the huge masses of hay and straw they carry, hail from the distant ports on the Medway or the Essex coast. They have faced the olfactory terrors of Barking and Crossness, and threaded safely the perilous passage of Limehouse Reach. Those long, narrow barges, with a similar freight, come, peradventure, from the Midlands, bearing from some remote Warwickshire village provender for the mews of Mayfair and Belgravia. How many locks have they descended, and to the voices of how many riverside sirens, ministering in cosy parlours, have their bronze-featured captains turned an unheeding ear! But Horseferry Road, lying between stately Westminster and æsthetic Chelsea, seems a little ashamed of its commercial surroundings, and makes believe to have nothing to do with the hay and straw littered river-port. At least, that was the mental attitude of my landlady when I went to look at the rooms I ultimately engaged.

I was very comfortable in my new lodgings, and the Dictionary of Metaphysics made rapid progress; indeed, the progress was, for a time, a little too rapid, as I found absolutely nothing in the contemplation of my Over-the-Way to distract my attention from my work. The house opposite was, to speak figuratively, completely dumb. There was a card in the ground-floor window to say that lodgings were to be had there. The milkman called once a day, as he did all down the street, and every morning the landlady, a little skinny woman in a rusty black dress, would issue forth and return in the space of half an hour, bearing her stock of provisions for the day. That was all. Had no fresh personalities intervened, I should have had nothing to write on the subject of Horseferry Road. Nobody in his senses could build up a story on such

materials. A whimsical dreamer, a man with an itch to invent a history about every person who may cross his vision, might have piled together a heap of rubbish under such circumstances; but I am grateful to remember that I have never taken up my pen to write the adventures of my opposite neighbours without being first in possession of abundant and well-authenticated data to work upon.

But one morning, when I lifted my eyes from my writing, I saw that the card had disappeared from the window of the house over the way, and naturally I pricked up my ears at the prospect of finding some additional interest in the opposite dwelling which, up to this time, might quite as well have been a blank wall as a rateable tenement. From that moment the progress of the Dictionary of Metaphysics was sensibly retarded. Late in the evening a porter arrived with a truck, laden with what looked like seaman's chests, and by his side walked a thin, middle-aged man, presumably the owner of the same. The boxes were carried in, the middle-aged man followed, a ruddy glare of firelight shone from the hitherto dull and darksome windows of the first-floor-front, and I concluded that the time for observation had now really arrived.

For a day or two the new tenant did not leave the house at all; but I accounted for this by supposing that he was busy arranging his possessions in his new abode. Then one evening, as the clock struck seven, he issued forth and walked briskly down the street towards the river. At nine precisely he returned, and henceforth these goings and comings were accurately repeated each evening. On the fifth day after he had arrived I noticed that he spent much of his time in looking out of the window down the street, as if he were expecting the arrival of someone from that direction. On the sixth his pale face and anxious eyes were visible almost all day, and on the morning of the seventh likewise. Then, at twelve o'clock, a big, rough, sailor-looking man, dressed in a blue pilot-coat and gilt buttons, rang at the door-bell, and was shown in, and remained in the house for about half an hour. For the three days succeeding I scarcely saw my opposite neighbour at all, save when he sallied forth for his evening walk; but on the fourth day his face now and then appeared; on the fifth he was hardly ever out of sight; and the sixth, and up to noon on the seventh, were one perpetual vigil.

Then the man in the blue coat again rang the bell, spent half an hour in the house, and took his departure. His visit had the same soothing effect as the week before, and this effect worked off in the same time and in the same manner. The old restlessness returned on the fourth day, and the whole business was gone through over again.

This particular Over-the-Way was, in one sense, a new experience. I had never yet been called upon to watch and explain the actions of a man who moved with a regularity which would have put to shame the performances of many a watch of modern construction. What had, hitherto, served to kindle my interest was the vague and comet-like appearances and disappearances of over the way neighbours, and I dare say my readers will be inclined to think that this mechanical gentleman, with no more originality than an automaton, must have seemed very tame to me after some of those whose histories I have already told. But after a week or two the very regularity of his goings and comings began to interest me profoundly, and even to exasperate me a little. A person who had intercourse with but one human being, and who was so powerfully affected by the advent of this solitary visitor, must necessarily have a story of some kind. But how was this story to be unravell'd? I did not, at this period of which I am writing, know the full extent of Simpson's powers of investigation, and it seemed to me that it would be a hopeless task to try to probe the secret life of a man who had but one confidant in the world. I soon had an opportunity of putting my friend's skill to the test, for he looked in to see me one afternoon about a month after I had been provided with my new neighbour. I gave him a detailed account of the drama which I saw performed week by week over the way, and though he led me to believe that he was fully confident of disentangling the mystery, I must say I was not equally sanguine. However, in less than a week, he came back with the following history :

I followed our friend opposite in one of his evening rambles, and tracked him to a snug, old-fashioned public-house, about half a mile distant. He was evidently an habitu , for the landlord saluted him from behind the bar, and he passed into a semi-private little room behind. I made my way into this also ; though I could see from

the looks which were exchanged by the four or five occupants, that I was regarded as an interloper ; but I managed, after a little, to dispel the unfavourable impression. Most of the gentlemen present were interested in the river trade ; but, for reasons of my own, I turned the conversation as often as I could towards the sea and its perils and adventures, its fatal catastrophes and marvellous escapes. The gentleman from over the way grew intensely interested, I could see, from his nervous action and restless eye, and more than once he asked me whether I had noticed— I was sitting before the open door—a man enter the bar dressed in a pilot-coat with bright buttons. One by one the company paid their reckoning and took their leave, till I was left alone with the gentleman. He became more talkative after we were left by ourselves, and I gathered easily from his discourse that he had spent a good part of his life on the salt water. At last he got up to go, and I did the same. I saw him leave the house, and scarcely had he passed the threshold before he was joined by the man who comes to see him once a week, a rough-looking sailor dressed in a blue pilot-coat with gilt buttons.

I followed them at a judicious distance, and was surprised to find that when they reached Vauxhall Bridge the sailor seized the middle-aged man by the arm, and attempted to force him to cross the bridge, instead of allowing him to return home. I stopped for a moment, and watched the struggle ; but when he called out, as if in distress, I went forward to assist him. The sailor slouched off, and disappeared across the bridge when he found he had a third party to reckon with, and I bade our friend tell me where he lived, that I might see him home.

He gave me an address in White-chapel, and this attempt at concealment confirmed the theory I had already formed as to his story. He begged me not to trouble myself on his account ; he could find his way well enough ; he always walked back, and would never take me so far east at that time of night. I begged him to have no such scruples. I lived in Bethnal Green myself, and liked a long walk with pleasant companionship through the streets at night better than anything. He was a little staggered at this speech of mine ; but he saw apparently that I was not to be shaken off, so he started eastward towards his imaginary dwelling in White-chapel.

I had no intention, however, of taking him far. I led the way past an old-fashioned coffee-house, a favourite haunt of mine, in the neighbourhood of Leicester Square, and I took him in there, nominally to taste a particular brand of Scotch whisky, but really to listen to the explanation, which I could see he was anxious to give me, of the strange scene I had just witnessed. I felt pretty confident that by the time this explanation should be concluded I should be in possession of the man's life-secret. I will leave you to judge how far I succeeded when you have heard the story he told me as we sat over our whisky-and-water in a snug box of the ancient coffee-room. I will let him speak for himself in the first person:

"My name is John Lethbridge, and the first act of my life which appears to me worthy of being recorded is my running away to sea at the age of eleven. My father was a well-to-do tradesman in a Yorkshire town, and destined me to succeed him in his business; but in this he made the mistake, so common with parents, of deciding how his son should pass his life without consulting the person most concerned in the matter, namely, myself. During my holidays I often went to stay with my grandmother, who lived at Gainsborough, and then I used to spend nearly all my time down by the quays and wharves, watching the round-sterned Dutch galliots come crawling up the Trent with their cargoes of seed for the mills of the town. Now and then, as a rare treat, old Sam, my grandmother's factotum, would make interest with one of the captains to let me go on board, and peer about in the cavernous hold and the tiny lockers, cabins, and companions. Ah me! what strange things are memory and association! By the very mention of these early pranks of mine the wonderful compound odour which penetrated everywhere is recalled to me. In spite of the perfume of this excellent Glenlivet, my nose seems conscious of the presence of cheese, and linseed, and tar, and bilge-water. But I must be getting on with my story. My natural inclination for a seafaring life, fostered by the perusal of stories of adventure, began to grow into an overmastering passion by reason of these real and tangible experiences of actual ships and sailors. Not that I ever thought of embarking in such a humdrum line as the transfer of linseed and cheeses, coal and dry goods, from one side of the North Sea to the other. My ambition

was to be such a sailor as Captain Cook, or the Frenchman, La Perouse, cruising about amongst calm tropical seas, and collecting all sorts of wonderful birds, and weapons, and precious stones. A little later I studied the careers of Drake and Hawkins, and I sighed to think that the slave-trade was on its last legs, and that piracy, even when known as harassing the Spaniards in the Main, was hardly a calling which a high-spirited gentleman could adopt with safety or repute; but I was taught by experience that at sea, as elsewhere, one has to begin at the beginning, so I ran away to Newcastle, and joined a collier trading between that port and London. A very short spell of this life satisfied me that I had not chosen the right branch of the profession. If ever any of your boys, sir—for I presume you are a family man—should show any inclination to follow my footsteps against your inclination, ship him on board a North Sea collier. If that does not cure him of his liking for the sea, he is a born sailor, and you can let him go his own way.

"This was my own case. The horrors of the collier only convinced me that I must make a new start. I shipped next in a vessel trading between the Baltic and King's Lynn, and then in a coasting Mediterranean steamer. I was fairly comfortable in this last berth; but I felt I should never be satisfied till I had crossed the line and the Atlantic as well, so I took the first chance that offered, and sailed in a fine barque bound for Rio and the western coast of South America. I stuck to the Clio, for I knew that I was a bit of a favourite with the captain, and after my second voyage I got appointed to the post of boatswain's mate, and having mastered the first step on the ladder of promotion, I began to picture myself the commander of a vessel as fine as or finer than the Clio herself.

"In the Clio I visited nearly every port of the Indies, East and West alike, and one autumn the owners sent us out with a general cargo to Sydney, or Port Jackson as it was then called. On this particular voyage we had shipped more young hands than usual, so my duties were rather heavier than they had hitherto been, but by the time we had doubled the Cape I had got them all into some sort of shape with one exception, and this exception was a man about my own age, entered in the ship's books under the name of Samuel Rands.

"When he came on board, while we were

lying in the docks, I could see with half an eye that he was no seaman—that he was playing the same game at thirty which I had begun before I was into my teens, and if it had not happened that hands were very short just at that time, I should have advised the captain to send him about his business. If I had done so, you would not now be listening to the tale of a ruined wretch such as I am.

“Rands was a creature made of that stuff out of which nothing worthy the name of a man can ever be fashioned. He was weak in body, and sullen and lazy in disposition, so that if he had been able to do his work the will would have been wanting. He and I were soon on the worst terms with each other, and his life could not have been a very pleasant one. I should not have been so hard with him if I had seen that he was trying to earn his salt. He chose as his mate the most worthless of the crew next to himself, a big, hulking Irishman named Dennis Ryan, who likewise knew the rough side of my tongue. They kept aloof from the other men all the voyage out, and when they came on board, before we set sail from Cape Town, they brought out with them a lot of purchases which seemed to be rather out of proportion to the wages of a man before the mast, and this circumstance, taken together with certain others which had already come to my notice, made me keep a sharper watch than ever over Mr. Samuel Rands.

“I first made out that Rands was nothing else than a ‘purser’s name’, and that he really was a certain Francis Horn. I watched him steal aft one day with something in his hand, and this something he flung overboard, or tried to do so, but it caught in the chain of a port-hole, and hung fluttering in the wind. He did not, however, see that he had failed in his purpose, and walked away, while I went below and possessed myself of the parcel. It was an old shirt, tied up in a knot, and evidently containing some other objects. These turned out to be several bundles of letters and papers, many of the former being dated from a place in Australia, and written to Horn by his mother. Nearly every one of them besought him to leave England at once and return to Australia, and implored him on no account to go near the old man at Cork. The later ones spoke of illness and failing health, and the last in date was in a strange handwriting, telling the news that the mother was dead.

“I pieced the story together as well as

I could. Here was the reprobate son of parents probably reprobate also—for in those days a terribly large proportion of the dwellers in New South Wales were ‘involuntary emigrants’—who had made his way to England and wasted all his money in debauchery. There was a grandfather, or uncle, the old man at Cork, who might do something for the ne’er-do-well in his will if they could be kept apart; but the mother apparently knew them both well enough to be sure that her son’s chances would not be improved by a meeting. Then came the news of the mother’s illness; but this was powerless to call the prodigal to the place where his duty lay so long as he had a pound to spend. Then the last news and the last sovereign; and the beggared profligate, finding London a cold home for a man with an empty pocket, determined to work his way out to Australia in the first ship which would take him. Then the evil chance which led his footsteps on board the barque *Clio*.

“After this discovery, I naturally felt a stronger interest than ever in the man whose secret I had, at least partially, fathomed, and I found it a little difficult to supply a motive for this resolve of his to seek again his birthplace; but I feared that it would be found rather in his expectation of finding something to lay hands on, than in the pious wish to shed a tardy tear of repentant affection over his mother’s tomb. I resolved to do him full justice, and wait till I could watch him and his behaviour on shore before condemning him; but fate gave me no chance of this. Before the grey, sullen rocks of Cape Leeuwin, the first point of Australia we sighted, came in view, Francis Horn, with all his imperfections on his head, was resting, sewn up in a hammock, in the depths of the Southern Ocean.

“Horn died of inflammation of the lungs, so there was no reason why the health authorities of Sydney should have refused us leave to land; but smallpox was raging then at the Cape, and the harbour-master sent us into quarantine for a week when he learnt where we had last touched. The days seemed as if they would never pass, but, on the last one of our captivity, the boat which brought out our provisions brought likewise a packet of letters from the owners’ agent for the crew of the *Clio*.

“Even when a man knows that the chances are a thousand to one against there being anything in the mail-bag to concern him, there is a sort of magnetic

attraction to draw near while the letters and newspapers are being distributed. I had completely cut the painter as far as my home-friends went, and for the last dozen years I had held no communication with any of my own family; but still I sauntered up to the ring which had formed round the Captain as he made the distribution. More than half the letters, to judge from the looks and the remarks of the recipients, must have contained bad news, so I felt little envy of them. When the Captain had finished his task, he held up a long blue envelope, and called out:

“Which of you men will own the name of Francis Horn?”

“There was a dead silence. Each man looked about with shifty gaze, which might have been taken to mean that everybody was willing to affirm that he knew nothing of Francis Horn, but that he was by no means sure that his words would command belief. Once the impulse came strong upon me to tell all I knew; but my eyes fell at that moment on the face of Dennis Ryan; and I determined to hold my peace a little to see whether he, too, knew anything of his late comrade's real name. He said nothing, but stood with his face cast into its ordinary form of malignant stupidity.

“No one will own the name,” the Captain went on. “Lethbridge, come to my cabin; I want to speak to you.”

“Captain Carter and I were very good friends. He was an excellent sailor and a just man, and I think he knew my value. I dare say this sounds a little vain to you. I had told him now and then stray bits of my past history; and he, with his extensive acquaintance with sailors in general, was able to fill in accurately enough the parts which were wanting.

“‘Lethbridge,’ he said, as I closed the door of his cabin, ‘why didn't you speak out like a man, and own the name of Francis Horn?’

“The Captain looked steadily at me with his steely-blue eyes, as he spoke these words. I was about to affirm that he was completely on the wrong track, and to offer to bring my proofs that Francis Horn was the same as the man he had known under the name of Samuel Rands, when he cut me short.

“Don't tell more lies than you are forced to, Lethbridge. I know how loth a man in your position generally is to own his real name. Just listen to this letter, which I have received from a London lawyer, before you say any more.”

“And then he read me the letter. It was written by the man of law, who had evidently been commissioned to find Francis Horn, to the Captain of the ship in which that worthy was supposed to have sailed. Francis Horn was wanted, it was clear, but there was nothing in the Captain's letter to tell the reason why. As the Captain read over the description of the missing man, it struck me with surprise to mark how a written inventory might fit accurately either one of two persons bearing by no means any remarkable likeness to each other. Never till then had I remarked that the same tint of hair and complexion would describe both Horn and myself; that both of us had lost a front tooth; that we both stooped in our gait, and carried the left shoulder rather higher than the right. As soon as the Captain began to read, the feeling of curiosity, which had possessed me when I had first fathomed Horn's secret, began to wax stronger. Many and many a time I had vowed that I would satisfy myself as to the past history of this man, who, worthless loafer as he was, had certainly exercised a strange influence over me; and by the time the Captain had brought his letter to an end, my mind was made up. The clue I was in search of might lie within the four corners of the blue envelope which he was balancing in his fingers, and when there was silence I neither spoke nor lifted my eyes.

“What do you say now, Lethbridge?” said the Captain.

“Say, Captain!” I replied. “Say that it is no use trying to keep anything dark when you have the watch.”

“And then he handed me the long envelope, and in ten minutes everybody in the ship knew that Francis Horn was a man who had run away to sea under the name of John Lethbridge. I, meantime, was mastering the contents of the letter of which I had thus feloniously obtained possession.”

ON GHOSTS.

WE own frankly, at the outset of this paper, that we are at times inclined to think that the dear old lady who used to declare that, though she did not believe in ghosts, she was very much afraid of them, is not quite so much in the minority as sceptical folk would have us believe; for we venture to state boldly that the most strong-minded person among us cannot

have passed through life without once and again pausing to consider whether ghosts are quite as impossible as they would very much like to believe they are.

And, be it understood, we are not now alluding to the mere vulgar phantom, livid with green, ghastly rays of light, clad in a long, white garment, and accompanied by the orthodox rattling of chains, whose existence is now almost entirely confined to the cheaper form of Christmas annuals; but to the more refined spirits whose presence is obvious indeed to all those whose minds are endued with sentiment, and who are able to look beneath the surfaces of life and discover for themselves that there is more, both in heaven and earth, than is dreamt even of in their philosophy. To such a mind as this, the idea of a family-ghost would come naturally enough. The ghost may be of some far-off ancestor, whose portrait hangs in the great hall, and whose unwritten story is handed down from father to son, either as an example or as a deterrent—or the spirit of some nearer relation, a mother, or a little sister, may be elected to the position of family-ghost and may almost be considered in the light of a guardian angel.

How many little quarrels have not been stayed half-way by an appeal to some such a memory! Many hearts have been knit together by the intangible touch of spirit-hands; and who shall say that they do not come to us, as we sit alone, and ponder over the time when they were yet with us, until we can almost believe we feel their soft, mist-like touch upon our shoulders, the while we seem to hear whispered to us ideas and thoughts too grand, too beautiful, too true, not to have been spoken by those who have journeyed farther than we have, and who know where we only believe?

There is no other way of accounting for the manner in which tender remembrances of our dead friends seem always present in our hearts. We may not know we are thinking of them; but their memory never leaves us, and is with us, reminding us of the faint perfume that hangs about old letters, which is too slight to call a scent, but which is inseparable from them: just as the remembrance of our dead is inseparable from our lives; just as their unknown presence may be the cause of many a delightful idea, many a beautiful thought which comes to us, we know not whence, in a moment, as if some flash of lightning had

suddenly illumined the path we have to tread.

Think one moment: has no such mysterious assistance been vouchsafed to you at some critical period of your life? Have you not been conscious of some reason for drying your tears as you sat alone, perhaps at Christmastide, and gazed at the empty chairs where they were once wont to sit?

Has no peculiar influence ever inspired you to noble deeds, to good work, or opened out to you the fairy-land of fancy? If to these questions you are constrained to answer, yes; then believe you, too, have that best of all possessions—a family ghost.

There is no reason why such a fancy should be nothing save a mere idea. No reason why, when we close the coffin-lid on the altered face of our nearest and dearest, we should believe that we shall meet no more; hold no more communication with them, until we, too, are changed out of all knowledge, and we come together again in the Paradise of God.

Better surely than credence in so entire a separation is a belief in a family ghost, who is ready and yearning to give us whispered counsel if we are only wise enough to recognise its presence. Better to believe that the clear sight and wide knowledge, that were of such inestimable value to us when our friend was yet with us, are not lost to us entirely, but are still ours at quiet moments when we sit and think of those we have lost, and can believe they come to us, if only to remind us of what they once were.

This fanciful theory must, after all, remain a mere effort of the imagination, but there is yet another side to contemplate.

That side, for example, presented by those who, having lost a darling child, do not shrink from a remembrance of the innocent little creature, but rather make a pious practice of talking of it, thus keeping its memory for ever green.

Like a shrine, the tiny portrait is erected on the nursery-shelf, and the children always keep flowers before it, speaking of their brother or sister in heaven as if she or he were still one of them—much holier, better, too, than they are, and by whose supposed standard of right and wrong conduct is measured, and temper governed.

The idea that evil behaviour may pain their absent sister in her rest quickly

exorcises the demon, and keeps a whole-
some check over hasty hands.

It is impossible for anyone who knows
the nursery to doubt that the children
there are not all the better, sweeter, and
quieter, because they unhesitatingly believe
that, though absent in the flesh, the spirit
is yet with them, leading them gently on
to that home which, after all, is such a little
way off?

Have not family quarrels among older
people been occasionally ended, also, by a
recollection that a dead parent may be
troubled by conduct that would have
pained her terribly when alive? If so,
surely she yet speaks to her children in a
voice that is audible in their hearts, if
nowhere else.

If we once recognise the possibility of
such communion with our dead, there
is small limit to the train of thought
that could be followed, for then we should
remember other and evil ancestors of ours
who stand ever by us, ready to prompt
us to the committal of those very sins
which marred their own lives.

Yet, even if this be so, much good may
still be gathered; for a due contemplation
of their careers, and the end thereof, may
be of great service to us; for, recognising
what we inherit, and availing ourselves of
their experience, we can use them as
stepping-stones, climbing up from their
vices to higher and better things.

But ghosts are not always merely spirits
of the departed, but exist around us in a
thousand other forms, all more or less
easily recognisable by the initiated.

Who does not know people who are
quite as intangible as any spirit, whose
lives seem absolutely formless, and whose
real personality we are never able to grasp,
and of whom, after years of civilities and
visiting, we know no more than we did the
first day we met? We never find out
what they think, what they like, or what
they are. They are to us only as so many
shadows cast upon a blind which we see
when we pass in the street; and nothing
surprises us so much as to discover that
such folk as these are ill, and suffer, and
finally die, for they never seemed to us to
be real enough to do anything save just
exist.

Then there are rows upon rows of
ghosts-houses built all around us every
year, looking so exactly alike, furnished all
on the same plan, and all more or less
draughty and wretched, and never becom-
ing homes, because no one remains in them

long enough to imbue them with any
personality.

But perhaps the most trying of all the
ghosts that exist around us are those books
that are surely nothing but the merest,
most flimsy of ghosts; where we begin to
read, and cannot comprehend; where the
sentences look plain enough, but are abso-
lutely without meaning; and where the
plot, or central idea, escapes us continually,
and which we are forced to put aside, de-
claring that, ghost-like indeed, they have
evaded us altogether, and that we are
powerless either to grasp them or compre-
hend them in the least.

And yet there is another far more satis-
factory aspect of the ghost-book, and one
also that is much better known, for who
among us has not at some time been
haunted by those who have never existed
save in the fertile brains of our favourite
authors?

Who has not parted with such spirits as
these, as with an old and familiar friend,
feeling, when closing the boards of some
fascinating story, that we have bid adieu
to a pleasant chapter in one's life, and
seen the last of a delightful acquaintance,
who never seems the less real because he or
she has never lived, nor walked, nor
spoken human words from human lips?

Still yet another hint of ghost existence
is curiously given us at times, by weird,
fantastic nooks and corners of scenery
on which we stumble occasionally in our
walks, and which, somehow or other, we
are never able to find again. For example,
we may take a stroll one afternoon, not
looking out particularly for landmarks,
when suddenly we see what appears to be
a corner of fairyland. Far off "the horns
of elf-land faintly blowing" can be heard;
delicate mosses and ferns deck the border
of the babbling stream, or divers-coloured
autumn leaves cover the ground; and we
gaze up to the light blue sky through a
lace-like tracery of thin, stripped boughs.
We drink it all in and go away, determined
to come again; but we can never do so.
Something has confused the road to it, or
the trees may all have been cut down, the
stream dried up, the state of the atmo-
sphere may be changed—we know not
the reason, and are only aware that, try
how we may, we can never find that
lovely spot again; ghost-like, it either
evades us tantalisingly, or has vanished into
thin air.

These ghosts are, after all, but pleasant
and harmless ones, and as such are to be

welcomed among us, or else lightly thought over and smiled at. Still, there are others as real as any we have spoken of, which are dreadful possessions in truth.

Ghosts, for example, of past follies, that will not be laid; that are strong and rebellious, and that appear rattling their bones and filling the atmosphere with their charnel-like odours when we had quite forgotten they existed. Ghosts of dead loves that smile in the eyes of living ones, and mock them by suggestions that such as they can never really die; and most of all, perhaps, ghosts of inherited passions and sins—which, conquered and laid to rest as regards ourselves, start into new life in our children, and jeer at us with their lips when we had hoped they were parted with for ever.

Oh, rather than contemplate such as these, we would return simply to the first idea of the precious possession of a tender, loving family-ghost! Let us all welcome such among us, believing in the sweet superstition, and looking forward to the time when we too shall join the spirit-world, and find out for ourselves that the idea of a ghost is not quite such a childish, foolish notion after all.

So will we not say, with Hamlet, "Alas, poor ghost!" but rather: "Welcome among us, dear and sacred spirit-world—dear ghosts of friends, of happy times, of places, and holy memories—the while we relegate those ghosts entirely that are comprised in intangible people, and in past sins, to that border-land of spirits, where we fondly hope we ourselves will never be constrained to stray."

VICTIMS.

By THEO GIFT.

*Author of "Lil Lorimer," "An Alibi and its Price,"
Etc., Etc.*

CHAPTER IV. TYPHUS OR TYPHOID?

"THERE was another death to-day," said the Count, a stout, pompous-looking man on the wrong side of forty, with puffy, bilious-hued cheeks, a strong, clean-shaven, blue-black chin, and a large, loose-lipped mouth, hidden—beneficially for himself—under a well-waxed moustache; "Jules Blin, a fisherman and goëmon gatherer. Did you hear of it, St. Laurent? The disease is certainly spreading."

It was on the evening described in the first chapter, and Vera, having finished serving the three whist-players with their

coffee, and having received a gruff "Merci, p'tite chatte" from her father, and a touch on the extreme tips of her fingers from the Count's lips in requital of the attention, had conveyed Leah's cup to her at the piano, where the two girls were sitting, when these words fell on the older one's ears, and, a little startled, she lifted her head to listen.

"Yes; I heard it," said M. St. Laurent sourly. "Those Blins are tenants of mine, worse luck. It was always difficult enough to get any rent from them, and now, I suppose, I shall get none, for P'tit Jean, our weed-picker, tells me the wife is down with the fever too, so I suppose she will go next."

"Oh, Vera, do you think they are speaking of my Mère Blin, the lame woman with the pretty children?" Leah whispered eagerly to her friend, who, however, only looked up at her vaguely. Vera had not been attending to the conversation. The Count was busy marking at the moment. When he had finished he said slowly:

"It is most annoying, this epidemic breaking out just now, for, as Dr. Dupré says, when it does brave our sea-breezes at all it makes friends with them, it remains, and one cannot turn it out. First one's rent-payers die, and there is no money coming in; then arrives M. le Curé with, 'My people are sick, and want nurses; pay for them. My people are dying, and want coffins; pay for them.' Enfin, you might almost equally die yourself as be ruined. Why not? It is only one step from the village to the châteaux."

Madame St. Laurent nearly made a revoke, and Leah could see her thin face, looking pinched and anxious, in the little spot of yellow light formed by the two tall candles on the whist-table. She said hurriedly to her husband:

"P'tit Jean sleeps with his parents in the village. He had better not do so in future;" and monsieur grunted in assent. It was very rarely, save with his "fidus Achates", the Count, that he vouchsafed more than a monosyllable in answer.

Leah bent her head over Vera, who, as usual, was seated on a stool at her feet, and asked:

"What epidemic are they talking of, Vera? I had not heard anything of it before, had you?"

Vera shook her head.

"Epidemic? No, not I," she said in the somewhat dreamy tone which, at times, irritated Leah's more energetic nature, her

soft hazel eyes gazing dreamily out through the open French-window to the terrace outside, across which a warm south breeze was blowing a handful of loosened rose-petals from a bush hard by.

Farther away, the golden-fruited boughs of the apple-trees in the orchard were toasting darkly against the soft deep blue of the evening sky, and from the yard at the rear of the house came now and then the low of wakeful kine or sharp bark of the watch-dog.

"Tell me some more about your sister's little children," she went on, as though following some train of thought. "How I should like to see them! I so often wish I had some child to kiss, and pet, and make fond of me. Are your nieces fond of you, Leah? Oh, don't go listening to that stupid talk over there, but tell me about them!"

But Leah was too much interested in the talk to attend to her.

"What sickness is it that you are speaking of, madame?" she said, raising her voice so that it should reach the group at the card-table. "Vera told me that there was a good deal of illness in the village at present, and when we were out to-day we twice heard the church-bell tolling, as if for someone dead. Is it anything very bad?"

Madame St. Laurent looked up with the worried expression deeper on her face. She seemed almost annoyed at having been asked the question, and answered with even more than her usual hesitation:

"Oh no, I think not; only—only a sort of low typhoid fever. They—they often have it at Quimper and Pont l'Abbé when the weather has been very hot after a wet June as we have had it this year; and, I believe, there have been a few cases in the village here; but nothing—nothing that need alarm you at all, or make you shorten your visit to us."

"Dame! but I hope not, indeed!" cried the Count gallantly. "We could ill-afford to spare mademoiselle for a day of her remaining time, and if you are at all nervous down here at Les Châtaigniers—which does, in fact, chance to be on the high road between the village and Pont l'Abbé—you had all better come to Mailly. We stand higher there, you know, and, if St. Laurent will excuse me, are better drained. I only wish my step-mother and her daughters were there to welcome you, but they are such cowards that the mere whisper of fever, even as far off from us

as Quimper, is enough to keep them from visiting Mailly for a whole summer. They go to Dinan instead, and if later on Mdlle. Vera could be persuaded to join them there for a while, I am sure my sisters, who are devoted to her——"

But Madame St. Laurent broke in nervously:

"Oh, thank you—thank you! but I think not. Vera is so young, such a child, that too much excitement is not good for her, and after that which she has already enjoyed in Miss Joseph's visit——"

"Only, my dear madame, if she is in the least nervous about this epidemic."

"Oh, M. le Comte, pray do not use such an ugly word! I assure you, we think it wiser not to talk about unpleasant things; far less make ourselves nervous over them. Shall we go on with our game? I don't think fevers and things of that sort are interesting subjects of conversation before young ladies."

And the subject was dropped accordingly, to the disappointment of one of the young ladies, at any rate, who found something more unpleasant than sickness to her in the callousness towards those suffering from it with which it had been discussed; and when a few moments later Madame St. Laurent made her usual prim request for "a little music", it was Vera's voice alone which rose obediently in the gay little French ditty:

"Que tout le monde soit gai, chérie,
Que tout le monde soit gai;
Car si tu m'aimes,
Et si je t'aime,
Ou peut faire ce qu'on plait, chérie,
Ou peut faire ce qu'on plait."

That night, however, as Leah was going to bed, there was a knock at the door, and rather to her surprise Joanna entered. The Jewish girl had not undressed. She had only taken down the thick, wavy masses of her hair, and having exchanged her evening dress for a loose cotton wrapper, was standing by the window gazing thoughtfully out into the blueness and stillness, the soft semi-obscurity of the summer night. Her room was in an upper storey, and looked down on the avenue of chestnuts with their distorted, wind-bent trunks and waving interlacement of boughs. Just now the moon, unseen itself, was shedding a rain of silver over the glossy, sharp-toothed leaves, and filling all the landscape and its enclosing atmosphere with a kind of pale, misty radiance. There was not much to see that was beautiful or

picturesque ; not much of anything indeed, for the long line of tree-tops interfered to shut out the undulating cornfields and meadows, and little, heavily-thatched cottages which lay beyond ; but, farther still, there rose up the long bald shoulder of the hill, over which she and Vera had come that afternoon, lying white as snow in the moonlight, and peering over the summit, blocked out solidly against the blue, star-filled sky, the square tower and open belfry of the parish church of St. Tryphine-par-mer.

Careless St. Tryphine, she thought, too happy in heaven to look after her village by the sea, and keep fever and sickness from the hardworking fishermen and their black-eyed, snowy-coifed wives ! And more careless landowners and gentry, who could discuss the theme as one simply entailing so much annoyance or discomfort on themselves, and drop it as soon as it became unpleasant or tedious. She had always disliked the Count. There was something distastefully cynical and arrogant in his manner, even when it affected the greatest deference—something at once cruel and sensual in his expression, more especially when his gaze rested on Vera, which filled her with absolute repulsion ; but this evening she thought he was even worse than M. and Madame St. Laurent in the selfish indifference, or the still more selfish irritation they had displayed towards the pathetic misery suggested by even those few words of details uttered with regard to the malady which seemed to be ravaging their poorer neighbours. For the Count, at least, was rich, and therefore able to do much in alleviating the sufferings of the hardworking, poverty-stricken people. He was the hereditary owner, not only of poor little rock-bound St. Tryphine-par-mer itself, but of the wide heaths and desolate but gold-productive salt-marshes, amidst which his lordly chateau lay in a green and fertile oasis. His ancestors lay thickly under the dark grey stones paving the little church. Many sturdy fishermen and lean, brown-cheeked labourers had fought and died around his grandfather, battling like tigers to the last for the Royalist cause in the days of Carrier and Fouquier Tinville ; while M. St. Laurent, though of old family, was comparatively a new comer in Finisterre—his father having purchased the little property of Les Châtaigniers when he was quite a young man, and settled himself down there, an alien to the place and the people, and bent only on

getting as much out of both, and doing as well for himself as possible. St. Laurent, senior, was a close-fisted, prudent, business-like man, who beginning with a good fortune, managed it to the best advantage, succeeded admirably in all his undertakings, and died, hated indeed by his poor tenants and the surrounding peasantry, but well content with himself, and leaving his son, as he imagined, to follow in his footsteps. The present M. St. Laurent, however, had not been so fortunate. Educated in a far more extravagant and effeminate manner than his father, he had early launched out into expenses far beyond his means, and, living as much in Paris as possible, had drawn so largely, even in his father's lifetime, on his future resources, that on the former's death he entered on his inheritance a heavily-embarrassed man, weighed down by debts which no future economies or additional grindings down of his servants and tenants could make up for.

He had been strenuously advised by his lawyers to marry, farm his own estate, and economise, and when pleasures had begun to pall upon him he had adopted this advice ; but he had no talent for farming, and no affection for the country. His fields produced less than any others ; his cattle died ; his workpeople cheated him.

Leah did not need to live three months at Les Châtaigniers before finding out that money was by no means a plentiful thing there, and that, despite the family carriage, the formalities, and exclusiveness, the St. Laurents were obliged to combine many small economies with much outward assumption, and but for help, which she shrewdly suspected they obtained from the Comte de Maily, might have been in even worse case.

As for these poor Blins, of whom Leah was thinking as she stood by the window, they lived in a miserable cottage belonging to M. St. Laurent, and had first attracted the Jewish girl's notice by the Murillo-like beauty of one of the children, a velvety-eyed urchin with scarcely a rag to his back, who had begged of her "un p'tit sous p'r acheter d'pain" as she and Vera were passing one day. The mother was hopelessly lame, but managed to keep the hovel they lived in in decent order, and to earn a little money by spinning ; and the husband, much older than herself, was, as the Count had said, a "gœmon" gatherer. Once, indeed, Leah and Vera had lingered to watch him and two or three

others of his trade from a sheltered nook in the cliffs as, one stormy morning in spring, they stood down among the blackened rocks on the beach below, the huge waves dashing high over the tops of their sea-boots, streaking their brawny limbs with white foam, and well-nigh smothering them with spray, as they hurled far out into the deep the long lassoes armed with a trident-shaped hook at the end with which they were provided, and which, entangling itself among the masses of tawny, thick-meshed seaweed colouring the surf for fathoms out, enabled them to drag it up on the shore, there to remain until it was dry enough to be carted away to the manufacturers.

After that Leah had often stopped to say a kindly word in passing to Blin's crippled wife as she sat at the door with her spinning, or to bestow a handful of bon-bons on the five merry, sunburnt toddlers who used to come rushing out with shouts of joy to greet her, and as she thought of them at present, and then of the little picture which had pleased her artistic eye that evening—the mournful little procession, the women (some of them weeping visibly) in their flapping, white-winged caps, blue aprons, and short, dark-coloured skirts; the men bare-headed and holding their great, broad-leaved felt hats in their hands; and the swinging censers of acolytes, with their thin trails of blue smoke floating behind them—her heart swelled with pity and almost remorse, and she wished that she could have followed, too, and shared in their ministrations to the dying mother, stretched out upon her hard little bed beside her husband's corpse.

"But at least I will go to-morrow," she said to herself. "There is nothing contagious in typhoid, and I must find out who is taking care of those poor little children. Yes; come in," as a knock at the door interrupted her, and then the handle was turned, and Joanna entered, looking as amusingly like her mistress as she generally contrived to do, her long, lean figure clad in one of the latter's cast-off gowns, her straight red hair flattened down in similar bands to madame's over her ears, her very voice sounding (by dint of long companionship) with the same accent.

"Beg pardon, miss, for disturbing you," she said in her abrupt way; "but Mrs. Sinlorren and me"—this was Joanna's mode of alluding to her mistress, whom, as Leah had often noticed, she never dignified by the latter name, or addressed by the

orthodox "ma'am" after the manner of servants generally—"have been talking about this fever, and she asked me to beg you particular not to go into any of the cottages, or get talking with the common folks here while it's about. She don't want to risk its getting into this house."

"Certainly not," said Leah; "but is there any fear of that? I have always heard that typhoid was not catching in that sense—that it comes from bad smells, bad water, or bad food, and isn't passed on from one person to another like typhus or small-pox."

"Very likely you're right, miss. I don't know nothink about that; but you see this is typhus, not typhoid, and as far as I've seen, that passes on to anyone as comes nigh it."

"Typhus! Are you sure, Joanna?" Leah asked rather incredulously. "Your mistress told us quite distinctly downstairs that it was only typhoid, and seemed to think very little of it."

"Did she? Ah, that was because Vera was there, I expect. And that reminds me I was to ask you also, miss, not to make much of it yourself to the child, or go talking of it before her, for she's such a timid little thing, she'd as like as not go and fret herself sick with the mere dread of the thing."

"Is she as nervous as all that, Joanna? I didn't know it."

"She's not nervous, miss; she's just cowardly, and always was from a babe; though, as I've just told Mrs. Sinlorren, I don't hold with cockering that sort of thing, which I think is just silliness."

Another peculiarity of Joanna's! Though a most faithful and devoted servant, slaving untiringly in her mistress's service, and at her beck and call for everything she needed—the only person, indeed, in whom Madame St. Laurent seemed really to confide, or to whom she spoke with anything like ease or freedom—the woman constantly manifested to her an air of resentment and offhand independence which struck Leah the more because madame, usually so formal and punctilious, never seemed to be aware of it. True, madame's punctilios sometimes took Leah by surprise, and made her wonder if they belonged to some antiquated or foreign rules of etiquette; but in all times and countries it has been the rule in families of any position for servants to treat their employers with a certain amount of subservience; whereas Joanna thought nothing

of contradicting her mistress flatly, or announcing her own contrary intentions when given an order to do anything which she did not approve of; and instead of reprimanding her for this impertinence, Madame St. Laurent either ignored it altogether or apologised for it in her absence on the score of long service and fidelity, and took more trouble than before to propitiate and keep her in good humour.

"Mrs. Sinlorren's what you call nervous," the woman went on now, "ridiculously so, I think; but not about illness, or things of that sort; but if Vera sees anyone with a toothache she thinks they're going to die, and wants to run away at once. She takes after her grandmother, who, they say, did die of nothing in the world but fright, because her pet terrier snapped at her when she was teasing it. I suppose cowardice do run in the blood like other things; and Vera's supposed to take after her grandma in most ways."

"Her grandmamma on the mother's side, I suppose, Joanna, as Miss Vera is so fair. She certainly doesn't resemble her father at all."

"Ah, but it's her father's mother I'm speaking of, miss, and they say she was fair too—as fair as a lily, and her feet and hands so small, you'd only to look at 'em to tell her breeding. She was a Rooshian countess," said Joanna with evident pride.

Leah smiled.

"Well, your young lady's hands are very pretty, too," she said pleasantly.

"Yes; they're pretty enough, if they wasn't so dead white. I like a little life-blood in people myself. Now, her mother had as pretty a colour again as she when she was a young woman, and she could do somethink with her hands. Vera's are just as helpless as a baby's; but I suppose that's like her grandma, too, who never did no earthly thing, so I've heard, but twiddle her dog's ears and roll up cigarettes to smoke."

"Well, Joanna, Miss Vera doesn't do that, at any rate," said Leah, unable to resist a laugh at the idea of her demure little friend with a cigarette between her lips.

Joanna smiled grimly.

"No; nor I don't think her ma would stand it if she wanted to. Not but what Rooshan countesses do smoke for all the world like men, and no one thinks any the worse of them. But, there, as I tell Mrs. Sinlorren every day, if she'd only keep her mind to it, a decent Englishwoman is as good, any time, as the best-born furriner, be she Rooshan or French."

"That is right enough. Stand up for your own country, even if you are away from it," said Leah good-naturedly, and then she added: "You have been with the family here a long time, I suppose, Joanna! Did your mistress bring you over with her when she married, or did you enter her service afterwards?"

It was an innocent enough question, asked with no particular interest; but Joanna drew herself up stiffly at once, and flushed as red as though some hidden offence were contained in it.

"No, miss; Mrs. Sinlorren didn't bring me here," she said haughtily. "She wrote—if you're curious about it—and asked me for to come and live with her, and I did—of my own accord. And now, miss, if you'll be kind enough to remember the message I brought you, and keep clear of this nasty infectious disease, I'll bid you good-night. There ain't anything else you want, I suppose?"

She went away without waiting for an answer, and Leah fairly burst out laughing.

"What an odd creature!" she said to herself. "And how amusingly like her mistress even in her absurd reserve. I once asked madame what part of England she came from, and she reddened in just the same way, and said, 'Essex,' as shortly as though I had been impertinent to her. They are the oddest household altogether, and, if madame were not such a great lady, I should almost say she might be her maid's——" But another thought struck her, and she stopped short, her gaze travelling towards the distant church-tower again. "I wonder if it is really typhus," she said. "At any rate, I dare not risk going after those poor children with the doubt."

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A STORY IN THREE PARTS.

BY MRS. CASHEL HOEY.

THE THIRD PART.

CHAPTER III. JULIAN'S EVIL GENIUS.

MR. WYNDHAM'S rooms were situated advantageously for his business, that of money-lending, in a fashionable street off Pall Mall. They consisted of a commodious first floor; they were furnished in a comfortable style, inclining to the solid, and not affected by the rag-and-platter fashion of recent years; they were eminently decorous, and not dull. These rooms did not wear the sort of aspect that immediately reveals the character and pursuits of an occupant, and in this respect they were like the outward semblance of their owner himself. There was nothing remarkable, certainly nothing mysterious, about Mr. Wyndham, and yet, for a man living in the busy world of London, and doing a satisfactory amount of business in a tolerably fair way—or, at all events, in a way that had not hitherto brought him into trouble—singularly little was known about him. There was, in fact, only one person of his acquaintance who could have told any whom it might concern that the well-preserved, well-dressed Mr. Wyndham had once called himself James Willesden, had lived by precarious employment in the lower walks of journalism, and had been on a certain occasion hardly distinguishable from a tramp.

The earlier experiences of his life had, no doubt, been hard; he had learned in the school of self-earned poverty and privation that which certain natures never can ordolearn—how to make the most of a really good chance when it offered—and he had

life by a sedulous course of money-getting ever since one daring venture had supplied him with tools wherewith to practise what Captain Wragge calls "human agriculture". Mr. Wyndham's methods were, however, simpler and more avowable than those of the proto-typical "agriculturist", probably because he possessed the immense advantage of having started with capital, in the first place; and, in the second, because caution was also among the well-learned lessons of his life. He was content with small things in the early days of his transformation from Mr. James Willesden, of nowhere in particular, to Mr. John Wyndham, of Plutus Place, Pall Mall.

It is probable that seldom in the history of money has any sum been made to increase and multiply more largely, than the five thousand pounds which Lilius Merivale had paid for the information sold to her by James Willesden, and for the possession of Hugh Rosslyn's child. The man's plan had proved perfectly successful; he had never been seen or heard of since he handed over the child and the papers by which his statement was proved, to Lilius, in the general waiting-room at the London Bridge Station. Until her remembrance of him grew dim with time, and the secure custom of her darling's presence, she had suffered, as her characteristic sensitiveness rendered her capable of suffering, about things long past; from the horrid recollection that the woman whom Hugh had loved had been in this man's power—had been his wife; but of late he never crossed her mind at all. She might have met him anywhere, any number of times, at a period much nearer to the James Willesden epoch of his existence than that at which her eyes really did rest unconsciously upon him, and not have found a chord of association

He was equally safe from recognition by Colonel Courtland, who, in addition to his naturally indolent and incurious way, had taken it for granted that the man who had come to Lilius with so strange, yet true a story, and stipulated for secrecy until he should have had time to get away, was gone out of the country for good or ill with his price—its amount Lilius had not divulged—and was a person to be henceforth dismissed from the memory of all concerned. Before Mr. Wyndham settled down to the doing of a satisfactory business in usury at his rooms in Plutus Place, he had turned over his capital more than once or twice, in ways with which this story is not concerned, and by the time he was installed in these comfortable quarters, Colonel Courtland would have been as little likely as Lilius to have recognised him. He had never resorted to any disguise; he had trusted with well-placed confidence to the effect of time, the change of abode, and the influence of easy circumstances, good living, and good clothes.

In one instance only had he been out in his reckoning. It chanced that, at a time when things were going very well with Mr. Wyndham, although he had not yet attained to Plutus Place, he found himself in need of legal advice, and was recommended to put himself into the hands of Messrs. Vignolles and Jackson, of Lincoln's Inn Fields. Shortly afterwards, a young gentleman from the office of that highly respectable firm called, as the bearer of a confidential communication, upon Mr. Wyndham, and a mutual recognition ensued. Julian Courtland could not be mistaken in the identity of the man with whom he had played cards at a public-house at Choughton—having secretly got out of his uncle's house at night—while the man's wife still lay unburied, and Mr. Wyndham was, for once in his life, startled, when he found himself confronted by an eye-witness to one of the discreditable incidents of his former career.

The difficulty was formidable, but a timely recollection of the circumstances under which he had met Julian Courtland, and the indications of the young man's weakness of character which he recalled, came to his assistance—Mr. Wyndham's memory was of the pigeon-hole order, and he could generally find anything he happened to want among its stores. He had no great difficulty in striking up a friendship with Julian, whose first unaffected, spontaneous impulse was to

wonder at and admire the cleverness of the transmogrified individual before him, and to envy his good luck. It was natural to opine that Julian Courtland, if he did not actually want money, could "do with" more than he had, or had any legitimate way of acquiring, and a loan, airily proposed by Mr. Wyndham after some jocosely supposition as to the young man's notions of "seeing life", and with a well-acted pretence of having nothing on his own part to conceal, was accepted with fatal facility.

From that hour, not only had Mr. Wyndham nothing to fear from Julian Courtland, but he found his young friend very useful. Under Mr. Wyndham's auspices, Julian saw life more variously and extensively than he had hitherto done, and if not very seriously at his own expense, that was because he brought a good deal of grist to a mill which ground "exceeding small".

Julian Courtland moved in good society, and was a favourite, as his good looks, his good nature, his good manners, his remarkable and highly-cultivated musical talents entitled him to be. There was, however, a seamy side to his life, and at their first meeting, when he was only a boy, he had turned that side out to the keen eyes of James Willesden, who had marked with a cold and cynical pleasure the tendencies of the nephew of Colonel Courtland, of the man who at least guessed what Willesden's treatment of his wife had been. He afterwards dismissed Julian from his mind, with the brief prediction, "He's safe to go to the bad, and not to be long about it," and had never thought of him again (not even in the moment of his disconcerting discovery that his transaction with Lilius could not be kept from the knowledge of the Courtlands) until he recognised him in the smart young gentleman just out of his articles, and about to become a partner in the firm of Vignolles and Jackson. Mr. Wyndham found out before long that the ambition of Julian Courtland was not to be, but to seem, all that he was expected to be, by the Colonel, who possessed the unworldliness and simplicity of mind which distinguish many brave soldiers, and as Julian made a better decoy by preserving appearances, he did not deride or subvert that purpose. He merely maintained a hold on his young friend by keeping a large debt (for which Julian had given him a tenfold equivalent by the introduction of eligible borrowers in temporary difficulties) hanging over his head, while he

secured ascendancy of a different kind by his superior knowledge of the world—that is to say, the worst part of it—and his past mastership in vices in which Julian was by comparison a mere dabbler.

Mr. Wyndham was so genuinely indifferent to the fate of his dead wife's daughter, after he had speculated to so much profit in that apparently unremunerative burthen, that he did not allude to her in talking to Julian, nor did he ask him any questions about Miss Merivale, or the progress of events at The Quinces.

The child was a growing-up girl, and Miss Merivale had not married. These two facts made the sum of his knowledge. He had not even cared to ask Julian whether mention was ever made in his hearing of the means by which the mystery of Hugh Rosslyn's fate had been dispelled at last. Mr. Wyndham had no retrospective sentiment, even of the cynical kind, and, except in so far as it behoved him to keep touch with matters which concerned Julian, so as to control any attempt to break his bonds, was quite incurious about him. So long as he was available for Mr. Wyndham's purposes, and obedient to his behests, Julian might be anything else he pleased, and, as that genial gentleman again expressed it in his thoughts, "go to the devil his own way, provided he did not go there until he (Mr. Wyndham) had done with him."

In the course of certain transactions between Mr. Wyndham and his young friend, involving the transfer of money from the pockets of the latter to those of the former—for there was between them an ever-pending question of the payment of instalments—the money-lender discovered that Miss Merivale had come to Julian's aid more than once. The effect of this discovery was to make him think once more about Miss Merivale, and deserv a possibility of again making his wife's daughter useful, without perpetrating any such breach of his covenant with Lillias as could be detected, or even suspected, by her. It was a notable notion which he cherished in silence until he had dexterously extracted from Julian all the information required to make him quite sure of its value and feasibility. He had, however, somewhat alarmed that young gentleman by his questions, which made him apprehensive that his secretly-dreaded master, grown reckless by impunity, might be contemplating the experiment of making him introduce him at The Quinces.

Subjected to a close examination respecting the relations of Miss Merivale with Miss Rosslyn, the amount of Miss Merivale's fortune, and what she intended to do with it; the appearance, manners, and proclivities of Miss Rosslyn, and his own position with both ladies; Julian had answered with equal candour and surprise that he should be so closely interrogated on a subject never previously approached. Julian's replies satisfied Mr. Wyndham on all the points he had proposed to investigate—on none more fully than the extreme improbability that Miss Merivale would ever marry (she always seemed to Julian, he declared, like a widow with an only daughter), and he then dropped the subject. It was, however, only to apply himself to the ripening of the pear.

Julian Courtland had about this time a singular run of ill-luck, and by a succession of follies he had fastened Mr. Wyndham's yoke more securely than ever upon his neck, and increased its weight. In Mr. Wyndham's opinion the pear was now ripe—he proceeded to pluck it.

"You're a little late," said Mr. Wyndham, with a wave of his cigarette towards a timepiece on the mantelshelf, when Julian Courtland presented himself according to the appointment made on the previous evening.

Julian looked at the dial with sullen carelessness, and said, as he dragged a chair into a position which would not leave his countenance fully exposed to Mr. Wyndham's scrutiny:

"I dare say it does not matter. You don't seem very busy. The birds that hop upon your limed twigs are not early ones."

Mr. Wyndham smiled, and let the impertinence pass. It was not his purpose to quarrel with Julian yet.

"Well, well," he rejoined, "now that you are here we will not waste time."

He rose, threw his cigarette into the fireplace, suddenly faced Julian from the vantage-ground of the hearthrug, and assuming the business-like tone which the young man hated—the tone with which he always went into the account between them—asked him point-blank what he meant by the affair of last night.

"What affair? I don't understand you?"

"You understand me perfectly. But I will change the form of my question if you like. What do you mean by bringing a

girl like that to a place where you may be seen and reported on by scores of people, and where you actually did narrowly escape being seen by Miss Merivale and Miss Rosslyn?"

"A girl like that!" An angry glow suffused Julian's face. "What do you know about her?"

"Enough to convince me that you are not playing on the square, Courtland. Miss Denzil is a respectable young woman, and she believes that you mean to marry her. You need not get into a rage; she did not reveal the secret; I merely put it to her as a fact of which I was aware—in the character of confidential elderly friend. Her ignorance of the world is stupendous, and her confidence in you is infatuated. But we will come to the consideration of her by-and-by. What I want to know first is, why in the name of all that is foolish you did not admit that you were in a difficulty of this kind, when we made our recent friendly arrangement?"

Julian made no reply, but looked still more sullen.

"I see," said Mr. Wyndham, after a pause, "you thought you could dodge it. That's so like you—so perfectly useless, so purely silly. You can't dodge it, my good fellow, because dodging it means dodging me, and if you don't know by this time what your chances of doing that are, you must be much duller than I take you for. The case between us does not require to be re-stated, and I'm not going into figures; we did all that too lately. You know best whether it would or would not ruin your position in your brand-new profession, and finish you with Colonel Courtland, who has found out a good deal about you already, if the papers which you and I went over so lately were to be laid before him with a view to a settlement."

"There are two sides to the case," said Julian, whose nervousness contrasted strongly with Mr. Wyndham's composed mien and mildly-argumentative tone; "and one of them is your look-out, you know. If you go to my uncle about me, you shall go in your own name, and as an old acquaintance."

"So! Sits the wind in that quarter? And suppose I did call upon the Colonel—with your 'dossier'—in my own name, as you say, what then? Has he never seen a man who has risen from the ranks, do you suppose? And what is it to me whether he knows me or not?"

"You know best; I don't know at all. Only I always thought you must have some reason for keeping Willesden dark—all that about Miss Merivale and the child—or you would not have been so careful to do it." A dark scowl crossed the face of the listener; but Julian could only keep up his defiant recklessness by avoiding Mr. Wyndham's eye, and therefore did not observe the look. "I don't know a great deal about it myself, but I have heard my uncle say it was a rascally transaction, and that Willesden dared not have tried it on with a man; so that I should think you would not care to be identified with it—that's all."

"You really are mistaken in that conclusion, Courtland. I care little for the good or bad opinion of my neighbours, and no more for Colonel Courtland's than for any other man's. But what has all this to do with the fact that you are my debtor to a large extent in a number of transactions which, however the Colonel might regard my share in them, could only strike him in one light with respect to you? Does it alter the fact? Does it modify the situation, which is, briefly, that I am resolved to have my money, and that you have got to pay it? Don't you think you had better drop this childishness, and stick to the point?"

"What point?"

"The point of your having undertaken to reward the ingenuous attachment of Miss Rosslyn by marrying her, and to pay your debt to me out of the handsome fortune which you will certainly get with her. The point of your being all the time secretly engaged to another girl, and running the risk of ruining your chances with Miss Rosslyn by being seen about with her under circumstances which you cannot explain. Come, Courtland, you must get off the horns of the dilemma somehow. Do you, or do you not mean to carry out your agreement? If you do not, I shall be glad to know when you propose to pay me my money. With the 'how' I have no further concern."

Mr. Wyndham resumed his seat, and waited for Julian to speak. He waited in vain for a short time, and then Julian, still with his head bent and his eyes down-cast, said in the tone of one vanquished:

"You need not be so hard on me; it's all true that you say. You've got the upper hand, and you'll keep it. I dare say I should do the same if I were you."

"Of course you would."

"Well then, I'll tell you about it. I have known Miss Denzil for two years. Her father died long ago, her mother is just one year dead. I met her at a small evening-party, where she was playing for dancing, and found out that the mother was a music-mistress, and the girl also a teacher of music, but in a very small way—second-rate schools, and that sort of thing. They lived in lodgings at Pimlico, and at first it was the music they treated me to that took me there. I got pupils for the mother, and I——"

"Fall in love with the daughter. I don't blame you for that. Go on."

"The mother was the nicest woman I ever knew, and the least worldly-minded. She had seen many evil days—indeed, but few, I fancy, that were not evil—but she was always cheerful and hopeful, and she thought all the world as good as she herself was."

"Very pretty; but the daughter, if you please. The young lady who might have spoiled our game last night, if it had not been for me."

"I am not going to talk to you about the daughter. I don't think you would understand me if I did; it is not in your line. You drew your own conclusions quite correctly last night. The mother died satisfied in the belief that her daughter would be my wife. She knew nothing about my family or my embarrassments; but when she was gone I told Miss Denzil a part of the truth."

"Which part, I wonder," thought Mr. Wyndham. He said: "And she was reasonable, and satisfied to wait until the sky should clear? I understand. Of course she's all perfection and you are all devotion, though your ordinary mode of life is inconsistent with that notion, to say the least of it, and you were not too hard to persuade into our arrangement of the other day."

Julian turned on him with an angry oath.

"Not too hard to persuade! Not too hard when you've got me in your grip, and can grind me to powder when you like. I wish I had cut my throat before I ever stood in with you."

"No, you don't, Courtland—not really, you know, because if you did there's no reason why you shouldn't cut your throat now. You wouldn't be troubled much by the fear of posthumous revelations, I fancy. Look here," he added, dropping

his sneer, and turning savage with intent, "let us have done with this! You have acted the part of a fool in deceiving me as you have done. I am sorry for this girl; but she would have nothing to thank me for if I were to let you marry her, and repent in the sackcloth and ashes of exposure and poverty. Besides, I have myself to think of, and not her. You will have to keep to your compact, Courtland, or take the consequences. I have a pretty clear idea of what they will be, but I have no doubt yours is a much more accurate one. I am not your only creditor in many kinds, and I have yet to see or hear of the man who has ever made a clean breast of all his debts."

"She is the truest and best girl in the world," said Julian Courtland, "and it will kill her."

"Not a bit of it. Besides, you should have thought of that before you agreed to marry Miss Rosslyn; the other dear charmer was just as true and as good then as she is now; but you were feeling the turn of the screw. Consider it turned now, if you please. And remember also," added Mr. Wyndham sternly, "that you have no time to lose. I can't trust you, you know, an inch farther than I can see you, and, therefore, I mean to keep you to the letter of the bond."

HOUSE HUNTING.

NOTHING, at first sight, seems easier to anyone desirous of settling in London than the selection of an abode suitable to his means and tastes, the only apparent difficulty being the necessity of deciding between the many eligible opportunities open to his choice. Are there not houses to let in every street, and accommodating agents, almost as numerous as the specialities over which they preside, with lists as long as Leporello's catalogue, and ready to supply at the shortest notice the wants of the perplexed applicant, who, amidst such an embarras de richesse, finds himself hopelessly at a loss which way to turn? These obliging intermediaries have at their disposal—at least, so they profess—exactly what you seek, whatever your requirements may be, and complacently enumerate the various items on their books, beginning with mansions in Belgravia and bijou residences in Mayfair, and—if these temptations elicit no encouraging response, or, in other words, if the fish doesn't rise

at the fly—gradually subsiding into an eloquent eulogium of the quiet respectability of Wimpole Street, or the suburban tranquillity of a semi-detached villa in West Kensington.

We will suppose that at length, armed with half-a-dozen cards authorising you to inspect the different localities, and in a rather bewildered state of mind, you start on your expedition, and after the usual series of disappointments, discover something which, as far as price and situation are concerned, suits you sufficiently well. Naturally distrusting your own inexperience in such matters, you decide on engaging a practical surveyor to test the solidity of the building by prodding the walls and minutely examining the state of the floorings; and, on receiving a favourable report, conclude that you have done all that is necessary, and finally close the bargain. The lease once signed, and your installation effected, the chances are that, unless you are exceptionally fortunate, you will find that in your anxiety to settle down, you have unaccountably overlooked certain possible drawbacks, by no means conducive to your comfort as a householder. For instance, you cannot tell whether your chimneys smoke or not until you have tried them; nor is the question of drainage likely to suggest itself to your mind until you are unpleasantly reminded of its importance as regards the salubrity of the neighbourhood by a visit from the inspector of nuisances, and the consequent necessity of disbursing more than you can conveniently afford in payment of the plumber's bill.

Minor evils which have hitherto escaped your notice gradually assume the shape of insupportable annoyances; if the house inhabited by you is an old one, the lower part of the premises is probably overrun by mice, and swarms with beetles. Should it, on the contrary, be of recent construction, the thin partition wall separating you from the adjoining tenement will ensure you the full enjoyment of whatever vocal or instrumental tortures the young ladies on either side may periodically inflict upon you. It is, moreover, quite on the cards that the street selected for your residence may be the favourite resort of barrel-organists and kilted bagpipe-droners—nay, you may even have unwittingly pitched your tent on the direct line of march hebdomadally patronised by the Salvationists, an unkindly freak of fortune on the effects of which, out of consideration

for nervous temperaments, we forbear to dwell.

There is a still more unpleasant contingency—happily of unfrequent occurrence—to which it is not impossible that the house-hunter may at one period or another be exposed; and we cannot better illustrate it than by the following reminiscence of what happened in Paris some five-and-twenty years ago:

A middle-aged Englishman and his wife—we will call them Nugent—had a liking for the gay city, and having no particular ties attaching them to their own country, decided on looking out for a suitable abode in a central situation, where they might pass the remainder of their days as agreeably as a moderate income without encumbrance would enable them to do. The Empire was then at the height of its splendour, and as a natural consequence unfurnished apartments were scarce and dear; so that for some time the couple in question failed to discover anything within their comparatively limited means. At length, however, while pursuing their investigations in the quarter of the city immediately behind the Madeleine, they came upon a freshly-painted house, at the door of which hung the desired announcement, "Appartements à louer," and ascertained on enquiry that the premises, having recently been "fraichement décorés" from top to bottom, were entirely unoccupied, and that any suite of rooms they might prefer were at their disposal. "Besides," added the concierge, who acted as cicerone, "if monsieur and madame are not already provided with furniture, the second-floor would be just the thing for them, as it is quite ready for their reception, and everything in it would be disposed of at a very reasonable rate."

"We may as well see what it is like," said Mr. Nugent to his wife, as they ascended a smartly-carpeted staircase preceded by their guide; "if it suits us, and the price isn't too exorbitant, it would save us a world of trouble."

On reaching the second-floor landing, the concierge unlocked a door facing the stairs, and ushering the visitors through a small ante-chamber into an adjoining apartment, threw back the outside blinds, and disclosed so bright and elegantly furnished a room that Mrs. Nugent could not refrain from an exclamation of delight. Everything was in the best possible taste; the curtains were of rich damask, and the carpet, sober in hue, and evidently the

product of a Persian loom, was deliciously soft and yielding to the feet; while "poufs", ottomans, and the usual appendages to a Parisian salon were scattered about in profusion. The dining-room, bedrooms, and offices having been also inspected and approved, and the entire cost only amounting to two thousand francs, in addition to a yearly rent of fifteen hundred, Mr. Nugent, after a brief consultation with his wife, agreed to the proposed conditions, and signified his intention of taking possession early in the following week, congratulating himself on having made, what unquestionably appeared to be, an excellent bargain.

"Very strange," he thought, "that it should not have been snapped up before. The drawing-room furniture alone is worth double the money."

In a few days, a cook and "bonne" having been engaged, the pair were comfortably installed in their new quarters, thinking themselves exceptionally lucky in having secured so desirable a home. Before the week was out, however, their satisfaction was considerably modified by the abrupt departure of their two servants without previous notice; both of them steadily declining to pass another night in the house, but giving no reason for their breach of contract beyond the simple statement that the place did not suit them. Fortunately, as it happened, the concierge and his wife, whose sole occupation appeared to consist in perusing the *Petit Journal*, and looking out for lodgers who never came, volunteered their services in the interim for the moderate consideration of thirty francs a month; and things went on pretty smoothly until a chance meeting with his old friend, Bainbridge, also a resident in Paris, but who had only just returned from a trip to the Pyrenees, at once demolished whatever visions of domestic enjoyment the unsuspecting Nugent had hitherto complacently indulged in.

While strolling together along the boulevard, his companion asked where he was staying, and on his mentioning the street and number of the house, stopped short, and stared at him with a bewildered air.

"You don't mean to say you live there!" he said.

"Certainly, why shouldn't I?" enquired Nugent.

"Why, don't you know—no, of course you can't, as you were not in Paris at the time—that the house you speak of is the identical one where old Madame de Prébois

was murdered by her man-servant last spring?"

"Goodness gracious!" exclaimed the horrified Nugent; "and I have taken the second floor for three years, and bought the furniture into the bargain! That accounts for my servants refusing to stay there."

"Shouldn't wonder," dryly remarked Bainbridge; "servants are generally better informed than their masters. Why, man alive, your own bedroom must be precisely the one occupied by the old lady herself; for I remember now, the papers mentioned her inhabiting the second floor. You must get out of it as soon as possible."

"I wouldn't remain another night there for a thousand pounds," said Nugent. "It would half kill my wife if she knew it."

"Then don't tell her until she is out of the place. Take rooms at an hotel, and have your things packed and sent after you. As the furniture is yours, it had better be sold at the Rue Drouot for what it will fetch; but you will be liable for the rent."

"I must put up with that," replied Nugent; and, taking a hasty leave of his friend, he lost no time in securing the necessary accommodation at Meurice's, and on his return home, after informing the concierge of his intention to leave the apartment that afternoon, angrily reproached him for omitting to acquaint him with what had taken place there.

"I thought monsieur knew all about it," coolly answered that functionary. "Monsieur is English, and as it is a well-known fact that all the English are eccentric, I naturally supposed that he had a fancy for inhabiting a 'maison criminelle'. But," he added, "if monsieur wishes to get rid of the lease, a gentleman who enquired yesterday about it, and was much disappointed on hearing that it was already disposed of, would willingly take it off his hands, furniture and all."

"What gentleman?" eagerly asked Nugent. "Where did he come from?"

"I hardly know, monsieur, for he speaks very little French. But he left his name and address, in case you might be inclined to treat with him."

So saying he produced a card on which was inscribed "Silas B. Buffum, Cincinnati, U.S."; and, written above in pencil, "Hôtel Chatham".

"Almost too good to be true," thought Nugent, overjoyed at this unexpected chance of relief. "If this gentleman really wishes to step into shoes," he said, "he

can do so, and the sooner the better. Is madame upstairs?"

"No, monsieur; madame went out an hour ago, and left word that she would be in the gallery of the Louvre until half-past three."

"Come with me then, and help me to pack. And mind that the trunks are sent this evening to Meurice's in the Rue Rivoli."

Two hours later Mr. Nugent hailed a passing "milor", and joining his wife at the Louvre, communicated to her as considerably as he could the events of the morning, which, contrary to his anticipation, appeared to affect her infinitely less than the possible damage done to her wardrobe by inexperienced packers. Leaving her in her new quarters, he proceeded at once to the Hôtel Chatham, and, enquiring for Mr. Silas B. Buffum, soon found himself in the presence of a sallow and bilious-looking personage, who was smoking a cigar in the courtyard preparatory to the table d'hôte dinner. Both parties being equally anxious to come to an understanding, very few words sufficed to effect a satisfactory arrangement; and it was agreed that the transfer of the lease (the landlord's permission having been previously obtained) should be duly signed on the following day. When all was finally settled, Nugent could not refrain from asking his successor what could be his reason for selecting so unpleasantly notorious an abode.

"Waal," replied the citizen of Cincinnati, "when a man has a craving for emotion, he goes to the right shop for it. Excitement, sir, is what I require, and I guess I've hit on the trail. The location, sir, I convene to occupy oughter produce emotion, and I estimate I'm about to realise the fact. Yes, sir."

What the result of the experiment may have been is not recorded; the tenancy, however, of Mr. Silas B. Buffum was not of long duration, a considerable portion of the street in question having shortly after been demolished by order of the municipality; and among the houses doomed to destruction one of the first to disappear being the "maison criminelle".

AMERICAN MANNERS.

SOME OLD AND NEW OBSERVATIONS.

It is remarkable, as indicative of one of the chief characteristics of the North American people, as now constituted and

being constituted, that strangers visiting their continent form very different opinions of the manners current in the States, according to their sex. Most lady-travellers, since Mrs. Trollope, return to England with more eulogies of the Americans in their hearts than they can find words to express. But, with rare exceptions, male-tourists condemn the Americans out of hand. "The manners of the Americans are the best I ever saw," says Harriet Martineau. "I like the Americans more and more; either they have improved wonderfully lately, or else the criticisms on them have been cruelly exaggerated," says Lady Wortley. And, as spoke these early travellers, so speak the later ones of their own sex; while Mr. Arnold, as representative of so many others of his sex, does not hesitate to imply that the social conduct of the people is, on the whole, execrable. Mr. Henry James, America's cleverest living writer, seeking to explain the courtesy (as he understands it) of English life, traces it to the struggle for existence: it is rather the suavity of the beggar than real gentleness of heart. But we will return him satire for satire in quoting Miss Martineau on the civilities of American life: "I imagine," she says, "that the practice of forbearance requisite in a republic is answerable for this peculiarity [sweetness of temper]. In a republic no man can in theory overbear his neighbour, nor, as he values his own rights, can he do it much or long in practice." Whatever sweetness of temper the Americans may have shown towards Miss Martineau fifty years ago, we recommend no one to go to the States nowadays, whether as a tourist or an emigrant, expecting to be received with kindly words and courtesies wherever he may be. Rather the contrary, indeed. From the moment of his landing at the bottom of Canal Street he must be prepared for new conditions of life. He has left a country where, howsoever humbly he may estimate himself, he has had many inferiors, for a country where, out of question, everyone whom he meets or accosts is at least as good in worldly value as he is. All officials will let him know pretty quickly that their officialism does not make them into servants, public or private. To secure even the curtest of answers from a police-officer, for instance, he must carefully modulate the tone of his enquiry. The guards on the different trains may condescend to fraternise with him, but he will soon see

that they have little or nothing in common with the tip-loving, cap-touching, corduroy-clad men of our own railway-stations. And so on, up and down the scale, to the small nigger-boy, who will clean his boots for a nickel, and take the money with never a "Thank you". Life in the States is a cold condition of barter. I do something for you; you do something for me. One service balances and cancels the other; thanks on either hand are supererogatory, and a waste of precious time. The sooner a new arrival understands this code of conduct, the better for him, the fewer his humiliations. It is not so bad in the Southern States, where the people profess much unenvious goodwill for "Britishers", and profound hatred for their Northern brethren; but West and Far West it is rather worse than better.

Again, brevity of speech is praiseworthy enough at times, though it is chilling to be met with the most laconic of answers to all questions. The following dialogue, resulting from an interview of Miss Martineau with a settler in an unfortunate part of the country, is still sufficiently typical. "Whose land was this that you bought?" "Mogg's." "What's the soil?" "Boga." "What's the climate?" "Foga." "What do you get to eat?" "Hoga." "What did you build your house of?" "Loga." "Have you any neighbours?" "Froga."

Besides absolute indifference, incivility, and an unpleasant brevity of speech, the stranger in the States must accustom himself to not a little blasphemy. The average European is a little free in his use of the name of the Deity, but there is nothing so wholly abhorrent about (for example) the Frenchman's "Mon Dieu!" as the unction with which a rough American will pour forth indecency and blasphemy in conjunction.

Alas for innocent Miss Strickland's comfortable theory that since "blasphemy" is "neither a want nor a luxury", it "presents after all small temptation to human nature, howsoever personally disposed"! Miss Strickland lived all her days among refined people, and knew nothing—absolutely nothing—of the needs and capacities of an unrestrained democracy. And those people who regard the progeny of the slaves who were emancipated barely a score of years ago as the mildest, worst-used, and most gentle race under the sun, should dwell for a few months or years in the South, and then see how they would appear to them. If a

wicked Northerner at his worst swears in the comparative degree, an excited nigger, though a church-goer, and the virtuous husband of but one wife, will swear freely in the superlative degree. Nor is it at all uncommon to hear the Deity's name used from the pulpit of the conventicle of the coloured people in a decidedly profane manner. Truly, as it has been said, "nothing fails in this extraordinary country, except the stranger's old-fashioned notions of political economy".

Everyone may be supposed to know that America is the country, par excellence, which does justice to its women. The French are civil enough to their women, but the Americans claim, and with reason, to treat them as a superior class. They may be termed the aristocracy of the States. From the city shopman, with his respectful notice, "Boys' and misses' hats," to the President himself, everyone is imbued with the spirit of chivalry from sex to sex. The wonder is that American ladies are not more self-consequential than they are, which is saying not a little. But it must be acknowledged that there are in the States an extraordinary number of the sex who respond to Stuart Mill's test for a clever woman—in other words, who possess strong intuition and sensibility to the present, and are quick of apprehension.

Another characteristic of American life is the hurry of it. Alike in the heart of New York—in Broadway and on its ferry-boats, morning or evening, on its overhead railway—and in the yet grassy streets of Todayville, everyone is driven by a demon of impatience to live feverishly for the present and in the coming future. Rest, there is none, except for the crippled; and hardly have the others time for a word of pity to these. And when a man dies, it is more than probable he will be galloped to the grave. The writer chanced to see the funeral of an opulent merchant at the beautiful cemetery of Greenwood, overlooking the Bay of New York. Thirty coaches followed the body; and the coaches, driven by men in white hats, drawn by horses of all colours, were filled with a number of gaily-dressed chatterers, some holding bouquets, and all in excellent good-humour. But it was a spirited spectacle to see the coaches, one after another, break into a brisk trot after the hearse, when this had entered the cemetery precincts. Later, a man in a blouse, with a spade over his shoulder, led the procession to the grave, and, the sumptuous velvet-covered coffin

having been encased in a common white box, this important and far from unassuming functionary completed the ceremony of burial. Then, with much glib conversation, the mourners hurried back to their coaches, and these hurried back into the city. Again, in foreign travelling, the American gives himself little rest and time for reflection; his experiences have ultimately to shake themselves into shape how they may. Similarly, at his meals, the average American eats like a mere animal: he sits down to his dinner of half-a-dozen messes and viands on separate plates, and neither speaks nor lifts his head until the plates are cleared; and then, perchance, he scampers for his train. No wonder quacks, with digestive cures, flourish in all the large American cities. And small wonder that in an analytical list of fatal casualties throughout the Union, we meet with such a heading as, "Choked by tough beef—so many".

It is really appalling to consider how the happiness of lives is wholly neutralised by this spirit of unrest which rules tyrannically in the States. "The laws of behaviour yield to the energy of the individual," says Emerson; and, of a truth, the maw of individual energy in his countrymen is lamentably capacious. The same writer says, further: "The men we see are whipped through the world; they are harried, wrinkled, anxious; they all seem the hacks of some invisible riders. How seldom do we behold tranquillity! . . . There are no divine persons with us, and the multitude do not hasten to be divine." No; but perhaps one may be pardoned for adding that they hasten to be everything else. Emerson, the philosophic and placid thinker, has many admirers among the Americans, but few followers. Even the pulpit not only catches the impelling spirit of the times, but makes the restless man yet less restful by such words as these (heard from Talmage at the Great Brooklyn Tabernacle): "Religion accelerates business, sharpens men's wits, sweetens acerbity of disposition, fillips the blood of phlegmatics, and throws more velocity into the wheels of hard work." One may almost be thankful that this onomatopœtic definition is not applicable on this side the Atlantic.

At times, however, this energy leads a man into difficulties he would surely have avoided by a little sober, judicious thought. "Démocratie et liberté ne sont pas synonymes," said De Cousin. A tombstone in a

St. Louis burying-ground, not long ago, bore these words:

Rock of ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee.

Drowned by Philander Bailey and Mark Beggs.

One might suppose that in America the will of a dead man in so simple and unaggressive a matter as his epitaph would be uncontested. Not so, however. For Messrs. Bailey and Beggs sued the executors of the defunct, and got the really handsome award of eight hundred dollars compensation.

Of the intolerable little precocities in the States called children one may say something, though little or nothing in praise of them. Wherever they are, they make their presence to be seen and heard, and it is but just that they should weary their fond parents rather more than they weary the rest of the world that touches them. Spoilt, of course, they are; and bitterly, no doubt, do they have to pay for their spoiling in such a rough school as that of American life in manhood. But none the less do they, when parents in their turn, bring up precocities, and go through the same process, the effects of which they have spent bitter years in combating. The sister to Sir John Hawkins, one of Johnson's biographers, in her Book of Anecdotes, gives an example of parental injudiciousness and its consequence which we may quote as typical of infant life in the States. "The sister of an important statesman of the last century," says Miss Hawkins, "heard a boy, humoured to excess, tease his mother for the remains of a favourite dish. Mamma at length replied: 'Then do take it, and have done teasing me.' Hereupon, however, the boy flew into a passion, roaring out: 'What did you give it me for? I wanted to have snatched it.'" Frequently in the dining-saloons of very respectable hotels the clamour of little peevish rogues of seven and eight is such as to make all other conversation an effort or an impossibility; and the worst of it is that this kind of thing is condoned, not condemned. "Take that right away, now," cries the Northern boy, pointing to a basin of porridge. And the obsequious darkey—obsequious to children more particularly, thanks to his traditions of servitude—says "Yes, sar," deferentially, and lays quick hands on the steaming stuff. "Here, I'll have it after all, I will. Bring it back, will you?" shouts the boy when the man is just disappearing through

the door. No one of the fifty other guests heed this little domestic drama of conduct. Mamma and papa smile approval, and, with another humble "Yes, sar," and a flash of his white teeth, the humbugged nigger replaces the porridge, and stands aside with clasped hands to see the young gentleman enjoy himself.

Nor is this humouring of children confined to the richer classes. When in Jacksonville, Florida, for a week, the writer used to dine and breakfast at a small restaurant adjoining his own house. This restaurant was kept by a "yellow" man and his wife; "yellow," understand, being the sobriquet for a nigger once or twice removed towards the white race. These people had one child, a fat boy of four, not quite so sallow as his parents, and the joy of their hearts. The mother, a pretty woman, like many other of the so-called "yellow" women, could not attend on her guest unaccompanied by her young treasure, and when this wilful little rascal took it into his abnormally large head to fancy anything on this or that plate, without scruple or apology he had to be satisfied at the writer's expense. Moreover, when his mother was busy, and his father away, the boy was turned loose to amuse himself, and, as often as not, he would stand by the "saloon" door for minutes at a time, with his thumb in his mouth, staring in a way fit to haunt a member of the Psychological Society for months; nor would he heed coaxings, counsel, or threats until, with a sudden whoop, he would turn his back and run down the passage screaming "Mammy!" at the top of his vigorous voice. And "mammy" was as rational in most things as she was pretty. She would not blame the child for whooping, but, by main force, would sometimes tug the young monster back into the writer's presence, and tell him he must get accustomed to the gentleman. The gentleman, you see, was to have no voice in the matter, so long as the child's well-being was assured.

One more instance of the outward expression of the spirit of "bullyism" which is so peculiarly prevalent in the Northern States; a grotesque example, but taken from the life. In one of the lesser streets of the old part of New York city, a barber's shop may be seen, bearing a terrible signboard. On this board is depicted a helpless customer imprisoned in a shaving-chair, and over him is a fiendish barber flourishing despotically a huge razor, while from his mouth proceeds a scroll, on which

these words are written: "Don't have much to say, or I'll shave you without soap." The drift of this eccentric advertisement is not apparent. Personally, one would rather be shaved elsewhere. But this signboard is a most happy epitome of Yankee character.

As for the inward significance of this same spirit of "bullyism", we cannot do better than quote once more the man who, though a recluse, probably knew his countrymen better than a stranger may pretend to know them. Says Emerson: "Every man is actually weak, and apparently strong. To himself he seems weak; to others, formidable. You are afraid of Grim, but Grim also is afraid of you. You are solicitous of the goodwill of the meanest person, uneasy at his ill-will. But the sturdiest offender of your peace and of the neighbourhood, if you rip up his claims, is as thin and timid as any, and the peace of society is often kept, because, as children say, one is afraid, and the other dares not. Far off, men swell, bully, and threaten; bring them hand to hand, and they are a feeble folk." There is truth here, but not, maybe, the whole truth. One must go to the heart to discern the real root of the matter, it seems to us. The defiant independence, universal in the States, is due to an internal disease rather than to a mere malignant excrescence: it is vital, not superficial. The determination not to acknowledge an indebtedness to anyone may indeed, on the surface, have something to recommend it to the social philosopher. But only on the surface, we think. For just as it is by courtesy and kindness, and little else besides courtesy and kindness, that life outside the home is sweetened, so it is a prodigious mistake to suppose there is anything majestic or laudable in an existence of absolute and unbending independence. The effort of striving to live gregariously in a state of severe spiritual isolation is hardening in the extreme. Gentleness of manners dies out as a matter of course. And gentleness of manners, though by no means an infallible index, may well be taken as indicative of kindness of heart. For the times will not admit of the growth of a number of Lord Chesterfields. Remove kindness of heart, or, rather, harden the heart so that it becomes impervious to all influences save those of self-interest, and the man is transformed, degraded into an animal. An animal, possibly, of noble parts, of much mechanical genius, and with

a large aptitude for absorbing such sensual sweets as a high state of civilisation and much wealth of silver and gold may put within his reach, but none the less an animal solely. It is by the heart that the animal part of us becomes transfigured into the human, the superhuman, and even the divine, and by the heart alone. "The art of pleasing," says Johnson, "like others, is cultivated in proportion to its usefulness, and will always flourish most where it is most rewarded; for this reason we find it practised with great assiduity under absolute governments." Johnson himself did not practise this art himself with much success, nor did he attempt to practise it; for this reason, if for no other, he is an authority on it, both in its cause and effect. If his dictum be accepted, we may affirm at once that the art of pleasing—courtesy or kindness—will never be included in the curriculum of the life of ninety per cent. of the Americans.

We have already referred to Matthew Arnold, and his bold criticism of the people whom he visited and lectured a couple of years ago. And we cannot end this paper better than with a single sentence from the lecture on Numbers delivered by him at Boston during his tour. It is the outcome of a great mind touching a great people, and none will question its truth.

"I suppose," says Mr. Arnold, "that in a democratic community like this, with its industrialism and its sheer freedom and equality, the danger is in the absence of the discipline of obedience, the discipline of respect, in the prevalence of a false acuteness, a false smartness, a false audacity."

Exactly; Mr. Arnold discerns the unworthy characteristics of our half-brethren, and impales them on the needle of his criticism unerringly.

DOUBT.

WHERE is it leading us, this sad procession
Of veiled hours and weeks, all grim and grey?
The summer dies in autumn's chill embraces,
Then winter calls drear autumn-time away;
Till spring days come, all redolent with flowers,
Once more to mock us with their brief, bright smile,
And summer comes but once again to vanish,
For all the seasons last so short a while.
But whither do they take us in their passing?
Eyes wax but dim, hearts beat a slower tune;
Hands fail to do the work that seems so pressing
'Tis winter time, e'er we have welcomed June.
We cannot stay them, passing—ever passing—
E'en though our lives wax shorter as they go,
Although we tremble at the gathering shadows,
That wait around, and hide what none may know.

Oh, life, sad life, I did not ask thy dower,
I did not take on me thy weary pain;
Thy pleasures never were by me demanded,
And having lived, I would not live again.
Still would I fain be given wider knowledge,
See clear and fair, not darkly through a glass,
Made darker yet to sight dimmed off by crying,
So dim I cannot see the way I pass!

There is no sunshine here without a shadow,
No smile that has not its swift following tear,
No bliss that is not paid for by a sorrow,
That casts before its shade of mortal fear.
Is there no land, oh, life, where we are happy,
Safe in the knowledge that our blessings are;
That love is real; life's best joys unending
Beyond the horrors of some judgment bar?

None answer, for the shadows grim and dreary
Are silent with the silence of the dead—
The dead, that are so quiet, safe, untroubled,
Not knowing aught, within their churchyard bed!

Oh, can it be that all our lives but lead us,
To share the silence where past ages sleep;
That Life himself doth yield our only harvest,
And what we sow, we here alone may reap?

STUDIES OF OVER THE WAY.

A HOUSE IN HORSEFERRY ROAD.

IN TWO PARTS. PART II.

"I CLIMBED up into one of the boats to be secure against all interruption before I broke the seal of the letter. It was from the same lawyer in London who had written to Captain Carter as to Francis Horn's whereabouts, and it explained fully how it was that he was wanted. The executors of the will of a certain Mr. Cornelius Creed, of the city of Cork, butter-merchant, deceased, were anxious to find one Francis Horn, the only son of his only daughter, as under his will Francis Horn was entitled to the entire accumulations of a long life spent in the collection and distribution of dairy produce. The letter said nothing of the probable amount of Mr. Creed's wealth; but I concluded it must be a considerable sum. The lawyer explained to Francis Horn that it would be well for him to repair to London with all speed to enter into the inheritance which fortune had given him.

"If you have ever clambered along the steep slope of a mountain, with a yawning chasm beneath you, you will remember how easy and secure it seems so long as you are going up hill with your eyes averted from the fearsome gulf below; so long as you are preparing for yourself, every step you take, a more lengthy and perilous return. It is when you turn round and find your head spinning round with giddiness, and your heart sinking with every downward step, that you begin

to realise how easy it is to get into a dangerous position, and how difficult it is to regain safety. As I sat in the boat, gazing at the lovely shores of Sydney Harbour, though I had as yet taken only a step or two along the crooked and treacherous path of fraud, I felt that to stop short at once, and tell the whole truth of the matter to the Captain, would be a task I could hardly undertake. It was so much easier to go on, though every step might bear me farther and farther away from that even and rather monotonous plain of rectitude, upon which I had hitherto been content to abide. The chasms of self-abasement and humiliation I dared not face, and a plausible voice whispered to me that perhaps there would be no need to turn round at all. Only keep on with my face in the direction I had taken, and I might very well find myself landed in a happy valley of ease and content. Francis Horn was dead and out of the way; and here was John Lethbridge, just such another waif, on the high road to appropriate the personality which occupied so favourable a position in the will of the late Mr. Cornelius Creed.

"Before I climbed down out of the boat, I had set myself a task which stamped me both as coward and desperado. When I next met Captain Carter I shirked the duty of an honest man, and said no word to undeceive the Captain, who, honest as the day himself, believed me to be another of the same sort; and I took upon myself instead the perilous task of personating the man whom I had helped to sew up in his hammock not a month ago. The Captain offered to release me so as to allow me to take my passage back to England by the next steamer; but, after thinking the matter over, I resolved to stick to the Clio. It was a question which needed some debating; for, since the story of my sudden fortune had got wind, the ship was no longer so pleasant to me as she had been hitherto. It was my coward conscience, I suppose, which made me fancy that every man on board had some inkling of the real facts of the case, and looked upon me as a villain. Certain it was that I should have bade adieu to the Clio, and gone back to England as fast as steam could have taken me, had I not dreaded my first interview with that London solicitor much more than the suspicious and hostile carriage of my own messmates.

"And so I elected to stay on in my old berth. I kept aloof from the rest of the

crew, and tried to force my mind to fashion all sorts of fairy pictures as to the employment of Mr. Creed's wealth when his will should have been duly proved; but the serpent would always creep into my paradise, and the death's-head would show its grinning jaws amid the roses of my feast-table. Everybody, from Captain Carter downwards, rallied me on my sour face, and said I looked more like a man going to be tried for murder, than one who had just come into a fine fortune. Had they known how often I pictured myself as standing in the felon's dock, with the judge, and jury, and gaoler all in order, they would have guessed the reason of my woeful countenance. Only Dennis Ryan kept a respectful silence. He seemed to have become a more decent liver since Horn's death. He worked now with a will, seldom got drunk, even while we were lying at Sydney, and by the time we set sail for England I began to think I had done him an injustice, and became on better terms with him than with anyone else on board, the Captain only excepted.

"We started from Port Jackson light, and we called at the Swan River settlement to deliver some Government stores and to pick up, if possible, a few bales of wool as freight. We had a splendid passage so far. A gentle south-east wind drove us along through the Australian Bight, and up the West Coast. We landed our stores, and took on board what wool there was, and set sail on our homeward voyage. For three days the same fair weather lasted, but at the end of that time came indications of a change. The wind shifted to the south-west, and in twelve hours' time we were scudding close-hauled before such a gale as I had never yet experienced. For two days it blew in a way which made it quite clear to me how it was that Cape Leeuwin and its neighbourhood had got as bad a name in the Southern, as the Bay of Biscay in the Northern Seas. Then the wind moderated a little, and the heavy clouds lifted; but it was a fearful sight that they revealed to us. There was the lee shore not more than a mile and a half distant. The sea was running tremendously high, and the wind was still blowing what would have passed for a strong gale in any less tempestuous latitude. During the previous night the mizen-topmast had gone overboard, and the rigging had got under the stern and clogged the rudder so that steering in any case would have been an impossibility. Not that steering or anything

else could have kept our doomed ship off that iron-bound coast. As if in derision, the sun broke out through the scattering clouds, and shone with a cold, cruel glitter upon the spray-dashed rocks of an island lying off the coast, upon which I thought, at first, we should be cast. But the ship left it still to leeward, and drifted into a narrow channel between it and another towards her fate.

"I went out to the bowsprit to wait for the end. Often during my seafaring life I had felt the danger, more or less imminent, of a speedy death, but never before had it had so few terrors for me as in this moment, when I knew that the chances were a thousand to one that I should never live to see another day. I think I was even a little thankful that Fate was about to cut for me the tangled skein which I had undertaken to unravel. I could laugh now at any fears of the law's vengeance, and was content, in consideration, to let go my life and all the Monte Cristo dreams I had indulged in. The clouds lifted more and more, so that the coast was quite clear. Below were the cruel, ragged rocks, upon which the coursing waves spent their strength and flew up in columns of spray; and at the top of the low cliff I could plainly distinguish the forms of the separate trees which marked the edge of the bush-forest. As the doomed vessel laboured on—now in the trough of the sea, with no land in sight, now lifted up again on the crest of a wave—I fell a-thinking how pleasant it would be to explore the recesses of that trackless wood. I even determined which way I would turn my steps. Far inland I could see a vast, flat-topped ridge, falling away at one end in a sheer precipice, sharp cut, as if Old Nick had been up to some of his pranks here as well as with the Rock of Cashel, and this was the object I planned to investigate. I took no heed of the shrieks of some of the crew, who were by this time mad drunk, laughing and blaspheming in a most horrible manner, but stood waiting for the end.

"It came sooner than I had expected. As the waves parted just ahead, they showed me the sharp teeth of a sunken rock, and immediately I was all quivering with excitement to begin my struggle for life with the waves, though a moment ago I was ready to meet death as a friend. Then came the awful crash. The ship seemed to break up like matchwood as the next wave dropped her right on the top of the rock. I was conscious of a violent blow on the

back from a loose bit of spar as I felt myself sucked down, and to this I clung with all a drowning man's grim tenacity. In a moment the sea was covered with wreck, and the cargo was spread abroad with strange diversity. Wooden chests, bales of wool, and bundles of hides floated within arm's-length of me, but I had a firm grip upon my spar, which I kept till I was within fifty yards of the land. Then I cast myself adrift, and had just enough strength left me to struggle through the surf to land. My memory yet retains an image of the events which followed, though I was in a state of semi-unconsciousness from battling with the waves. I remember crawling up over the smooth, water-worn stones on the beach for a dozen yards or so, and then I sank down in a dead swoon by the side of a large rock, which I fancied vaguely must be beyond the rise of the tide.

"I had not then, and never shall have, any notion how long I lay unconscious. When I opened my eyes, the sea, though still high, was greatly moderated, and the sun was beating with fierce rays upon my head. I was too dazed at first to form any idea of my situation; but very soon the horrible reality stood plainly forth, that I had escaped death by drowning only to fall a victim to the terrible fate of slow starvation. The western coast of Australia was at that time comparatively unknown, and what little was known was contained in stories of its inhospitable deserts and its ferocious inhabitants. How far I was from the penal settlement on Swan River I had no idea, neither could I tell whether it lay north or south. I stumbled along inland for a hundred yards or so, to a bit of rising ground, to see whether there yet remained any vestige of the ship, but nothing could I see save the same monotonous race of wave after wave breaking upon the dark red rocks. As I strained my eyes towards the islands off the shore, I fancied I saw a black speck dancing on the surface of the sea—now visible, now hidden, but ever coming nearer. At last it grew so distinct I could doubt no longer, so I made my way down to the shore towards the spot where I judged it would come to land, and just as I got to the water's-edge, a cask, no doubt from the ill-fated ship, was cast up at my feet.

"I broke in the head with a stone, and found, to my joy, that the cask contained biscuits, and that these were but little injured by the sea-water. I was by this

time nearly famishing, so made a hearty meal, and as soon as my hunger was appeased, I sank down upon the stones, and in a moment was fast asleep. When I awoke it was yet dark; the stars were yet brilliant in the sky; but over the forest to the eastward, the heaven was overspread with the flush of dawn. The day comes rapidly in those latitudes, and in a few minutes it was almost light. I rose wearily from my stony bed, and when I turned my eyes seaward I saw, to my amazement, the figure of a man standing at the very margin of the land, but as he was looking out to sea I could not distinguish his face. I could only be sure that he must be one of our ship's company who, like myself, had escaped death, and I shouted to him as loud as I could to attract his attention, and moved forward to meet him. In a moment he turned, and I recognised the countenance of Dennis Ryan.

"Ryan and myself, as I have already remarked, had been on much better terms since the news had been spread abroad of my strange elevation than we had been during Horn's lifetime; but now, no sooner did I catch sight of his face, than a sudden strange sense of terror came over me. Ryan was some ten years my junior, and immensely strong physically; but I felt no apprehension that he would take the opportunity of taking vengeance upon me personally for the many hard rubs I had given him on the voyage out. As we walked towards each other I could not help associating him once more with his ill-starred messmate; and I found it difficult to persuade myself that I could not distinguish something shadowy, in the likeness of Francis Horn, walking by Ryan's side as he approached me.

"'Lethbridge, you here?' he cried. 'I thought I was the only one who got through the surf; but it's lucky for us both. If either of us had been alone there would have been no chance, but together we may fight our way down to Swan River.'

"'I'll sell my chance of life for a trifling sum,' I replied. 'How should we make our way along this rocky beach. If we had provisions it would be just the same, for we could not carry them, and who knows whether Swan River is north or south.'

"'I do,' he replied coolly; 'Swan River is about sixty miles southward. I climbed up to that peak last night, and made out plainly a forked island, which we saw on

the starboard bow when we sailed. 'Tis about thirty miles off, I reckon, and Swan River should lie about thirty miles beyond it.'

"'But how are we to move thirty miles, or three either.'

"'You must have been asleep ever since you've been ashore,' he said with something like a sneer. 'Why, there is a boat lying on the beach beyond those boulders, hardly damaged at all; and the shore is strewn with barrels and stores of all sorts. I've rolled a lot of them beyond high-water mark. Just come and lend me a hand with some of the others.'

"I followed Ryan for about a hundred yards along the beach till we came to a place where a rocky spit, running out from the land, formed a little harbour, and there, by the side of a huge boulder, was the boat Ryan had spoken of, and strewed all around were bundles and barrels of all sorts and sizes.

"'Now you get as many of these things up as you can, while I put a patch on the boat,' said Ryan.

"I could not help noticing, though our desperate condition might well have driven all such thoughts away, how completely Ryan's bearing to me was altered, and our positions reversed. He ordered me to go about my task with a tone of covert insolence, just as, a week ago, I should have told him to coil a rope or swab down the deck; and I, though I knew well enough that if I lost the lead now I should never regain it, fell into the subordinate place without a word, and began to roll up the casks which were lying low down amongst the rocks, towards the heap which Ryan had already collected.

"After about an hour of this work, during which time not a word was spoken by either one of us, Ryan called out:

"'There, I think she's water-tight now; and you, Lethbridge, give over that work for a bit, and come and have something to eat. It won't do for you to fall ill, Lethbridge; at any rate, just at present.'

"I made a hearty meal of biscuit and water; for, luckily, there was a little stream coming down from the land close to where we had been cast ashore, and we worked all the rest of the day, getting some sailing-tackle fitted to the boat, and examining the casks and cases with the view of provisioning our craft for the voyage. We scarcely exchanged a dozen words. I was saved from shipwreck indeed; but I was still in supreme danger of my life. In this over-

whelming crisis, however, I was tormented with the dread of peril, remote, it is true, but little less fearful than death itself. With every moment that passed, the conviction within me grew stronger that Ryan was the master of my secret—that he had known, all along, the identity of Samuel Rands and Francis Horn. Why, I asked myself, had I never thought of this before? What was more likely than that he, the only friend of the dead man among all the ship's company, should have learnt the story of Horn's alias? I lay awake till it was almost dawn, tormented with the consciousness that I had only escaped death by drowning to meet a worse fate; and, more than once, I resolved to get together as much biscuit as I could carry and plunge into the forest, and make a desperate effort to reach Swan River on foot. If it were only sixty miles, as Ryan had said, it would not be hopeless; but I fell into a heavy sleep, and when I awoke, Ryan was busy over a fire he had kindled, toasting some bacon.

“‘I’ve been in luck’s way, Lethbridge,’ he said. ‘There’s a caak of bacon I’ve hit upon. As far as provisions go, we might make our way back to Port Philip. I think we’ll sail to-morrow.’

“‘When you like; it makes no difference to me.’

“‘You don’t seem in very good spirits this morning. Now, I’m as lively as a kitten. We’ll be at Swan River in a couple of days, and when we get to England I’m going to have a real spell of fun; and so will you, I reckon, with all that money of your old uncle’s. It’s no use asking you to go shares, I suppose, but at least you’ll stand treat handsomely.’

“After these words I had no longer any doubt. He had known all along that I was sailing back to England under false colours, and had, no doubt, formed his plans of swooping down upon me with threats of exposure unless I should pay him any price he might ask to keep his mouth closed. Strong as my suspicions had been already, the certainty of my peril gave me a shock, and I could hardly answer him by reason of my confusion.

“‘For Heaven’s sake, man,’ I cried, ‘don’t talk of money now! It’s ten to one that we are eaten either by the blacks on shore or by the sharks at sea before another week is over.’

“‘Nonsense! You’ll feel better when you are on board the liner that will take us to England. But we mustn’t stand

here talking. When you’ve done breakfast, just trace this brook up into the woods, and see if you can find a pool where we may fill our barrels.’

“I gladly hailed the opportunity of getting out of the presence of the man whom I now hated more intensely than ever, and followed the course of the stream through the rocks to a spot where the cliffs divided and made a narrow gorge, at the bottom of which the stream flowed, and formed in its course several basins from which water might easily be drawn. But I did not return until, having accomplished the object of my search, I clambered up the side of the gorge till I stood in the heart of the bush forest. Once there I saw how vain was the hope I had nourished of venturing to traverse the wilderness on foot. Into the dense undergrowth around me I could not have penetrated a dozen yards. I was a prisoner. Nature’s bolts and bars were as secure as any ever devised by the locksmith’s art.

“I returned to the shore, and found that Ryan, during my absence, had got the boat almost ready for sea. He had shipped the sailing-gear and ranged a dozen or more of selected caaks under the seats. There was a space yet left for water, and of this we fetched enough to fill five more barrels from the pools I had discovered. I was so worn out by the hard toil I had undergone that I slept soundly in spite of my weight of terror, and was only aroused by the rough shake of Ryan, who shouted to me at the same time that it was morning, and that we must set sail. I got up, half-dazed, and helped him to get the boat into deep water. As soon as this was done Ryan sprang in and called to me to follow. I did so, and in five minutes the sail was bent, and we were speeding along before a light breeze towards the south.

The weather continued all day as fine as one could wish, and by sunset the forked island, which Ryan had espied from the top of the cliff, was only a few miles ahead. If his calculations should turn out to be correct, we should reach Swan River in a couple of days time at the latest. Every hour that passed Ryan grew more excited, and he ordered me about with an air of triumphant superiority. He took charge of the rations, and served me out my portion of bacon and biscuit, and a glass of rum, which he drew from a small caak, carefully stored in the stern beneath the bench upon which he sat. He drank much more freely himself, and soon fell fast asleep. So I took

the rudder, and kept the boat up to the wind, which had now fallen almost to a calm. The next day we could not have made more than four or five miles, as the sail hung idly flapping against the mast.

“‘Never mind, Lethbridge,’ Ryan said; ‘we will get in sooner or later, though you don’t seem a bit anxious about it. Now, if I was going home to finger a fine fortune, I’d be tearing mad with impatience; but, maybe, I’ll get some pickings, after all.’”

“I had by this time resolved that, if fate suffered us to get back to the living world, I would bury myself at once in the mazes of some great city, and would let the world hear no more of Francis Horn. So I kept my temper and my composure as best I could. Towards evening the wind sprang up, and we ran along merrily. Ryan took the rudder, and bade me lie down to sleep, and it was bright morning before I awoke. Then my companion, who had already been at the rum-cask, took another heavy draught, and was soon sound asleep.

“We were about three miles from land, and right in front of us lay an island. I shaped the boat’s course to pass between this and the mainland, and was just going to eat some biscuit, when a strong smell of rum greeted my nostrils, and, looking down, I saw that the bung of the cask, which Ryan had put in carelessly, had come out, and all the spirit had escaped. I was greatly disappointed at this, for I had just promised myself a drink. However, there was another cask of the same kind in the bow; I would broach it with a gimlet after I had made my meal.

“By this time we were well in the channel, and not more than a mile from shore. Suddenly my eye fell upon a white speck on the top of a high point. What could it be, and what was that straight leafless tree beside it? In a moment I knew we were saved, at any rate from the perils of the sea, for what I saw was the look-out station of the penal settlement. The wind had veered a little, and was now in our teeth, so I had to tack to make any way along the narrow channel. I determined not to awaken my companion, who still slept heavily under the combined influence of rum and fatigue, but, at the same time, I felt the want of a little stimulant keenly. So I drove my gimlet into the head of the other cask, and held the cup to catch the stream of rum which I expected would follow, but to my surprise nothing came. I drew out the gimlet, and found it discoloured, and when I heeled

the cask over, some black dust ran out over the bottom of the boat, and I saw at once that it was gunpowder.

“I was bitterly disappointed, for the nervous strain had produced in me a craving for drink such as I had never felt before, and I even tried to sop up some of the spirit which was still washing to and fro in the bottom of the boat. Suddenly I started up, to find myself assailed by a new temptation, more dire even than the one which had led me into my present strait. This new one came upon me like a lightning-flash, born of the sight of those black, shining grains which were still pouring out of the gimlet-hole in the cask with every motion of the boat, and it mastered me at once. My moral sense, I suppose, was dormant; anyhow, I determined in a moment to make a buoy for myself of the empty rum-cask, bring the boat closer in to land, fix a slow-match to the hole of the powder-barrel, and then, swimming and floating, to gain the shore, and leave Dennis Ryan to his fate.

“I quickly made my preparations. I twisted a match of some bits of tarred rope, fixed the bung firmly in the empty rum cask, and knotted a bit of rope round it to hold on by, and then ran the boat within half a mile of land, a distance I felt sure I could easily swim with the help of my barrel. Then came the supreme moment of lighting the match. I had only about half-a-dozen, and you know how hard it is to coax a flame out of a lucifer in the gentlest wind. I struck one, and two, in vain, but the third burnt well, and soon kindled the bit of frayed-out tarred rope which I had prepared. This I applied to one end of the slow match, and having watched it burn up brightly, I jumped overboard and struck out for land. As an additional precaution I had tied the tiller so that the boat would fall before the wind and take a north-westerly course out to sea as soon as she should be left to herself. Once in the water it was wonderful how soon we parted company. The boat went almost about, and ran through the water at a great rate. At one time I feared that she might not clear the island, and that Ryan might be a second time shipwrecked. I swam steadily towards the point, resting whenever I was out of breath, and turning to watch the doomed craft. Now she was abreast of the extreme point of the island; in another five minutes she would be round it, and hidden from my sight, even should the match have not done its work.

Then came the white puff of smoke and the faint report, and when the air was clear again there was no longer a vestige of her to be seen.

"There was a strong current running between the island and the mainland, and as this set in shore I was soon carried to land. I clambered up to the flag-staff, and my sudden apparition almost scared the man in charge out of his wits. At first he took me for a runaway convict, but when I had related to him my story, with certain omissions, he gave me some food and directed me to the path which led down to the settlement. I found my way without difficulty, as the trees were marked for guidance, and on reporting myself as a shipwrecked sailor I was kindly received by the authorities, and in about a fortnight I got a passage to England.

"I had plenty of time to consider my line of action with regard to Mr. Creed's estate during the voyage home. Sometimes I felt inclined to tear the lawyer's letter into a thousand bits, and let the old man's money go where it might, but the seductive prospect of a lifetime of ease and luxury, and the absence of all pressing danger, since that slow-match had done its work, urged me on. To cut my story short, I arrived safely in England, sought the lawyer's office, proved my claim, entered into possession of over twenty thousand pounds, and settled down to enjoy life in a pretty little cottage near Southampton. My old love of the sea never left me, and I spent most of my time cruising about in a roomy thirty-ton cutter. My story was well known, and I became somewhat a lion, and could have had society without stint; but I saw nobody but a few quiet families, and now and then smoked my pipe in the parlour of a quay-side inn, where I frequently met some petty officers of the various mail-steamers which frequented the port, and talked over my own seafaring days.

"One day I accepted the invitation of one of them to go on board his ship, which was about to sail, and have some lunch. The steamer was to leave the dock in a few hours' time, and everything was already smart and ship-shape. My host led the way down to the cabin, and just as I turned to descend the companion I found myself face to face with Dennis Ryan.

"Dennis Ryan and no other! There was no doubt about it. His eyes lighted up with an evil glitter as they fell upon my face; but he passed me with no sign of recognition. I was as one stunned. I

hardly knew what I said or did; but I managed somehow to frame a halting excuse to the officer, and left the ship at once. I watched her from my upper window, and only felt a very little relief when I saw her steam away down the Water.

"All that evening and through the night my brain was busy at work with a scheme for burying myself in some secluded corner, in some foreign land, if need be, far away from the possible path of Dennis Ryan, and with speculations as to how he could ever have escaped the fate I had so carefully prepared for him; but these latter soon left me in the presence of the overwhelming necessity for instant flight from this sailor-haunted town. As I sat at breakfast the next morning, I told myself that I had been wrong to have ever ventured into it. I was just going upstairs to prepare for my departure, though the ship on board which I had seen my deadly foe would not be back again for four months at least, when my servant came in and told me that a man outside wanted to speak to me.

"It was Ryan. Fool that I was, never to have speculated on the probability of his deserting his ship at the last moment, especially when such game was afoot on shore as myself! He came to the point at once, and was brutal in his reference to the past, and exacting in his terms as to the future. He had doubtless some cause for railing at me; but he did not give due weight to the fact that self-preservation is the first law of nature. He demanded, as the price of his silence, an annual payment which absorbed half my income, and since that time his exactions have become so severe that he leaves me a bare pittance. Once a week he comes to claim his hush-money, and lately he has even waylaid me on my way home from the tavern, for a supplementary grant. You will be able to judge, after what you have seen this evening, that I shall have to decide, before long, whether I shall end my days in the workhouse or in prison."

VICTIMS.

BY THEO GIFT.

Author of "*Lil Lorimer*," "*An Alibi and its Price*,"
Etc., Etc.

CHAPTER V. SENT AWAY!

It certainly was typhus, though how, why, and whence it had come, none could say. Typhus! It was not even the

season for things of that sort—if, indeed, anything of the sort could have been expected at any season in the wind-swept and healthy district of St. Tryphine and its neighbourhood. As for Dr. Dupré, he said distinctly that it was “preposterous, unheard-of, out of all reason,” and was inclined to pooh-pooh altogether the first cases which came forward to claim his attention; and yet, preposterous, out of reason, or what not, here it was sure enough, beginning in some narrow alley in the neighbouring market-town; creeping thence to breathe upon the busy, chaffering groups in the market itself; and carried from there to the outlying cottages, and even the little fishing hamlet, by those of their inhabitants who visited the town with truck-loads of salt or potatoes, or big baskets, skilfully balanced on their heads, of fresh sardines, eggs, and butter; and returned home laden with groceries and hardware, or wool and cotton stuffs, for the benefit of those belonging to them.

“Fevers! Bah! We are safe enough from infection, ‘nous autres par ici,’” the people of St. Tryphine and Maily used to say. “Our sea-breezes, see you, would blow them away before they were even born.”

But if the sea-breezes were potent enough to prevent the birth of such evils within their area, they were powerless to cope against them when brought from without by human agencies, and fostered; as, among a people so poor, primitive, and prolific, they were sure to be; by overcrowding, open drains, and insufficient food.

As if, too, to add to these unwholesome elements, the weather, which had been hot and dry through the early part of July, changed suddenly to wet—a soft, soaking, windless rain, which fell day after day, blotting out all the bright colours on sea and land as with a pall of grey; and rising from the ground again in a hot, dank mist, which seemed to hold all things malodorous in its steamy grasp, instead of suffering them to escape.

The fever revelled in it. There were deaths here, there, everywhere—nearly as many, indeed, as cases among the neighbouring poor—till Leah almost grew to dread opening the window in her room, which looked seaward, lest she should hear the bells of St. Tryphine telling with solemn toll that some fresh soul had passed from its troubles here to the rest beyond the grave.

At times, too, she looked out from it at mournful little pictures. Now, a rustic funeral, lumbering heavily along, its scanty train of mourners vaguely distinguishable through a slant of rain. Now, a little procession, led by the village curé, in surplice and stole, and chanting aloud a litany from the thumbed prayer-book in his hand; before him a cross-bearer, carrying a big gilt cross, which glittered and twinkled in every stray sun-gleam; behind him a straggling line of men, women, and children, with bent heads and rosaries trickling through their brown, sunburnt fingers, trudging hopefully along the heavy, deep-rutted roads, to pray at the shrines of St. Gildas or St. Guenolé for a cessation of the scourge which was devastating their peaceful countryside.

Devastating indeed! Mère Blin was dead, and a brother of P’tit Jean’s, and who could say how many more. The very wheat in the fields was lying prone against the wet earth, ripe and rotting, while the reapers had either fallen beneath Death’s reaping-hook or were too disheartened and “démoralisés” to wield the sickle themselves. And the more superstitious of the peasants were unanimous in declaring that the spectre-horse of King Gradlon, a favourite Breton wraith, could nightly be heard galloping—“trip, trep, trip, trep”—across the moor, as when he fled from the doomed city of Is centuries before Gaul or Norseman set their feet on the rocky shores of Bretagne.

At Les Châtaigniers, however, everything went on as usual with a quiet ignoring of the sorrow and sickness without, and a monotonous formality of routine which chafed Leah at times almost beyond bearing, and which was not even disturbed by the disappearance in one day of two of the under-servants—one, a Parisian, having returned abruptly to her native city for fear of the infection; the other, a village girl, because her sister having caught it already, she wanted to nurse her. The defections made no difference in the household régime, and were not even known to the girls till they were filled up. Joanna had done the extra work meanwhile; and if Madame St. Laurent gave any reason for the appearance of new faces about the house, it had nothing to do with the fever which, whether as typhus or typhoid, was a word prohibited to be spoken. Even the Count, autocrat as he generally seemed to be, was snubbed when he took upon himself to introduce the forbidden subject; and when,

disregarding the sufficiently significant check, he proceeded somewhat pertinaciously to descant on the delights of Dinan in the bathing-season as experienced just then by his step-mother and sisters; and on how much these would be increased by the presence there of Madame St. Laurent and her charming daughter, madame quietly sent Vera out of the room on some errand and answered:

"I am much obliged to you, Count, but neither M. St. Laurent nor I are at all afraid of the fever, which is entirely among the poorer classes, and not likely to affect us; and as my daughter is too young and timid to go away from home without our protection, I do not wish her to be alarmed or excited by hearing of things which might make her nervous and unhappy here."

The Count bowed low, but with an unmistakeable darkening of face, which was not lost on Leah, who sat working close by.

"Madame is a devoted mother, and all who admire must obey her," he said politely; "but is it not possible that the maternal love, which sees the infant it has nourished in the adorable woman who has succeeded to it, may blind her—I will not say to Mdlle. Vera's age—but to her powers and qualifications? Surely if she is able to support the excitement and enjoy the society of the charming and intellectual Mdlle. Josephs, she is not less fitted for that of 'ces deux fillettes', my young step-sisters, who are the friends and playmates of her infancy."

Madame St. Laurent coloured. Her little flash of anger was evaporating as usual in nervousness.

"Oh, certainly not—of course not, M. le Comte! Vera has, of course, a great friendship for Eulalie and Alphonsine, and if it were not that you say that they would be afraid to come on a visit here just now——! But too much pleasure at a time is not good for any young people, and Vera is undoubtedly very young for her age, and has been sufficiently excited this summer by the pleasure of Miss Josephs's visit; still, next year, if the Countess would like——"

"Next year we shall certainly hope to see more of Mdlle. Vera," said the Count with a half-laugh, which sounded almost threatening. "But even now, since madame has been so good as to allow the privileges of old friends to my sisters, I trust she will not think that I also am presuming too

much on the same claim if, in my deep anxiety for her charming young daughter's health, I still venture to entreat that if there be any risk to it——"

"Oh, but there is none—none at all. We were never any of us better or more cheerful," cried madame, whose tone was as little cheerful as the Count's had been entreating. "If it were not so, do you think Miss Josephs would remain with us, or that I should allow her to do so? You are forgetting Miss Josephs in your anxiety about—about us—but we do not forget her. And if there was the least fear for anyone—if she had any fear for herself, we should send her away at once. Shouldn't we, Miss Josephs, my dear?"

Leah was hardly allowed to answer for the protestations and apologies which the Count poured forth upon her. Madame had found a way to silence him on the subject of Dinan and Vera for the time being; but Leah was greatly puzzled by the tone of the interview—the air of almost insolent authority in the Count's manner, and the decided hostility and resistance showing through all madame's attempts at deprecation and civility. It contradicted certain girlish, half-formed theories of hers, that the St. Laurents were intending to bestow their young daughter on this man, who, though more than twice her age, was their only intimate friend, and the only unmarried man admitted to the house: and these were still further negated by a little incident, most trifling in itself, which occurred a few days later.

The rainy weather and the state of the roads had offered a good excuse for keeping the girls at home of late, or confining their walks to a brief turn along the high road between Les Châtaigniers and Maily, where there were no cottages—nothing, indeed, but fir-trees and heath on either side, and nothing more dangerous in the way of carrying infection than a rough heath-pony or a flock of geese; while indoors they spent a good deal of their time in what was called the workroom—a more cheerful and less formal apartment than the drawing-room, where Madame St. Laurent not infrequently spent her afternoons superintending the making and mending operations of Joanna and a little dressmaker from Pont l'Abbé, who came over by the week to assist in them.

The distance from any large town naturally compelled the family to have all their needlework done at home, but, at the same time, precluded the ladies from

having any very familiar acquaintance with the fashions of the day; and it was, therefore, not surprising that the extremely modern style of Leah's gowns and bonnets caused her to be regarded as the "glass of fashion" by the rest of the party, and any opinions or suggestions of hers to be sought for and received with grateful eagerness. Perhaps the gratitude was increased by the fact that her clever fingers were always ready to give a practical exposition of what she meant; and even Madame St. Laurent, though constitutionally timid as to novelties and inclined to regard anything unwonted in the shape of puffings or flouncings as tending to impropriety, was fain to relax into an indulgent smile when, on first finding herself in a gown made after the pattern of one of Leah's, Vera opened her eyes of almost childish wonder at the mirror which reflected her, and, turning suddenly to her mother, exclaimed impulsively:

"Oh, mamma, am I not pretty? Did you think I could look so pretty in anything?"

It happened very naturally, however, that other people came to the same conclusion, and on the evening following the little passage-of-arms between madame and the Count, the latter took advantage of Vera's ministrations with the coffee-cups to pay her, not only the customary toll on her finger-tips, but an elaborate compliment on her truly charming appearance; adding, as he turned to her father:

"N'est ce pas vrai, mon ami, que mademoiselle s'est grandie tout d'un moment? La voilà femme aujourd'hui; et ma foi, femme très jolie, je vous assure!"

St. Laurent glanced across the room at his daughter from under his heavy eyebrows.

"Le crois tu!" he said shortly; but then, after a moment, as his gaze rested on the young girl, who, in her new bravery and still blushing from the compliment paid her, was looking unusually charming and womanly. "Diable! mais—en effet tu as raison," he added, with a grim, but not ill-pleased laugh.

It was just then that Leah happened to glance at Madame St. Laurent. She, too, was looking at her daughter, or rather from the faces of the two men to hers, the expression of her own furrowed by such a look of anxious, deprecating misery as startled her young visitor as much as it puzzled her. She did not speak, and nothing more was said on the subject; but

on the morrow and the day following, Vera made her appearance, not in the pretty new frock which had excited so much admiration, but in the dowdy, old-fashioned one she had worn previously; and when asked as to the reason why, answered:

"Oh, mamma came to me and said she did not quite like me in it as it was, and that I was not to put it on again till she had had something done to it. I was sorry, for I thought it perfect after all the trouble you had taken with it."

"And you liked yourself in it too, Vera, didn't you?" said Leah. "Did your mamma say what was the matter? Perhaps I could——"

"No, she did not tell me. She only took it away with her. Oh, I? I never liked myself so much, dear Leah," said Vera, smiling. "I hope Joanna will soon let me have it back."

But Joanna did not. The dress remained in madame's wardrobe, and Leah had too much pride and tact to make any further enquiry about it, more especially as she discovered at the same time that her advice and assistance were no longer required in the workroom, so far, at any rate, as Vera was concerned. She wondered about it a little—wondered whether madame had so much foolish pride as to feel mortified and angry at a Madlle. St. Laurent being singled out for sudden admiration because attired in a dress modelled after that of a young lady who was (for the nonce, at any rate) only her companion and singing-mistress; or whether, being a youngish-looking woman herself, she could have the more foolish vanity of wishing to keep her young daughter in the background, for her own benefit where the middle-aged admirer was concerned. Vera's perfect submissiveness prevented the question from being solved on either count. Where she never even attempted to demur or enquire, no one else could presume to do so, and her friend could only admire for the hundredth time the power, however acquired, by which this quiet, insignificant hostess of hers managed to maintain so complete a hold over her daughter's will that the latter never seemed to have even contemplated the possibility of having one of her own, and this without ever descending to anger or argument on one side, and coaxing on the other; or so much as presenting any solid or definite reason for her likes and dislikes to the person she expected to be swayed by them.

Principle, motive, reason, had nothing

to do with Vera St. Laurent. She had been brought up to obey and to ask no questions. Possibly this was all her mother could teach her, but she had at least taught it thoroughly and with a jealous, persistent care, a constant checking of every independent thought and action within the narrowest limits of her own narrow training, which had had (to outward appearance at any rate) its desired result. At over nineteen years of age Vera was simply an echo and a shadow, following as her mother moved, repeating as her mother spoke, yet a shadow with a vast capacity for feeling and even passion which certainly never came to her from either father or mother, and of which she was hardly conscious herself until the advent of Leah into her life afforded her a partial outlet for it.

But (and this the acuter Jewish girl sometimes thought) if with that unsatisfied capacity the echo were ever to be brought into response with any other voice, any more powerful key-note—what then?

The answer was nearer than she thought, for just one week after the little dress episode just recorded, M. St. Laurent himself was stricken down by the fever.

He had been ailing for a couple of days; but illness only having the effect of making him more morose and obstinate than usual, he had refused to let his anxious wife send for the doctor; and when the sick man was obliged to give in on this point, it was evident, from Dr. Dupré's face as he left the sick-room, that the worthy physician thought the summons far from premature. Madame, who had followed him downstairs, needed not even to ask a question, but stood looking at him with hands wrung together in silent misery, as many another poor woman had wrung hers during the last few weeks, and the doctor answered the look at once.

"Yes, my dear madame, there is—I afflict myself to say it—no doubt in the matter. Our friend has managed in some way to catch the infection. We can only trust that it will not be a bad case; but what we have to do now is to deal with it as promptly as possible, and to avoid its spreading further."

The Comte de Maily came over to Les Châtaigniers the very next morning. Leah thought it spoke well for his fidelity to his friends that he did not allow any fear of the fever, so long frowned down and tabooed, to keep him from their side, but she was surprised to see the anxious distress on madame's face deepen when his name

was announced, and the expression became still more marked when the invalid sent down word that he wanted to see the Count at once, and alone.

"I suppose it is about legal matters. The Count is one of his executors, and perhaps it is as well to arrange things in case—in case he should be delirious later," she said, pressing her thin, dry fingers tightly together, even her reserve broken down for once in the overmastering need for sympathy; "but I do not see why I should not be there. I am his wife."

Leah ventured to take the restless fingers in her warm clasp, and press them kindly.

"Dear madame," she said in her pleasantest voice, "that is why monsieur keeps you away; it is to save you the pain of hearing him discuss events which may never come to pass, though it may be necessary to discuss them for yours and Vera's sake."

"Ah, it is about Vera!" cried Madame with a half sob, but checked herself the next moment, and added more quietly: "But you are a good, kind girl. Thank you, my dear; and—and go to Vera. Of course, we shall have to lose you, at once, and she will like to have all she can of you. Indeed I don't know how long I shall be let——" once again she broke off, her face working; but the old habit of reticence prevailed, and she went on quickly: "but don't tell Vera anything. There is no call for her to be frightened. We have not told her yet what is the matter with her father, you know. She thinks it is only a feverish attack, and perhaps it may pass over. The doctor may say he is better in the morning."

"But if he does not, and if he thinks there is fear of infection, ought not Vera to be sent away as much as I?" Leah asked. "Dear madame, I do so wish you would let her come home with me for a while. You know my mother suggested it when she first heard of there being cases of typhus in the neighbourhood, and wanted me to hurry my own return in consequence; and though you would not hear of it then, surely now, when there is real danger for her in staying at home, and when you know how delighted we should all be to have her, and what care——"

"Oh, thank you, my dear—I am sure of that; but it couldn't possibly be. I couldn't let her go. She is quite a home-bird, you know, and so shy she would feel lost away from us. Oh no. She will not go near

her papa's side of the house, of course, but the doctor couldn't wish me to send her away. Hush! Are not those his wheels? I must go. And pray, Miss Josephs, my dear, don't suggest such an idea to Vera. She would not like it, indeed, fond as she is of you."

Leah was glad not to be required to say anything. Indeed, she would almost rather not have gone to Vera, so difficult was it for her, with her natural frankness, to practise madame's system of silence and hushing up everything, which seemed to be the chief article in that lady's creed, and one to be carried out even at the price of depriving herself of her grown-up daughter's sympathy and help in the hour when she had most need of both. On the present occasion, indeed, Miss Josephs found her friend in a rather more cheerful and talkative mood than usual; feverish, bilious attacks being not very infrequent occurrences with her father, and having their mitigating side in removing his surly and mirth-quenching presence from the family board for a brief period. It was, perhaps, natural that Vera should not have much real affection for a parent who never showed her the slightest outward sign of any, and should congratulate herself on the fact that he "never would have her near him when he was poorly", in the hope that she and Leah would thereby get a long day to themselves out of doors. But it was difficult for the latter, knowing the real state of the case, the dangerous nature of the father's illness, and the preparations already being made for her own departure on the morrow, to respond to this innocent cheerfulness with any approach to her usual manner; and she could have cried out with relief when the door opened at last, and the sudden appearance of Madame St. Laurent put a stop to the conversation, at the same moment that the roll of wheels along the drive showed that either the Count or doctor, if not both, had just departed.

One glance at madame's face was sufficient to tell that their visit had had a terribly agitating effect on her, while the odour of vinegar and chloride-of-lime which was wafted before her showed that she had not dared to come to them without prior precautions.

"I have something to tell you—both of you," she said, sitting down at a distance from them, with her eyes fixed on her own daughter, who simply regarded her with placid expectation. "Vera, my dear, Dr. Dupré says your papa's illness is of an—

infectious character"—even now she could not bring herself to say the real word—"and therefore he thinks it better for young people, who always take things easily, not to be in the house. You could be no use, of course, for Joanna and I can do everything your papa wants, and, with us occupied upstairs, it would in any case be very dull for you when Miss Josephs is gone, so, as she has been kind enough to urge that you should accompany her home——"

"Oh, mamma!" cried Vera, half stretching out her hand to her friend, but it fell at her side almost at the same moment, and whether the exclamation was one of pain or pleasure no one knew.

Leah was looking at Madame St. Laurent, and that lady, after one quick glance at her daughter, and a half-repressed sigh, turned to the Jewish girl, and went on, not without evident embarrassment:

"You are quite sure that your mamma does wish for her—that she will not be a—in any way a trouble, my dear? I could not possibly let her go if I were not certain of that, or if you had not pressed it so much; for—for, as it happens, the Comtesse de Maily is at Dinan at present, and particularly wants me to let Vera go to her. The Count brought the message, and as he is joining her himself to-morrow, he has offered to take charge of Vera and her maid on the journey. Indeed, he was inconsiderate enough to speak to M. St. Laurent about it, and get him to consent; but though it is, of course, most kind of the Countess, and I couldn't have refused if—if there had been no prior engagement, still, as you had asked her first, and I knew my daughter would prefer being with you——" She made a little pause here; but Vera did not speak, only stood looking at her, with bewildered, almost stupid, eyes; and again she turned to Leah. "But, perhaps—I had not thought of that; your mamma might be afraid of the fever now?"

"Oh no, madame; that she certainly wouldn't," said Leah quickly. "How could Vera bring it any more than I? She has not been with her father at all since he began to be unwell; and there is nothing we should like better than to have her; unless she——" and here it was her turn to stop and look at Vera.

She had expected that the latter would have interrupted her before now with entreaties not to be sent away in this time of anxiety and trouble, but to be permitted

to stay and help her mother through it. Knowing that nothing could have torn her from her own parents at such a crisis, as also that it was only stern necessity which had compelled Madame St. Laurent to consent to the separation, Vera's silence and immobility seemed to her equally puzzling and unnatural; until another explanation of it occurred to her, and she went on rather hesitatingly:

"Unless she would rather go to the De Maillys. They would be nearer to you, and they are much older friends, so it might be more agreeable to her, especially if monsieur gets better; for Dinan would be very gay just now, and of course, as you know," colouring a little, but speaking quite frankly and pleasantly, "we are very homely people in comparison. We live very quietly always; and the season will be quite over in London by the time we get there."

"Mamma——" Vera began again, this time in a tone of trembling appeal.

But Madame St. Laurent was already answering her friend:

"My dear, that is just what I wish. The De Maillys are—— oh, of course they are very nice——most distinguished and condescending, and all that; but I would rather Vera didn't go to them just yet. I would rather she were with homely, quiet people——people of her own stand—— I mean where she would not be troubled with much gaiety and that sort of thing, and——and made discontented with her own home and the ways here."

"Mamma, I am not discontented," said Vera, going a little nearer to her. "I will do just as you tell me. I don't want to go away, if you would rather have me. I only want to do as you say. If I could be of use——"

"But have I not told you you cannot be? There is no choice about it. Dr. Dupré says you must go. Barbe is packing your trunk now, and I—I ought

to be with your papa. I have stayed here too long already," the mother interrupted, her voice harsh enough from that very desperation of anxiety to make Vera shrink back. "Miss Josephs, my dear, you will take care of her? Promise me!" And she left the room without another word.

They hardly saw her again, and not for more than a few brief seconds——too short for conversation——at any time.

Indeed, there was not leisure for much conversation of any sort. Vera, ignorant of the very nature of the illness from which her father was suffering, and rendered still more incapable of appreciating its gravity by the care with which she had been kept from hearing of its ravages among their poorer neighbours, was simply bewildered between the mixed pain and pleasure of the double tidings so suddenly conveyed to her. How she had dreaded Leah's going, and longed to accompany her, her passive sense of the hopelessness of such longing had prevented anyone from guessing, while at the same time intensifying her feeling of dumb misery at the approaching separation. And now, when she was suddenly informed, without one word of warning or preparation, that her father was very ill of something infectious, and that she and Leah, instead of being parted, were to go away together at once——when Leah looked grave and anxious, and her mother ghastly and unlike herself——she felt like one stunned, and more glad to busy herself in simply doing what she was told; folding dresses and petticoats, and helping with the packing generally; than in asking questions or talking. By-and-by Leah would tell her all about it, but just now there was too much for everyone to do, and too little time to do it in, for even Leah to have leisure for much speech.

Before dawn on the morrow they were already on their road, but Vera scarcely realised it all even then!

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MARCH

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38

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM
YEAR TO YEAR."

All the Year Round

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CONTENTS OF PART 208.

No. 901.	PAGE	No. 903.
A Stern Chase. Chapter IV. In a Fools' Paradise ...	49	A Stern Chase. Chapter VI. Finding a Flaw
Wonderful Wands.....	53	Chronicles of English Counties.—Middlesex. Part I I.
Our Friend the Enemy	59	Of the Writing of Letters
Chronicles of English Counties.—Middlesex. Part I....	63	Lunar Fancies
Victims. Chapter VI. A Villa at Weybridge	69	Victims. Chapter VIII. The Legend of St. Tryphin o
No. 902.		No. 904.
A Stern Chase. Chapter V. Introduced by Mr. Dexter	73	A Stern Chase. Chapter VII. "And why, Dolores?"
Mont Blanc Sixty Years Ago	78	Art Needlework.....
A Gossip on Drinking.....	82	Old Acton.....
At Eventide. A Poem	87	Under the Chestnuts. A Poem
Travelling Made Easy in Central Asia.....	87	Duelling, Ancient and Modern
Victims. Chapter VII. Naomi's Little Evening	91	Victims. Chapter IX. Vera goes for Rushes

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ALL THE YEAR ROUND

A Weekly Journal

CONDUCTED BY

CHARLES DICKENS

NO. 901. NEW SERIES

SATURDAY, MARCH 6, 1886.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

A STERN CHASE.

A STORY IN THREE PARTS.

BY MRS. CASHEL HOEY.

THE THIRD PART.

CHAPTER IV. IN A FOOL'S PARADISE.

THE lapse of years had brought about no change in the relations between Lilius Merivale and Colonel and Mrs. Courtland. They were still her tenants at Lislee, but she was no longer a stranger there. Her life had been so completely altered; its loneliness, its vain regret, had been so entirely dispelled; by the revelation made to her by James Willesden, that she no longer shrank from the sight of the scenes amid which she had suffered the last, worst period of the suspense that remained in her memory of the past as that of its most trying experience. She visited her friends at Lislee frequently, and the romantic story of the little girl whose mother had died at the convalescent cottage, and who turned out to be Miss Merivale's niece—people were not particular to a shade about the real relationship—was one of the local anecdotes wherewith visitors to Great and Little Choughton were entertained for some years afterwards.

In the Little Choughton churchyard a cross of pure white marble marked the spot where "Fair Ines", alike untouched by—

— pleasure on the sea
And sorrow on the shore,

slept well, and the inscription told that it had been erected in remembrance of Hugh Rosslyn, her husband, "lost at sea" seven years before she was laid in that foreign resting-place. A far-spreading ancient yew-tree, with a little hillock of green grass at its foot, stood near the flower-decked grave, and Lilius liked to sit under its

shade when she visited the churchyard with the little Dolores, reviewing the past, and thankful for the great relief that had come to her from the hand of a child. About the image of the dead woman, as she conjured it up, there hung a sad and solemn mystery; her sorrows, her fears, and her sufferings were altogether out of the ken of Lilius Merivale. In her own safe-guarded, commonplace life, the barest outline of the facts of that of Ines was all she had to guide her fancy, and she would endeavour to conjure up to her mind's eye from Mrs. Courtland's description of Mrs. Willesden a picture of the girl of whom Hugh had written so rapturously, tempered in its radiance, but not shorn of its beauty.

Dolores, she thought, must be very like her mother: probably not so brightly and sunnily beautiful, because she had not been born and reared in a land of the sun: the privations of her early childhood must also have made a difference in the child. Mrs. Courtland could point out in what particular she resembled the mother who had been so beautiful to the last, and as Dolores grew older would trace that resemblance with accurate recollection, for the visits of Lilius and her charge kept green the memory of the dead at Lislee. It did not surprise Lilius that no likeness to Hugh was to be traced in his daughter's face, because, though she would have given much to find resemblance there, she could expect none between the dark-eyed, dark-haired, olive-and-carnation-tinted daughter and the fair-haired, fair-complexioned, blue-eyed father, except in certain looks and turns of countenance, independent of form and feature.

Dolores, who was called "the little Spaniard" by the people about, had less of the subtle grace of her mother's race

than Fair Ines, and still showed the immaturity of early girlhood at the age when her mother's beauty had reached the perfection of its bloom. If Liliás looked in vain for a likeness to her father in Dolores, she was not more successful in tracing a moral and intellectual resemblance to Hugh. Dolores was keenly sensitive, indeed, but of an indolent turn of mind, and wholly without artistic tastes. Fair but not remarkable intelligence, a sweet temper, a trusting disposition, and a heart much too affectionate for her future peace, were the chief characteristics of this girl, who was, indeed, dear as an only daughter, and a source of the purest happiness to Liliás Merivale.

Warned by the experience of her own early years, it had been Liliás's great care to surround the child, who had come into her lonely life with so strong a plea for consideration, with all the tenderness and solicitude of which her own nature held so large a store, but which had been only sparingly utilised until the closing years of her stepfather's life had drawn upon it, to her full compensation and content. To gain the child's, and keep the girl's confidence; to fill Dolores with the conviction that she was the one supreme and all-important object in her life; to make her reliance upon indulgence, her confidence in Liliás's illimitable love as spontaneous as breathing—this was the ambition of Liliás, and she had achieved a success which seldom attends human effort in any creditable direction. The line she had taken with Dolores did not meet with universal or unmixed approval; there were others besides the household at The Quinces who thought she "made too much fuss" about the girl. Of this number Mrs. Courtland was one; but she based her opinion upon more philosophical grounds.

"You are too careful to make all smooth for her in the little things of life and the small contrarities of every day," Mrs. Courtland said to Liliás more than once; "this would be well if you could ensure a continuance of it, and if you were to be by her side always. But she will have to take her share of the lot of humanity, to be dropped in her turn into the mill, and you will either be no longer there to see the grinding, or you will have to stand by with folded hands, helpless, and see her suffer and be strong, or suffer and be weak, as nature and training shall have fashioned her; for this is what we all have to do in the case of those whom we love. Don't

bring her up too exclusively in Paradise, my dear Liliás; let her sometimes have a peep beyond the gates into the outside world, lest she be unable to bear the shock of reality when you are no longer there to break it to her, or are forced to look on while others put her through that teaching."

Liliás knew these were the words of wisdom, but she had not courage to act upon them. To her seeing, Dolores had no faults that needed correction, no wishes that ought to be denied; her sweet wilfulness was just that which she might have exercised towards her real mother, and it was therefore delightful to Liliás; lastly, if her father had been here, this would have been Hugh's way with her. And so Dolores was unconsciously, indeed blamelessly, self-occupied; for how was she to doubt her own supreme importance, or surmise that the small world in which she lived had interests other than her own, when all her experience from seven to seventeen went to convince her to the contrary, or, rather, to exclude all such ideas from her mind?

With the steadiness and constancy of her character, Liliás had adhered to her early interest in Julian Courtland, and, as he always showed her the best side of his nature, she was much attached to him. It was not altogether from policy and selfish motives that Julian exerted himself to maintain his position with Miss Merivale. He really liked and respected her, and she possessed the faculty, given to the favoured few, of bringing out the best qualities of those with whom she associated. His good looks, his pleasant ways, his high spirits, and his musical talents were charming to Liliás; that any grave faults marred this pleasing exterior she did not know. Colonel Courtland had always been careful to screen his nephew from the odium of the conduct which gave himself much pain, and kept him in constant anxiety. And Liliás was more in accord with him in regard to Julian than his wife was. Mrs. Courtland, in addition to a belief in hereditary characteristics and vices, which would in any case have made her suspicious of Julian, as the son of particularly worthless parents, was quicker of perception, more difficult of persuasion than her husband, and she differed, silently, from him on the merits of his nephew, and suffered not a little from the fear that a severe disappointment was in store for him.

Julian had always been conscious that

Mrs. Courtland distrusted him, and he disliked her accordingly; but his behaviour towards her, from the time at which he had acquired the cunning of his precocious manhood, had been faultless. He regarded her as an enemy whom he could neither dislodge nor disarm, and whom it behoved him to keep in check by giving her no possible point of advantage against him. His tactics had hitherto been so successful that there was just one subject in all the range of things on which Colonel Courtland did not value his wife's judgment, and did not depend on her sympathy. That subject was Julian.

As for Miss Merivale, the utmost she believed to the discredit of the Colonel's nephew was that he was rather extravagant. That he was a gambler, and generally unprincipled, she had not the remotest idea; nor would the Colonel, if he had been obliged to tell the truth according to his knowledge, have admitted anything like so much.

To Julian, therefore, Miss Merivale's house had been a second home, and if anything had been wanted to confirm the interest with which she had regarded the Colonel's nephew from his boyhood, it would have been supplied when Dolores came to her, and she found that it was for him that the child had fretted herself into illness after Willesden removed her from Lislee. To the pretty, foreign-looking little girl with the invalid mother, Julian had been protector and playmate, after the patronising fashion of a big boy. One of the pleasantest incidents of the ever-memorable time which delivered up Hugh's trust to her keeping, was the meeting between the child and the boy when, on Colonel Courtland's arrival at The Quinces with Julian, he recognised in Lillias's new-found treasure the little girl whose fate had given rise to so much regret.

Julian was thenceforth doubly welcome, and as Miss Merivale had educated Hugh Roselyn's daughter at home, he had frequent opportunities of being in the company of his former little companion, when he came to London to pursue his studies for his profession. The sequel of the simple story is soon told. Julian was never dislodged from his place in the heart of Dolores. She passed from childhood into girlhood, with him for her companion still; a little more distant, just a little feared, perhaps, but ever the hero of her imagination, the idol of her heart, invested with

the glory and the grandeur of manhood while she was yet in the humility of the schoolgirl period; a being of wondrous experiences, but kind and condescending to her as ever.

About that time there came a break in the calm continuity of life at The Quinces. Lillias took her charge abroad for a year, and when they returned to England, and Julian met Dolores again, the day of kindness and condescension on his part was over. He recognised this instantly, partly with a slight shock of regret, partly with amusement, and then took up his new position with tact and readiness.

The schoolgirl had vanished as completely as the pretty, foreign-looking child, and Julian found himself regarding Miss Roselyn from a new point of view, and wondering whether he should have admired her if he had never seen her before, and if there were not so much in common in their respective lives. On the whole, he thought he should not have pronounced her "awfully pretty". She was as nice as ever, he had no doubt; he was uncommonly glad to see her again; and he mentally paid her and his recollections of her several compliments in the peculiarly objectionable slang of these latter days; but, as for looks, she was not his "style".

Julian Courtland had travelled by this time a considerable way along the path of descent, and it would have been a hopeful sign—had there been anyone, except his evil genius, in the secrets of his vicious life, on the look-out for signs—that he was still capable of honest love for a good woman. For it was during the absence of Miss Merivale that Julian had engaged himself to Margaret Denzil, and she was in his mind when he decided that the dark-eyed Dolores was not his "style".

A less vain and more high-minded man than Julian Courtland might have been acquitted of presumption in interpreting the shy but irrepressible emotion betrayed by Dolores on her meeting with Julian as an indication that he might change the relation between them from that of friends to that of lovers. The truth was that Dolores had loved Julian all her life; she had carried his image in her heart, never supplanted, never obscured; and by her bright, innocent face, by the tone of her voice, vibrating with a timid joy, her secret—which she did not herself interpret fully—was revealed to the witnesses of the meeting, Lillias Merivale and Colonel Courtland.

Neither of the two was remarkable for worldly wisdom, and when each reflected upon their common impression, it was without a misgiving respecting Julian's sentiments. If there was a hidden hint on the part of Colonel Courtland's conscience, caused by his private conviction that his nephew was not worthy of such a girl as Dolores, he is not to be very severely blamed for ignoring it. The Colonel was one of those illogical persons who believe that the radical evil of a man's character may be uprooted by the influence of a good wife, and will lend themselves to the securing of lifelong misery to the unfortunate woman sacrificed to their theory, whenever they get a chance of reducing it to practice. Dolores was the loveliest and best girl in the world—all he could desire as a wife for Julian. Everything would be all right when he should be under the lasting influence of that dear girl, and they would be as happy as possible. Providence was indeed shaping the ends of a very rough-hewn design; the workmanship was too plain to be mistaken or ignored. This good, this excellent, this all-desirable thing was to be, and would be. Like many quiet and easy-going men, Colonel Courtland was apt, when he did make a mental exertion, to jump to a conclusion, and his sweet temper rendered him sanguine in his views.

Mrs. Courtland was not in town when Lillias and Dolores returned from their foreign tour, and the Colonel did not fully account to himself for his disinclination to impart his discovery and his hopes to his wife by letter.

"Better wait until the young people have come to an understanding, and there can be no doubt about things," said the good and honest self-deceiver to himself, as he stood before the glass in his dressing-room, arranging his white tie with scrupulous care before going down to dinner on the day after Lillias's arrival at The Quinces. Julian was to join the party at dinner, and the astute Colonel wondered whether Miss Merivale would find out anything in the course of the evening, and whether she would mention it to him if she did. Of how she would take the discovery he had no doubt.

The Colonel joined Dolores in the drawing-room, and subsiding into his special chair in his most telescopic fashion—while she sat at his feet on a footstool, not at all like a grown-up young lady who had made the grand tour according to the

very latest programme, and showed him a few of the innumerable photographs she had brought home—he slyly waited for further betrayals of the open secret, as self-congratulatory in his cunning as Tom Pinch.

Lillias; enjoying the quiet homeliness of her bright, spacious room, with its view of the velvet lawn and the great yew-trees, often longed for amid the novelty and variety of foreign travel, and lingering there until Julian's arrival should oblige her to go to the drawing-room; was occupied with similar thoughts. To her, however, they came with more solemnity, and with a thrill of pain. A woman, however inexperienced, if she has a conscience and a heart, never fails to realise that a girl's gift of her first love is an awful deed, one which sets a gulf between the past and the future of her life, with all the joys, affections, habits, and pursuits of the former on one side of it, and on the other, "the hazard of the die". If it be cast for good, those who love the giver of that gift are indeed bound to rejoice, not only in a great positive gain, but in the escape from boundless possibilities of loss; if it be cast for ill, they are powerless to remedy or assuage the evil.

If Lillias Merivale had ever been in love, she would probably have found out earlier that the future happiness of the girl who was so dear to her was not in her keeping or governance; but she had no instinct to warn, no retrospect to guide her. There was no call in the attachment of Dolores to Julian for the self-repression that had characterised her own attachment to her so-called brother; but in every other quality the one reminded her of the other, and had seemed equally natural. Stronger love than hers for Hugh Rosslyn, Lillias humbly but rightly believed there could not be, but that it might have been different she had learned in the confidence—late, indeed, but at the last unreserved—reposed in her by her stepfather. She was of too sweet, too womanly a nature not to feel a deep and thankful gladness in the conviction that she was all to him she had prayed, hoped, and striven to be, which she had derived from Dr. Rosslyn's avowal that she herself was the ideal wife he had desired for his son, and that he had believed her heart was Hugh's. But her calm, sorrowful answer, "So it was, papa, and yours," had set the matter at rest.

The lightest stirring of a feeling that might grow into a passion, the least troubling of her quiet mind by a preference,

had never befallen Liliás Merivale in the years before Hugh's trust came to her, and after that time Dolores filled her heart and occupied her life. The comparison, "like a young widow with an only child," was exactly applicable to her.

Was it all over now? The most unselfish heart that ever beat would sink at that question, and Liliás's heart did sink when, in that little interval of quiet ensuing upon the bustle and business of her arrival at home, she put it to herself. Only to banish it, however, with the inevitable answer, and honestly to welcome the prospect of surer, higher happiness for Hugh's child.

Julian was a little late, and Liliás joined Dolores and Colonel Courtland in the drawing-room before he arrived. Dolores was still sitting on the footstool at the Colonel's feet, and still busy with the advance-guard of her army of photographs; but her animation had flagged, and her eyes turned to the tell-tale timepiece on the mantelshelf with reproachful glances.

"Julian is late," said Liliás, "but it is always excusable to be late when a man, with any business at all to do, has to dine at Hampstead."

A few minutes after the door-bell rang, and Dolores's dark eyes shone with a starry radiance which Hugh Rosslyn might have recognised.

Three months had elapsed between the return of Miss Merivale to England, and Mr. Wyndham's interpellation of Julian Courtland at the Lyceum Theatre. Three happy months Dolores would have declared them to be, if she had ever thought of them as in any wise different from other portions of time except that she was at home again, and that she saw Julian frequently, instead of merely thinking of him always. Three happy months to Liliás, taking pride in the quickly-maturing beauty, in the ripening intelligence, in the girlish graces of her beloved charge, and nothing doubting of the sun of love that was fostering them all. Three somewhat perplexing months to Colonel Courtland, who could not make out why the young people had not long ago come to an understanding, and who was, for his own part, a little uncomfortable and slightly ashamed, because, for the first, but as he strenuously resolved, also for the last time in his life, he was keeping a secret from his wife.

Three months to Julian Courtland which he would have described in strongly objuratory language. Three months during

which he was made to receive an instalment of the wages of sin, and to feel some of the weight of the yoke under which the transgressor staggers and stumbles downhill. An incautious word had suggested to the tormentor, to whom he had delivered himself over, that there was business to be done in an unhoped-for direction, precious ore still to be extracted from a mine supposed to have been worked out, and Julian had to pay the penalty of his incautious word. The foot of the avenger was following him up. The one good thing he possessed was about to be taken from him. The one redeeming intention of his wilful, wasted, unprincipled life—the intention of making a good girl who loved him, but had nothing but love to give him, his wife—was about to be frustrated. The most cruel of all the breaches of faith he had yet committed, because its victim was so guiltless, defenceless, and trusting, was about to be forced on him. He knew all this must be, that it was his only alternative. Ruin must have come in any case, he believed, for Julian, though a sharp young scoundrel, was not so sharp as the older scoundrel who had him in his grip, and Julian did not know that he was too valuable to Mr. Wyndham for him to ruin him after the proverbially shortsighted fashion of the slayer of the goose that laid the golden eggs. He dallied, however, pleading that it was quite too soon for him to propose to Dolores, and that he knew the old-fashioned people he had to deal with, while Mr. Wyndham did not know them. In those three months Julian had come very near to hating Dolores as fervently as he hated Mr. Wyndham; but he had been perfectly charming, and nothing was wanting to the Fool's Paradise in which they were all dwelling, except that formal declaration to which Julian now found himself pledged beyond redemption.

Meanwhile, at the very hour in which Mr. Wyndham was giving Julian Courtland a practical lesson upon the value of discretion in the selection of one's friends, an incident, destined materially to affect his future interests, had occurred at The Quinces.

WONDERFUL WANDS.

IT is sufficiently remarkable that the rod, besides being the emblem of authority, is also an instrument of the supernatural. An indispensable instrument, one may say; for was ever a magician depicted in books,

on canvas, or in the mind's eye, without a wand? Does even the most amateurish of prestidigitateurs attempt to emulate the performances of the once-famous Wizard of the North, without the aid of the magic staff? The magician, necromancer, soothsayer, or conjuror, is as useless without his wand as a Newcastle pitman is without his "dawg".

At first thought it might be supposed that the association of the rod or wand with necromancy were merely an indication of power or authority, in the same way as the sceptre is associated with kingship. But there is something more in it. Magic has been well called "the shadow of religion," and the early religious idea found expression in symbols. These symbols, as we know, have in many cases retained a certain significance long after the ideas they were meant to convey have been lost, or abandoned, or modified. If we bear these things in mind, it is not difficult to discover a religious origin for the symbolic wand of necromancy.

Mr. Moncure Conway, in his book on Demonology and Devil-lore, mentions a thing which seems peculiarly apposite to our subject. In the old town of Hanover there is a certain schoolhouse, in which, above the teacher's chair, there was originally a representation of a dove perched upon a rod—the rod in this case being meant to typify a branch. Below the dove and rod there was this inscription: "This shall lead you unto all Truth". But the dove has long since disappeared, and there remains now but the rod and the inscription. It is natural that the children of the school should apply the admonition to the rod, ignorant that it was but the supporter of a symbol of the Holy Spirit. Thus has the pious design of inculcating a Divine lesson left only an emblem of mysterious terror. In some way, too, has the magic-wand lost its religious significance and become but a dread implement of the occult.

Yet we might trace the origin of the magician's wand to the very same as that of the iron rod of the Hanover schoolhouse. We may find it in the olive-branch brought by the dove into the ark—a message of Divine love and mercy—and, therefore, a connecting-link between human needs and desires, and superhuman power. To construe a mere symbol into a realised embodiment of the virtues symbolised, were surely as easy in this case as in that of the Eucharist.

But if this suggestion of the origin

of the magician's wand be thought too hypothetical, there will be less objection to our finding it in Aaron's rod. Moses was commanded to take a rod from the chiefs of each of the twelve tribes, and to write upon each the name. The rods were then to be placed in the Tabernacle, and the owner of the one which blossomed was designated as the chosen one. The rod of the house of Levi bore the name of Aaron, and this was the only one of the twelve which blossomed. Here once more was the rod used to connect human needs with Divine will; but now a special virtue is made to appear in the rod itself. This virtue appeared again, when Pharaoh called all the sorcerers and magicians of Egypt to test their enchantments with Aaron's. All these magicians bore wands, or rods, and when they threw them on the ground they turned into serpents. Aaron's also turned into a serpent, and swallowed all the others. Now, here we find two things established. First, that even in these early days necromancy was a profession, and the rod a necessary implement of the craft; and, second, that the rod was esteemed not merely an emblem of authority, or a mere ornament of office, but as a thing of superhuman power in itself, although the power could only be evoked by the specially gifted.

We find the beginning of the idea in the story of Moses's Rod, which turned into a serpent when he cast it on the ground at the Divine command. This was what led up to the trial of skill with the Egyptian magicians, and seems to have been the first suggestion in early history of the miraculous virtues of the rod. Then we must remember that it was by the stretching forth of the rod of the prophet that all the waters of Egypt were made to turn into blood, and by which also the plagues of frogs and lice were wrought, and the hail was called down from heaven which destroyed the crops and flocks of the Egyptians. In fact, all the miracles performed in the land of Egypt were made to appear more or less as the result of the application of the magic rod, just as to this day the clever conjuror appears to produce his wonderful effects with his wand.

It was by the stretching forth of the rod of Moses that the Red Sea divided, and that the water sprang from the rock. The staff of Elisha and the spear of Joshua may also be cited in this connection, and other examples in Holy Writ may occur to the reader. We mention

them in no spirit of irreverence, but merely as evidence that the magic virtue of the rod was a fixed belief in the minds of the early writers.

We find belief in the vitalising power of the rod embalmed in many a curious mediæval legend. The budding rod, borrowed from the tradition of Aaron's, is, for instance, very frequent. Thus in the story of St. Christophoros, as preserved in Von Bulow's Christian Legends of Germany, we read of the godly man carrying the Child-Christ on his back through a raging torrent, and afterwards lying down on the banks of the stream, exhausted, to sleep. The staff which he had stuck in the ground, ere he lay down, had budded and blossomed before he awoke, and in the morning he found a great umbrageous tree bearing fruit, and giving shelter to hundreds of gorgeous birds. There are many such legends in the traditions of all the Christian nations, and the collection and comparison of them would be an interesting and instructive task, but one too large for our present purpose.

It is related by Holinshed, in connection with many wonderful visions which were seen in Scotland about A.D. 697, that once when the Bishop was conducting the service in the church of Camelon, with the crozier-staff in his hand, "it was kindled so with fire that by no means it could be quenched till it was burnt even to ashes". This was supposed to have been the handiwork of the devil, who has on other occasions used the staff or wand to emphasise his intentions or spite. Thus, of the famous Dr. Fian it is narrated in the "Newes from Scotland, declaring the damnable Life of Doctor Fian, a notable Sorcerer, who was burned at Edenborough in Januarie last 1591; which Doctor was Register to the Devill, that sundrie times Preached at North-Baricke Kirke to a number of notorious Witches," etc.—that he made the following, among his other confessions: "That the devill had appeared unto him in the night before, appareled all in blacke, with a white wand in his hande, and that the devill demanded of him if he would continue his faithfull service according to his first oath and promise made to that effect, whome (as hee then said) he utterly renounced to his face and said unto him in this manner. 'Avoide, avoide, Satan, for I have listened too much unto thee and by the same thou hast undone me, in respect whereof I utterly forsake thee.' To whom the devill answered,

'That once, ere thou die, thou shalt be mine,' and with that (as he sayed), the devill brake the white wand, and immediately vanished from sight." After which, the chronicle goes on to tell how the redoubtable doctor actually escaped from prison, and began to resume his Satanic practices.

This brings us to the most frequent use of the rod in superstitions—for the purposes of divination. We have a suggestion of the practice by Nebuchadnezzar, when he "stood at the parting of the way, at the head of two ways, to use divinations, he made his arrows bright," etc. He then threw up a bundle of arrows to see which way they would alight, and as they fell on the right hand he marched towards Jerusalem. Divination by the wand is also suggested in the shooting of an arrow from a window by Elisha, and by the strokes upon the ground with an arrow, by which Joash foretold the number of his victories.

Sir Thomas Browne speaks of a common "practice among us to determine doubtful matters by the opening of a book and letting fall of a staff." The "staff" business is not quite so familiar in present days, but the opening of a book for prophetic guidance is, perhaps, more common than most people suppose.

Sir Thomas Browne also speaks of a "strange kind of exploration and peculiar way of Rhabdomancy" used in mineral discoveries. That is, "with a fork of hazel, commonly called Moses his rod, which, freely held forth, will stir and play if any mine be under it. And though many there are," says the learned doctor, "who have attempted to make it good, yet until better information, we are of opinion, with Agricola, that in itself it is a fruitless exploration, strongly scenting of pagan derivation and the *virgula divina* proverbially magnified of old. The ground whereof were the magical rods in poets—that of Pallas, in Homer; that of Mercury, that charmed Argus; that of Circe, which transformed the followers of Ulysses. Too boldly usurping the name of Moses's rod, from which, notwithstanding, and that of Aaron, were probably occasioned the fables of all the rest. For that of Moses must needs be famous unto the Egyptians, and that of Aaron unto many other nations, as being preserved in the Ark until the destruction of the Temple built by Solomon."

We must confess that in our experience

of the divining-rod, we have never met with it in real life under the name of "Moses his rod," as old Sir Thomas did. We had, indeed, quite forgotten the learned physician's reference to the matter at all when we began this article, but turning, on a sudden inspiration, to his volume, we found what seemed so much in accord with the theory with which we started, that we forthwith extracted the whole passage, as above.

It is curious, however, that Sir Thomas Browne, who was so fond of delving among ancient writers, makes no reference, so far as we remember, to a striking passage in Herodotus. That historian, speaking of the Scythians, says: "They have amongst them a great number who practise the art of divination. For this purpose they use a number of willow-twigs in this manner: They bring large bundles of these together, and having untied them, dispose them one by one on the ground, each bundle at a distance from the rest. This done, they pretend to foretell the future, during which they take up the bundles separately and tie them again together."

From this we see that while the divining-rod was a familiar instrument four hundred and fifty years before Christ, it was also then disbelieved in by some. Curious to think that what the old historian of Halicarnassus was wise enough to ridicule four centuries and a half before the birth of Christ, there are yet people, nearly nineteen centuries after His advent, simple enough to accept!

Herodotus goes on to tell that this mode of divination was hereditary among the Scythians, so how many centuries earlier it may have been practised, one can hardly guess. He says that the "enarics, or effeminate men, affirm that the art of divination was taught them by the goddess Venus", a statement which will carry some significance to those who are familiar with the theories so boldly advocated by the recent author of Bible Folk-lore.

Now, the attempt to divine by means of rods, arrows, staffs, or twigs, is evidently a good deal older than Herodotus, and it is to be found among almost every race of people on the face of the earth. We say "almost", because Mr. Andrew Lang, in his book on Custom and Myth, instances this as one form of superstition which is not prevalent among savage races; or rather, to use his exact words, "is singular in its comparative lack of copious savage

analogues". The qualification seems to be necessary because there are certainly some, if not "copious" instances among savage peoples, of the use of the divining-rod in one form or other. And Mr. Lang is hardly accurate in speaking, in the same book, of the "resurrection" of this superstition in our own country. It has, in fact, never died, and there is scarcely a part of the country where a "diviner" has not tried his—or her, for it is often a woman—skill with "the twig", from time to time. These attempts have seldom been known beyond the immediate locality and the limited circle of those interested in them, and it is only of late years, since folk-lore became more of a scientific and general study, that the incidents have been seized upon and recorded by the curious. We may take it that from the time of Moses until now, the "rod" has been almost continuously used by innumerable peoples in the effort to obtain supplies of water.

In ancient times it was used, as we have seen, for a variety of other purposes; but its surviving use in our generation is to indicate the locality of hidden springs or of mineral deposits. There are cases on record, however—so recently as the last century—when the rod was used in the detection of criminals, and a modified application of it to a variety of indefinite purposes may even be traced to the planchette, which, at this very day, is seriously believed in by many persons who are ranked as "intelligent".

Now, of the use of the divining-rod in England, Mr. Thiselton-Dyer thus wrote seven years ago: "The *virgula divinatoria*, or divining-rod, is a forked branch in the form of a Y, cut off a hazel-stick, by means of which people have pretended to discover mines, springs, etc., underground. It is much employed in our mining districts for the discovery of hidden treasure. In Cornwall, for instance, the miners place much confidence in its indications, and even educated, intelligent men oftentimes rely on its supposed virtues. Bryce, in his *Mineralogia Cornubiensis*, tells us that many mines have been discovered by the rod, and quotes several, but, after a long account of the method of cutting, tying, and using it, rejects it, because Cornwall is so plentifully stored with tin and copper lodes, that some accident every week discovers to us a fresh vein, and because a grain of metal attracts the rod as strongly as a pound, for which reason it has been found to dip equally to a poor as to a rich lode." But

in Lancashire and Cumberland also, Mr. Dyer goes on to say, "the power of the divining-rod is much believed in, and also in other parts of England." The method of using it is thus described: "The small ends, being crooked, are to be held in the hands in a position flat or parallel to the horizon, and the upper part at an elevation having an angle to it of about seventy degrees. The rod must be grasped strongly and steadily, and then the operator walks over the ground. When he crosses a lode, its bending is supposed to indicate the presence thereof." Mr. Dyer's explanation of the result is simple: "The position of the hands in holding the rod is a constrained one—it is not easy to describe it; but the result is that the hands, from weariness speedily induced in the muscles, grasp the end of the twig yet more rigidly, and thus is produced the mysterious bending. The phenomena of the divining-rod and table-turning are of precisely the same character, and both are referable to an involuntary muscular action resulting from fixedness of idea. These experiments with a divining-rod are always made in a district known to be metalliferous, and the chances are, therefore, greatly in favour of its bending over or near a mineral lode."

The theory of "involuntary muscular action" is a favourite explanation, and the subject is one well worthy, as Mr. Lang indeed suggests, of the investigations of the Society for Psychical Research. But how does this theory square with the story of Linnæus, told by a writer in *The Gentleman's Magazine* in 1752? "When Linnæus was upon his voyage to Scania, hearing his secretary highly extol the virtues of his divining-rod, was willing to convince him of its insufficiency, and for that purpose concealed a purse of one hundred ducats under a ranunculus which grew up by itself in a meadow, and bid the secretary find it if he could. The wand discovered nothing, and Linnæus's mark was soon trampled down by the company who were present, so that when Linnæus went to finish the experiment by fetching the gold himself, he was utterly at a loss where to find it. The man with the wand assisted him and told him that it could not lie in the way they were going, but quite the contrary; so pursued the direction of the wand, and actually dug out the gold. Linnæus adds, that such another experiment would be sufficient to make a proselyte of him."

The explanation of this case by the

incredulous would, of course, be that the owner of the wand had made a private mark of his own, and thus knew better than Linnæus where the gold lay. This is probable, but we have no evidence in support of the explanation.

The divining-rod, however, is not used only in districts which are known to abound in metalliferous deposits, when minerals are being searched for, but has frequently been used by prospectors in new countries. Thus we recall that Captains Burton and Cameron in their book about the Gold Coast, tell how the rod was used by the early British explorers on the Gambia River. One Richard Jobson, in 1620, landed and searched various parts of the country, armed with mercury, nitric acid, large crucibles, and a divining-rod. He washed the sand and examined the rocks beyond the Falls of Barraconda, with small success for a long time. At last, however, he found what he declared to be "the mouth of the mine itself, and found gold in such abundance as surprised him with joy and admiration." But what part the divining-rod played in the discovery is not related, and for the rest "the mine" has disappeared as mysteriously as it was discovered. No one else has seen it, and all the gold that now comes from the Gambia River is a small quantity of dust washed from the mountain-ridges of the interior. It is curious, however, to find civilised Europeans carrying the divining-rod to one of the districts where, according to Mr. Andrew Lang, it has no analogue among the primitive savages.

We have mentioned, on the authority of Mr. Thiselton-Dyer, some of the districts of England in which the divining-rod is still more or less used. But something of its more extended use may be learned from Mr. Hilderic Friend. That writer informs us of a curious custom of the hop-pickers of Kent and Sussex for ascertaining where they shall stand to pick. One of them cuts as many slips of hazel as there are "bins" in the garden, and on these he cuts notches from one upwards. Each picker then draws a twig, and his standing is fixed by the number upon it. This is certainly an interesting instance of the divination by twigs reduced to practical ends. The same writer regards the familiar "old-wife" fortune-telling by tea-leaves as merely another variation of the old superstition. It certainly seems to have some analogy to some of the practices to which we have briefly referred,

and one finds another analogy in the Chinese custom of divining by straws.

The divining-rod of England is described by Mr. Friend much in the same way as does Mr. Dyer. But, according to Mr. Friend, hazel was not always, although it has for a long time been the favourite wood. Elder, at any rate, is strictly forbidden, as deemed incapable of exhibiting magical powers. In Wiltshire, and elsewhere, Mr. Friend knows of the magic rod having been used recently for detecting water. It must be cut at some particular time when the stars are favourable, and "in cutting it, one must face the east, so that the rod shall be one which catches the first rays of the morning sun, or, as some say, the eastern and western sun must shine through the fork of the rod, otherwise it will be good for nothing."

The same superstition prevails in China with regard to rods cut from the magic peach-tree. In Prussia, Mr. Friend says, hazel-rods are cut in spring, and when harvest comes, they are placed in crosses over the grain to keep it good for years, while in Bohemia the rod is used to cure fevers. A twig of apple-tree is, in some parts, considered as good as a hazel rod, but it must be cut by the seventh son of a seventh son. Brand records that he has known ash-twigs used, and superstitiously regarded in some parts of England; but the hazel is more generally supposed to be popular with the fairies, or whoever may be the mysterious spirits who guide the diviner's art. Hence probably the name common in some parts, of Witch-Hazel, although philologists will have it that the true derivation is Wych. In Germany, the witch-hazel is the zauber-streuch, or the magic tree, and it is probable that both witch and wych are from the Anglo-Saxon wic-en, to bend. It is curious, at any rate, that while in olden times a witch was called wicce, the mountain-ash, which, as we have seen, had supposed occult virtues, was formerly called wice. Whether this root has any connection with another name by which the magic wand is known—viz., the wishing-rod—may be doubted, but there is clearly a close connection between the hazel-twigg of superstitious England and the niebelungen-rod of Germany, which gave to its possessor power over all the world.

Of the employment of the divining-rod for the detection of criminals there are many cases on record, but the most famous in comparatively recent times is

that of Jacques Aymar, of Lyons. The full details of the doings of this remarkable person are given by Mr. Baring-Gould in his *Curious Myths of the Middle Ages*; but the story as told there is too long for us to repeat. It will do to serve our purposes to quote the following condensed version by another writer: "On July 5, 1692, a vintner and his wife were found dead in the cellar of their shop at Lyons. They had been killed by blows from a hedging-knife, and their money had been stolen. The culprits could not be discovered, and a neighbour took upon him to bring to Lyons a peasant out of Dauphiné named Jacques Aymar, a man noted for his skill with the divining-rod. The Lieutenant-Criminel and the Procureur du Roi took Aymar into the cellar, furnishing him with a rod of the first wood that came to hand. According to the Procureur du Roi the rod did not move till Aymar reached the very spot where the crime had been committed. His pulse then beat, and the wand twisted rapidly. Guided by the wand, or by some internal sensation, Aymar now pursued the track of the assassins, entered the court of the Archbishop's palace, left the town by the bridge over the Rhone, and followed the right bank of the river. He reached a gardener's house, which he declared the men had entered, and some children confessed that three men—whom they described—had come into the house one Sunday morning. Aymar followed the track up the river, pointed out all the places where the men had landed, and, to make a long story short, stopped at last at the door of the prison of Beaucaire. He was admitted, looked at the prisoners, and picked out as the murderer a little hunchback, who had just been brought in for a small theft. The hunchback was taken to Lyons, and he was recognised on the way by the people at all the stages where he had stopped. At Lyons he was examined in the usual manner, and confessed that he had been an accomplice in the crime, and had guarded the door. Aymar pursued the other culprits to the coast, followed them by sea, landed where they had landed, and only desisted from his search when they crossed the frontier. As for the hunchback, he was broken on the wheel, being condemned on his own confession."

This is briefly the story of Jacques Aymar, which is authenticated by various eye-witnesses, and of which many explanations have been tendered from time to

time. Mr. Baring-Gould commits himself to no definite expression of opinion, but says: "I believe that the imagination is the principal motive force in those who use the divining-rod; but, whether it is so solely, I am unable to decide. The powers of nature are so mysterious and inscrutable, that we must be cautious in limiting them, under abnormal conditions, to the ordinary laws of experience." As, however, Jacques Aymar failed ignominiously under all the subsequent trials to which he was subjected, the most reasonable explanation of his success, with regard to the Lyons murder, is that he was by nature a clever detective, and that he was favoured by circumstances after he once caught a clue.

To return to the employment of the divining-rod in England, we find numerous instances of its application in searching for water, and these instances happen to be among the best authenticated of any on record. Not very long ago a writer in the Times boldly declared that he had himself seen the rod successfully used in seeking for water. He had even tried it himself, with the determination that the rod should not be allowed to twist "even if an ocean rolled under his feet". But, he confessed, that it did twist in spite of him, and that at the place was found a concealed spring! Then it is recorded of Lady Milbanke, mother of Lord Byron's wife, that she had found a well by the violent twisting of the twig held in the orthodox way in her hand—turning so violently, indeed, as almost to break her fingers. Dr. Hutton was a witness of the affair and has recorded his experience, which is quoted in a curious book called *Jacob's Rod*, published in London many years ago. This case, and others, were cited by a writer in the twenty-second volume of the *Quarterly Review*, which writer is again cited both by Mr. Baring-Gould and by Mr. Andrew Lang. De Quincey, also, asserts that he has frequently seen the divining-rod successfully used in the quest of water, and declares that "whatever science or scepticism may say, most of the tea-kettles in the vale of Wrington, North Somersetshire, are filled by Rbdomancy." Mr. Baring-Gould also quotes the case of a friend of his own, who was personally acquainted with a Scotch lady who could detect hidden springs with the twig, which was inactive in the hands of others who tried it on the same spots.

We might cite other instances did space permit, but enough has been said to

show how the magic rod, from the earliest periods, has been an instrument of supernatural attributes, and that even to this day in our own country it is still believed by some to have the special faculty of indicating the presence of minerals and water. With regard to minerals, we confess that we have come across no instances so well authenticated as those concerning the discovery of water. With regard to these last a considerable amount of haziness still exists, and without venturing to pronounce them all fictions, or productions of the imagination, it is possible to find an explanation in a theory of hydroscopy. It is held that there are some few persons who are hydrosopes by nature—that is to say, are endowed with peculiar sensations which tell them the moment they are near water, whether it be evident or hidden—a concealed water-course or a subterranean spring. If the existence of such a faculty, however exceptional, be once established, we have at once an explanation of certain successes with the divining-rod. In the meanwhile, as hydrosopes seem shrouded in considerable doubt, it is as well to preserve an "open mind" until science and the Psychological Research Society illumine the whole subject.

OUR FRIEND THE ENEMY.

I so well remember that evening when the news came that war had been declared between France and Prussia. I was at Tropez, a sleepy little village some fifty miles from Paris, where for months I had been gradually sinking into that state of blissful indifference to all events not immediately present and personal, which is the characteristic effect of country air and bucolic pursuits. Still, the news startled even me, it was so perfectly unexpected. The Curé, the Maire, the Doctor, each in turn came to assure me that it was a mistake. "No; the Prussians might not have much sense, but they had just too much to be guilty of that folly. Besides, if it were true, we must, of course, have heard some rumour of it before," they declared. I did not see the force of that last argument, I confess, for I knew well that I had not looked into a newspaper for a month, and I rather suspect that my companions were very much in the same state. Still, of course, the idea of war having been declared without our knowing of it, struck us as manifestly absurd; and as we sat and chatted

that cool, pleasant evening, we smiled at the credulity of those who believed such a wild, impossible report. Now one daily Parisian paper came to Tropez, and was punctiliously read and studied—that was the *Sous-Préfet's*. We were just discussing the propriety of paying a visit to this gentleman, for the purpose of discovering whether anything had happened that could throw light on the origin of this absurd rumour, when we saw the *Sous-Préfet* himself opening the garden-gate. He was a person whom, for my part, I was prone to shun when possible, for the unique reason that he alone in the village seemed to keep up some intercourse with the outside world—to my certain knowledge he had been at least twice to Paris in nine months—then, too, when he came to see me, he would insist upon telling me the news; thus, altogether, he was a disquieting element in our community. This evening, however, he was welcome, in spite of his grave, anxious appearance; but all our little jokes died upon our lips as, like a bird of evil omen, he took his place among us.

"Well, M. le *Sous-Préfet*, what do you think of this latest invention?" asked the *Maire*, striving to speak in his usual jovial manner.

"What invention?"

"Why, that we are going to fight the Prussians."

"Going to fight!" repeated the *Sous-Préfet* scornfully. "Are fighting, you mean;" and he drew out of his pocket the *Siccle* for the day.

Yes, there it stood, clear as day: fighting had already begun. One and all we were seized with a sudden fit of patriotism; for some days there was quite a large demand for newspapers, and when we met in the street we used actually to stop and—thing unheard-of—enquire if there was any news. Then a formal notification came to the *Sous-Préfet* that we—Englishman though I am, it was always we—had gained a great victory over the Prussians; and we rang the bells and organised quite a little round of gaiety to commemorate it. In a few days came the news of another victory, then of another, and after that the whole affair seemed slightly monotonous; so we gave up reading the papers, soon forgot to buy them, and finally, having decided that we would not ring the bells any more until Berlin was taken, we dismissed the war and everything connected with it from our minds, and settled down

into our usual state of happy semi-somnolence.

It was not but that the people of Tropez were perfectly loyal and well-disposed towards their rulers, only the war appeared to be so far away, so utterly unconnected with all the things which concerned them personally, that no wonder they forgot all about it. Then, too, they were such a simple, peace-loving, easy-going people, how could anyone expect them to feel any lively sympathy with blood-thirsty pursuits? The *Sous-Préfet*, it is true, strove from time to time to awake a ray of enthusiasm, but they only listened to his harangues with a wondering smile, and decided that the poor man's liver must be out of order for him to become thus excited about trifles. Good-natured, ease-loving M. le *Maire* was a fair type of the Tropeziens, and "Live and let live" was his only code of morals. There were no signs of poverty at Tropez, crime was almost unknown, and, more important than either, there were no quarrels, for the simple reason that there was no question of politics. No man—the *Sous-Préfet* alone excepted—was a Bourbonist, a Bonapartist, or a Republican. They were all just Tropeziens and nothing more.

Some nine months before the war, worn out mentally and physically, I had come amongst these people, and had found what I so sorely needed—rest and peace. At first they had seemed stolidly indifferent to my presence; but, by degrees, perhaps moved with pity for my helplessness—in those days I was a cripple—they fell into the habit of turning into my little garden for a chat when they were passing. Sometimes they were welcome, sometimes they were not, but I knew they meant it kindly and was not ungrateful. They furnished me, too, with a never-ceasing source of amusement; there was something so unutterably sheeplike in their gentle naïveté. So completely did they upset all my preconceived notions of the French people, that sometimes, as I listened to their quaint, simple speeches, I used to amuse myself by imagining that centuries before some Northern tribe must have wandered down and settled there; and, cut off by a hill on the one side and a river on the other, had never mingled with the people around. The summer months passed swiftly by, but the news of the taking of Berlin never came to set our bells a-ringing; still, we were not impatient, we had already forgotten our anger against those Prussians

whose audacious folly had led them so far astray. Nay, in the lovely autumn evenings we used to pity them, and hope that our soldiers would remember to be merciful, as well as brave. All this time not a word—not a thought—of disaster. The Sous-Préfet seemed to become from day to day more careworn and anxious, but no one connected that with the war. One day he excited a storm of mild witticisms by suggesting that, as we were living in a time of war, we should raise a rifle-corps; not, of course, to fight, but just as a little amusement.

Oh, how the Tropeziens laughed! The Sous-Préfet, poor man, soon gave up the thought—the idea of a Tropezien fighting was too absurd.

Our own little newspaper always spoke in a vague, hazy way of glorious victories; and as for Parisian papers, it soon became strangely difficult to get hold of them. Our stationer said that the agent forgot to send them; why, he did not know; and none of us very much cared. Thus the long sunny days of September passed, and when the first frosts began to tinge the bright foliage with purple and warm brown, not a suspicion had reached our little village that all was not well.

At length, one lovely morning, I was lounging in the sunshine, watching the people whilst they arranged their autumn fruits upon the stalls in the little market-square. I was strolling about from one group to another, and chatting to each in turn, when a man, with a strange look of terror on his face, galloped up. Now the Tropeziens never gallop—a gentle trot is the utmost they ever venture on; so we knew at once that the rider was a stranger. Moved as much by pity as by curiosity, for evidently some awful sorrow had come upon the man, the people left their stalls and gathered around him. He seemed completely exhausted, and although he strove to speak, the only words we could understand were: "Les Prussiens!" This he almost shrieked, as he pointed wildly in the direction whence he had come. A murmur of pity went round, for the idea that some trouble had driven him mad was present in all our minds. I think he must have known it, for he glared at us as if in angry despair, and asked for M. le Préfet. The Préfecture was close at hand, so we led him there at once, and lingered about in the garden, for madmen were things unheard of in Tropez.

It could not have been more than five

minutes after the poor man had gone in, before the door opened and the Sous-Préfet appeared. Had he gone mad too? White as death, with chattering teeth, he stood there trying to address us; but he could not utter a word. Grief was so plainly written on his face, that a thrill of hearty sympathy passed through the crowd, and we all pressed eagerly around him, anxious to know the nature of the stranger's revelation.

"Mes amis," the Sous-Préfet began in a low, husky voice—"mes amis," he repeated, and then, covering his face with his hands, he burst into tears and sobbed aloud with uncontrollable emotion. For one moment the little crowd stood spell-bound; then the Curé and the Maire, who had just arrived, pushed their way to the front, and, without a word, led him into the house.

We were none of us very quick at grasping at the idea of danger; but as ten minutes, a quarter of an hour, half an hour passed, and we still stood waiting in that garden, I think a presentiment of evil crept over most of us. No one spoke, no one moved, but there was a feeling that things were not as they should be, and a dogged determination to know the worst was written on most faces. At length the Maire and the Curé came out on to the little iron balcony that ran around the Préfecture. The Curé was white and haggard, whilst even good-natured M. le Maire wore an air of gravity that was almost stern.

"My friends," he began, "a great misfortune has come upon us. We have been cruelly deceived. Those victories which we celebrated with ringing of bells were Prussian victories, not French; and all the news that has been sent to us is false. We have been betrayed and beaten in every engagement. The Emperor is a prisoner. Paris is surrounded, and a detachment of Prussian troops is marching in this direction."

He paused. Men, women, and children (by this time every inhabitant of the little town was listening) stood as if striving to realise the nature of this terror that was coming upon them.

"M. le Sous-Préfet has known for some time that things were going wrong, but he was forbidden to tell us. He has asked for troops for our defence, but the authorities say we must defend ourselves." One long piteous wail arose from the crowd. "We have no time for crying. In four hours the Prussians will be here, and we

have not a soldier, not a cannon. Has anyone anything to suggest?"

The question seemed almost a mockery.

"Well, then, I will tell you what M. le Curé and I have decided; and I may as well tell you, at the same time, that M. le Sous-Préfet is far from agreeing with us. Now we cannot go out and fight the Prussians, so let us go out and welcome them. Yes; I see you are surprised, but keep this clearly in your minds: the Prussians will come here in spite of all we may do, and surely it will be better for them to come as friends than as enemies. As I told you at first, a great misfortune has come upon us, and we must face it as best we can. After all, these Prussians are human beings like ourselves; now, if you agree with me, we will go out and meet them, and tell them that we have no personal ill-feeling towards them, and"—here for a moment M. le Maire hesitated, and a gleam of amusement shot over his face, which, however, he heroically suppressed—"and in the olden times when people wished to gain the goodwill of others, they used to send them gifts. Now these Prussians will be hungry and thirsty after their long march—don't you think it would be more easy and pleasant to talk to them after they have eaten and drunk? In two hours' time we will start, and let anyone who wishes to aid in this work of reconciliation bring with him fruit, cakes, wine, or any of those things by which the heart of man is made glad."

Astonishment, wonder, terror, every feeling was now swallowed up in profound admiration for the wisdom of M. le Maire. One and all they ran to collect their peace-offerings, and when, two hours later, the procession started, there was really a goodly show. At its head marched M. le Maire, in his best frock-coat, and by his side M. le Curé; after them came a motley crowd of men, women, children—nay, even babies were not lacking. Some were bearing trays covered with cakes, tarts, and rolls; others, baskets of purple grapes; one child had a few shining red apples, another a tiny bottle of wine. There were clothes-baskets full of fine white bread; wheelbarrows, neatly covered with white linen, and tastefully arranged with flowers, sweets, sticks of chocolate—in a word, the sort of array a grateful people might send out to welcome a victorious army that had delivered them from some sore danger. And all this was going to the Prussians! In all that crowd, not a creature but what

was taking his offering, and, except the Curé, not a creature who doubted as to the spirit in which his offering would be received. Truly, blessed are the simple of heart.

Before evening I saw them return, leading their conquerors in triumph. The Prussian officers and men seemed delighted with the novelty of their position, and if a shade of contempt mingled with the amusement of the former—what matter? The Tropeziens never knew it. As for the soldiers, they munched their cakes in unquestioning content, and though their hosts understood not a word of their grunted thanks, yet when a great Uhlan lifted a wearied child on to his shoulder, or gave his arm to a tottering old woman, his action spoke plainer than words.

During the month that followed there was little peace for me. To the Tropeziens German was an unknown language, and unfortunately I knew it well, and paid the penalty of my knowledge by being at once instituted interpreter-general. The German soldiers used to bring to me little complimentary sentences to be put into French, and later in the day their host, or hostess, would come to me for answers in German. Many were the intrigues I helped to build up, and dire was the confusion that resulted, whilst the blame or the praise that fell to my share was unstinted.

Still, all went on bright and smooth as a summer-day. The German officers were good-hearted fellows, and they mingled with our people as friends and brothers. They gave soirées, to which, after very little persuasion, our demoiselles went and danced; their musicians played for us; they lent their horses, and all the time overwhelmed us with expressions of goodwill.

The only breach of etiquette I heard of was in the case of a man who bent down and kissed a pretty girl as she was coming with her *bonne* from school; and for this, many and abject were the apologies that were made.

The day the Prussians left us, I took refuge from the rain in a poor, broken-down cottage. Its owner, a decrepit old woman, kept wiping her eyes furtively as she talked to me, and by degrees I drew from her that she was weeping for the Prussians.

"Ah, sir," she said in her strange patois, "you don't know how good they've been to me! Two were billeted here, and when I knew it I almost died of fright, for

what could I do with two great soldiers in the house? But the very first day they brought in a piece of beef, and although I could not understand a word of their grunts and growls, I knew they wanted it cooked. I cooked it, and put a bit of vegetable to it; and when it was ready, sir, one of those great, fierce-looking men took it and cut it into three parts, and put one part on a plate, and set a chair before it, and then began talking to me so fierce-like—at least, it sounded fierce-like to me—I nearly died of fright again. Then, as I didn't understand him, he just took me, and led me to the chair, and put a knife and fork into my hand, and I knew then that he meant me to eat the meat. And all the time they were here, no matter what they had, they would never touch a bit of it unless I would take my part too. They used to call me 'Mutter'." And the old woman sobbed again.

From all the towns around came tales of violence, outrage, and bloodshed. In Tropez alone was peace and goodwill. Who can say that M. le Maire was not wise in his generation?

CHRONICLES OF ENGLISH COUNTIES.

MIDDLESEX. PART I.

IN dealing with Middlesex, the last on our list of English counties, the difficulty at once suggests itself as to whether London is to be included or excepted. To deal adequately with London would require greater space than is at our disposal, but to pass it over would leave but a meagre subject for the chronicler. The difficulty is one to be rather evaded than directly met, for, like King Charles's head in the memorial, London is sure to make its way into any essay upon the history of the county, which is, in fact, little more than a dependency of the great city within its borders. Even officially, London may be said to rule over the whole county, for, since an impecunious King sold the shrievalty of the county to the citizens of London, whenever there has been a case for hanging, drawing, or quartering in any part of the county, or of levy, or replevy, or any other unpleasant process to be inflicted on Her Majesty's lieges, it is the chosen officer of the citizens of London who does execution.

But long before county and city had assumed their present relations, the Bishop, who shared with the Portreeve the secular

government of the City, held almost undisputed sway over the country round about. Whether there had ever ceased to be a Bishop in London since the first establishment of the Christian faith in Britain under the Roman sway, is a matter of some doubt. When he first comes into full historic light we find him a prelate high above the rest in power and influence, and little inferior in anything but ecclesiastical rank to the metropolitan of Canterbury. Reminders of the former territorial importance of the Church in Middlesex may be found in the prebends of St. Paul's, many of which take their titles from manors and lordships in the surrounding country beyond the city walls. So ancient are these prebendal endowments that some of their estates, situated farther afield on the Essex coast, have disappeared under the waves in the course of ages, and have left only a memory behind.

When we remember that the diocese of London is nothing else but the ancient kingdom of the East Saxons, and that this kingdom so-called, was, perhaps, in its turn, only the survival of the former Roman diocese, we may be led into speculations on the continuity of civic as well as ecclesiastical life hereabouts, which have hitherto no great authority to support them. But, anyhow, in Middlesex, the Bishop, whether by grants from pious Saxon chiefs, or in virtue of his high office, was something like a prince, and long before the Conquest he held one of the pleasantest and most fertile of the meadow tracts about London. In Fulham, to quote from Domesday, the Bishop of London had forty hides, and the buildings that clustered there, the lowly roofs, beneath which was much good cheer, opened their hospitable doors upon a fertile plain of meadows and orchards, interspersed with rich arable tracts, where the ploughman drove his team afield, secure under the sacred banner of the Church. And there is still ploughing going on at Fulham; even in this very year of grace the present writer saw a ploughman—actually a ploughman, at work with his plough and team, while all about the carcasses of unfinished houses and the rubbish of half-made roads enfold the patch of country.

Even now, when all things are changing, you may look down from the arches of the District Railway upon something like a country village. The pleasant, warm-looking, red-bricked houses are there, with their roomy gardens, with arbours and pleasure-houses, where one might still eat a pippin in summer-time with much

satisfaction. Among them rises the grey old church tower, and beyond are the tall elms that screen the Bishop's palace. Pleasant, too, was the glimpse of rural quiet, even when red omnibuses and dusty hansoms were rolling by, a glimpse beneath the porte-cochère—the square archway, so to speak—of the old-fashioned house that stood athwart the Fulham end of Putney Bridge; a house that seemed a last reminder of the old-fashioned bridges, with houses perched picturesquely over the tide, and on to which the traveller passed sometimes under a prison-gate, with, perhaps, a grizzly head or two impaled upon its spikes; sometimes beneath the groined roof of a chapel, where some favourite saint invited the wayfarer's votive offering.

But old Putney Bridge will soon be a thing of the past. It had neither antiquity nor beauty to recommend it, but still it will be missed, and the more pretentious granite arches that succeed it will be long ere they acquire such a crust of old associations. And just where crosses the primitive wooden bridge the river takes one of the most gracious aspects of its course. Above and below, for some miles, the banks are often uncomely and even gruesome to contemplate, but here, with woods, and lawns, and the noble sweep of the stream, we get a glimpse of what a grand river should be like. And that this should be such a pleasant corner we owe, no doubt, to the old Churchmen who made their home here, and dug and planted for other men's posterity.

There were swamps and marshes between Fulham and Chelsea, where there was hawking, no doubt, in the olden days, where the heron waded in the marshy streams, and where there was abundance of fowl, both great and small. Indeed, it was as the home of the fowl that Fulham, they say, first took its name, although this may be doubted, being rather too vivid an imaginative flight for the sturdy Saxon. A brook that rises on Wormwood Scrubs, and finds its way, if it can, among a network of sewers to join the Thames opposite Battersea, forms the boundary between old Fulham and Chelsea; and what a brook it is when it reaches the river in the form of a sullen tidal creek, where barges lie up on the black mud—a fitting place for Mr. Quilp to take up his abode.

There is always something to show for Chelsea in the handsome red-brick hospital for old soldiers; the plan of which kindly Nell Gwyn was the first, it is said,

to suggest to her royal lover. But is there anything left of the suburban village to which so many of the court and town resorted for fresh air? "Pray, are no fine buns sold here in our town, was it not R-r-r-r-rare Chelsea Buns?" writes Swift to Stella, from his little room in Chelsea. "Six shillings a week for one silly room, with confounded coarse sheets." And in May, he records the hay almost fit to be mowed. And then he rows across with fine ladies and others to hear the nightingales at Vauxhall. One night at eleven o'clock he is tempted by the ripples of the water, and went down in night-gown and slippers to swim in the river.

There is just a morsel left of old Chelsea, a fragment of High Street, with the stamp of individuality, and two rival bun-houses to keep up the traditions of the warm and saffron-flavoured bun. Old Cheyne Walk still retains its gracious outline, with the elms under which Carlyle would sometimes smoke his pipe at nights; and the comely brick church is always a landmark. But of the great people who lived here in their grand houses, only a name here and there of street or terrace recalls the memory. Lady Jane Cheyne sleeps in the church hard-by, who gave her name to the walk, where perhaps she might be met in dim brocade some starry night by one gifted with second-sight. She was of the proud Cavendish blood, daughter of the Cavalier chief who fought Tom Fairfax in the north, and she married plain Charles Cheyne, who afterwards became Viscount Newhaven. Cheyne's house had once been a royal jointure-house; and here had lived Catherine Parr for a while with her handsome Admiral, and with the Princess Elizabeth under her charge, too sprightly and frolicsome for the much-married Catherine. A few years later here lived the widowed Duchess of Northumberland, who had seen her eldest son mounting the steps of a throne only to mount still higher to the scaffold. And yet a mother of fortunate sons and daughters—of the good Earl of Warwick, of Elizabeth's favourite, Leicester, and of the mother of Philip Sidney. Long before, the old manor-house had belonged, with the adjacent lands, to the reverend abbot of Westminster; for all about Middlesex, what St. Paul had missed, St. Peter had gained—a division of territory which perhaps gave rise to the well-known adage about robbing the one to pay the other. Last of all, in this strange, eventful history,

appears Sir Hans Sloane, preserved to fame in Sloane Street and Hans Place, who came to Chelsea in his old age, with his fine collections of curios and antiquities, which at his death went to form the nucleus of the British Museum.

But here we are getting fairly into London and must retrace our steps. If we took the county according to its official divisions, we should now take a complete circuit of the City, for the Hundred of Ossulstone is simply the belt of land surrounding old London, and now comprises some of the busiest parts of the metropolis, its divisions consisting of Westminster, Kennington, Holborn, Finsbury, and the Tower. And being covered with houses, and ruled by countless local bodies, under numberless Acts of Parliament, the hundred has disappeared altogether from public view, and the sufferers from popular disturbances are puzzled enough how to enforce their legal claims against it. But, apart from these considerations, the existence of this particular hundred and its boundaries are of some interest, as showing pretty clearly that the divisions of the county, which, although popularly ascribed to Alfred the Great, are, no doubt, much earlier, were made with reference to London as a centre; that the county, in fact, was made to fit the town, the reverse being generally the case in Teutonic institutions.

It will be more convenient, however, to take the chief highways which branch out from London as a centre, beginning with the great road to the West—the Bath road as it used to be called—which may be said to start from the White Horse Cellar in Piccadilly and to end by

Famed Bolerium, cape of storms.

It is only in comparatively recent days that the western road took its outlet through Kensington and Hammersmith. Stukely says that the Roman road from Chichester crossed the Thames at Staines, where it was joined by other great roads, and passed through Brentford to Turnham Green, and over Stamford Bridge, where Stamford Brook still waters a patch of half-open common, and so by the Acton road into London. And this was the route generally followed by travellers, till the age of coaches commenced and turnpikes were in the ascendant. A fragment of the old road may be, perhaps, recognised in the Goldhawk Road, which takes its name from the extinct manor of Coldhawe, and not from the public-house sign

of The Gilded Hawk—and which starts as if it meant to be an important thoroughfare, but dies away into nothingness just about that same Stamford Brook. It was a rough and broken way, we may imagine, about Cromwell's time, when the Lord Protector, riding homewards from the west, narrowly escaped an ambush laid for him in the wilds of Shepherd's Bush.

But to follow the more modern track. We may leave Kensington, to its specialists, who discourse often pleasantly enough about the old Court suburb, although in its courtly functions it does not seem to have arrived at any great antiquity. And we may leave Hammersmith, which local pronunciation would lead one to suppose had been Emma's Mead, but which was probably Hamon's Mead, with only a glance at its convents—now all new and furnished up, but in themselves the first monastic communities established in England since the Reformation. It is said, indeed, that a community of nuns has existed at Hammersmith uninterruptedly since Roman Catholic times; being unendowed with landed property, it was overlooked or not thought worth disturbing at the dissolution of religious houses. But the familiar picture which the name of Hammersmith recalls, the graceful suspension bridge with its brown towers and its steamboat-pier in the centre—this will no more be seen by mortal eyes—its chains are gone, its towers are falling fast, and what we may see in its place Heaven only knows.

We must turn aside for a glimpse at Chiswick, with its church by the riverbank—a brand-new church, but with the old tower still standing—and surrounded by the old graveyard with its tombs of Hogarth and Louthenburg, and close by a comely old-fashioned Mall. Great stretches of high brick wall conceal the Duke of Devonshire's villa, built upon the site of a house once occupied by Robert Carr, Earl of Somerset, whose intrigue with the Countess of Essex, who subsequently became his wife, formed one of those unsavoury romances which delighted the public as much then as now. Here in sullen retirement and disgrace the unhappy woman ended her days in the now loathed companionship of the man for whom she had sacrificed everything. The Earl survived his partner for many years, and was obliged to mortgage his house in order to pay his daughter's marriage-portion to her husband, Lord Russell. In the ducal villa

of modern times have often gathered the most distinguished representatives of the various worlds of arts and politics, and here by a curious coincidence died Fox and Canning, visitors only at the house of a friend; to whom death came in his turn without ceremony.

Almost as far as Turnham Green, which is the inland portion of Chiswick parish, King Charles the First had reached on his victorious march from the west, when everyone thought that he was destined to enter London in triumph and send all the Parliament folk to the Tower, and perhaps to the scaffold; when Milton, stout Puritan as he was, could only frame a sonnet to deprecate the fury of the stormers.

Lift not thy spear against the muse's bowler.

But Lord Essex, with twenty-four thousand men, marched out this way, and encamped on Turnham Green, and the auspicious moment having been lost, Charles retreated slowly and reluctantly to Kingston.

Soon we reach Gunnersbury, originally Gunyldsbury, and perhaps the home of the Danish princess Gunyld, which, as Norden says in his *Speculum*, "is well scytuate for wood, ayre, and water". Gunnersbury House, now occupied by Baron Rothschild, is a fine old Jacobean mansion in origin, built by Webbe, a pupil of Inigo Jones, but a good deal altered and enlarged, with a chapel built for the use of the Princess Amelia, who at one time occupied the house. Gunnersbury Lane is still very much of a country lane, and the county round about is still a little countrified, while orchards and market-gardens dispute the ground with rows of houses, the skirmishing line of greater London.

It is not easy to write enthusiastically of Brentford—

tedious town,
For dirty streets and white-legged chickens known.

Its long dull street, where every other house almost is a tavern, seems to the pedestrian as if it would never come to an end. A wayside town, it owed its straggling length to the wayfaring traffic of the coaching age, and there are still more carriers' carts passing through than you might think, to and from the Old Bailey, while on market-nights there is a long procession of waggons all night long towards Covent Garden—waggons which return next day loaded up with manure from the London stables. The river Brent, from which the place takes its name, has some historical interest in respect of

its ford, which has often been hotly disputed for the defence of London against enemies coming from the west. To say nothing of battles with the Danes, too remote and uncertain to inspire much interest, there was a brisk engagement here between Royalists and Parliamentarians, when the latter were driven from the defences they had raised, and London, as we have just now related, seemed at the mercy of the King.

The Brent River rises a good way to the north of London in the valley between Highgate and Finchley, where a cluster of houses named Brent Street gives us a clue to the name of the river. Some British dwellings or Roman villas probably stood there, which our Saxon ancestors, with characteristic amenity, destroyed by fire, and named the place in commemoration of their exploit, Brent Street. And thus the Celtic name of the stream being lost, the newcomers called the stream, from the place it flowed from, Brent Brook or Brent River.

Isleworth was probably Thistleworth—a grand feeding-ground for donkeys, which are still reared in the neighbourhood. And now we approach the quondam heath of Hounslow, once the terror of travellers for its highwaymen, but now nearly all enclosed. To the right lies Heston, a pleasant village enough, and Osterley Park with its solid, red-brick mansion.

A somewhat dull and phlegmatic country lies before us, highly cultivated, but more fertile, perhaps, than fragrant—a country without meadows or wild-flowers; the smallest primrose-root would be ruthlessly extracted for the hawk's basket—where gangs of women, with the mud of the streets on their broken boots and patched garments, are weeding or hoeing in long lines.

Bedfont is noteworthy if only for its curious yew-trees in the churchyard, neatly trimmed into the faint presentment of two fighting-cocks—birds in which, according to tradition, the parson of the parish once took a fond delight. But after Bedfont all is blank for miles—straight road, stumpy trees, stiff hedges, deep ditches, the only eminence a distant railway-bridge—till we reach Staines, a town which is accurately described in gazetteers as neat, but which has no other attraction, except its convenience as a boating-station on the river.

Staines, anciently Stan, takes its name from the old boundary-stone of the City's

jurisdiction on the river—a stone that, if it stands in its original position, probably marks the site of the old Roman bridge over the river. The Roman name, indeed, of Staines, Pontes, would imply that there was more than one bridge. It may have been that the river then flowed in more than one channel, and was crossed by a series of bridges; but anyhow here has always been an important crossing over the river.

To explore the peninsula cut off by the highway between Brentford and Staines, we may first take a cross-country road to Ashford, less known than its bustling south-eastern rival. The first cause of Ashford, the ford over the little river—once the Esk, no doubt—varies the dulness of the way; a pretty scene, with a peaked bridge and a run of water beneath, with reeds and water-weeds, and sometimes a water-hen splashing about, and all with a background of dark firs. Ashford itself comes next, with villas and cottages about the little church, and bigger houses scattered about in the midst of lawns and gardens. Close by is a kind of wilderness, called Littleton, with gorse and thorn-bushes, and swarming with rabbits, while some fine old trees give a kind of dignity to the scene. Littleton looks interesting, and as if it had a history, but nobody seems to know anything about it.

Laleham, too, is a nice little village, on a pleasant and "fishy" looking bend of the river, where the banks are shaded with ash and willow, and rows of the inevitable elm. And here are old-fashioned red-brick houses with roomy gardens. Ponds and ducks abound, and ditches conduct the drainage of the district in a primitive way towards the river. Then there is a rambling old church, very ancient and much patched, and an enviable parsonage all covered with syringa. Happy, too, is Laleham in that it has no history of a definite character, although tradition speaks of a certain river meadow that was gained for the parish by the pious care of its inhabitants in burying a drowned person found upon its banks.

The pleasant little riverside towns of Shepperton and Sunbury have little to contribute to the general history of the county, but Hampton, with its splendid green and adjacent royal palace, seems to invite a little delay. Long was Moulsey Hurst, close by, a kind of Campus Martius, where, in the old pugilistic days of Cribb, and Spring, and the rest, many

a well-fought battle was decided within the roped enclosure. There, too, is the racecourse, once almost the only suburban racecourse of any note, and that note of rather a minor key; with little to tempt the turfite, but dear to the costermonger and sporting butcher and baker of the period. But what a wonderful change has come over the scene, with Kempton Park, and Sandown, and Croydon, with races all the year round, and thousands of pounds given away in prizes, and still more thousands won and lost over every race, while wealth and fashion crowd the stands and enclosures, and the gate-money pours in with ever-increasing stream! Assuredly, whatever else may be in decay, the turf has suffered no hard times.

This, by the way, suggested by the aspect of Moulsey Hurst; but it is needless to remark that the serious interest of Hampton is concentrated in its palace.

The quaint-looking palace, a sort of Dutch Versailles on a small scale, retains one quadrangle, which bears the marks of its first founder, Cardinal Wolsey, and with its trim lawns and flower-beds, and geometric avenues, looks, on a bright summer's day, a really going concern, which it would be easy to people with the actors of other times. It is not altogether uninhabited; soldiers mount guard at the gates; within the sunny garden-borders old ladies with their lap-dogs are wheeled about in Bath-chairs; nor are there wanting grace and beauty to brighten up the sombre old windows. It must be a kind of splendid misery to be lodged in Hampton Court, the rooms often dark and low, the kitchen a long way off from the dining-room—in the next block, perhaps; and then there are the ghosts at night. Sometimes we may fancy anterooms, and presence-chambers, and secret closets, all illumined by a spectral kind of light, as gilded coaches dash silently up, and pages and equerries throng the staircases and entrances.

At Hampton you have a glimpse of the royalty of the past, the life en plein jour of the King or Queen, when their rising and their going to bed were so many half-public performances of high interest and importance, when the gentlemen and ladies of the bedchamber actually performed the duties of their office, and royalty shivered in the cold, while noble dames disputed the right to hand over the robe de nuit. There is the royal four-poster, there the clock by which the King regulated his slumbers. With all this cumbrous etiquette his

majesty had sometimes to rise early and start upon long journeys, with hard knocks, marching, and cannonading at the end of them. There were backstair plots, too, and mutterings, and, altogether, life at Hampton Court was not a bed of roses.

But all this is long ago. Hardly one of our present dynasty has used the place as a residence, and it is with William the Third and his Queen that the chief associations of the court are connected. But always we shall remember Wolsey there, the proud Cardinal who first saw the advantages of the site, and who must have deeply regretted the sacrifice to prudence that he made in handing over the place to his royal master. Henry himself is a constant presence there, now with his cruel frown, and now with his falsely jovial air. Here came his Queens, one after the other. It was a sort of ogre's castle for them, where they might in fancy see the bleaching bones of their predecessors. Queen Bess did not care for the place; the air was too stagnant for her. But the Stuarts loved it well, the merry monarch the least of all, perhaps.

The pictures, too, that line the walls—the fine collection of portraits chiefly—require a lengthened study, and are of priceless interest to those who have become acquainted with the originals in the history of their own land. But, somehow, a hasty glance seems all that is possible at Hampton Court. You promise yourself to go again often, but you do not go. There seems a spell about the place, so that no cunningly-laid plans to reach it ever succeed. It must be visited, if at all, "promiscuous like".

And now we come to Twickenham—le vieux Twick of the bourgeois monarch who, as Duke of Orleans, lived here so long, and gave his title to Orleans House. The house, where lately the Orleans Club held its aristocratic revels, is not without its interest. Here once came Princess Anne for country air, with that one boy of hers who, among her flock of children, alone passed safely the perils of infancy. He would have been King of England had he lived, and changed the face of history, perhaps, this young Duke of Gloucester, with his little boy regiment, instead of wooden soldiers, to march up and down the formal paths and round about the cabbage-beds.

Two notable veterans shared the rest of the century between them in this same house.

Jamie Johnstone, of Warriston, whose father had lost his head, with his patron,

Argyle, in the troubles of 1663, and who was now Secretary of State and Lord Register for Scotland, was one of them. Here he entertained Queen Caroline, George the Second's faithful consort, building an octagon room in honour of the occasion. But the good man died in 1737, just about the time of the Porteous Riots; so that Jeanie Deans could not have seen him when she made her famous visit to London. He was ninety years of age when he died, and had lived under ten sovereigns, if one may count the two Cromwells. He might have been taken in his nurse's arms to the execution of Charles the First, and lived to hob-a-nob with poor Queen Caroline—surely a life that must have been charged with strange memories.

The other veteran was a stout and florid English figure, a brave, old-fashioned Admiral, Sir George Pocock, who, after exchanging many hard knocks with the French in the Indian Seas, had the good luck to capture the Havannah, and retired to Twickenham to enjoy his laurels and his prize-money. Kempenfelt—brave Kempenfelt, who went down, with twice five hundred men, in the Royal George—was one of his captains, and another was Norfolk Jervis, who afterwards won a peerage at Camperdown. Pocock himself was a nephew of that unhappy Admiral Byng who was court-martialled and shot, "pour encourager les autres". A notable thing, too, is it that Sir George had under his orders the gallant Thunder-bomb, and knew something about the unhappy Billie Taylor and his ladie faire. Pocock died when the French Revolution was in full swing, and illustrious exiles were coming in shoals to our shores.

One of the first to settle at Twickenham was Louis Philippe, a fugitive from the revolutionary army, in which he had held high command. His two younger brothers, the Duc de Montpensier and the Comte de Beaujolais, who joined him here on their release from prison, died in their sombre place of exile. But Louis Philippe lived here, at intervals, till he returned to France at the Royalist restoration. Hardly, however, had he unpacked his trunks, when he came flying back, contentedly enough, to le vieux Twick for the hundred days of Napoleon's last struggle. The house was a resort of the Orleans family till 1875, when the Duc d'Aumale finally abandoned it to the clubbites, but when Louis Philippe returned for his last exile, in 1848, he took up his abode at Claremont, which was assigned

to him by King Leopold of Belgium, who had a life-interest in the place in right of his late wife, the hapless Princess Charlotte.

More congenial, perhaps, are the memories of Pope, in his villa by the banks of silver Thames, and of Walpole at Strawberry Hill, the house still existing, but the grounds all cut up into building sites; memories that we must leave for another chapter.

VICTIMS.

By THEO GIFT.

Author of "*Lil Lorimer*," "*An Alibi and its Price*,"
Etc., Etc.

CHAPTER VI. A VILLA AT WEYBRIDGE.

"VERA, don't forget that Naomi is going to have some friends this evening, and that you are to make yourself look pretty," said Leah, with something more than her usual briskness one afternoon.

They were not at the Josephs's house in Kensington. Mr. Josephs had gone off with his wife to the meeting of the British Association in Dublin, and Naomi, whose husband had taken a villa at Weybridge for the summer, had invited all the younger members of the family—Vera included—to come down to her there for the weeks of their parents' absence.

"It will be a treat to get you to myself for even so short a time, Leah, after your being away so long," the elder sister said coaxingly; "and as for your friend, I shall be delighted to have her. My babies have struck up a tremendous alliance with her; and only yesterday Alix was saying to me, 'Do ask F'ench 'ung lady to 'tay here, mummy. Her tells such nice fairly 'tories to I.' Come all of you to-morrow."

And they had done so without more ado; not being a family at all given to making difficulties, or standing on ceremony with one another, but being always prepared to give or take with equal readiness.

To Vera, indeed, the overflowing heartiness and jollity, the keen banter and family jokes, the freedom from all constraint, and absolute confidence which reigned in both households, were a perpetual and never flagging wonder, the effect of which, however, was to make her at first even more shy and retiring—with Leah as well as the others—than she had ever been before.

"But you see it is all so new and different to me," she had said plaintively once when the latter expostulated with her. "Even you yourself, Leah. Not that you

are less nice to me than you were. Indeed, I think that in some ways you seem nicer than ever, but at St. Tryphine your niceness all appeared to belong to me, to be for me, and no one else; just as you were not like anyone else, but a beautiful fairy come down into my world to make it bright for me; while here you belong to your parents, and brothers, and sisters, and a lot of other people, and they belong to you, and are all a little like you, and you like them, and it is I who have come into your world—the fairyland world—only, instead of being a brightness, I am a dull little patch there as a mortal should be," and Vera laughed a trifle sadly.

Leah laughed too, putting her arms round the girl as she did so.

"Why, Vera, what a fanciful little flatterer you are! And such poetical fancies, too! But, do you know, you are not really flattering me, after all, when you show me that you made me more at home with you in Brittany than we are doing with you here. Why should you call yourself a dull little patch? You are not so to us, and you would not feel so yourself if you would be only less shy, and would talk and enjoy yourself, instead of hiding away in corners and peeping out with your great, solemn eyes like a white mouse in a cage of magpies. Mother said only the other day that she was afraid you were not happy here."

"Oh, but I am; and I did not mean 'dull' in that sense," cried Vera eagerly. "That is just what I enjoy, looking at and listening to you all, and keeping quiet myself. It is just like a play to me with a lot of scenes, or a long gallery of pictures; only they are all pleasant pictures and scenes, and I never get tired of them as I might of real ones. Please, please tell your mother so, dear Leah, or perhaps she will think I am ungrateful, and will want to send me away."

"Here she is, so you had better tell her yourself. She is such a sceptical old woman she mightn't believe me," said Leah gaily; but, indeed, both she and the others soon found out that Vera's shyness and silence did not mean unhappiness, and that the only thing which really distressed her was to be forced out of it, and made to come into the foreground, and mingle with the talk and chaff of the lively young people about her.

Her great delight on the other hand was, as Naomi said, to get hold of that lady's three younger children, and pet and

play with them by the hour together; a fancy of which those young Turks soon became aware, and which they turned to account by riding roughshod over her in every sense of the word, galloping to Banbury Cross on her foot, trapping her between four chairs as a bear, chasing her along the garden walks as a rabbit, riding triumphantly on her back with the thick, plaited tail of her hair clutched in their little hands to hold on by, or cuddled down in her lap to be sung to, with a luxurious pleasure which was more than reciprocated by the lonely little girl, who had never lived in a house with little children in it before, and thought each of their words and ways more charming than the last.

For their parents she had much less admiration. Naomi, it is true, was not unlike Leah in many ways; and was a very pretty, sensible young woman, overflowing with good nature to everyone, and prepared to feel special kindness towards anyone who had the good taste to admire her children; but she had not her sister's advantages either in the way of natural talent or education, and having had to deal with the rougher and more prosaic side of life in her early youth, had in these later days of prosperity taken more ardently to the creature-comforts of life than is perhaps consistent with a high degree of refinement or intellectual culture. And creature-comforts, combined with a healthy capacity for enjoying them to the utmost, have a tendency to make the female figure spread, to double the classic chin, and bring an undue floridness to the cheeks. Naomi did not like getting fat. She had had a particularly small waist in the days of her girlhood, and that portion of her she managed to retain of very medium size by dint of rigorous lacing; but the result, as regards the line of beauty, was hardly perhaps as successful as might have been desired; and her mother had remonstrated more than once on the process.

"Better let yourself go, dear," she said kindly. "It can't be healthy to take yourself in so much; and I'm sure it is that which sends the blood to your face." But Naomi was unpersuadable.

"My dearest mother, I should be a porpoise! How very brutal of you! And my waist is only just decent as it is. If I were to let it get a bit bigger, Lucas would be so disgusted with me he'd go off with some other young woman. Don't you think he would, Miss St. Laurent? I know he admires you."

Vera thought Mrs. Lucas vulgar, and wondered she could be Leah's sister, or that Mrs. Josephs should seem equally fond and proud of both her daughters. She did not at all understand it when the tender-hearted mother would say, with tears in her eyes, after a visit from her eldest girl:

"Ah, no one knows what Naomi is to me, who didn't see her in the days when she and I had to fight through our worst troubles together. That child! I can see her now, a wee thing of seven, toasting her father's bread, or staggering up and down the room with baby Leah in her arms so as to set me free to see to the other house duties. And when she was bigger, the times and times she's gone to school with only a bit of dry bread in her satchel that there might be more butter left for the little ones, or pretended not to care about milk in her coffee at breakfast! The Lord bless my girl! 'Tis a righteous reward that she should enjoy her life now."

Neither did Vera return Mr. Lucas's admiration; though her indifference to men—a peculiarity which even Leah could not help remarking wonderingly—made her less keen to detect the special faults in him.

After all they were not very heinous ones; for it certainly could not be put down as a fault, of malice on his part that Mr. Lucas only stood five foot nothing in his boots, and that the little legs terminating in the said boots were so thin and curved as to suggest his having been a weakly babe set down to toddle too early in life; nor that his nose was unduly large, and his chin disproportionately small for the rest of his features; while his conversation dealt so exclusively with sale and barter, with rise in this and fall in that, that Vera, who, like most girls, thought nothing so uninteresting as money matters, quite sympathised with Mr. Josephs when he used to say:

"Naomi's good man is coming to tea! Then bring me mine into my study, one of you. I've got a delicate experiment to make this evening, and if the word 'city' once gets into my brain there's no more hope for science in it."

To do him justice, however, Mr. Lucas never wilfully obtruded his own special topic on his father-in-law, for whom, as for all his wife's family, he entertained the warmest respect and admiration. He was a City man, of course, and a City man, "pur et simple," understanding nothing so well as the making of money, succeeding very well in the manufacture, and enjoying it hugely when made. But

more even than money—or the making of it—did Mr. Lucas worship his wife and adore his children; nor did the assiduity of his grubblings in the City show itself, as with many Christians, in stinginess at home and close-fistedness generally. He was really an excellent young man, generous to his family, charitable to the poor—the Jewish poor, “bien entendu”—a regular attendant at the synagogue, keeping all the fasts and feasts of the law with the greatest regularity, and being far more orthodox generally than the men of the Josephs family. Also, utterly prosaic and commonplace as he might be, he had a weakness, or, rather, a passion, a romance of his very own, so delicious, all-absorbing, and consolatory, that, even though “shirtings had fallen again” and “blue winseys were a drug in the market”, he could still find peace and joy during those months of the year when the seasons permitted him to devote part at any rate of his evenings to the enjoyment of it. I allude to that sport which an ill-natured person has somewhat flippantly described as “a hook at one end of a line and a fool at the other.”

It was for the indulgence of this pastime that Mr. Lucas had gone to the expense of the Weybridge villa; though it is not to be denied that he got it cheaper than anyone else could have done, its owner being in his debt and glad to economise abroad for a time; and anyone who had seen him emerge from the station of an evening and hurry home, smug and City-like, in his tightly-fitting frock-coat, top hat, and patent leather boots, to sally forth again a few minutes later, clad in a shabby and worn-out suit of checked flannel, a cap of the same material on his head, with ear-flaps tied down under his chin, a disreputable old fish-basket in one hand and a bundle of rods, etc., in the other, would hardly have known him for the same person. This, however, was Mr. Lucas in his highest and happiest moments, just as the subsequent hours, which he passed, silent, motionless, and almost breathless, on a cane chair in a punt moored about half a mile down the river, were those of the purest and most unalloyed enjoyment he ever experienced. So well this was understood, indeed, by the whole family, that his eldest boy and the two young Josephs looked on the privilege of a seat in the punt, and a miniature rod of their own, as something akin to the “golden bar of heaven”; while his wife, though delighting in nothing so much as the society of her neighbours on

these summer afternoons, would have given up every engagement in the world rather than not be at home when her Albert came back from town, so as to see that his rods and other paraphernalia were ready in the hall, and give him a cup of tea and a kiss before he departed to his beloved punt, and she to some river picnic or afternoon tennis-party; at which latter, though she did not play herself, she could sit in the shade chatting to other matron friends, and think how much more gracefully Leah played than the other girls, and how much prettier, sharper, and better behaved her children were than the children of any other lady present.

Vera did not play tennis. In the first place she did not know the game, and in the next she was too shy to learn it; on hearing which, Mr. Lucas was cruel enough to propose that she should come in the punt with him and fish, and Naomi declared it was the greatest honour he had shown any girl of her acquaintance.

“He won’t have me. He says I can’t do without talking and frightening the fish; and it’s true—I really can’t. I should scream if I wasn’t allowed to say something once in five minutes,” she said candidly; and even Leah observed:

“I hope you won’t mind it, dear. You needn’t go again if it’s stupid; but I do think Albert wants to be kind, and show you attention.”

Poor Vera had not courage to resist, and went like a martyr offering no further protest than a feeble:

“But I don’t know how to fish!”

“Oh, you will soon learn,” said Mr. Lucas benevolently; “it comes of itself to those who have a taste for it, and I am sure you have. I see you like being quiet, and this is quiet and excitement, too—the perfection of both. See here; take hold of your rod—so, and just play the line gently. We mustn’t talk, you know—it would never do to disturb the fish—and, when you feel a bite, turn your wrist quickly, and— Of course, though, if it is a very heavy fellow—”

But perhaps this recommendation was needless. Indeed, Mr. Lucas was not often called upon to struggle with a “heavy fellow” himself, and Vera certainly never felt a bite at all. She sat like a statue, the picture of meek docility, for three hours, never opening her lips or stirring; and only revealed the depths of her misery to Leah by the piteous enquiry, after their return home:

“Do you think I need ever go again,

Leah? Of course, I must, if you say so; but do you think I need it?"

Leah made haste to assure her to the contrary.

"My dearest child, how often must I tell you that you never need do anything you don't like here? All we want—now that your father is better—is for you to enjoy yourself and be happy."

On the present occasion, Vera did not look as if the idea of an evening entertainment was enjoyment, for she faced round from where she was sitting, screwed up on the lower step of an iron staircase leading down from the drawing-room to the villa-garden, and said, rather apprehensively:

"Do you mean a party, Leah?"

"Oh dear no! But Naomi has found out that the Salomons are at Shepperton, and she asked them to row up this evening, and have supper and some music with us; and the Werthers, from next door, and two gentlemen, old friends of ours"—Leah's colour deepened suddenly in her cheeks—"are coming too."

"Friends I have met already!" asked Vera, not noticing.

"No; I don't think so—not one of them, at any rate. He (his name is Dr. Marstland)," Leah's colour was certainly wonderfully beautiful that afternoon, and she seemed to feel it herself, for she turned her face aside, so as to face the fresh breeze, "had left town before we returned from Brittany. He has taken a house-boat on the river for the summer holidays, and it was only by chance he found out we were here. His friend is a Mr. Burt—John Burt, the water-colour artist. Don't you remember our meeting his wife and her sister one day at the Exhibition, and her saying they were just off to Switzerland? Well, they didn't go, because the sister was taken ill with the measles, and he is staying with George Marstland on board the house-boat instead."

"Well, it will be like a party to me," said Vera; "and then there was that garden one yesterday. I wonder—— Leah, do you think mamma would call it being too gay?"

"Gay! My dear, of course not."

"But you know what she said when you spoke of it not being the season now, and of how quiet you were."

"Yes; but, my dear Vera, that was only because of the danger your father was then

in. You did not know of it, because Mdme. St. Laurent did not wish to frighten you; but I dare say she felt that if you did know, you would not care to be going out much, or enjoying yourself. However, that is all past now, for he is much better; even the fear of a relapse over. Didn't your mother say so in her last letter?"

"Yes," said Vera. "Well, Leah, you know best, and if mamma only meant that——" She paused a moment, and then added somewhat irrelevantly: "I remember Mrs. Burt, a rather melancholy-looking person, dressed in a funny way, something like the saints in stained-glass windows. She asked me if I knew St. Matthias's in West Brompton, and told me how beautiful the Whitsuntide decorations there had been; so I supposed she was a Christian."

"Oh yes; the Burts are very decidedly Christian, and very High Church people—almost Roman Catholics. Indeed, when Mr. Burt is on the Continent (by the way, he is very fond of Brittany; I must introduce him to you), I believe he goes to mass as regularly as any of the peasants."

"Does he, really?" said Vera, looking shocked; then: "And Dr. Marstland—is he a Christian, too? Somehow, the name doesn't sound Jewish."

"Yes." Leah's tone had grown suddenly grave, almost sad; but the next moment she smiled, and added: "I know what is in your mind, Vera, but you are safe enough this time. Dr. Marstland is as good a Christian and Protestant as your mother. You may make friends with him safely, and you will. He is a man everyone likes."

"Do you like him, Leah? I have more faith in you than 'everybody'."

"I?" Leah hesitated an instant, but added almost immediately and with extra distinctness: "Yes, I like him exceedingly; but we have known him a long time, Naomi and I. He used to attend father's chemistry class, and study botany privately with him as well, before he took his degree. Father is very fond of him. Well, don't be late in dressing, Vera. I will go and cut some flowers for your hair," and she ran off humming a tune as she went.

It was that of the little French song she had taught Vera.

"Que tout le monde soit gai, chérie!" and Vera thought that her voice had never sounded sweeter.

THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

A Weekly Journal

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

A STERN CHASE.

A STORY IN THREE PARTS.

BY MRS. CASHEL HOEY.

THE THIRD PART.

CHAPTER V. INTRODUCED BY MR. DEXTER.

BREAKFAST was always a pleasant meal at The Quinces. The sun shone into the bright, pretty dining-room, from which Liliás, with the dismal recollection of Harley Street before her, had carefully excluded the ponderous furniture, the hideous carpet, and the melancholy hangings that used to be regarded as the correct attribute of an apartment in which people were to eat and drink. The windows looked out on the lawn, where a multitude of birds, daily pensioners of The Quinces, were busily engaged in clearing off several little heaps of food which were put down for them regularly every morning. Order, very curious to note, attended this observance. Shortly after the baskets of food had been emptied, a flapping of wings would be heard, and the rooks from two rookeries at a considerable distance, would arrive. While these early birds were breakfasting, the smaller legions would muster, discreetly alighting on the grass at a respectful distance, and twittering in the trees, until the shining black company rose and flapped away homewards again, with tit-bits in their beaks for domestic consumption, when they would set to upon the scattered provender with delighted chirpings and ruminations. And then, how good it was to hear their shrill pipings, and occasionally a glorious burst of song from some hilarious feathered creature, with more leisure than its neighbours to give thanks for its breakfast. Liliás loved to preside unheeded over her daily dole to the birds.

On the morning after the play, the party assembled at breakfast was even more cheerful than usual, for not only was there the usual pleasant discussion of plans for the day, but Dolores had a real good opportunity of expressing her feelings about Portia and Shylock. Colonel and Mrs. Courtland, and even Aunt Liliás herself, had all been so unaccountably and inconsiderately tired on the previous night, that there was no getting to say one half she wanted. If Julian could only have come home with them! He was quite as much pleased with the play as she had been, and they might have talked it over so delightfully.

Nobody was tired this morning, however, and there was sunshine inside and out, for Dolores had a pleasant day in prospect, and Julian was coming to dinner.

Colonel Courtland followed the multitude in the matter of reading his favourite newspaper at breakfast; but there are many ways of reading a newspaper—some of them excessively aggravating to the beholder—and the Colonel's was an amiable and inoffensive way. He was open to being diverted from the leading article, or even from the telegraphic news; he was even capable of spontaneous inattention, and consciousness of the presence of other persons; he did not mind being asked whether "there was anything in" the paper, by a lady who couldn't be troubled to glance at the epitome of the history of the world for herself, and he never upset his teacup in the ardour of his interest in anything. On the present occasion he was about equally divided between the burning question of the day, which would be to-morrow the white ashes of yesterday, and the animated discussion of the play at the Lyceum Theatre. The ladies were all agreed on its merits; but

Dolores was naturally the most enthusiastic of the three.

"And so you would not mind going to see the same play again this evening—eh, Dolores?" said Colonel Courtland, as he finally laid aside his newspaper.

"Indeed I should not," answered Liliás; "or to-morrow evening, and on Thursday—no, not Thursday, because we are going to Mrs. Donne's dance; but on Friday—no, no; you need not shake your head. I know it would take much more than a week to convince me that I had seen enough of Shylock and Portia."

"Ah well," said the Colonel, as he poured out some cream for a remarkably handsome and elegant cat, known as "The Masher," "it's a fine thing to be young. It makes all the difference."

"I never enjoyed a play so much in my life; did you, Aunt Liliás?"

"Not for a great many years, certainly," said Liliás with a grave smile.

"Even though I had read it all, and knew that it comes right in the end, I was quite wild with anxiety while that beautiful Portia was in suspense. It must be a dreadful thing to be kept in suspense. Aunt Liliás, I really almost persuaded myself that Bassanio might choose the wrong casket."

"That is just what it was the actor's purpose to made you feel, my dear," said the Colonel. "And I have no doubt, so pretty and artless a tribute would please even those great artists."

"Supposing he had—if it was all real, I mean," said Dolores, with a thoughtful look, "I wonder what would have happened to Portia?"

"Ah, now," said Mrs. Courtland, "you have struck out an original vein of Shakespearean speculation. I don't think anybody has ever thought of that before. It would have been very bad for Bassanio, but Portia would, no doubt, have made a much better match, if, as you say, it was all real."

"Oh, Mrs. Courtland, how can you say so! I am sure Portia would either have died on the spot, or given up everything and married Bassanio. And I'm sure Aunt Liliás thinks so, too!"

"I would not 'put it past' Aunt Liliás and somebody else also to think so," said Mrs. Courtland with a sly little smile, and a glance which included her husband in its kindly fun; "but you forget that poor Bassanio could hardly afford to settle it in that way. No, Dolores; I think, if it

was real, Portia would have had to get over it."

The subject was discussed for a few minutes longer, to the amusement of the Colonel, but unheeded by Liliás, to whom a servant had brought a note with an intimation that the bearer was to wait for an answer.

"From Mr. Dexter," said Liliás, and then she perceived the word "Private" above the few lines which the note contained. She read those lines with a slight change of colour, and, excusing herself to Mrs. Courtland, left the room.

Miss Merivale did not return to the breakfast-table. Dolores went off to prepare for a ride in the Colonel's company; and Mrs. Courtland betook herself to her own sitting-room, where she invariably remained invisible until the hour of luncheon.

Dolores had run into her aunt's room in her riding-dress to say a gay good-bye, according to custom, and had flitted away without an idea that Liliás was disturbed about anything. Liliás watched the riders pacing soberly down the avenue with a parting salute of envious looks, from the little dogs left at home, to the fine greyhound, Dombey, who condescended to accommodate his speed to that of the inferior animal mounted by his beloved mistress, and then she seated herself at the window which commanded the avenue—to wait.

There was a shadow upon the face of Liliás, so calm and untroubled of late. The long-laid ghost of the past had risen before her; the long-hushed echo of the old wailing had once more come to her ear; the long-healed wound was beginning to ache with a revival of the former pain. Her hands lay in her lap; a twisted paper was pressed between their palms; her thoughts were back in the years that were gone, but—it might be—not done with even yet; and fear, always easily aroused by the unexpected in those who have suffered much, had taken hold of her.

"That man," she said to herself over and over again; "it must be that man! Mr. Dexter did not see him, and even if he had seen him, he would not recognise him after all these years. What brings him here? 'The interests of Miss Rosalyn!'" She twisted the paper impatiently between her fingers. "What has he to do with her? Oh, my darling, is sorrow coming to us? Is any calamity upon us? I look at our position from all sides, and I can see none on which it is

not guarded; and yet my heart fails me, and something that I cannot resist tells me this interview will have some great meaning to me."

She smoothed out the twisted paper and read Mr. Dexter's written words once more.

"I am requested by a gentleman, who was closely connected with certain incidents in the life of Mr. Hugh Rosslyn, to ask you, in the interests of Miss Rosslyn, to give him an interview. He prefers to tell you himself what his name is, and what are the circumstances that have led him to address this request to me. I must, however, add that he has fully explained himself to me in my double capacity of your legal adviser and your old friend, and that I strongly advise you to see him at once, and alone. Immediately on my receipt of your favourable answer—for which the gentleman will wait at my office, where he now is—he will go to The Quincea."

"It must be Willesden," thought Liliás; "in good clothes he would have looked like a 'gentleman'."

The time seemed long to Liliás, for all her dread of what it was to bring, and yet she started from her seat at the sound of wheels upon the avenue. A hansom drew up at the porch, and a man alighted from it, so quickly that she could not see what he was like. She heard the hall-door opened and closed, and then she waited until her visitor was announced as "a gentleman from Mr. Dexter's". She passed by a long glass near the door of her room, and caught sight of a very pale face in it; but rallying her courage she descended the stairs quickly, entered the drawing-room, and found herself in the presence of a distinguished-looking man of middle-age, who was an entire stranger to her.

Liliás had so completely persuaded herself that she was about to see James Willesden, that the surprise of meeting a person totally unknown to her instead, overthrew the self-command which she had summoned up for a different emergency. She faltered and stood still, deadly pale, and without an attempt to speak.

"Miss Merivale," said the stranger, hurriedly approaching her, "you are ill—frightened. I beg your pardon a thousand times, if I am the cause of this. Let me explain in as few words as possible." He brought a chair for her, and she seated herself, looking up at him dumbly. "I could not have thought you would be so much

upset after so many years. I saw you at the Lyceum last night; I was in a box with Mr. Dexter, and I asked him about you. When he told me you were the step-daughter of the late Dr. Rosslyn, and that the young lady with you was his grandchild, I felt a great desire to make your acquaintance, and I ventured to ask him to introduce me to you."

He paused in some embarrassment.

"Yes," said Liliás faintly.

"I fear I've horribly mismanaged a very simple thing," he continued; "presently I will explain how I came to do it. The fact is, I knew your brother very well, a great many years ago, in Cuba. My name is Rodney."

"Rodney? They told us you were dead!"

"So I have learned from Mr. Dexter, and that is another strong reason for my asking to be allowed to see you. It is very strange that such a statement should have been made under the circumstances of which Mr. Dexter has informed me, with wonderful clearness and recollection for so old a man, but still not so fully as I venture to hope you will relate them to me. There must have been some strong reason for the mystification which was practised, I understand, upon an agent of Dr. Rosslyn's; for more than one person at Santiago could have told the agent not only that I was alive, but where I was, and what I was doing. Now, even after all this lapse of time, I mean to find out what that reason was."

He had gone on with a sort of fluent coolness, for the purpose of allowing Liliás to recover her composure, wondering indeed that she should stand in need of such consideration, and thinking: "What a heart this woman must have, thus to feel about her brother who has been dead nearly twenty years!" But he now perceived that what he said was making no impression upon her. Liliás had not been able to follow him beyond the words: "I knew your brother very well, a great many years ago, in Cuba. My name is Rodney."

It had all come back—the misery, the suspense, and the horrid certainty. And now the thing she had so often longed for with the painful intensity of absolute hopelessness, had come to pass; she was face to face with one who, if his memory of those long-past years would serve, could tell her many things which she still longed to know—for instance, all

about the old home of Ines and her parents. That Mr. Rodney's memory would serve him in this respect was probable, for, were it otherwise, why should he have cared to see Hugh's sister, or been touched at the sight of Hugh's child?

It was with all this her swift, confused thoughts were busy while Rodney was speaking, and she was not alive to the point that he was making of the lie circumstantial which had been told about him to Mr. Walter Ritchie.

When he perceived this, he adapted himself to the direction of her thoughts, and began to speak of the old, old days of the studio in the Calle de Santa Rosa, and the brief but ardent friendship that had subsisted between himself and Hugh Rosslyn.

"After I heard, at New York, from Wharton, the captain of the ship in which they got off," continued Rodney—"he's in town now, and will be much interested in hearing of you—that everything had gone right, and they had been married at Kingston, Jamaica, I wondered at intervals, for a long time, that I had no news of Rosslyn and his wife. I fear I began to impute this to the ordinary negligence, indifference, and selfishness of mankind."

Lilias remarked that Mr. Rodney did not use the word "ingratitude", and she noted the delicacy of the omission.

"Our talks had been chiefly on art topics or respecting the place we were in; he had always been reticent about his home, and his relations—with one exception—" Rodney pointed the compliment with a very expressive look—"and although I did entertain an idea of writing to 'Dr. Rosslyn, London', to enquire what had become of his son, I was restrained from doing so by many feelings; now I suspect that the head and front of them was indolence. I had a long illness, followed by a spell of general ill-luck, and then I went to Mexico and many other parts of the earth, and if I did not altogether forget Rosslyn, his beautiful wife, the queer story of the elopement, and my occult share in it, I ceased to think of them. You would not care for the history of twenty years of the life of a special correspondent, Miss Merivale, even if I could relate it, and I need only say that five years elapsed before I again met Paul Wharton. I distinctly remember that we talked of the adventure at Santiago, and that Wharton also expressed surprise and disappointment at hearing nothing of the young

pair he had befriended. I don't think it occurred to either of us that Rosslyn might be dead; we agreed that he was all right, in the lap of Britannic luxury and content, and from thenceforth I rarely thought of Rosslyn, except when I wrote the address of the studio which he and I had shared upon my few-and-far-between letters to Don Gualterio de Turras.

"There is an English side to my family, and I had not seen it for several years. I had just made up my mind to come to England, when one of my uncles died, and left me a small property. I was bound to look after it, and it so happened that Wharton was also coming to Europe with his wife and daughter. We have been in London only three days, and last evening, at the Lyceum Theatre, I was struck, firstly by the foreign look of the young lady in the box opposite Mrs. Wharton's, and secondly by something in it that set my memory struggling over a vague reminiscence. I was a long time making it out, but I found it at last, and all about Rosslyn came back to my mind. You will readily believe that I listened with great interest to Mr. Dexter's history of the sad fate of the young husband and the still more sad fate of the lovely girl whom we used to call 'Fair Ines'. I think I should, in any case, have ventured to introduce myself to you, on learning that the young lady whose face I seemed to know was Miss Rosslyn, but when I heard that the agent sent out to Santiago had been deceived with such statements as that Doña Ines was in a convent, and that I was dead, and that no communication between Miss Rosslyn and her mother's family existed, I felt the matter wanted looking into, notwithstanding the lapse of time."

"We do not even know whether any of them are living," said Lilias, who had now recovered her composure.

"Information ought to be procured," said Rodney, "in the pecuniary interests of Miss Rosslyn. Her mother was entitled to a considerable fortune on the death of Doña Modesta de Rodas, Don Saturnino's first wife, and this, of course, ought to be claimed on behalf of Miss Rosslyn. One of the most puzzling points in this curious history is why Mrs. Rosslyn, being aware of her right to this money, as I happen to know she was, allowed herself to be reduced to such straits as Mr. Dexter told me of; why she did not place the matter in the hands of some lawyer here—she could easily have got one to take it up;

and why she did not make her way back to Cuba with her child, when her scoundrelly second husband deserted her."

"I cannot offer any explanation or even suggestion concerning her," said Liliás, the tears rising in her eyes at the recollection of the lonely, never-to-be-interpreted life of poor Hugh's "dream of loveliness".

Then she briefly related the incidents connected with the convalescent cottage, and added that not a paper had been found belonging to Mrs. Willesden which could throw any light upon her past, while those which had been sold to herself by James Willesden were formal documents relative to the marriage that had lasted for so brief a span. To all this Mr. Rodney listened with curiously close attention, and afterwards asked Liliás whether, now that she knew that Ines would only have to take legal proceedings to get her fortune, she (Liliás) could account for such a man as Willesden refraining from claiming that property? She professed herself quite unable to devise any reason that could have induced him to do so, but added:

"Perhaps he did not know anything about the money; it may be that Ines did not know she had any rights that could be enforced from England; that she believed all to be lost, and never said anything at all to Willesden on the subject."

This answer seemed to impress Rodney seriously. He repeated it to himself in the exact words of Liliás, adding: "This looks very bad—cruel and bad."

"Have you any interpretation in your own mind, Mr. Rodney?" asked Liliás, fixing a sad, questioning gaze upon him. "You look as if you had."

"I am groping after one, Miss Merivale, but it is far away and very dim. You must forgive me if I do not impart it to you until it is nearer and not so dim; it seems almost absurd to myself who knew all the persons concerned, and to you it would seem simply unreasonable and silly. Tell me, however, if you can, whether this man, Willesden, referred to his wife's former home, her family, or the subject of a fortune at all?"

Liliás smiled slightly.

"I smile," she said, "at the idea that the poor man who brought me Dolores had any notion of a possible fortune anywhere, to be secured at no matter what risk! He was little above a tramp, though there was something in his appearance that carried an assurance that he had seen better days."

"And he did not say anything of his

wife's knowledge of her claim to a share of her father's property?"

"He did not allude to anything of the kind. I see your point, Mr. Rodney, though I do not discern your inference, and I feel more and more sure that Willesden knew nothing whatever of his wife's claims."

"That would explain much," said Rodney. "His subsequent conduct, for instance, is made intelligible by it. I learned from Mr. Dexter that there has been no attempt at black-mailing you since?"

"None whatever; I have never seen the man from that day, and do not know whether he is dead or alive."

"I have come to the end of my questions on this subject, Miss Merivale, and I am now ready to answer as many as you please to address to me."

He smiled at Liliás, very much as if he already knew all her questions by heart, and as she was by this time quite at her ease with him, she took him at his word, with her usual simplicity, and was soon talking to him of the past of her own life, and the present of that of Dolores, as freely as if she had known him in the dear days of old. The first painful thrill of agitation had passed away, and a sense of thankfulness and relief had come to her, which animated her voice, tinged her face with colour, and brightened her eyes.

Apart from the personal interest involved, Rodney's conversation with her was a sweet pleasure to Liliás. She would have enjoyed it still more if she could have known how like the easy, wide-ranging, unpretentious, highly-cultivated talk of the distinguished-looking man of forty-five was to that which had so fascinated Hugh Rosslyn nearly twenty years before. It was better talk, but its qualities were the same.

It was arranged between Liliás and Rodney that the views of the latter respecting a communication to be sent to Cuba, based, this time, upon the knowledge of Dolores's pecuniary claims, should be laid before Colonel Courtland, and Rodney accepted Liliás's invitation to remain for luncheon.

When the Colonel and Dolores came back from their ride, they were much surprised to see Liliás standing on the lawn with a strange gentleman by her side. She made a sign; they stopped their horses, and Liliás and Rodney went up to them. A few words explained the situation, and Dolores, who had instantly recognised the

discerning stranger, whose observation of herself on the preceding evening had been evident to her, and—which was much more important—to Julian, leaned gracefully from her saddle, and with a smile gave her hand to her father's friend. As he raised it to his lips, by an impulse of old Cuban custom, a vision of Fair Ines flashed across him as his eyes had last rested on her when they gave her the assurance of his help, and her eyes told him she had descried his note in the folds of her fan.

His impressions of the preceding evening were confirmed as, during the remainder of his visit, he continued to observe the girl. Nevertheless, when Rodney said to himself, as he was walking briskly in the direction of the Swiss Cottage: "She has the sweetest face I ever saw, and her voice is delightful!" he was not thinking of the face or the voice of Dolores.

MONT BLANC SIXTY YEARS AGO.

STROLLING not very long ago through the churchyard of Cranbrook, a quaint little town in the heart of the Weald of Kent, my eye fell upon an inscription to the following effect: "In memory of Edmund John Clarke, M.D., one of the few enterprising travellers who have succeeded in ascending to the summit of Mont Blanc. He departed this life, March 24th, 1836, aged thirty-seven years." Here was food for reflection. In the days when classical epitaphs were common, mention of such a fact might have been expected, as it would afford an opportunity for elegantly-turned conceits in the modern style of Latin elegiacs—"attigit hic puras, purior ipse, nives"—but the inscription before us is plain and English. It is not yet fifty years old, and Chamonix will in a few months be celebrating the centenary of Balmat's ascent, yet when these lines were cut, a man who had climbed Mont Blanc was an "enterprising traveller", a lion in society, who would be pretty sure to write an account of his experiences. What a contrast to the present day! Then the journey often occupied the better part of a week, now it is frequently accomplished in a single day. Then a man took a dozen guides or so, if he could get them; now it is a commonplace of Alpine complaint that the authorities insist that each traveller shall be accompanied by two.

Dr. Clarke, of course, wrote an account of his adventures, and so did many others.

Many of these narratives are now rare, most of them are interesting, and all are more or less amusing. The most ambitious and the best known is that of Auldjo (1827), a quarto volume embellished with audacious lithographs. These travellers (for as such people who ventured to Switzerland were then regarded) show a curious absence of personal pride in describing their exhaustion and their fear. On the contrary, they show some inclination to exaggerate them both, as tending to enhance the merit of their exploits. The modern mountaineer cannot bring himself to pain his sympathetic reader by a too ingenuous narration of how his knees tottered with weariness, and his heart was consumed with personal terror; but no such considerations check the naive flow of the early narratives. Auldjo, for instance, tells us how his courage failed him, and his zeal for the ascent suddenly evaporated; how he implored his guides to let him alone and to complete the ascent without him; how his progress up the snow slopes was materially assisted by a notable invention, being neither more nor less than the tying of a long rope round his middle, and the hauling of him up stage by stage. Long before he got back to Chamonix, he was unable to move fast enough to keep himself warm, and, even when restored to warmth by the exertions and the coats of his numerous guides, he was nothing but a helpless heap. In this emergency, alpenstocks were passed under him on each side to form a sort of hand-barrow, and on these he was half carried, and half dragged, till at last the hero made his dignified entry into Chamonix exactly as we are accustomed to see borne along the effigy of Guido Fawkes.

But Auldjo, though he will always be regarded with reverence by the learned as the author of the "first quarto", is one of the latest of the writers on this subject. To De Saussure belongs the place of honour among them, and it is thoroughly well deserved; not merely because he was a great man and the first—not being an inhabitant of Chamonix—who reached the summit, but because it was entirely due to the influence of his gold and his enthusiasm that the explorations were carried on which led to ultimate success. It would have been cruel if any stranger had slipped in and made the ascent before him. Yet this was within an ace of happening. An English man of science had quietly resolved to ascend, and, ignorant of De Saussure's

success, arrived at Chamonix so soon after the event, that M. Bourrit was still there. Poor M. Bourrit! A hundred years ago his works were regarded as containing the cream of Alpine adventure, and now we doubt if they find two readers in a year. In five years he made five determined efforts to reach the summit—one being inspired by De Saussure's success, and undertaken immediately after his return. It failed, like the rest; but this did not deter Colonel Beaufoy, whose narrative is just what we might expect from a soldier and a man of science—manly, precise, and free from all taint of exaggeration. We seem to see the practical officer in the manner in which he levied supplies and led forth—somewhat as we are wont to picture Hannibal crossing the Alps—his expedition organised under strict military discipline.

He was by no means the weak tourist, bowing to the sway of an imperious head-guide, but a man evidently resolved to be captain in his own ship. However, the man of theory peeps out when he describes the garb which he adopted to protect himself against "the reverberation of the snow"—a costume which we should think more suitable for wear on the plains of Bengal than amid the icy nooks of the Grands Mulets—"a white-flannel jacket, without any shirt underneath, and white-linen trousers without drawers." Contrast this with the equipment recommended by Captain Sherwill: "Two pair of stockings, two pair of thick shoes, two pair of gaiters, two pair of cloth pantaloons, a flannel waistcoat, a great-coat, a neckcloth, and a large flannel night-cap."

As the party ascended, they seem to have risen superior to terrestrial vices; for, like De Saussure, they felt "a strong aversion to the taste of spirituous liquors"—an aversion which, we fear, the depravity of modern mountaineers has enabled them to overcome. "At last, but with a sort of apathy which scarcely admitted the sense of joy, we reached the summit," and the Colonel had the satisfaction of determining the latitude of the mountain-top, which had not previously been ascertained.

In the year which followed the Battle of Waterloo, an attack, now half forgotten, was made by a very remarkable man. In the early ascents nearly every nation, except the French, took part—Swiss, Savoyards, English, Germans, Dutch, Russians, Poles, and even Americans; but M. le Comte de Lusi may be said to have represented nearly all of them in his own

person. At Chamonix he was thought to be a Russian; he was thoroughly master of French, and wrote his account in that language; he was an officer in the King of Prussia's Guard and a Knight of the Iron Cross; he had English relations; and that he was at home in Austria is shown by his publishing his book in Vienna. In short, he was half a native of every country in Europe. Two of his English relatives, who actually saw him at Geneva just after his ascent, are still alive and hearty, and there are still a few people in England who remember him well. He was by no means a big man; but his close and symmetrical build concealed an altogether exceptional strength of limb, which enabled him to perform astonishing feats. Lying at full length on the floor he could lift clean into the air a heavy man standing on the palm of his hand. In the use of his fists he was wont to exhibit British skill and British promptitude, and this led him into many a brush with people whose opinions differed from his. With French postboys this was especially frequent. American teamsters are said to consider themselves unrivalled in "exhorting the impenitent mule"; but they would cheerfully admit that a French driver swearing at a refractory horse displays a powerful vocabulary and resourceful imagination. At that period, however, their ne plus ultra of venomous objurgation was concentrated into the simple words: "Ah, sacré Prussien!" At the first sound of the last word Lusi would come bounding out of his carriage into the mud or the snow, as the case might be, and, rushing at the astounded postboys, roar out: "A genoux, à genoux! Je suis Prussien moi! Demandez pardon à genoux!" And lucky it was for them if they made instant submission. Satisfaction obtained, he would return to his carriage, there to remain until a change of postboys necessitated a renewal of his patriotic exertions.

He tells the story of his ascent with remarkable clearness and modesty; but facts which he casually mentions make it clear that he displayed an amount of heroic endurance, which in anyone whose bodily fortitude was less surely known would be scarcely credible. In those days, to get to Chamonix itself was no easy matter. A careful writer of that date explains how the journey from Geneva may be performed in three days, two of which, he warns us, cannot but be long and highly laborious. The Count, however, left Geneva on the 13th September, 1816, at ten a.m., and

travelling continuously, reached Chamonix about half-past five the next morning. Without resting, he at once set to work to procure guides and have provisions prepared, and in little over four hours from the time of his arrival at Chamonix, after a day and a night of severe travel, he started with eight guides. They took but two hours in crossing the Glacier des Boissons, but found a huge crevasse cutting them off from the Grands Mulets, where it is usual to sleep, and were forced to pass the night in a hole scraped in the snow. Here an unlooked-for annoyance awaited the Count. "Quant à l'eau de vie elle me dégouta entièrement, ainsi que ma pipe, à laquelle je suis cependant très-accoutumé." When a man has been on his legs for six-and-thirty hours, and his pipe refuses to comfort him, the outlook is cheerless indeed. Next day they did very well till noon, when the wind, which had gradually increased, became fearfully violent, and repeatedly buried them to the waist in snowdrifts; four of the guides lost blood at nose and mouth. After a short rest at the Derniers Rochers the snowdrifts had so much increased that the leader was at once engulfed neck-deep, and advance from that side was plainly impossible. Lusi, nothing daunted, resolved to turn the flank of the calotte, and though this involved a considerable descent, he succeeded by half-past two in reaching the same level on the opposite side. Here he found comparatively easy going on a gentle slope, and in half an hour reached a tiny plateau. Then the guides coming up, represented to him the lateness of the hour and the frightful state of the weather, owing to which, they said, the remaining two hundred and fifty feet could not be accomplished in less than three-quarters of an hour. The Count, though anxious to advance, had the courage to desist. Having come to this determination, his heart brimmed over with piety and patriotism; his first thought, he says, was to fall on his knees and thank God for his preservation up to that point, his second was to "porter un triple Houra à mon grand Roi Frédéric Guillaume le Juste, le Libérateur de l'Allemagne. J'avais conservé," he continues, "pour cette occasion une bouteille de vin du Rhin, car un vin d'étranger ne m'aurait pas paru propre." Turning to depart he noted that the colour of the sky overhead made his coat—which was, of course, of Prussian-blue—seem light in comparison. By seven p.m. they reached their snow-pit, and passed another

wretched night, the result of which might have been foreseen.

The unfortunate Count had both feet severely frozen, and only reached Chamonix next day with the utmost difficulty and pain. He was received with the warmest enthusiasm, and the ladies, with whom he everywhere enjoyed unbounded popularity, honoured him with a crown which—perhaps, he says, in order to render it more accurately typical of his exploit—was remarkably thorny. Here he had the satisfaction of going to bed for the first time in four days, and next morning received the coveted certificate, which set forth that he had reached a point guaranteed less than fifty toises (three hundred feet) from the summit, and that nothing but the lateness of the hour had prevented him from doing more, and it went on to declare—surely at his own suggestion—that "nul Français n'est parvenu à cette hauteur". Let us hope that it consoled him during the next fortnight, for his frost-bitten feet kept the poor fellow twelve days in bed at Geneva, with the threat of amputation hanging constantly over him. But he himself gratefully says: "La société de mes neveux les jeunes MM. Burnand et de quelques autres Anglais qui s'y trouvaient me firent passer agréablement ces jours d'ailleurs si pénibles." Both these gentlemen are now still in full health and vigour, and enjoy, what must surely be an almost unique pleasure—the satisfaction of seeing their social gifts recorded in a book which has been printed seventy years.

The Americans were early in the field. In 1819 the top was reached by Dr. Jeremiah Van Rensselaer, of New York, and Mr. William Howard, of Baltimore; and the former gives a brief but clear account. It would be interesting to learn whether this gentleman—whose name, by the way, is not spelled alike in any two accounts, or right in any one—was an ancestor of the American climber of that name, who, in 1884, made, in a very few days, such a clean sweep of all the most difficult peaks round Chamonix. In this account there is no attempt at enhancing the exploit by descriptions of harrowing farewells between the guides and their wives. The only difficulty was to select from the large number who were anxious to go with them. They carried poles nine feet long; in other respects everything went much as usual, even to the regulation butterfly of gorgeous hues who chose the same day for his ascent.

Mr. Frederick Clissold describes a narrow escape which he had during his ascent in 1822, and Mr. H. H. Jackson deserves notice as the first who boldly disclaimed all scientific motives for making the attempt. "From a love of hardy enterprise, natural to, and, I trust, excusable in a young man, I had determined to ascend Mont Blanc—chiefly, perhaps, because the attempt was one of acknowledged danger and difficulty, and the succeeding in it would be rewarded with that pleasing recollection which always attends successful boldness." This was in 1823. Four years later, Sir Charles Fellows, the Lycian traveller, and Mr. Hawes, brother of Sir Benjamin Hawes, made an ascent which was somewhat baldly narrated by the last-named. They reached the top without incident, except the sight of the usual butterfly flying over the summit, where they "drank success to our friends of the Thames Tunnel".

Captain Markham Sherwill's account, though much inferior to his companion's, has the merit of clearness. To us, perhaps, his geographical information may seem rather inadequate. Yet those who know how imposing the Canigou can look, or have enjoyed the marvellous view from its summit, may well forgive him for believing it to be "the highest of the Pyrenees"; and we can scarce wonder at his statement that "from Chamonix to the top (of Mont Blanc) and back is near one hundred miles", at a time when the high and mighty critic in the *Edinburgh Review* could describe that mountain as "the highest in the old world". The indifference of the guides was matter of constant wonder to the early climbers. "We could not help remarking, as we continued to ascend the difficult and narrow path, how cheerful the guides appeared; they were all in eager conversation on trivial subjects." For his own part, though he showed throughout most indomitable pluck, he was so deeply impressed with the magnitude of his undertaking that, on reaching the *Pierre de l'Echelle*, he heaves a sigh of relief, and informs us that they "felt great security from the avalanches". He might almost as well have "felt great security" from hansom-cabs. His description, as a whole, is manly and to the point, and evidently aimed at nothing more.

Dr. Clark's is a much more elaborate affair, and, if too grandiloquent here and there, is, with the possible exception of Auldjo's, the fullest and most graphic of

all. Urged partly by mere curiosity, partly by scientific zeal, and partly, again, by a desire to pioneer the way for the ladies who had crossed the *Col du Géant* three years before, and were said to be then about to attack Mont Blanc, he was preparing for his ascent when Captain Sherwill, a complete stranger, arrived at Chamonix, and agreed to join him in the attempt. To both of them this arrangement proved a source of unalloyed satisfaction, and—as is not always the case with the "capital fellows" one picks up at a Swiss hotel—on further trial, each found in the other a staunch comrade and a delightful companion. They took seven guides, and Dr. Clarke tells us that of the forty enrolled guides, a good half refused to accompany them at any price. There is some capital description in the narrative, which we have not space to quote; but one "purple passage" is much too delicious to be abridged. Proud of his native land as the pacificator of the Continent, he acted upon a brilliant idea, and proceeded "to place the symbol of peace at the mast-head of Europe, and deposit a little memorial of the pre-eminence of England where it may be likely to remain for centuries unmolested. For this purpose we had gathered on the shores of the Mediterranean small branches of olive, and, lest a plant reared on a land of slavery and oppression should be of unhappy augury, we had replenished our wreath with twigs of olive from the free and happy soil of Geneva. These we had enclosed in a cylinder of glass, with the name of our King and of his deservedly popular Minister, subjoining the names of some of the remarkable persons of the age, whether high in honour as enlightened politicians, revered as sincere and eloquent theologians, admired as elegant poets, useful as laborious physicians, or adorning the walks of private life by the mingled charm of urbanity, gentleness, accomplishments, and beauty. Having reached the loftiest uncovered pinnacle of Mont Blanc towards England, the land of our hopes, we selected a little spot sheltered from the storm by incumbent masses of granite, and there buried in the snow an humble record, but sincere. Hermetically sealed down by an icy plug, covered with a winter's snow, and perhaps gradually incorporated into the substance of a solid cube of ice, it may possibly remain unaltered for many centuries, like the insects preserved in amber, and so bear witness to distant generations

when other proud memorials have crumbled into dust! During this little operation honest Julien, who did not wholly partake of the enthusiasm of the thing, occasionally exclaimed: 'Dépêchez-vous, monsieur!'

The learned doctor thought that he had erected a monument more enduring than brass; but—alas for human hopes of permanence!—two years later the "cylinder" was found exposed and half full of water, the twigs of olive rotten, and the humble record utterly illegible. What names did he select to represent "urbanity, gentleness, accomplishments, and beauty"? Was the "very fair young lady" who crossed the Col du Géant one? Did he allow the gallant captain any vote, or did he leave this section entirely to him, while he was himself adjusting the claims of the "sincere theologians" and the "laborious physicians"? It is vain to speculate; "'tis sixty years since". We only know that, less than twelve years later, when most of those whose virtues he was anxious to record were still in the fullest enjoyment of life, he himself was called away, and laid in that quiet grave beside which we so lately stood.

A GOSSIP ON DRINKING.

PROBABLY there is no natural feeling more imperative in its demands than that of thirst. Man can suffer heat or cold, pain or sickness, with more or less equanimity; but thirst is more insupportable than even hunger, and if not assuaged ends in madness and death. With most men, the amount of drink necessary to satisfy the craving of thirst depends undoubtedly upon habit. Thus, the desert Arab, who must of necessity go for long periods without drinking, accustoms himself to abstinence, and will drink only at stated intervals, even when not compelled by circumstances to abstain. He will often refuse offered drink by the simple reply, "I drank yesterday". With this we may contrast the habit, far too common in our large cities, of taking during the day a large number of "nips" of brandy and whisky, or glasses of wine and beer, quite independent of thirst, which, although not entailing so much shame as drunkenness, causes quite as much injury to the mental and physical health.

The habit of excessive drinking after dinner is now obsolete; yet at all festive gatherings there are many who would be

happier for bearing in mind Sir William Temple's maxim: "The first glass for myself, the second for my friends, the third for mine enemies." Undoubtedly many men become drinkers to excess because they suffer from such an inordinate thirst as amounts really to disease. A well-known instance may be cited in the case of the celebrated Greek scholar, Porson, who, as Horne Tooke informs us, would drink ink rather than nothing at all; and is known to have swallowed an embrocation intended for a sick friend. When dining out, he would frequently return to the dining-room after dinner, and drain the glasses of what had been left in them. At a friend's house, he once drank off a bottle of what he pronounced to be the "best gin he had ever tasted," but which was in reality spirits-of-wine.

Dr. Johnson was another celebrated victim of thirst, but happily for him, his favourite drink was tea. As he said himself, he was a hardened and shameless tea-drinker, whose kettle had scarcely time to cool; who with tea amused the evening, with tea solaced the midnight, and with tea welcomed the morning. Mrs. Thrale sometimes sat up, pouring out tea for him till four o'clock in the morning. The doctor's teapot was recently in existence, and is said to have been capable of containing half a gallon. Johnson's friend, Kit Smart, the poet, was another thirsty soul, whose excessive potations, however, eventually ended in madness. Dr. Burney was told by Johnson that the poet had "as much exercise as he need to have, for he digs in the garden. Indeed, before his confinement, he used, for exercise, to walk to the ale-house; but he was carried back again."

Whatever may be advanced by the apostles of teetotalism as to water being the natural drink of man, we never find any nation, whether savage or civilised, where it is the customary drink when anything stronger or more stimulating can be obtained. Nearly all nations, even the most savage, appear to have discovered the art of making "drinks", generally appreciated in proportion to their intoxicating qualities. Goldsmith, in his *Citizen of the World*, mentions a tribe of Tartars who made a strongly intoxicating drink from a kind of fungus, and this account has been confirmed by several travellers. Most readers will be able to call to mind many instances of natives of various countries contriving to make

intoxicating drinks from the most innocent materials.

Our own country seems to have been in no way backward in this particular, for, from the earliest times, drink seems to have held a foremost place in the affections of the Briton with his mead, the Saxon with his ale, the Norman with his wine, and the Englishman with all these and more. The Danes and Saxons were notable toppers, and prided themselves on the quantity of strong liquors they were able to take. Fighting and drinking were their greatest pleasures, and were, indeed, the chief delights of their promised Walhalla. A frequent cause of quarrels among the drunkards of old was the indignation roused in the breast of one thirsty soul by the selfish and gluttonous action of some fellow-topper in drinking more heartily, when it came to his turn to hold the flagon, than a just comparison of numbers and quantity entitled him to do. Where several were drinking from the same vessel this question of "drinking fair" was an important one. Dunstan is said to have caused King Edgar to ordain that all drinking-vessels in taverns should have pegs fastened inside at regular distances, so that each should drink his fair share and no more. From this introduction of pegged tankards we have, doubtless, the proverb "a peg too low". The pegs were afterwards replaced by hoops fixed at regular intervals round the pot. Shakespeare makes Jack Cade promise his followers: "There shall be in England seven half-penny loaves sold for a penny; the three-hooped pots shall have ten hoops; and I will make it felony to drink small beer."

The quaint ceremonies attendant on the passing round of the "loving-cup" at our City banquets, are a relic of the old drinking habits of our ancestors. In the days when sword and dagger were ready at each man's hand, and little regard was had as to how or where a man avenged himself upon his enemy, anyone drinking in a numerous assemblage of armed men, inflamed with strong liquors, was in a peculiarly dangerous position. Both hands being engaged with the large cup which was passed round the company, his arms both held up, and his eyes upon the liquor, his side and breast were necessarily left exposed; and it was no uncommon thing among the Northmen to stab a foe while drinking. It was therefore customary for the guests at each side of him to stand up and pledge themselves for his safety. Hence we have the term "drinking-pledges". It was the

custom at Queen's College, Oxford, in old times, that the scholars who waited on their fellows while drinking, should place their thumbs on the table. The same custom prevailed in Germany, whilst the superior drank to the health of his inferior. The object, of course, in each custom, was the safety of the drinker from outrage.

All through our history we find the love of drinking prevalent among the people. There have been probably more songs and poems written in praise of drink than upon any other subject. The confession of faith of the confirmed toper may be said to be contained in that famous old song from Gammer Gurton's Needle, which begins:

I cannot eate but lytle meate,
My stomacke is not good;
But sure I thinke that I can drinke
With him that wears a hood.
Though I go bare, take ye no care,
I nothing am a colde;
I stuff my skyn so full withyn,
Of jolly good ale and olde.

Perhaps the Stuart period was about the most drunken in our history. Drinking had then become almost an art, and all manner of devices were practised both to increase the obligation to drink, and to add to the capacity of the toper. To give themselves a relish for their drink, they were in the habit of taking thirst-provokers known as "drawers-on", "gloves", or "shoe-horns". "You must have," says Tom Nash, "some shoe-horn to pull on your wine, as a rasher on the coals or a red-herring." Other "gloves" were salt-cakes, anchovies, pickled-herrings. Massinger gives a list of "pullers-on" in his lines:

'Tis not Botargo,
Fried frogs, potatoes marrowed, cavear,
Carp's tongues, the pith of an English chine of
beef,
Nor our Italian delicate oil'd mushrooms,
And yet a "drawer-on" too.

Another writer says: "'Tis now come to pass that he is no gentleman, a very milk-sop, a clown of no bringing up, that will not drink; fit for no company; he is your only gallant that plays it off finest; no disparagement now to stagger in the streets, reel, rave, etc., but much to his fame and renown; 'tis a credit to have a strong brain, and carry his liquor well; the sole contention who can drink most and fox his fellow the soonest. They have gymnasia biborum, schools, and rendezvous, these centaurs and lapithæ, toss pots and bowls as so many balls; invent new tricks, as sausages, anchovies, tobacco, caviare, pickled oysters, herrings, fumadoes, etc., innumerable salt meats to increase their

appetite, and study how to hurt themselves by taking antidotes to carry their drink the better." Most of the Saxon drinking-cups were made without foot or stand, so that they must be emptied before they could be set down again on the table. But these seventeenth-century toppers required that a man, after drinking, should turn up his cup and make a pearl with what was left on his nail, "which if it shed, and cannot make it stand on by reason there is too much, he must drink again for his penance." This was drinking "supernagulum", or, as Fletcher phrases it, "ad unguem". Another proof of having tossed off his cup like a man, was for the drinker to turn it bottom upwards, and, in ostentation of his dexterity, give it a fillip to make it cry "ting". After all these tiplings a man was held to be sober who could "put his finger into the flame of the candle without playing hit I—miss I". At this time, too, was devised the custom of drinking a full cup to a health, and requiring the health of everyone in the company to be drunk in turn, and when all were done beginning again, which made it a certainty that the whole party should become intoxicated. No wonder that in 1628 William Prynne published a tract "proving the drinking and pledging of healths to be sinful and utterly unlawful unto Christians".

Shakespeare, as might be expected, is full of allusions to the drinking habits of his day. His Christopher Sly is a capital, though brief, sketch of the drunken boor of the time. The merry roisterers at The Boar's Head, and Sir Toby Belch and Aguecheek, present other types to us. Shakespeare himself does not appear to have been given to excess in drink; but his compeer, "rare Ben Jonson," seems to have had the habit of hard drinking so prevalent at the time. To his "humours" at The Mermaid, and his convivialities at The Apollo, he was doubtless indebted for "his mountain belly and his rocky face". One sometimes wonders if Shakespeare could have had him in his mind when he painted Falstaff and Bardolph. The following incident, which is fairly well authenticated, would seem to give some probability to this. It is said that Jonson was recommended by Camden to Sir Walter Raleigh as a tutor for his son. Young Raleigh seems to have had a desire to shift the yoke from his shoulders, and with this end in view he took advantage of Jonson's taste for liquor to render him helpless. He

then had him placed in a buck-basket, and carried by two men to Sir Walter, with the message that "their young master had sent home his tutor".

We get a vivid idea of the habits of the highest in the land from a letter of Sir Ralph Harrington's concerning the sports and rejoicings consequent on the visit of the King of Denmark to James the First, in 1606. He says: "We had wine in such plenty as would have astonished each sober beholder." He goes on to say: "The ladies abandon their sobriety, and seem to roll about in intoxication." Sir John describes a masque which was attempted to be given representing the visit of the Queen of Sheba to King Solomon. The lady who played the Queen, whilst carrying presents to His Majesty of Denmark, tripped up, and the presents, such as "wine, cream, beverage, jellies, cakes, spices, and other good matters, were bestowed upon his garments. His Majesty, nothing disconcerted by this mishap, insisted on dancing with the Queen of Sheba, but he fell down and humbled himself before her," and so was carried off to bed. Hope, Faith, and Charity then came forward. Hope tried to speak, but was too full of wine, and Faith and Charity soon staggered in her company to the lower end of the hall. Peace made her entrance, but being held back in her attempts to reach the King, she laid about her lustily with her olive-branch, much to the detriment of many pates around her.

If such scenes were possible in the presence of the throne, one may imagine what orgies were practised in the low taverns. So the game went merrily on. James's reign was essentially a peaceful one; money was plentiful, and the bumpers were tossed off gaily. A sterner time set in during Charles's rule; the middle-classes were feeling their strength, and beginning those agitations and combinations which were to broaden and strengthen our liberties. Cromwell came into power, and the drunkards, if they drank no less, had to keep quieter, and to make no boast of their prowess. The Cavaliers had to content their spite by putting a crumb of bread into their glass and saying before they drank, "God send this crumb well down".

But the Puritan bands were strained too tightly, the people tired of long faces and long sermons, and the whirligig of time brought in Charles the Second and his court of idlers and drunkards. Pepys tells us how, on the night of the coronation, he

and his friends were stopped in the streets and compelled to kneel down in front of the bonfires and drink the King's health. The public peace was so often broken by such ultra-loyal drunkards that a royal proclamation was issued against "a sort of men who spend their time in taverns, tipping-houses, and debauches; giving no other evidence of their affection to us, but in drinking our health".

Pepys was a clever, industrious man, business-like and sedate, and exceedingly anxious as to what people might think of him. A ludicrous passage occurs in his diary, where he says: "Took a turn with my old acquaintance Mr. Pechell, whose red nose makes me ashamed to be seen with him, though otherwise a good-natured man." Yet it shows the loose manners of the time when Pepys, who did not like to be seen in the streets in company with a red nose—Pepys, the staid and dignified Clerk of the Acts, afterwards Secretary to the Admiralty and Member of Parliament for Harwich—could indulge in what the toppers of the present day would call "a spree". There had been a great victory over the Dutch, and the rejoicings were general. Pepys, of course, being so intimately connected with the navy, felt bound to take part. Accordingly we find that, on August 14th, 1666, after dinner, he took his wife and Mercer to the "beare-garden", and "saw some good sport of the bull's tossing of the dog; one into the very boxes". They supped at home and were "very merry". At nine o'clock they arrived at Mrs. Mercer's, where abundance of fireworks had been provided, "and there mighty merry—my Lady Pen and Pegg going thither with us, and Nan Wright—till about twelve at night, flinging our fireworks, and burning one another and the people over the way". They then went indoors and were again "mighty merry, smothering one another with candle-grease and soot, till most of us were like devils". They then broke up, and were invited to Pepys's house, "and there I made them drink, and upstairs we went and then fell into dancing". Three of the men, Pepys being one, dressed themselves up like women; Mercer put on "a suit of Tom's", like a boy, and danced a jig, and Nan Wright, Pegg Pen, and "my wife" put on periwigs. "Thus we spent till three or four in the morning, mighty merry, and then parted and to bed." One is not surprised to find the first entry in his diary the next day is "mighty sleepy".

And thus the ball was kept rolling merrily through the reigns of the second Charles and his wrong-headed successor, through that of the silent William, and of the Marlborough-ruled wife of "Pas Possible", and so on through the Georges down to our own time. One can imagine the same actors coming up generation after generation, some little change in the costume, some few changes in the words, some alterations in the toasts. We find the Stuart adherents at one time drinking to the health "of the little gentleman in the velvet coat", alluding to the mole over whose earthwork William's horse stumbled; at another time holding their glasses over a bowl of water as they pledged "the King" (over the water); but always the same round of hard drinking and deep potations. We can discern the first rift in the cloud when the coffee-house began to be the resort of the politician, the poet, and the man of leisure, and when "the new drink called Thee" began to be fashionable.

The scenes that Hogarth painted will show us what the drinking habits of his day were, especially those striking pictures of Gin Lane and Beer Street. The duty on spirits being little or nothing, the people were able to indulge to a disgraceful extent; and perhaps no Act of those days was more beneficial to the lower classes than that which put an end to this facility. The Gentleman's Magazine for May, 1736, records that on May 28th "a proposal was put in the House of Commons for laying such a duty on distilled spirituous liquors as might prevent the ill consequences to the poorer sort of drinking them to excess". The writer further adds: "We have observed some signs where such liquors are retailed with the following inscriptions: 'Drunk for a penny, dead drunk for twopence, clean straw for nothing'."

The growth of a spirit of vitality in the Church and the amelioration of the condition of the people, together with the spread of education, combined to work a change, gradual but sure, in the habits of the nation.

With the bucks and dandies of the reign of George the Fourth expired the gross habits of intemperance amongst the fashionable classes, and "drunk as a lord" no longer truthfully expressed the superlative of intoxication. Now that the respectable mechanic considers it disreputable to be seen intoxicated in the streets, we are able to look forward to the time when Merrie England shall mean

sober and happy England. But let all good men and true determine that it shall never mean intolerant, fanatical, and hypocritical England.

AT EVENTIDE.

CRIMSON, and gold, and russet,
Against the blazing sky,
The trees stood up in the sunset
As the wind went wandering by.

Crimson, and gold, and russet ;
And a drifting haze of rain
Caught up the western glory,
And gave it back again.

Just so, when life is sinking,
To the twilight time of tears,
Worn with the fret and fever,
The turmoil of the years,

Light from the land we're nearing,
Falls on the path we tread,
Like the smile we see through weeping,
On the faces of our dead.

TRAVELLING MADE EASY IN CENTRAL ASIA.

CENTRAL ASIA is very different now from what it was even a generation ago. The fear of Russia has made life safer and travelling far less dangerous. One is not quite as much at one's ease on the Steppes as one is on the moor of Rannoch; the Tekke Turcomans are still down on the unprotected wayfarer who seems to have something worth stealing. Khans and Emirs are shy of letting unaccredited strangers into the towns where they still maintain a shadowy authority. But how great the change since Conolly and Stoddart paid with their lives the penalty of their rash visit to Bokhara, or even since Vambéry, dressed like a holy man in flea-bitten rags, was trembling at every stage of his journey, lest some sharp Mussulman should find out that he was a sham. By-and-by, complete peace and security will come to the whole land between the Caspian and China—a peace like that *pax Romana* which, in St. Paul's day, enabled him and his fellow Apostles to travel without passport from one end of the civilised world to the other. This peace does not necessarily mean prosperity. Roman rule is said to have crushed out national life; and very probably in a few generations the Kirghese, and Turcomans, and Dungans, and others will have been Russianised, their native industries killed out, their energies—which too often ran in the direction of killing or enslaving their neighbours and those who rashly adventured among them—cramped into the mould of Moscow or Astrakan. But, though travelling in the Steppes is not yet free

and open to everybody, it is all as easy as a Cook's tourist-trip to one who has the goodwill of the Russian authorities. Now, Dr. Lansdell won this goodwill by telling what he had seen in the Siberian prisons. Those prisons have a very bad name. We have been led to believe that the exiles are sent off wholesale, with very little investigation, and that the stories are quite true of people sent off by mistake, who were coolly told: "Yes; you're not the culprit. He's another of the same name; but you must go, for it would never do to confess that the Government has been in the wrong. Go, and behave well; and then, after a year or so, you may petition to be sent home." That sort of thing—sufficiently aggravating in itself, and accentuated with a good mixture of lesser annoyances as marching hundreds of miles in irons, being packed like herrings in filthy barracks, being flogged if you are recalcitrant, set to mine-work if you continue stubborn, freezing to death in the forest if you run away, is what most of us believe to be the system. "Oh no," said Dr. Lansdell; "you're quite mistaken. Life in Siberia isn't half-bad; most of those who write about it never were there at all. The prison rooms are not mouldy with rank fungus; the smells are not abominable—certainly not worse than the smells in thousands of peasants' huts; the prisoners are not at the mercy of brutal turnkeys. Altogether, what 'Stepniak' and the Nihilists describe is evolved out of their own inner consciousness. The people who write are often not escaped prisoners at all, but refugees who are working in Switzerland, and whose trade it is to say all they can against the Russian Government." That is the substance of Dr. Lansdell's *Through Siberia*. "Oh, do finish it," said his friends, when he read them his notes; "all the talk has hitherto been on the other side. The lions ought in common fairness to have a painter as well as the men; and, as you've seen things for yourself, your testimony cannot be gainsaid." So Dr. Lansdell told the world that the devil of Russian officialism is not so black as he has been painted, and that the hell of Russian prisons is at worst a mild kind of purgatory. He did not convince the British public; John Bull is very hard to move when he's made up his mind; and most of us were of the late Dean Close's opinion: "Yes, my dear doctor," said the Dean; "of course you tell us all you saw; but I, who am no

anti-Russ, am quite sure those cunning Russians knew what they were about when they undertook to show you all over their prisons. Do you suppose they would let you into their chamber of horrors? They saw that, if they could make believe to show you everything, they would get what they wanted—a whitewashing in *The Times*."

But though his countrymen refused to be undeceived, the Russians were duly grateful to the man who spoke up for them. Thenceforth Dr. Lansdell was as sure of a good reception from any Russian governor as if he had been a Grand Duke himself. All doors were open to him; if there were any skeleton cupboards they were walled up, and the space covered with ikons (sacred pictures) and religious prints. Had he not published a book, of which a Russian prison-inspector wrote: "What you say is so perfectly correct that your book may be taken as a standard even by Russian authorities?" And so, when his desire to visit the nomadic Kirghese became irresistible, and he had got the needful funds from the Bible and Religious Tract Societies, he found everybody, from Count Tolstoi to the Cossack post-masters, eager to speed him on his way. He went, and saw, and wrote another book, which he dedicates, by permission, to "the Autocrat of all the Russias", in words that remind us of orator Tertullus in the Acts. But though we may smile at the quaintness of "I count myself happy, august Ruler of an Empire", etc., we have no desire to laugh at Dr. Lansdell's earnestness. He had distributed in Russia more than one hundred thousand tracts, and had put some part of the Bible in every room of every prison and hospital, not only in Siberia, but in several parts of Russia in Europe; and now he tells the Czar how he has been doing the same in the new provinces of Central Asia, even giving Bibles to Mollahs and other Mahommedans.

Thus much to show what a very different reception Dr. Lansdell and Professor Vambéry might expect. Not long ago we saw how the latter, a wretchedly poor Hungarian boy, ran away from his stepfather's tailoring, and imitated that Athenian of old who worked all night as a gardener's water-carrier that he might earn enough to attend by day the lectures of the philosophers. At last Vambéry became a first-rate Oriental linguist, and got a small grant from the Hungarian Academy

towards a journey eastward, in which he was commissioned to learn the earliest forms of that Turkish which is closely connected with the Magyar language. What a journey it was! Travelling in Central Asia had never been very safe; but, threatened as they had begun to be by England on one side and Russia on the other, now stealthily creeping up, now moving by leaps and bounds, no wonder the Tartar princes were maddened at the sight of a white man.

Very excusably they would say of him, "To spy out the nakedness of the land is he come," and so, when he got in, he found it hard to get out. Even Dr. Wolff, backed up with a firman from the Sultan, and dressed, too, in full clerical costume, only escaped from Bokhara by the skin of his teeth. They did not strip him as the Beloochees did afterwards. (Who that has read his Travels does not remember the racy account of how "I, Wolff, naked as I was born, and thankful to have escaped these marauders, presented myself before Runjeet Singh?") But they tried to poison him, and made every excuse for keeping him in what was virtually a prison, though it was called a guest-house. Vambéry shammed to be a hadji (pilgrim) from Stamboul going to add to his sanctity by visiting the tombs of the saints at Samarkand and thereabouts. Hadji like, he was dressed in rags, foul with vermin; not a note did he dare make; he even turned away from much which to a stranger must have been most interesting, but which it did not become a hadji to seem too inquisitive about. Always he was haunted by the fear of discovery; an unguarded word, a wrong movement in salutation or prayer-saying, a breach of etiquette, must have brought discovery and certain death. He had his life in his hand; and a weary weight he found it after the novelty had worn off. The sharp Persians found him out again and again; luckily the hatred of the Persians, who are Shiahs, for the Turcomans, who are Sunnis and kidnappers, prevented them from saying a word; but, dense as the Turcomans are, Vambéry was several times within a hair's-breadth of detection.

And now to the very city where, fifty years ago, Burnes had been obliged to dismount and walk, while his Mahommedan escort rode, Dr. Lansdell drove up in his tarantass, exchanging it at the mediæval-looking gate, with its loopholes and sentries as old-fashioned as the walls, for a grand horse, on which he was taken along the Rhigistan, a private road of the Emir, for

presuming to ride along which Stoddart, in 1838, was kept for two months in a prison twenty feet below the earth's surface. The finest house in the city was given up to this friend of the all-powerful Russians; and one day, when he insisted on being taken into the big mosque just before service began, and his conductors wanted to keep him out of sight because he was an "infidel", he deliberately chose a place where he could see and be seen. "Oh, but they'll look at you, and so lose the benefit of their prayers," was the plea, to which he retorted: "Then tell them not to look." So Dr. Lansdell watched the service, and found the worshippers far too absorbed in their work to stare round at him. He even waited till prayers were over, and examined what he thought might be a Nestorian font, earning thereby a good many black looks, and feeling, he says, a little nervous lest some zealot should rush upon the inquisitive unbeliever. Another time, the humorous doctor insisted on galloping round the city walls, and actually compassed in one ride seven out of its eleven gates, finishing the remaining gates another morning. When he found the Kushi-beggi (lord of bags—i.e., Emir's chief minister) looking annoyed at his taking notes, he boldly said: "I'm an author; my book has been accepted by the great white Czar. I mean to write a book on Bokhara, so you must take care to show me everything." They did not like to show him the prison, so he told them: "If you come to London we'll show you all our prisons. Here's my card. Send your son, and see if I'm not as good as my word. Besides, please to remember I'm General Cherniaieff's visitor," showing a letter from that officer, "and I should be sorry to tell him I had not been shown all I wanted to see." He was always saying unpleasant things to the Kushi-beggi, whom he summed up as an old fox; whilst his son was the greatest nincompoop in the khanate. One day, at dinner, he asked: "Do you remember two Englishmen who were put to death here about forty years ago?" "He appeared not to like the subject," is Dr. Lansdell's naive remark; "and I proceeded to administer another potion, asking him if he remembered how Dr. Schuyler bought a slave, and adding how glad I was that slavery was done away with now." Prisoners still have a hard time of it. Our doctor saw a pair of them outside the prison, chained by the neck, and howling piteously for alma. A kind-hearted Uzbek trader had come into Bokhara

on purpose to spend a few pounds in giving bread to those in prison. Of course he did not hand his money to the officials, or the prisoners would not have been a penny the better. He got leave to personally distribute his gift, and used daily to drop a score of rations into the underground cells, as one might feed the bears in the Zoo if they had not a pole to climb up. "What a brute this Emir must be!" Softly, my friend. Read your John Howard, and see how things were in England a century back. If you, in those days, had been "green" enough to hand five guineas to any British gaoler, how much good do you think your gift would have done the prisoners? The Emir is less in fault for these things than Russia; for she is as omnipotent in Bokhara as we are in the Deccan, and her own prisons are models of humane treatment, as she has taken care that the world (through Dr. Lansdell) shall know.

Sanitary matters are as bad in Bokhara as they used to be in England; but the people are far less to blame than our fathers were, for England is by nature blessed far more than Bokhara in regard to matters of health. Some London water is even now—well, let us say, trying to the constitution—after it has been stored for a month or so in a filthy water-butt. But no length of storage will, in our happy climate, breed the "riahts", that horrible worm found also in parts of West Africa, and taken, long ago, over to the New World. Old Jenkinson, who, in 1558, being in the Russian service, sailed over the Caspian, and made his way to Bokhara, says: "The water is very bad, breeding in the legs worms an ell long. If these break in being pulled out, the patient dies. For all this inconvenience, they are forbidden to drink any liquor but water and mare's milk; and they who break this law are whipt through the market—yea, if only a man's breath smells of spirits he shall have a good drubbing." It is not quite so bad as Jenkinson said; but, if the "riahts" does break, all the little worms inside it spread through the body, and the sufferer gets full of ulcers, which take months to heal. The native barbers use a needle and their thumb to squeeze it out. The Russian doctors wind it out on a reel, so much a day, till the whole is extracted. It varies from three to seven feet in length! How does it get in? Why, the little pools are full of a very small grey crustacean (the "cyclops"), whose colour makes him

almost invisible. Men swallow these, and they are pretty sure to be infested with "rishta" germs, which, finding in the human stomach a good place for their development, develop accordingly, and work their way to the skin. I wonder if Dr. Lansdell gave the Bokhariots a hint about boiling their water, not once only, but (as Professor Tyndal recommends) twice at least, so as to kill the germs which have escaped the first boiling. They would have listened to a man whom their Emir had welcomed with a guard of honour in magnificent array, headed by a Colonel all in cloth-of-gold, and who, infidel though he was, was allowed to ride right into the courtyard of the palace, while his Mussulman attendants had to dismount at the gates. Then the presents—a dozen sugar-loaves and as many boxes of candy, and trays of sweetmeats; and the after-dinner fête—a dance of long-haired boys who here answer to the Indian nautch girls, and a play by the same performers, in which one made himself very comical as the "heavy father" in a wool wig and ditto beard.

Between Kitab and Bokhara the doctor's tent was set up in the courtyard of a mosque which, a few years ago, he would hardly have been allowed to look at. When he came to interview the Emir, the troops were turned out as a guard of honour—a nondescript set, many of them in cast-off English regimentals; and in "the presence" he was allowed to walk by himself, whereas ordinary mortals are supported under each arm, lest the Emir's overpowering majesty should make them sink to the ground. There were two chairs; in one sat the Emir, resplendent in gold brocade, in the other the man whom the Czar delighted to honour, in a cassock which he had worn at a St. James's Drawing Room, a gold-embroidered Servian vest, a D.D.'s scarlet hood, a Masonic Grand Provincial Chaplain's collar, with all its jewels, and a college-cap on his head. The hood and collar he graciously bestowed on the Emir, for whom, being a mollah—learned priest—the former seemed an appropriate present. This is remarkable in all these Central Asian kinglets—their reverence for book-learning; books are as indispensable in the presence-chamber as the pipe itself; wherever Khan or Emir goes, his books go with him. In return Dr. Lansdell got a whole wardrobe of khalats—robes of honour; two horses—sorry screws—with splendid saddle-cloths, and bridles set with

turquoises. One of the doctor's presents was returned with thanks—his Through Siberia, with Copious Illustrations, and the Author's Portrait. "I don't want it," said the Emir. "Oh, but the Czar was graciously pleased to accept a copy, and so was Count Tolstoi." "You see, I have not visited any of the places," pleaded the Emir, who, while gladly accepting a Persian Bible and Arabic New Testament, firmly declined the doctor's book. He could not accept an illustrated work, for in all Bokhara there isn't the ghost of a picture; some lately brought from China by a foreign merchant were broken to bits, and their price paid by the Emir, and it is not so very long since the possessor of a picture was solemnly put to death. The Mussulman belief is that those who paint living creatures will have to give life to them at the day of judgment. Yet, though they had to treat him civilly, as a friend of Russia, they didn't like their enforced guest. The Kushi-beggi tried to show him as little as possible; his search for old manuscripts and curios was made fruitless; and his entertainer tried hard to make his "splendid hospitality" a gilded captivity, failing only because the buoyant doctor refused to be sat upon.

At Khiva, which has seen more of Russia, the doctor had no Kushi-beggi to be at once cicerone and spy. He wandered as he liked among the twenty-two colleges—medresses—in a cell of one of which Vambéry fixed his quarters among the other "kalendars". He puzzled the Khan—whose body-guard he thought dowdy and poverty-stricken—by telling him the sun never sets on our empire, at which his majesty could not refrain from saying: "That cannot be true." He went through the famous peach and melon gardens, and brought home a lot of melon-seed, some of which grew too rank, but some—that at Chevening—produced fruit as good as the Khivan—i.e., the best in the world.

Dr. Lansdell says the photographs flatter the mosques and medresses, "there's always an unfinished look about them". Earthquakes are common and a crack soon loosens the enamelled bricks. He was only too ready, by the way, to take advantage of this looseness; and no zeal of art can justify his setting a pack of boys to hunt for tiles among the débris, and getting a mollah to fetch a ladder and pick him out a loose one from the wall. Tartar undergraduates, by the way, keep a great many terms; the cells are bare enough, but idle fellows

like the lazy, half-begging life, and stay as long as thirty years, learning the Koran and comments by heart (without understanding a word of Arabic), as some Oxford men have tried to learn Euclid.

What most scandalised our doctor's escort at Bokhara was his attention to the Jews. In "Bokhara the noble", the Jews were, till the other day, as badly treated as in mediæval England, without the compensation of making now and then a good penny out of their persecutors. Anybody might knock them about with impunity; and a good many availed themselves of the privilege. But now, when a Russian grandee comes he often brings a Jew interpreter, and the Bokhariots have to treat the "Israelite dog" as respectfully as if he were a Russian. Dr. Lansdell would go into the Jews' quarter, and would not allow the people who swarmed out to see him to be kept at bay with the staves of his attendants.

But such a traveller could do pretty much as he liked; when he was going across the desert on horseback, he sealed up in the governor's house the hood and curtain of the tarantass which he was entrusting to a native Arab driver, thereby so impressing the man that had the carriage been full of precious stones they would have been safe. Once a party of robbers did ride up to some of his baggage and began firing guns. "If you want these goods, you had better come and take them," said the drivers, "only, remember, they belong to the Russians!" Whereupon the highwaymen stole off. In Khokand, the Tartar "manufacturing centre", still famous for its brass ewers, chain armour (see our doctor's portrait, in suit of Khokand mail), massive silver bracelets, velvet, and cloisonné jewellery (of which he brought back samples such as had never before been seen in London), the police, as he came in, all rose, some bowed, and some dismounted. At Samarkand he saw the mausoleum of Timur, a six-foot slab of jade to which the world has no fellow, a pillar at the head with the usual banner and horse-tail. Timur was buried, by his own wish, beside his tutor—respect for learning again—under the dome which he had reared over that tutor's grave. The floor of the building is of hexagons of jasper, the wainscot of transparent gypsum, the doors inlaid with ivory. It was here the doctor got his enamelled bricks, and actually bought the three-lipped lamp which used to be kept always lighted on the shrine.

Of course he saw a great deal more than Vambéry, and he saw it at his leisure—could notice butterflies (our big blue, found only with us at Bolt Head, is common on the Steppes), and Steppe flowers (fancy square miles of meadow sweet and blue anemone and not a soul to enjoy them!), and geological changes. Vambéry could not be geological, even when his caravan once took to a salt Steppe to avoid marauders. Dr. Lansdell notes the wonder of travelling along the cliff-bounded bed of a river, and he is all agog for the changes in the course of the Oxus, about which Rawlinson and Murchison had such a dispute. If only the Russians could get rid of the choking sand, and turn the Oxus into the Caspian, they would have a water-way almost to the frontiers of India. Above all, he was able to be cheerful, to give out English tea—"you would soon grow as fat as a camel, drinking such famous stuff as that," said a guest who drank it; to sing God Save the Queen at a Kirghese dinner-party, and Twickenham Ferry at a Bokhariot entertainment; to look on at the dervishes without being obliged to take a part in the performance; to learn about the climate—how it is steadily growing worse, the dryness of the air constantly turning fresh land into steppe, young trees being unable in the three growing months to get to any size, and the nomads cutting down the old ones; to find that Russian imports are killing out the native industries (we did the same in India), while, nevertheless, Russian trade is so clumsily managed, that they are afraid of our goods being imported into Russia itself by way of Central Asia!

In one thing Vambéry had the advantage: he could talk almost any language. Dr. Lansdell, despite several visits, apparently knows no Russian; and when, in Ili, he talked to the Sibo military colonists brought in by the Chinese to fill up the gap left by their exterminating conquest; the transmission from Sibo to Chinese, and thence through Russian to English, must have been perplexing. Naturally he was well supplied with statistics; learnt, for instance, that among Kirghese children, deaths from scalding and burning are exceptionally frequent—they roll into the fire, or get scalded with the camp-kettle. But Tartar statistics must be doubtful, when a man, having used up his hands and feet in counting, has to borrow those of the man standing next him to go on with the reckoning. Besides, the Russians must have

humbugged him now and then; they actually told him that in West Siberia the yearly consumption of alcohol is only just over five pints a head, whereas in the British Isles it is twenty-six!

Such a book, by such an enterprising man, was sure to be full of interest. There is not too much about tract and Bible giving, though we are told that Bibles were given everywhere, even to mollahs and fanatic Kirghese, and that at every post-house, just under the portraits of the Russian royal family, our doctor fastened up a picture of the Prodigal Son, whilst the post-masters piously exclaimed: "The Lord must have sent you!"

On the whole, Central Asia is hardly a country for tourists; though, as far as safety goes, they need not fear if they get a travelling permit from the Russian Government.

VICTIMS.

By THEO GIFT.

*Author of "Lil Lorimer," "An Alibi and its Price,"
Etc., Etc.*

CHAPTER VII. NAOMI'S LITTLE EVENING.

VERA'S question as to Dr. Marstrand's religious proclivities had not been, as her friend intimated, without a point of personal application. In the hurry and confusion of the girl's sudden departure from Brittany, and the all-absorbing grief and anxiety attending the necessity for it, all Madame St. Laurent's fussy nervousness and prudential timidities with regard to her daughter had perforce been laid aside. The one idea of removing her from the risk of infection without submitting her to the influence of the De Mailly family had been powerful enough for the time being to overwhelm every other; and at the moment of parting even these maternal anxieties were subordinated to those of the wife grudging even that second from her husband's bedside.

It was only later, when his illness began for the first time to take a favourable turn, and the doctor to whisper a hope that any immediate danger might be considered as over, that his devoted nurse could even spare time or thought to do more than glance over her daughter's letters for the assurance that she was well and happy, and to wonder—with some inward qualms—as to what her husband would say to her independent action when he should be well enough to hear of it.

That her child had been warmly wel-

comed, and was receiving every kindly care and attention from the hospitable Jewish family to whom she had been committed, the mother knew well enough from the tone, even more than the words of Vera's somewhat meagre epistles (it is seldom that a girl who has never left home, or had girl-friends, is a good correspondent), and Madame St. Laurent's own communications had been more meagre still; generally consisting of a daily bulletin as to her husband's condition, often of two lines only, and always carefully fumigated before being sent.

It was only when this condition improved, so as to leave room for other thoughts, that, as I have said, the wife had leisure, for the first time, to question the wisdom of her own conduct, and dread lest any unforeseen result, subversive of her lord and master's well-known wishes, should eventuate from it; and when a letter arrived from Vera, mentioning, among other matters, a visit from "a young Mr. Rosenberg, a very funny young man, with long hair and a grey velvet coat, who talked in a way she couldn't understand, and asked her if she had ever 'sat for a Madonna,'" Madame St. Laurent replied by quite a long epistle, beginning pleasantly enough, indeed, with the improvement in her invalid's condition, but going on to express a hope that Vera's good spirits, in consequence, would not lead her to giddiness or folly (poor Vera! she had never known the feeling of being giddy in her life!), and giving her a most stringent caution against dropping into anything like flirtation, or even friendly intimacy, with Mr. Rosenberg, or other youths of his sort.

"I know," she wrote, "from what Leah has said here, that her parents do allow some young men friends—Jews, as I gather—to visit at the house; but that, as you know, is not the way with us, and though I have not objected to your making this visit to Leah Josephs and her family (indeed, I think you are less likely to be led astray among a people whom even you know beforehand to be hopelessly benighted and set apart from the Lord's household, than among fashionable, so-called Christians, whom you might be inclined to believe in, and perhaps vex papa and me equally by imitation), you must remember that he would not approve for a moment of your letting yourself become intimate with any of the young men, or encouraging them in paying you silly compliments or attentions.

I am quite sure, in fact, that he would send for you home at once if he imagined there was the least fear of such a thing; so I do hope you will be prudent and careful, and draw back the minute anyone is the least particular, so to say, in his manner to you."

"There, I can't say more," the mother thought to herself. "I don't believe he could have put it more strongly himself;" and, indeed, Vera's answer, when it came, seemed equally comprehending and satisfactory.

"DEAR MAMMA,—There are very few visitors of any sort at the Josephs's just now. Leah says town is empty, and everyone gone away, but it is cheerful enough for me. You are quite right about the people who come to this house being mostly Jews, and I am so glad you say I need not like the young men, or be friendly with them, for I don't care about them at all; only till you wrote I thought I was wrong not to try to do so, and to be less shy with them. I do like Mr. Josephs, for, though he is so learned that I am a little afraid of him too, he is very kind and fatherly, and so gentle everyone loves him. Perhaps, however, you didn't mean to include him, for he never pays compliments to anyone but dear Mrs. Josephs, and she likes them. Fancy, every Friday evening, he has a beautiful candlestick, with seven candles in it, lit up in her honour, which they call 'the bride's candlestick'—I suppose it was given her when she was a bride—and, after dinner, he makes her sit in the best armchair, and kisses her hands, and says all those pretty verses out of Proverbs, about a good wife, to her, and the children say, 'Happy Sabbath, good mother, to you,' and kiss her too. The young men are quite different, however. I don't like them a bit; they are mostly so small, and have such big noses, and don't look either like Frenchmen or Englishmen. Besides, I can't understand their conversation, which is chiefly about music and what Leah calls æsthetic subjects, so that when they call I am quite glad to escape or get into a corner with the little boys. Tell papa, please, he need certainly not send for me home on their account; and, oh! if he and you do go to the Count's château in the Landes, for change, when he is better, do let me stay here till you return. The Josephs all beg that I will."

This was written before the visit to Naomi's, and if, in excuse for her increased shyness with the male sex, Vera felt com-

pelled to betray the counsels she had received on the subject, Madame St. Laurent had no right to blame anyone but herself and her system of education, which, by keeping a girl of twenty in as strict leading-strings as a little child, had trained her indeed to the docility of one, while depriving her of all the natural tact and judgment of a woman.

Fortunately Leah had enough of both, and of generosity in the bargain, not to betray the contempt and indignation which this proof of how Christians looked on "her people" kindled within her; still less to resent it on her guest's innocent head. Her cheek flushed a little, and her lip curled—that was all, and Vera only gathered that there might be something offensive in her confidence by the gently spoken caution: "Don't tell dear mother what your mamma has written to you. It—it might hurt her."

It was evening now, and Vera was changing her dress in obedience to her friend's orders to "make herself pretty for Naomi's evening". Rather, I should say, she was looking at her limited stock of "best dresses" as they lay on the bed, and wondering which she should put on, and why Leah did not come in as usual to assist her in her choice. There was the black silk, and the striped brown and purple, and the green muslin. There was also a white book-muslin, but that was for very best—nothing under a dance, at least, and Leah had distinctly said this was not even to be a party. Why didn't Leah come in and decide for her, tell her what to wear, and how to wear it, and so save her the trouble of thinking at all about the matter?

"I only care about looking nice to please her, and she understands how to make me do so much better than I do," Vera thought plaintively. "Now, would she say the brown? I suppose she is still busy preparing for Naomi's people. How much trouble she seems to give herself about them!"

Indeed, it was a fact that Leah had been wonderfully busy the whole afternoon, flying about hither and thither, arranging antimacassars in dainty shapes, and disarranging them the next moment to try a dantier; removing unorthodox litter, such as children's toys, and Mr. Lucas's cigarettes—the Lucases were not a tidy family—from the drawing-room, and filling every available bowl and vase with fresh flowers, which she kept running in and out of the garden to procure, while Naomi leant back

in a rocking-chair, easily clad in a cool cambric "peignoir", her fat baby at her feet and a novel in her lap, the picture of good-tempered laziness and comfort. She laughed openly at her sister's energy, and whispered something jesting to her in passing which sent the blood into Leah's brown cheeks; but the latter did not relax in her self-imposed duties all the same, and Vera noticed that her lips wore a happy smile the whole time, and that ever and anon little bursts of song came rippling to them and went floating out upon the summer air. Now, when dressing-time came, and she had not put in her customary appearance at Vera's toilet, the younger girl, still puzzling over her gowns, began to puzzle over something else too—that laughing whisper, namely, of Naomi's: "Is the object of all this bustle worthy of it?"

Was there any special object for it? Vera wondered. Any one among the expected guests, the thought of whose coming was pleasant enough to make Leah look so bright herself, so eager that everything else should look so? And who could it be? It was only then that there flashed upon her the look and tone, unnoticed at the time, with which her friend had spoken of the friend she had met in the street, Dr. Marstrand; and in an instant Naomi's joke seemed to acquire a sudden point, and Leah's unwonted forgetfulness of her a hidden sting, none the less painful because she blushed at herself in hot shame for feeling it. She had no friend in the world, save Leah; no one whom she loved so well or confided in so utterly; and yet it seemed possible that Leah could have friends dear enough to cause her to be forgotten, though their existence, even, had never been whispered to her till to-day. For the first time since she left Brittany, poor little Vera half wished herself back there. At least, she had never known what jealousy meant at home.

She began to dress all the more quickly, however. It was one of her forms of shyness that, when company was expected, she always liked to be downstairs and safely ensconced in a quiet corner of the drawing-room before any of the guests arrived—a manoeuvre by which she escaped the ordeal of a formal entrance and introduction into a roomful of strangers; and now, being left to herself, it did not take her many minutes to discard the black silk as too hot and the brown as too ordinary, to endue herself with the green muslin, which, having been stiffly starched and

badly packed, presented a condition of stiffness and crumples neither suggestive of grace nor comfort; and having twisted her hair up on the top of her head—a fashion peculiarly unbecoming to her, but which she innocently thought gave her a more "company" appearance—to glide down to the drawing-room and seclude herself in the friendly embrasure of a window before the first ring at the bell had sent Naomi rustling, fluttering, and flushed into the apartment to receive her guests.

Even then Leah, usually beforehand in punctuality with her sister, did not make her appearance, and it was not till some minutes later that Vera suddenly caught sight of her at the other end of the room, talking to a young lady guest; but looking so more than usually bright and handsome, that the little French girl could only gaze at her in a sort of admiring rapture, while even little Benjy Lucas, whose indulgent mother allowed him to sit up much later than was good for him, exclaimed:

"Oh—h—h! isn't Aunty Leah lovely to-night!"

Yet Miss Josephs was really by no means so regularly beautiful as the Salomon girls—intensely dark brunettes, whose black eyes and hair were set off by the daintiest of summer costumes in white cambric and lace; her cheeks and eyes being only so much brighter than usual as to suggest to those who knew her best some inward cause for excitement; while her gown was a very old and well-worn one of black satin, originally belonging to her mother, and made more simply than many of her dresses, but with an open, square-cut bodice and short sleeves, ruffled round with fine black lace, which relieved the warm, creamy whiteness of the neck and arms, and a scarf of the same material, knotted loosely round the hips. All of colour or richness in the costume was concentrated in a great cluster of roses fastened against one side of the bosom—roses of every hue, from palest yellow to deepest crimson, nestling in their own bronzed leaves, and glowing out from that shelter with a luxuriance and vividness which would have made even a plain girl striking.

The person who wore those roses needed no other adornment; nay, even the half-blown bud, hiding itself like a flake of ruby velvet among the coils of her dark, wavy hair, seemed like an impertinence in attempting to distract the eye from the queenly gorgeousness of its sisters.

She had not forgotten her friend, however, over her own more successful toilet, for, even while Vera was still regarding her with wistful admiration, the dark eyes met hers in recognition, and the next moment Leah was at her side, whispering reproachfully:

"Vera, you bad girl! Did you hurry downstairs lest I should prevent your screwing up your hair that way! And why didn't you put on your flowers! Naomi kept me in the nursery with Alix, who is croupish, till later than I thought, and when I went to your room you had flown, and there were all the pretty flowers I cut for you—white roses, and your favourite clematis, and the only bit of gardenia in the conservatory—wasting their sweetness in the glass just as I left them!"

"Oh, Leah, I am so sorry! I didn't see——" Vera began, but the sentence was not finished, for at the same moment the door opened to admit some fresh guests, and Leah went forward to assist her sister in receiving them.

They were three gentlemen—one, young Rosenberg, and the other two strangers, tall men both, and one, at any rate, singularly handsome, slight, graceful, and scarcely middle-aged, with a thoughtful, rather melancholy face, fair hair parted in the middle, and a long fair beard, pointed on the chest.

Vera felt an instinctive certainty that this was Dr. Maratland, more especially as, after a brief greeting to the other, Leah remained talking with him at the farther end of the room, where he seemed only too well content to detain her, while Mr. Burt—if the second stranger were he—crossed the apartment at once, and entered into lively conversation with Naomi and her husband, both of whom welcomed him with even more than their wonted effusiveness.

Certainly he was not like the wife with whom Vera had already made acquaintance. Indeed, remembering that lady's rigid and almost "stained-glass" solemnity, she could not help feeling that the Burts' marriage must have been one of those founded on the law of contrarities; for the very sound of the gentleman's voice, pleasant in tone, perhaps, but loud enough to overpower most of those in its vicinity, and of his laugh, ringing and explosive as a schoolboy's, were enough to banish the idea of solemnity from his presence, and make shy Vera tremble in spirit lest so noisy a person should be introduced to her,

and so bring general attention on her timid head. In truth there was something vigorous and demonstrative enough about his whole personality to make many nervous souls flutter on their perches. As tall really as his friend, he looked less than his height, owing to the great width of his shoulders, and substantial, not to say somewhat thick-set frame. His head, too, though not actually large, had the appearance of being so from being covered with a thick mass of curly hair of an unusually vivid shade of chestnut-brown, which was made the more noticeable by the much darker shade of the moustache and short pointed beard which covered his mouth. His eyes were brown, too, large, well-opened, and almost too brilliant, with a habit of fixing themselves so intently on the face of the person he was speaking to as to be somewhat trying to the nervous feminine organisations afore-mentioned; while his fresh and ruddy face, sunburnt hands, and unconventional attire (for he made his appearance in a rough serge and coloured shirt) spoke to plenty of outdoor life in wind and sun, if not to a somewhat contemptuous disregard for the exactions of evening-dress.

"But the truth is, I haven't got so much as a white tie, let alone a swallow-tail on board the boat," he was saying to Naomi, though at a distance just too far removed from Vera for her to catch the words. "When I determined to allow myself this outing, I made up my mind to do it Bohemian fashion or not at all. I don't see any fun in carrying London shackles into country air, so I left evening toggery, and all other handcuffs and ankle-gyves, locked up in my wardrobe at home. I thought you'd make me welcome without them."

"I? Oh, I'd make you welcome in a dressing-gown, and so would Albert," said Naomi warmly. "Leah had told me you were camping out in a house-boat; but I thought it was somewhere above Oxford, and never expected to meet you down here."

"We only came down yesterday. My chum there wanted to be within half an hour's reach of town for a day or two on account of some business matters, so we upped anchor and came. How well your sister is looking!"

"Isn't she? Never better, I say, though she didn't enjoy her Brittany visit very much, after all. Indeed it was an awful fall in some ways, for—— Oh, here she is!"

"I hear the word Brittany," said Leah,

coming up, her black draperies and glowing roses, with those bright eyes over them, making her, indeed, so striking and gracious a figure that Mr. Burt might be excused for allowing his keen, intent gaze to rest on her in most open and cordial admiration. "Is Naomi offering to introduce you to my friend from there, Miss St. Laurent?"

"No; where is she?" and "No; we were admiring you," came from man and woman simultaneously; the former's speech being the last quoted, and bringing a bright blush into Leah's cheek. She turned it off, however, with a frank, pleasant smile and answered (Vera could guess what she was saying by the turn of her head):

"Then come now and let me do it. There she is in that window, and she is so nice."

"That girl!" he turned a quick glance in the direction indicated, and again Vera felt what was being spoken. "The young woman with red hair strained off her face like a Dutch doll, and an impossibly hideous dress covered with green cabbages! No, please don't; I would much rather talk to you."

"Oh, but I want you to know her. She has made herself look ugly to-night; but her hair is lovely really, and so is her character. I doubt if you have ever met a sweeter or more innocent girl; and, as to her dress—you are not Mr. Rosenberg to 'die like a rose in achromatic pain' because of a false tone of colour. She has lived out of the world and never learnt the art of dressing—that is all."

"A true woman never needs to learn it. It comes to her by nature. Do you mean to pretend anyone taught you how to put those roses together? No, I'm not going to talk to your friend. Her sweetness may be saccharine, and her innocence only equal to a 'bashful young potato, or a quite too-too French-bean'; but they must be wasted on less deserving mortals for the present. I haven't seen you for three months, and I want a chat."

"Then you must wait for it, or do it solo"—but Leah did not speak chillingly—"for I have just promised to sing."

"Very well, that will be better than nothing. I will come and listen to you, and we will have our chat afterwards."

And they went off together, his shaggy curls and massive shoulders towering over nearly everyone else present, and making Leah look slim and fairy-like in comparison.

Vera sat still in her corner. Her heart

need not have fluttered so quickly after all. She had got her wish. The loud-voiced Mr. Burt was not going to be introduced to her; but she knew as well as if each word had reached her, that the introduction had been offered and declined; and, humble as she was, it would have been unnatural if a little twinge of mortification had not mingled with the relief.

"Of course he liked better to go and listen to Leah," she thought. "Anyone would; but it would have been more—more polite if he had just let her introduce him to me first. Besides, I daresay she would much rather have had that handsome Dr. Marstland to turn over for her."

Miss St. Laurent little thought that her opinion of "that handsome Dr. Marstland" was to go down in similar fashion before many minutes.

Some of Leah's Brittany sketches were lying on a table near Vera's window; and while the singing was going on, Dr. Marstland drew near and began to turn them over. He did not say anything, and Vera was disappointed not to see the melancholy beauty of his face lighted by any very keen expression of admiration; but her wrath began to rise when little Rosenberg, who had already told Leah in the frankest way that he was very sorry, but they would be no use to him, "much too mannered and conventional. Suffolk Streety (if she wouldn't mind his saying so), sadly Suffolk Streety," drew near also.

"Another example that one must not look for music and painting in one soul more than now and again in a cycle," he observed as he came behind the doctor.

"Yes," said the latter.

"She can sing, you know."

"Ye—ea."

"Don't you think so? It's a very good quality of voice."

"For that quality of song—yes."

"But she oughtn't to paint. I'm very sorry. Indeed it is my fault, for I encouraged her at the beginning. I thought it was in her; that there were germs—very crude, you know; but still germs of the divine cult. And she is such a dear creature. I admire her intensely, don't you know. Those very things were done for me."

"Ah!"

Dr. Marstland went on turning over the sketches with no more expression in his face or finger-tips than before. He might have been simply toying with them in a fit of abstraction.

"Yes, I said to her, 'Go into the heart of Nature—Nature as she sits on the sea-coast of Finisterre, and just daub down what you see there; not what you think you see, or fancy you can paint. You can't paint, but I think you could daub. Daub only as you see and feel;' and she promised me she would. It was very precious of her, you know. She was gone three months, and—these are the results!"

He whisked three or four of them towards the doctor with a smile that was almost fearful.

"Humph!" said the latter, and put them aside.

"Yes, you can guess what I felt. Smart, neatly - coloured sketches, smacking of science and art schools and cheap drawing-copies. I wish she had burnt them."

"Yes," said the doctor slowly; "school-girlish—very. Not so very bad for a school-girl, though. Unluckily she isn't one."

"Who isn't—Miss Josephs?" put in a sudden, deep-toned voice, startling Vera, who in the extremity of her indignation against these insolent traducers of her idol's genius had risen to her feet, heedless that the impetuous movement had entangled her hair in the curtain-folds, and ruffled it in quite tragic fashion.

"No; more of a mistress than a school-girl, isn't she, both in music and painting? What are these? Her Brittany sketches? By Jove! they're clever. Just look at the lines of that fisher-girl's figure. Makes you feel a bit jealous, don't it, Rosenberg? You're awfully shaky in your anatomy, you know, old fellow. The fact is, you ought to have studied in the life-schools more. It's easy enough to daub in landscapes by your untutored genius, like the old boss here; but when you come to the figure you want science——"

The speaker was going on, but stopped rather abruptly; not because of any interruption from the discomfited Mr. Rosenberg—his friend had only smiled tolerantly—but because of a face which seemed to have sprung out of the shadows behind to greet him—a girl's face, pure and soft, framed in a tangle of fluffy hair, and with a pair of marvellously appealing eyes, filled one moment with burning anger and contempt for the two adverse critics, but only to be turned on him the next with an expression of the

sweetest gratitude and approval, so lovely in its unconscious fervour as to touch him with a species of wordless caress. He did not know to whom it belonged. He did not even associate it with "the Dutch doll girl in the impossibly hideous dress". He only saw the face itself relieved for one moment against a dark curtain in the gap between the two men's shoulders. The next, a movement of one of them hid it, and when he looked again it was gone, and its owner to be seen nowhere. Indeed, that sudden pause, and the answering flash in his keen eyes, had startled Vera back into more than her normal timidity. She became conscious that she had come forward, had attracted attention from the very person who had refused to be introduced to her so short a time ago; and in an access of terrified shyness and confusion she slipped out through the open window and made her escape into the garden, thus missing Rosenberg's answer:

"Ah, Marstland, my dear fellow, you're a surgeon and a Philistine, don't you know? not an artist. You look on a woman with the scalpel in your mind's eye; not as I do, as the expression of a soul—a harmonious fortuity of colour and form. Miss Josephs would not thank you for your praise."

It was in this way that Vera escaped learning the mistake she had made—namely, that the tawny-headed stranger with the big voice and broad shoulders was not Burt, the artist, whose ecclesiastical appearance was far more consonant with his wife's, but Dr. Marstland himself. And therefore, when the girls retired to bed for the night, it was in perfect good faith that she told her friend:

"I'm very sorry, Leah; but, no, I don't like your handsome doctor—though he is handsome—at all; and I don't think I ever should. No, don't ask me why, for I couldn't tell you; and please don't be offended with me. His friend Mr. Burt is nice, if you like. I didn't think so at first; and he is rather a frightening sort of man too; but I do like him, all the same."

"And yet you would not let me introduce him to you once when I asked you," said Leah in astonishment.

"No; because—— I can't tell you because why, either," Vera answered, crimsoning.

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

A Weekly Journal

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A STERN CHASE.

A STORY IN THREE PARTS.

By MRS. CASHEL HOEFLER.

THE THIRD PART.

CHAPTER VI. FINDING A FLAW.

"A ROMANCE in real life, indeed," said Captain Wharton, when Rodney came to the end of the story of his visit to Miss Merivale. "I suppose so successful a pull upon a man's recollections of twenty years before has seldom been made. It is odd, too, that I have a perfectly distinct remembrance of the young pair, and of all the circumstances. To be sure it was the only elopement I ever had a hand in, and a remarkable case in itself. And to think of it having ended so sadly!"

The friends were sitting at one of the innumerable tables in a vast dining-room of the Langham Hotel. There was a pleasant solitude around them; only a few stragglers remained at the farther end of the room. Captain Wharton was enjoying himself thoroughly in Rodney's society. His wife and their beautiful daughter, a brilliant, fiery sort of girl, whose word was law to her proud and obedient parents, had informed him that they did not want him to escort them that evening. His pleasure in Effie's enjoyment of the delights of London, and in the admiration which her rare and novel loveliness everywhere excited, never flagged; yet Captain Wharton was obliged to remind himself now and then that he was not so young as he had been.

Twenty years had changed both Rodney and Wharton; the first into a middle-aged, the second into an elderly man, but they had treated the two gently. Rodney's upright figure, frank countenance, quick, penetrating glance, and slow, humorous

smile, were all untouched by time; the thinning of his hair, and the deepening of the lines in his face, were the only marks of the handiwork of the destroyer. Captain Paul Wharton was now a white-haired gentleman, with whom it was more than ever difficult to associate the idea of a life passed in the toil and danger of seafaring. Alertness of movement unusual at his age, and a readiness of resource, characteristic of men whose business is in the deep waters, were all that told of Paul Wharton's former experience. At home—his beautiful, refined home at Boston—he was a quiet dweller among his late-acquired treasure of books; abroad, he was well content that his claims to notice and distinction should rest upon the fact that he was the husband of the charming Mrs. Wharton, and the father of the brilliant and lovely Effie.

"I remember it all, as if it only happened last week," said Captain Wharton: "the girl's terrible nervousness, and Rosslyn's unconsciousness that there was any stronger reason for it than their elopement. I can see her face now, as I said good-bye to her, and assured her it was impossible that any information about them could reach Jamaica from Cuba until they should be safe in England. I can recall the words I said: 'Supposing you were recognised here, the steamer by which you will sail for England will have left Kingston before there is any means of getting from Jamaica to Cuba. It won't matter then how soon the truth is known.' She was aware that you had told me all, and she let me see her fear of her cousin plainly. I tried to rally her out of it, but in vain; it was half-superstitious, and of course that is always hopeless, especially in the case of a Spanish woman."

"Her fear was well-founded, as I felt with

sincere conviction at the time, or I should not have mixed you up with the matter," said Rodney. "I confess I have never been able utterly to discard belief in the Evil Eye, and, if ever it existed, Norberto de Rodas possessed that baleful influence. Look at this very instance. The girl was rescued, the villain was defeated, her lover was saved, the marriage was accomplished, but Norberto triumphed in the end; his curse was fulfilled; his successful rival perished within a few hours of home, after a few days of happiness, and the girl's after fate does not bear thinking of."

"True; but you don't want the Evil Eye to account for all that—"the plain devil" suffices. Her cousin's wickedness drove the poor girl to the fatal step she took; but Rosslyn's death must have been pure accident, and, after all, it is from that the ulterior consequences have come. There is one point in the narrative, however, which seems obscure. It is the motive which led the poor girl to abstain from communicating with her husband's family when she reached England. Even supposing that her knowledge was of the slightest, she knew that Rosslyn was a man of means, an artist, therefore known to a certain extent, and that his father was living. I remember her telling me that he had said his father and sister would welcome her; then why did she not apply to them? Granting that she was ever so helpless, she would at all events have consulted a minister of her own religion, and there would have been little difficulty in discovering Dr. Rosslyn. Did not the full force of this strike you, when Miss Merivale related the story to you? Apart from the results to herself, it is incomprehensible that the poor girl should have left her husband's father and sister ignorant of his fate. How terrible have been the consequences! What years of suspense and misery she inflicted upon them!"

"I have thought of all these points," said Rodney, "and discussed them with Miss Merivale; but she threw no more light upon them than Mr. Dexter had done. She remembered with perfect distinctness what Willesden had told her—indeed, her clear-mindedness and recollection are remarkable. She put it strongly to him that Mrs. Rosslyn's not having applied to Dr. Rosslyn in the first instance was inexplicable, and that his not having done so, afterwards, when he could have recommended himself by revealing the existence of the child, was, if possible, more inex-

plicable still. He freely admitted this; and when she observed that it was the weak point in his story, he admitted that also, but coolly added that he relied upon the strong points."

"There cannot be any fraud in the matter, I suppose?"

"Not so far as the facts concerning the poor girl are concerned. Of course, Miss Merivale was put to ransom by Willesden, who was an undoubted scoundrel—his own account of himself makes that abundantly evident. Mr. Dexter does not know the amount of money the fellow got from her, and with me she naturally did not touch upon the subject."

"I suppose this part of the story will never be cleared up. After all, considering the lapse of time, it is very strange that so much should have come to light; and not the least curious link in the chain of circumstances is the seeming accident of Mr. Dexter's being at hand at the moment when Miss Rosslyn had attracted your attention, to tell you all about her. Another illustration of the world's being a very small place."

"It was an odd sensation," said Rodney irrelevantly, "to find myself talking with people who had for so long believed me to be dead. Miss Merivale showed me the report sent to Dr. Rosslyn by the agent who went out to Cuba. By-the-bye, we shall meet the very man at dinner at The Quinces, on Thursday, most likely; and Colonel Courtland also told me about a letter written by this gentleman to him, in which the brief announcement, 'Mr. Rodney is dead,' was made. You will not be surprised that no incident in the whole case impressed me more strongly than this; and if you don't mind my being more than a little tedious, I will try to show you why I regard it as a more important feature than at first sight it seems to be."

"I'm profoundly interested," replied Captain Wharton, "and all abroad as to how such a mistake was made."

"It was no mistake. Bear in mind the person who told Dr. Rosslyn's agent that Mr. Rodney was dead. That person was Don Norberto de Rodas. Bear in mind the persons with whom the agent was in communication—the English Vice-Consul, Don Gualterio's servant, Juan, and Don Pepito Vinent. None of the three knew anything about me, and Don Gualterio, to whom I had written after I reached New York, was not in the island. The lie fulfilled Don Norberto's

purpose. It convinced the agent that his task was fruitless and must be abandoned, and, supposing Don Pepito afterwards remembered anything at all about it, it was easy for Don Norberto to say that he had been mistaken."

"That is plain enough; but I don't see the man's motive."

"Don't you? It is as clear as day to me, and it fits in exactly with a notion of mine respecting him, which I well remember to have imparted to poor Rosslyn—the notion that there was vast potentiality of undeveloped wickedness in Norberto de Rodas. In deceiving Dr. Rosalyn's agent, and inducing him to give up his mission as a bad job, Don Norberto had two objects to gain—the preservation of the family secret concerning Fair Ines," it was strange how easily he dropped back into the familiar words after all those years, "and most effectual revenge upon his rival—whom he hated, depend upon it, dead or living, as only such a man can hate—and also upon the unfortunate girl who had, at all events, and at the very worst that could befall her, escaped from him. He accomplished both those objects, the first, manifestly, because the agent left Santiago without any suspicion that Ines was not in the convent, or that I was still in the land of the living; the second, presumptively, because the mission of the agent had disclosed to him that evil of some kind had befallen his cousin and her husband, and that whether Hugh Rosslyn were living or dead—the latter being far the more probable—Ines was without the aid and protection of his family. These two pleasant subjects of contemplation were provided for Norberto de Rodas by the agent's abortive mission. As I remember him, twenty years ago, he must have revelled in them."

"What a fiend you depict in a phrase!"

"He was a fiend in malignity of spirit, and an adept in most of the merely human vices as well. I wonder whether he has yet gone to his own place, or whether he is now a prosperous, pious, and popular personage in Santiago de Cuba."

"There were more fiends than one in the business. What wretches the girl's father and step-mother proved themselves, too. After seven years' ignorance of her fate, to learn that it had been so terrible, and to disown her child! Why, Rodney, it's a disgrace to human nature!"

"It is indeed; and even when I have said what I am going to say, the case is

black enough against Don Saturnino de Rodas and his wife. But I have the strongest conviction—it came to me while I was talking with Miss Merivale—that the whole thing was the doing of Don Norberto."

"Impossible, Rodney. Her own parents must have told the falsehood about the girl's being in the convent; no influence could have prevented them from taking measures to ascertain her fate, and if any had been resorted to they must have succeeded easily. You, yourself, were within reach of enquiry from Cuba. No—no; the cruel resolution to abandon her was taken when the lie that was devised to save the family credit, according to their notions, was told; and it was ruthlessly carried out in that vile letter, which was written in answer to the communication addressed to them when the child was found."

"That letter was written by Norberto de Rodas, and it forms one of the strongest grounds of my conviction. There is not a scrap of evidence that Don Saturnino or Doña Mercedes had anything to do with it, or that they ever saw the letter to which it was an answer. There is not a scrap of evidence that they ever heard of the agent's visit to Santiago. Why should they? Not a breath of rumour had ever connected the names of Hugh Rosslyn and Ines de Rodas. If it suited the purpose of Don Norberto to conceal the circumstance from them, he had only to keep his own counsel; it was nobody's business to reveal it. I knew those people well. Don Saturnino was a weak person; he adored his wife, and did not particularly care about his daughter; but he was not inhuman, and—though he would no doubt have assented to the first falsehood, for the sake of the family pride, credit, and honour—I am perfectly sure that he would not have been induced by any influence to consent to ignorance of the fate of Ines. I took the measure of Doña Mercedes, too, with tolerable accuracy in those old days, and although I knew her to be cold-hearted, hard-hearted, profoundly self-interested, and that she disliked her step-daughter, I could not believe her capable of such cruelty as this."

"Then how is their conduct to be interpreted?"

"As I believe, by imputing it, as it appears, to Don Norberto de Rodas. Allowing that they consented to the lie about the convent; granting even that Doña Mercedes suggested it, they would

only have regarded it as a temporary expedient for suppressing scandal, and we might then conclude that the task of making secret enquiry would have fallen to Don Norberto. Let us suppose, for the sake of working out my theory, and also to rid those people of odium of which I cannot believe them deserving, that he did to them in the case of Ines what he did to Dr. Rosslyn in the case of myself——”

“Told them she was dead, do you mean?”

“Told them she was dead, knowing that they would accept his word for it; and then left her to the utter abandonment which he must have hoped for and foreseen from the nature of the agent's mission.”

“It is a strong web of conjectural villainy that you have woven, Rodney. You bring out the ‘potentiality’ you spoke of a little while ago on a grand scale; but there is a great deal in your theory of this man's conduct that is consistent with all you knew of him when you came to me on board the old Manhattan. The scoundrel who had scared the poor girl to such desperation at that stage of the business, would undoubtedly be capable of carrying out the scheme you have guessed at. The only thing against it is the presumption of great folly on the part of the people he was deceiving, and the extraordinary improbability of the girl's not having communicated directly with her father, when she fell into the distress which ultimately threw her into Willesden's hands.”

“Unless I could make you understand the state of things in the De Rodas family, as I remember it,” said Rodney, “I could not meet your first objection convincingly; so I must leave it, merely saying that it does not present so much difficulty to me, and that the reason is not because I am enamoured of my own reading of a riddle. Your second objection I can more readily dispose of. Although Willesden could not give Miss Merivale any information on the point, there is no reason why we should conclude that Fair Ines did not appeal directly to her father; but nothing would be easier than for Norberto de Rodas to suppress the communication. He would only have had to watch for such a thing, and he would naturally have been expecting it from the time when the agent's mission apprised him that calamity of some kind had overtaken Ines, and that Rosslyn's family knew nothing about her. He had free access to Don Saturnino's papers; his part in the business gave him that; he had

only to be on the alert when the mail from England was delivered, and, if he secured and concealed one letter from Ines, he might feel pretty confident that he need not fear the coming of a second.”

“You think, then, she would not try again?”

“Yes; I feel sure her timidity and her despair would prevent her from making any further attempt.”

Captain Wharton looked doubtful, and shook his head. The weak point in the cleverly - constructed and plausible case made by Rodney for Don Saturnino and Doña Mercedes de Rodas made itself evident to him, where the weak point in Willesden's statement to Liliás Merivale had made itself evident to her. In neither the case nor the statement was the influence upon Ines of her child's interest sufficiently recognised. Liliás had argued that no consideration such as Willesden named would have withheld Ines from making her position known to her lost husband's father when it became a question of letting her child want. Again, nothing in the case as put forward by Rodney, Captain Wharton felt, accounted for Ines's making no second application to her father when it had become a question of letting her child want. Far as Rodney still was from divining the whole truth, he had worked out a great deal of it in his ingenious brain; but Wharton had detected a flaw in the web, because, whatever he might be doing or talking of, his own daughter was never out of his mind, and as he listened to the story of Ines his fancy linked it with that of Effie. Thus, the note of sympathy, which is the truest enlightenment, was struck.

“The villain must have been lucky in his villainy and have secured all she wrote,” said Captain Wharton, “for it is totally impossible that she made no farther effort. But, even so, I still find it difficult to account for her being driven to the despair which induced her to marry so soon. The alternative can have been nothing short of starvation, and that, they say, no one can face. No woman can face it for her child, certainly.”

“Extreme helplessness and ignorance of everything English had probably as much share in forcing her to that resource as actual penury,” said Rodney. “A deserted child in a wilderness is the only image of the desolation of Fair Ines that I can conjure up. Born and reared amid wealth, luxury, and indulgence, and with all the

helplessness of a Creole lady—ah, it does not do to think of, even as a thing past and gone so many years ago!"

Captain Wharton was silent. In his mind's eye was a vision of Hugh and Ines as he had seen them, standing side by side in the moonlight on the deck of his good ship, the girl's starry eyes uplifted to their kindred skies, the young man's bent on hers with a lofty look of love, reverence, and protection, while the silver sea lay glittering in a boundless plain around them—the silver sea, so soon to be the grave of that true lover. Twenty years ago!—and here was he, Paul Wharton, an elderly man, prosperous and happy, to whom that same sea had ever been propitious and beneficent, with as keen a pang of pity at his heart for the bridegroom and the bride as though their fate had befallen them yesterday.

"You're right, Wharton—you're quite right," said Rodney, after a meditative pause. "Even if I have worked it out rightly, there's a missing link, and I don't see how it is ever to be supplied."

"Nor I. Have you any idea of the present state of things in the Rodas family? I gathered from what you said that you don't know anything about the villainous nephew, who is now probably a local magnate."

"I know nothing, because I have never enquired. But my old friend, Don Gualterio, is still alive, well, and erratic. At least, he was all this at the beginning of the year, when I came upon him in the Yosemite, tranquilly sketching El Capitan. I had not heard of him for a long time previously. He wanted me to go back to Cuba when he should be going; but my face was set for Europe just about that time. I shall write to him, after I have seen Miss Merivale and Colonel Courtland again, for all the preliminary information that will be required."

"You are sure of your facts about Doña Ines's inheritance from her mother?"

"Perfectly sure."

"Do you know, Rodney, the money part of this matter is the strongest argument, to my mind, for the correctness of your notion that the villain suppressed, not only the poor girl's own letters, but also the communication made on behalf of Miss Merivale when Willesden gave up the child. You see, the money which Doña Ines inherited from her mother did not belong to Don Saturnino at all, and you have spoken of him as an honourable person."

"Certainly."

"Well, then, he might have refused to take back his daughter, or to have anything to do with her, either from pride, anger, revenge, or all those bad motives combined; but he would not have been likely to rob her of her just inheritance, and, when he had been informed of her death, to go on robbing her child, just because the lady who had taken charge of her was not aware that the child had any rights. Don't you agree with me that the two actions belong to different kinds of baseness and turpitude, and that a man might do the one thing who could never be induced, by any security of impunity, to do the other?"

"Of course I do," said Rodney, with a keen look of satisfaction; "and I see how strongly your observation supports my theory. That's the second time you've hit where I've missed, Wharton. If I know anything at all of men, Don Saturnino de Rodas would be absolutely incapable of a dishonest action, although he might be persuaded into an unfeeling and revengeful one. The question is settled for me: every communication was suppressed; the existence of his grandchild is unknown to the old man, if he be still living."

"I think that is the only way out of it," said Captain Wharton quietly; "and I should say the next scene of this drama—with so long an interval between the acts—will be of a lively and exciting nature. Of course, Miss Merivale has not as yet considered the steps to be taken in consequence of what you have told her."

"No; I fancy not. A first consultation with you, and then a general council under the advice of Mr. Dexter, is as far as she has got."

"It's getting late," said Captain Wharton, looking at his watch. "My wife and Effie will be back from their concert presently. Shall we go upstairs? It will be pleasant news for them that Miss Merivale and Miss Rosslyn are coming to call on them to-morrow. Mrs. Wharton was very much struck with both ladies at the play."

Rodney occupied rooms of more modest dimensions, and a good deal nearer the roof of the Langham, than the spacious suite of apartments to which Mrs. Wharton and Effie had already, by some mysterious art, given an air of home. It was past midnight when he sat himself down at the window of his sitting-room for a final smoke, and fell to thinking again over the

occurrences of the day, and the long conversation of the evening. The result of his reflections was the forming of a resolution.

"No agent this time," he said to himself. "I am an idle man for the first time in my life, and I will see the matter through. It is no good waiting to exchange letters with Don Gualterio; there must be somebody left among them who can be brought to an account. She shall not have another spell of suspense in her life if I can prevent it. I will start as soon as I have seen about this confounded place of mine at Southampton."

CHRONICLES OF ENGLISH COUNTIES.

MIDDLESEX. PART II.

POPE'S villa and Walpole's Gothic building of Strawberry Hill have given a flavour to Twickenham that it has preserved through all the disillusionments of its modern growth. The name conjures up in the imagination the placid river, the graceful swans, the green sward, the artful artificial plantation.

In vain fair Thames reflects the double scenes
Of hanging mountains and of sloping greens.

What are the gay parterre, the chequered shade,
The morning bower, the evening colonnade?

What are all these, the poet would say, without the fair creatures who once adorned them—without the especial fair one who, for the moment, received the poet's adoration, an elegant and ethereal passion that might rest like a flower upon the purest bosom. Not that one would like to think in that connection of the hard and unsympathetic Lady Mary Montague, but of that softer and more pleasing train of nymphs, who are pictured by Gay as welcoming their hero back from the visionary land of Homer and the plains of Troy:

I see two lovely sisters, hand-in-hand,
The fair-haired Martha and Teresa brown,
Madge Bellenden, the fairest of the land,
And smiling Mary, soft and fair as down.

And though it would have been a delight to have visited Pope's garden, laid out by his own hands and arranged in dainty devices:

I plant, root up; I build, and then confound,
Turn round to square, and square again to round;

or to have pictured his friends from the great world at work with the little poet, hammering, nailing, and tying up, Boling-

broke, perhaps, his head running upon Jacobite plots, or Peterborough, just home from the war in Spain;

And he whose lightning pierced the Iberian lines,
Now forms my quincunx and now ranks my vines.

Pope had won this villa of his owing to the wonderful success of his translation of the first books of the Iliad having put money in his purse, which he thus judiciously invested. And he came there in March, 1715-16, bringing his father and mother, and his household gods, like any Trojan hero, from the skirts of Windsor Forest to the pleasant and sunny nook which the poet styles alternately "a paltry hermitage" and "my Tusculum."

Pope had already been some years at Twickenham when his friend, Lord Bolingbroke, who had made his peace with the ruling powers, came back to England, and settled in the same county, at Dawley, within an easy drive of Pope's villa.

Still retired and secluded is the little village of Harlington, where Dawley House, or some part of it, is yet standing. This had been the seat, at one time, of the Bennets, one of whom had been made a peer in Charles the Second's time, and was the well-known Lord Arlington, one of the A's of the Cabal. That he should have so unconcernedly dropped the H from the name of his native village, from which he took the title, makes one think that people were not so particular about their h's in those days, and that even exalted personages did not trouble themselves about an aspirate or two. However, Lord Bolingbroke bought the place, and gave out that he had buried himself in the pursuits of a rural life, while he was still near enough to London to be ready for that summons to action which never came. And here Pope visited him often enough, and describes him, in a letter to Swift, as reading the Dean's epistle lying between two haycocks.

Once, in returning from Dawley in Lord Bolingbroke's coach-and-four, Pope had an accident which is, in a literary way, historic. At Whitton, a mile or two from Twickenham, a little river crosses the road, or rather the road should cross the river by a small brick bridge. But this night the bridge was broken down, and the alternative ford was choked by a balk of timber, and my lord's fine coach was upset into the middle of the stream, and the poor poet soured in the water. The great Voltaire was visiting Lord Bolingbroke at the time, and wrote a graceful letter of congratulation—on the escape,

not on the ducking—to his brother poet.

It is like witnessing the feasts of the gods, to read of the meeting of the great men of the rising century, all among the elms and meadows of the green Thames Valley. When Gay and Swift met at Pope's villa, in 1726, one had just finished Gulliver, and the other was beginning to hatch out *The Beggar's Opera*. And then the happy frolics of these days, when dress was stiff but manners were easy! Pope and Swift one day found their way to Marble Hall, close by Twickenham, where dwelt pretty Mrs. Howard, who was often glad to escape there from her burdensome service at Court—that Mrs. Howard who, in later years, as Lady Suffolk, appears in the *Heart of Midlothian* as the object of Jeanie Deans's unconscious satire. But the mistress was away, and Pope and the Dean made themselves at home in the house, and dined there, served by laughing maids.

But evanescent is the charm of life—that subtle aroma of the wine which vanishes before the bottle is nearly drained. On his next visit to Twickenham the Dean found nothing to his mind. He was deaf and giddy; the tattle worried him; there was too much company; and he found the dullest London lodging more endurable than the once-loved Twickenham.

But Pope had been sleeping some years in his quiet grave when Walpole came to Twickenham. He found the name of Strawberry Hill in one of the old deeds of the property when he bought it, and pleased with the simple name, he rescued it from oblivion. To see Strawberry Hill in lilac time was the great attraction; and even now there are few pleasanter sights than the suburban gardens of Twickenham, with the shrubs in their freshest verdure, and masses of luxuriant bloom which throw the poor, old-fashioned lilacs into the shade—a sight that almost reconciles one to the harsh lines of new houses.

The dainty Horace himself was generally to be found in a flowered silk coat of a delicate lavender hue, moving about among his curios and treasures, from the tribune to the gallery, from the gallery to the Holbein chamber or the Beauclerk closet. Or in the Gothic library, with serious face, he would read over the proofs that Kirgate, his printer, had just brought him from his own Strawberry Hill press. Or we may find him in his garden, with his little, fat lap-dogs puffing and yapping at his heels. Always, too, he is building and adding to

the queer composite edifice for which he has quite an ill-regulated affection. Now a pinnacle is added, or a turret crenellated into warlike guise, or a Gothic window is filled with painted glass. Who would think to see in the dilettante the harbinger of the coming romantic revival in literature, or the Gothic revival in architecture, of which the beginning and end are almost within living memory!

We have followed Pope in his frequent journeys to his friend Bolingbroke at Dawley, and the same route will bring us into a hitherto unexplored country, where the level floor of the Thames Valley is exchanged for gently rising hills, intersected by brooks which, of no great volume in themselves, have made such deep beds in the stiff, tenacious clay as to be formidable obstacles enough to the cross-country rider or pedestrian. One of these brooks, formerly haunted by the solitude-loving crane, has taken its name from that bird, and given it in turn to the secluded village of Cranford.

Cranford on the Crane is quiet and secluded enough to this day, perhaps even more secluded than when from its position on the high Bath road the coaches and carriages of the wealthy rolled by on the way to the festive court of Beau Nash. Formerly part of the extensive possessions of the Knights of St. John, the manor of Cranford fell at the time of the dissolution of religious houses to the house of Berkeley, whose descendants still occupy the Lodge. And to this connection Cranford owes two of its more or less distinguished rectors. Thomas Fuller, the author of the *Worthies*, was chaplain to George, Earl of Berkeley, when he was presented by his patron to the living of Cranford. Worthy Master Fuller died in his lodgings in Covent Garden, and his body was reverently attended to its tomb in Cranford church by two hundred or more of the clergy of London and the neighbourhood. Fuller's successor was the eccentric Dr. Wilkins, who had been warden of Wadham, Oxford, under the Commonwealth. His wife was a sister of the Protector's, and he might thus have been thought quite out of way of promotion under the new regime, but he made friends with the Restoration, and was made Bishop of Chester. It was Dr. Wilkins who first in a literary form projected a voyage to the moon, and sketched out the possibility of a flying man—an idea carried out with a good deal of force in the *Adventures of Peter*

Wilkins, so called, perhaps, in acknowledgment of the suggestion. But the difficulties on the way to the moon have been more completely explored since the doctor wrote, who imagined that birds took their flight there, and that swarms of gnats and flies descended from the same place.

By West Drayton, where the Coln makes its way in many devious channels towards the Thames, stood not long ago an old brick mansion called Burroughs—a moated grange with pensive shaded walks. Tradition has it that here the Lord Protector had a private dwelling—a retreat unknown to any but his closest friends, and not perhaps to more than one of those—and it is said that on Cromwell's death his body was secretly brought to Burroughs; and thus, while pompous obsequies were celebrated over some nameless corpse in Westminster Abbey, in this retired spot beneath the pavement of the hall the veritable relics of the great Protector were interred. There are many curious traditions about the burial of Oliver Cromwell, but this is one of the most curious of them all.

Some way nearer London lies Hayes, a colony of brickmakers and bargees, with an old rectory-house upon the site of the former manor-house, which belonged in old times to the Archbishop. Thus, in the days of the Red King, when he and his witan were at Windsor, and Anselm, the Archbishop, was keeping the feast of Whitsuntide at Mortlake, the King sent a message bidding him go to Hayes, and there remain, so that he might be nearer the King. It was only a question of squeezing money out of the Archbishop, and nothing particular came of the incident; but some parts of the old church may have seen the Archbishop at his devotions, and the Bishops of the realm about him in a swarm. Becket, too, was here often enough, as well as at Harrow, where he had also a residence. Hillingdon Rectory, too, was another episcopal residence, having been given to the Bishop of Worcester that he might have a lodging there on his way between his diocese and London.

We might now visit Uxbridge, the prospect of which, with its smoky industries, is not tempting on a hasty view, but whose name has a familiar ring to the student of the history of the great Civil War. The treaty at Uxbridge was the last serious effort to end the dispute between Crown and Parliament in a peace-

ful manner, and although, perhaps, neither party was quite sincere in the matter, yet the Commissioners met with all due pomp and ceremony. The meetings of the Commissioners were held in a roomy mansion, then belonging to a Mr. Carr, which subsequently became The Crown Inn. The Cavaliers, it is reported, gay and debonaire, marched about the town, freely conversing with the townsmen, and carried themselves as if the place belonged to them, while the others, in sad-coloured raiment, were rarely seen out of doors, and then always two or three together, avoiding private conversation with anybody. The Cavaliers had their headquarters at The Crown, while the Puritans bestowed themselves at The George—houses that then faced each other in the market-place.

A few miles to the north of Uxbridge lies Harefield, close to river and canal, where time out of mind there has been an important seat, the site of which may be traced near the ancient church. An old priory of the Knights of St. John—a branch of the Clerkenwell preceptory—once stood near the long straggling village. For long centuries the Newdegates have been connected with Harefield; among whom was the noted Serjeant Newdegate, who refused to serve as judge under the Protector, till Oliver roughly told him that if the red robes would not serve, he would place his red coats in the judgment-seat—an anecdote which may be true in the main, although surely English soldiers were not known as redcoats till a much later date. The Protector did not make much out of his new judge, who, on the trial of Colonel Halsey and others at York, gave the dictum that while the law made it treason to levy war against the King, he knew of none to make it treason to levy war against the Protector. For this Oliver reduced him to the ranks of his profession, but he was restored under Charles the Second, with the rank of a baronet—a title which became extinct with Sir Roger, the last of that branch of the family, and the founder of the Oxford "Newdegate" Prize.

In Elizabeth's time Harefield Place was occupied by her Lord-Keeper, Egerton, whom she visited twice at this place, where the Queen's Walk may still be pointed out. Egerton's widow, who bore the title of her former husband, the Earl of Derby, lived on at Harefield to a good old age. To her it was that Milton in his youth—he living close by at Horton, in Buckinghamshire—

presented his first attempt in the current taste for masques and musical diversions. Only a fragment of the Arcades have come down to us. "Part of an entertainment presented to the Countess Dowager of Derby, at Harefield, by some noble persons of her family, who appear on the scene in pastoral habit, moving towards the seat of state with this song: 'Look, Nymphs and Shepherds, Look!'"

The noble persons in question were, no doubt, her ladyship's grandchildren, the sons and daughter of Lord Bridgewater, and the same who were the performers in the more important work of *Comus* in the following year, 1634, at Ludlow Castle.

The Countess died in 1637, and her tomb is still to be seen in the ancient church of Harefield, among the monuments of Newdegates and Andersons.

At The Red Lion at Hillingdon, on the high-road west of the church, Charles the First put up for the night or for part of it. "The King was much perplexed," relates his companion, Dr. Hudson, "what to resolve upon—whether for London or the north." Had he thrown himself upon the generosity of his enemies the result might have been far happier. But here he took the fatal resolution of trusting himself to the Scotch, and at two of the clock took a guide towards Barnet.

It would not be an easy way to find, even in this nineteenth century, without taking the way through Harrow, which was then probably barred by the vedettes of the Parliamentary forces. Even now there is a bare and thinly-populated line of wolds between Uxbridge and Barnet, with streams flowing deep in the heavy clay bottoms, and only footpaths and bridle-tracks running in the required direction. On the left might be seen lights in cottage-windows in Ickenham village, while Swakeley Hall, a then new Italian mansion rising white and ghostlike among the trees, was the home of an uncompromising enemy, Sir William Harrington, destined afterwards to sit in judgment upon the King and sign the warrant for his execution. Farther on the woods of Ruialip hung darkly on the horizon, with the windmill on the crest of the hill. Then the fugitives would pass between Pinner and Harrow, the latter with its scattered lights upon the hill, hardly known for its school beyond the immediate neighbourhood. The old moated manor-house of Headstone would be full in the track, once a country-seat of the Archbishops, and

said to have been at times the residence of Wolsey. And then Stanmore would be passed and Edgware reached, from which a well-frequented way through a more sheltered country would bring the travellers without further difficulty to Barnet.

To retrace our steps in the bright daylight of this present era, something may be said on the way about Edgware, familiar in name to Londoners as the object-point of the Edgware Road. The road itself, from its starting-point at the Marble Arch, is comparatively a new one, but it soon falls into the track of the old Roman Watling Street—a track, however, which had been discontinued for many centuries, as the wild and lonely woodland country through which it passed abounded with outlaws and bushrangers, and was altogether a region to be sedulously avoided by travellers.

Following the highway for some two miles beyond Edgware we come to Brockley Hill, where the site of the Roman station of *Sulloniacæ* is still to be made out; the intermediate stage for soldiers on the march to Verulam, now St. Albans. Tradition, wonderfully retentive in such matters, points to the neighbourhood of the Roman foundations as the hiding-place of untold treasure:

No heart can think nor tongue can tell
What lies between Brockley Hill and Pennywell.

A distich which puts the treasure-seeker well on the track, for Pennywell is little more than half a mile from Brockley Hill, lying about half that distance to the right of the highway, near the village of Elstree, but on this side of the county boundary.

The Roman station belongs to Stanmore parish, whose name records that hereabouts was the *meer-stone* or boundary mark of the borders of county or Saxon petty kingdom; a stone that was placed in the heart of the wild forest, where stags, boars, bucks, and wild bulls abounded up to the beginning of the thirteenth century, when the district was disafforested. One little patch of this great forest of Middlesex is still left in Caen Wood and other parcels of woodland, the remains of the great lordship of the Bishops of London.

We have hitherto spoken of Stanmore the great, but Little Stanmore must not be forgotten, within whose boundaries stood one of the greatest of the grand houses of the eighteenth century. James Brydges, Duke of Chandos, was Paymaster of the Forces during Marlborough's campaigns,

and acquired an enormous fortune in that suggestive employment. The ostentation of the man developed itself in the way of building. He began two grand and enormous mansions, one in Cavendish Square, which was never finished, the other at Canons, in Stanmore, which cost a quarter of a million before it was completed.

The enormous house, with its artificial grounds, appears in Pope's satire as Timon's Villa—

Grove nods at grove, each alley has a brother,
And half the platform just reflects the other.

The Duke was accustomed to dine in public like any monarch, while the dishes were changed to the flourish of trumpets. He went to his devotions attended by a military guard of honour, and his chapel, with its florid decorations, is recalled by Pope:

On painted ceilings you devoutly stare,
Where sprawl the saints of Verrio or Laguerre.

The poet is less happy when he alludes to the musical services:

Light quirks of music broken and uneven,
Make the souls dance upon a jig to Heaven.

For whatever his other absurdities, the Duke seems to have been gifted with excellent musical taste, and Handel himself often acted as "capelmeister" in the ducal chapel. A musical festival would sometimes be held—a Handel festival, with Handel himself as conductor—which drew the critics, and amateurs, and the great world, from London to this then gay and attractive corner of Middlesex.

Apart from his ostentation, the Duke seems to have been an amiable and even generous man, and his former kindness to Pope makes the satire of the latter appear somewhat mean. The poet, like a boy who throws a stone and runs away, denied that he had intended Timon for the Duke, but nobody believed him. Pope was more happy in his prophecy:

Another age shall see the golden ear
Inbrow the slope, and nod in the parterre,
Deep harvest bury all his pride has planned,
And laughing Ceres reassume the land.

The bursting of the South Sea Bubble crippled Timon's fortune, but he continued to live at Canons, with diminished splendour, till his death. The Duke's heir, finding the place too enormous for his means, after vainly trying to dispose of it, pulled it down. A cabinet-maker bought the site—the cabinet-maker of the period, for Walpole speaks of Hallet as the representative of his craft.

A smaller house was built of a portion of the materials of the ducal palace, which retains the name of Canons. The elaborate woodwork and carvings of the mansion furnished the cabinet-makers with abundance of materials, and Wardour Street and Soho were enriched with the spoils of Canons, as during the present century with the treasures of the twin ducal palace of Stowe. An equestrian statue of King George was removed from Canons to Leicester Square, where its hapless fate of slow, ignominious decay excited the derision or compassion of a succeeding century.

In this neighbourhood is Kingsbury, a royal seat in Saxon times, with its ancient church, about which are traces of Roman foundations, and Kingsbury Hyde relieving the dull straight course of the Edgware Road, where Goldsmith retired to write his *Animated Nature*, lodging in a farmhouse just by the sixth milestone from London.

Of Harrow and its school it is not necessary to say much. The school has its own historians, and the school has swallowed up the town. The founder of the school, John Lyon, was a wealthy yeoman who had no more extended view than that of founding a solid, useful school for the sons of his friends and neighbours, preference to be given to the kin of the founder, to natives of Harrow, "and such as are most mete for towardnesse, poverty, or painfulness," while the amusements of the boys were to be limited to driving a top, tossing a hand-ball, running, and shooting. The shooting is of course archery, and the use of the bow was kept up at Harrow till the middle of the last century by a yearly match in public on the 4th August, afterwards replaced by a public speech-day. Under the headship of Dr. Thackeray, the school for the first time took its place among the chief public schools of the kingdom.

Harrow-on-the-Hill ends with a bold eminence, the ridge of hills which, intersected by the valley of the Brent, is continued to the heights to the north of London. When Canute was King in London and defended the capital against the West Saxon King, it was along this ridge, probably, that the Danish King marched to meet his assailants. And there is some likelihood that by Horsington Hill, overlooking the valley of the Brent, the great battle of Assandun was fought which decided the fate of the Saxon monarchy. The site of the battle is generally placed among the Essex flats, from the statement in the

Chronicle that combats were fought on the river Crouch, but then we have Crouch End near the source of one of the feeders of the river Brent, which suggests whether the Crouch may not have been an alternative name of that stream.

Horsington Hill looks down on the secluded village of Perivale, which is properly Greenford Parva, and Parva Vale has probably been corrupted into the present name; and a little higher up the stream, where once it flowed in a double channel, is Twyford, where the quiet, unsophisticated country makes its nearest approach to the smoke and smother of London town.

OF THE WRITING OF LETTERS.

WHAT a magic there is in the advent of the postman! Our heart leaps at the two sharp raps and the lifting of the lid of the letter-box. Like Charles Lamb's poor relation, "he is known by his knock". But the magic is not always that of the kind fairy; the post can bring both good and evil; and often when we are cheered by the sight of a well-loved hand, and the little creature of good temper born in our souls is helped and blessed by letters from old friends, from brother or sister, or, maybe, from a dearer source, there comes at the end of the packet the ugly witch of a long, blue, plaguey business-letter, and blights our innocent festival.

But it is not of the receiving of letters so much as of the writing of them that we would now speak. It is a wide field on which our feet are for a few moments straying. Now that we are blest with an Education Act, letter-writing is what everyone is thought able to do, and if speech, which all the philosophers will have it marks off the man from the brute, were taken away, what of that? Would not humanity still be sufficiently distinguished by the faculty of inditing epistles? There are, it is true, disadvantages in this method of communication. It is more trouble and less pleasure to set down in black and white the words that we like to hear flowing smoothly from our own ready tongue, and besides (and this is graver), we miss all that the look of the eyes and the tone of the voice can give us. Many a sad misunderstanding has arisen because a letter has been read with the reader's expression, and not with the writer's. Yet, to balance these drawbacks, letter-writing has its own

conveniences. We are cooler when we sit down to a pad of blotting-paper than when we talk face to face; and what a sense of being master of the situation is ours! If we wish to be complimentary, how comfortably we can round off our happy thoughts, and cheat the hard fate which too often brings our fine sayings to our minds only to give us regret that our opportunity is gone for ever. If we are conducting a controversy, we can collect without let or hindrance our illustrations and our instances, till the argument flows on in an uninterrupted stream, which must needs, we think, carry away our opponent in its waters. If our letter is one of wrath, there is no one to contradict us. We can be severely dignified or frankly angry, and all the time ride triumphant over the offender. I knew a family which clearly understood the value of letter-writing. In the times of tension in domestic politics they always resorted to epistolary instead of oral communications. The tender subject was never alluded to in the converse of the garish day, but at night, as befitted so solemn a matter, one party to the negotiations would softly open his window, and letting down a packet by a string, would dangle it against a lower lattice. When it was opened, the packet entered and was read, and presently an answer rose through the air. Except in degree, there was no difference between the functions of that slight cord, and those of all the Royal and Imperial messengers in Europe.

Letters have played important parts, and stand high in the hierarchy of literature. From the days of Cicero they have been preserved, commented on, and edited—nay, how much of the Sacred Text itself is made up of Epistles! There is something of especial charm about old collections of letters. They show us their authors in veritable flesh and blood. Their writer is not hidden in his periods. Tully, no doubt, thought more of his Offices, but it is the Epistolæ, in which he told his joys and sorrows "ad Familiares", which shows him and Rome. He has had plenty of followers in the field. To leap over more than seventeen centuries, let us just recall the worldly old Earl of Chesterfield, whose letters to his son are known to all, and whose correspondence fills four fat volumes. His letters are bright and sometimes witty, if spiced not infrequently with profanity, and often after some most ambiguous sentiment the old reprobate ends with a fervent "God bless you". His style

reminds us of Cicero, and where the Roman quotes Greek, the Englishman interlards his sentences with French. It is not many of us who write such letters nowadays. We are too much in a hurry; for the fatal genius of the nineteenth century who drives us forward ever faster on our way, has robbed us of our time for correspondence. Our letters, like our manners, have lost their stateliness. I myself have seen a letter from a very great man scrawled hurriedly on a scrap of paper.

Ah, what a change is here, my countrymen,

from the solemn and leisurely writing of a bygone age!

Two kinds of epistolising have now quite changed their fashion, and seem about to share the extinction of the Dodo. First, are those nameless letters of that Junian kind which caused great commotion, first in the world political, and later in the world literary. Plain-speaking, to great men of that sort, and under that form, is not often indulged in now. The tone is altered, and when such letters are printed they are satirical and not invective. The second change is in the manner of the epistle dedicatory, that once was wont, with many flourishes, and printed bowings and scrapings, to be prefixed to every work. It must have pleased the wealthy patron to find at so cheap a cost a "most humble, obliged, and obedient servant" in an author worth twenty of the man he had to flatter. We have changed all that—and rightly—yet there is an old-fashioned smack about those epistles dedicatory, which sometimes contrasts pleasantly with the follies now to be found on the page next the title, where the author inscribes his book, "To my great-grandmother," or "To everybody in general and nobody in particular."

This rambling essay will best be brought to its end by a simple story, called to my recollection by my subject, of an old man whom I knew when I was a boy.

When young, Benjamin Scrivener had been taken into the service of a large London firm. He had worked his way steadily, and, though he never rose to eminence or wealth, he presently came to occupy a post of some trust in his office. There he had his own corner, where day after day he used to arrive at half-past nine, nor was he ever late but once, when he had stayed to carry home a child that had been hurt by a passing carriage in the street. It was part of his duty to write a number of

letters every morning, and herein was at once the business and the joy of his life, for Benjamin wrote a fair and clerly hand, and took his pride in his simple and little-varied periods.

At length, when he was well turned of sixty-five, and the hair which still clustered almost as thickly on his head as when he was a boy, was now a reverend silver, he was allowed to retire, and to take with him by way of pension the salary—not a very large one—which he had always been accustomed to receive. The old man determined to go from London, and, with his sister Alice, some ten years younger than himself, who kept his little bachelor household, he came and pitched his tent in the village where I was born, and at that time lived. The cottage which the simple pair took for their dwelling was not in itself beautiful. It was one of those regular, small, red-brick houses, the architecture of which seems modelled on the square habitations of dolls; but over the porch, which looked to the southern sun, blossomed, in June, a great wealth of yellow roses, and on each side of the garden was a goodly border, where tall white lilies flowered, and stocks and sweet-williams and Canterbury bells grew together in loving and prosperous confusion. Beyond the road ran a little brook, and there were fine elms in the field at the side, so that Benjamin Scrivener found a pleasant resting-place for his kind old age.

For the first month all went smoothly, and Benjamin with his sister passed his days happily enough, but at the end of that time a restlessness came over him. Something—he knew not what—seemed demanded of him, and he was troubled and anxious, till finally his vague idea took to itself definite shape, and one morning at nine o'clock, the hour at which he had been used to leave his London lodgings for his office, he started up, brushed his hat, and said that the holiday was over, and he must go back, for he had many letters to write. It was in vain that his sister told him that working days were over. He insisted that he must return, or he would lose his post. Alice quieted him for that day by promising to go back with him on the morrow, and meanwhile prepared for him a desk and stool in a room not ordinarily used. On the following day, when the craze came back, she took him to this room to try if he would be satisfied. A merciful success attended her little

schema. Old Benjamin mounted the stool, and taking his pen began to write letters in his accustomed manner, with his signature in due form at the end, "Your obedient servant, Benjamin Scrivener, for Mercer Brothers."

He went on the whole of the morning, till his mind was relieved and the daily task seemed over, and from that day he was contented to pass his time in the same manner. His letters were sometimes read, and found to contain mingled together old recollections of his office correspondence, meaningless, but composed with proper precision. His madness never affected him in any other way, and, except for this strange morning habit, he was to the world, what he was to me, a simple and a kindly old man.

For five years his happy life continued, when one summer day he was, as usual in the morning, in his "office", with his sister sitting near him. He had just finished his letters. They were neatly addressed and folded up, and his pen was wiped and put away. Benjamin looked out of the window upon the sunny landscape, and said: "Alice, I am tired, my dear—very tired. I must leave off working soon. I cannot write as once I did." He pointed, with a sigh of regret, to the inscription on one of his envelopes, where the handwriting was more trembling than of old. Then he looked again on the quiet scene he had loved—his garden, the brook, and the pastures beyond, and remained still sitting at his desk, his white head supported on his hand. But he spoke no more. Alice rose hastily, and went to him, and found that Benjamin Scrivener had taken a holiday at last. Peace to thy ashes, gentle soul! No letters need to be written in the land where now thou dwellest, but thou hast found brighter flowers and a sunnier landscape there!

LUNAR FANCIES.

CERTAINLY since, and probably long before, Job "beheld the moon walking in brightness", all the peoples of the earth have surrounded that luminary with legends, with traditions, with myths, and with superstitions of various kinds. In our time, and in our country, the sentiment with which the orb of night is regarded is a soft and pleasing one, for

That orb'd maiden with white fire laden
Whom mortals call the moon,

is supposed to look with approval upon

happy lovers, and with sympathy upon those who are encountering the proverbial rough places in the course of true love. Why the moon should be partial to lovers one might easily explain on very prosaic grounds—perhaps not unlike that of the Irishman who called the sun a coward because he goes away as soon as it begins to grow dark, whereas the blessed moon stays with us most of the night!

Except Lucian and M. Jules Verne, we do not remember anyone who professes to have been actually up to the moon. Lucian had by far the most eventful experience, for he met Endymion, who entertained him royally, and did all the honours of the planet to which he had been wafted from earth in his sleep. The people of Moonland, Lucian assures us, live upon flying frogs, only they do not eat them; they cook the frogs on a fire and swallow the smoke. For drink, he says, they pound air in a mortar, and thus obtain a liquid very like dew. They have vines, but the grapes yield not wine, but water, being, in fact, hailstones, such as descend upon the earth when the wind shakes the vines in the moon. Then the moonfolk have a singular habit of taking out their eyes when they do not wish to see things—a habit which has its disadvantages, for sometimes they mislay their eyes and have to borrow from their neighbours. The rich, however, provide against such accidents by always keeping a good stock of eyes on hand.

Lucian also discovered the reason of the red clouds which we on earth often see at sunset. They are dyed by the immense quantity of blood which is shed in the battles between the moonfolk and the sunfolk, who are at constant feud.

The reasons why the gentler sex are so fond of the moon is satirically said to be because there is a man in it! But who and what is he? An old writer—John Lilly—says: "There liveth none under the sunne that knows what to make of the man in the moone." And yet many have tried.

One old ballad, for instance, says:

The man in the moon drinks claret,
But he is a dull Jack-a-Dandy,
Would he know a sheep's-head from a carrot,
He should learn to drink cyder and brandy

—which may be interesting, but is certainly inconsequential. It is curious, too, that while the moon is feminine in English, French, Latin, and Greek, it is masculine in German and cognate tongues. Now, if there is a man in the moon, and if

it be the case, as is asserted by antiquarians, that the "man in the moon" is one of the most ancient as well as one of the most popular superstitions of the world, the masculine is surely the right gender after all. Those who look to Sanscrit for the solution of all mythological as well as philological problems will confirm this, for in Sanscrit the moon is masculine. Dr. Jamieson, of Scottish Dictionary fame, gets out of the difficulty by saying that the moon was regarded as masculine in relation to the earth, whose husband he was; but feminine in relation to the sun, whose wife she was!

With the Greeks the moon was a female, Diana, who caught up her lover Endymion; and Endymion was thus, probably, the first "man in the moon". The Jews, again, have a tradition that Jacob is in the moon; and we have the nursery story that the person in the moon is a man who was condemned for gathering sticks on Sunday. This myth comes to us from Germany—at all events, Mr. Proctor traces it there with much circumstantiality. Mr. Baring-Gould, however, finds in some parts of Germany a tradition that both a man and a woman are in the moon—the man, because he strewed brambles and thorns on the church-path to hinder people from attending Sunday mass; and the woman, because she made butter on Sunday. This man carries two bundles of thorns, and the woman her butter-tub, for ever. In Swabia they say there is a mannikin in the moon, who stole wood; and in Frisia, they say, it is a man who stole cabbage. The Scandinavian legend is that the moon and sun are brother and sister—the moon here being the male. The story goes that Mani took up two children from earth, named Bil and Hiuki, as they were carrying a pitcher of water from the well Brygir, and in this myth Mr. Baring-Gould discovers the origin of the nursery-rhyme of Jack and Gill! "These children," he says, "are the moon-spots, and the fall of Jack and the subsequent fall of Gill simply represent the vanishing of one moon-spot after another as the moon wanes."

In Britain there are references in the ancient monkish writings to a man in the moon; and in the Record Office there is an impression of a seal of the fourteenth century, bearing the device of a man with a bundle of thorns carried up to the moon. The legend attached is, "Te Waltere docebo cur spinas phebo gero" ("I will teach thee, Walter, why I carry thorns to

the moon"), which Mr. Hudson Taylor, who describes the seal, thinks to be an enigmatical way of saying that honesty is the best policy—the thorns having evidently been stolen.

Chaucer has more than one reference to the man in the moon, and so have most of the older poets. Shakespeare not only refers frequently to "a" man, but in the *Midsummer Night's Dream*, Peter Quince distinctly stipulates that the man who is to play "the moon" shall carry "a bush of thorns".

The man in the moon, according to Dante, is Cain, carrying a bundle of thorns, and yet in that planet he found located only those mild sinners who had partly neglected their vows. A French legend, on the other hand, identifies "the man" with Judas Iscariot. Per contra, in India, the Buddhist legend places a hare in the moon, carried there by Indra for kindly service rendered to him on earth. May not this hare of the Indian mythology be the moon-dog of some of our own legends? Peter Quince, we know, recommended that the moon should have a dog as well as a bundle of sticks, and the association of the quadruped in the story is very common. The North American Indians believe that the moon is inhabited by a man and a dog. The Maoris believe in the man, but not in the dog, which is not surprising when we remember the limited fauna of the antipodes. The Maori legend runs something like this. A man called Rona went out one night to fetch water from a well, but, falling, sprained his ankle so as to be unable to return home. All at once, the moon, which had arisen, began to approach him; in terror he clung to a tree, which gave way, and both tree and Rona fell on the moon, where they remain even unto this day. Here we have clearly a variation of the "bundle of sticks" legend, but there is an absence of apparent cause and effect in the Maori legend which is unsatisfactory.

More precise is the Bushman legend quoted by Dr. Bleek. According to this, the moon is a man who incurs the wrath of the sun, and is consequently pierced by the knife (the rays) of the latter, until there is only a little piece of him left. Then he cries for mercy for his children's sake, and is allowed to grow again until once more he offends his sunship; the whole process being repeated monthly.

Dr. Rink relates a curious tradition of the Eskimo, which we can hardly quote here, but the gist of it is that a man, who

desired to make his sister his wife, was transformed into the moon, while the woman became the sun. Something like the same legend has been traced as far south as Panama. Another notable thing about Eakimo traditions is that the moon is associated with fertility in woman. This superstition is both very ancient and very widespread, and, indeed, seems to have been the root of the moon-worship of the oriental nations and of the mysterious rites of the Egyptians referred to by Herodotus. Luna is identified by some mythologists with Soma of the Indian mythology—i.e., the emblem of reproduction.

In China, according to Dr. Dennys, the man in the moon is called Yue-lao, and is believed to hold in his hands the powers of predestining marriages. He is supposed to tie together the future husband and wife with an invisible silken cord which never parts while life lasts. Miss Gordon-Cumming, in her recent account of wanderings in China, relates that, in the neighbourhood of Foo-Chow, she witnessed a great festival being held in honour of the full moon, which was mainly attended by women. There was a Temple-play, or sing-song, going on all day and most of the night, and each woman carried a stool so that she might sit out the whole performance. This reminds us of what Mr. Riley states in *The Book of Days*, as related by John Andrey in the seventeenth century: "In Scotland, especially among the Highlanders, the women make a courtesy to the new moon, and our English women in this country have a touch of this, some of them sitting astride on a gate or stile the first evening the new moon appears, and saying, 'A fine moon! God bless her!' The like I observed in Herefordshire."

As illustrative of this superstition may be instanced a curious practice in this country in olden times, of divination by the moon. It is quoted by Mr. Thielton-Dyer from an old chap-book: "When you go to bed (at the period of harvest moon) place under your pillow a prayer-book open at the part of the matrimonial service which says, 'with this ring I thee wed'; place on it a key, a ring, a flower, and a sprig of willow, a small heart-cake, a crust, and the following cards: a ten of clubs, nine of hearts, ace of spades, and ace of diamonds. Wrap all these in a thin handkerchief, and, on getting into bed, cover your hands, and say:

"Luna, every woman's friend,
To me thy goodness condescend;
Let me this night in visions see
Emblems of my destiny."

It is certainly hard to imagine pleasant dreams as the result of such a very uncomfortably-stuffed pillow.

In this same connection may be named other items of folk-lore related by Mr. Dyer. For instance, in Devonshire it is believed that on seeing the first new moon of the year, if you take off one stocking and run across a field, you will find between two of your toes a hair which will be the colour of the lover you are to have. In Berkshire the proceeding is more simple, for you merely look at the new moon, and say:

New moon, new moon, I hail thee!
By all the virtue in thy body,
Grant this night that I may see
He who my true love shall be.

The result is guaranteed to be as satisfactory as it is in Ireland, where the people are said to point to the new moon with a knife, and say:

New moon, true morrow, be true now to me,
That I, to-morrow, my true love may see.

In Yorkshire, again, the practice was to catch the reflection of the new moon in a looking-glass, the number of reflections signifying the number of years which will elapse before marriage. All these superstitions are suggestive of that which Tylor calls "one of the most instructive astrological doctrines"—namely that of the "sympathy of growing and declining nature with the waxing and waning moon". Tylor says that a classical precept was to set eggs under the hen at new moon, and that a Lithuanian precept was to wear boys on a waxing and girls on a waning moon—to make the boys strong and the girls delicate. On the same grounds, he says, Orkney men object to marry except with a growing moon, and Mr. Dyer says that in Cornwall, when a child is born in the interval between an old and a new moon, it is believed that he will never live to manhood.

Dr. Turner relates several traditions of the moon which are current in Samoa. There is one of a visit paid to the planet by two young men—Punifanga, who went up by a tree, and Tafaliu, who went up on a column of smoke. There is another of the woman, Sina, who was busy one evening cutting mulberry-bark for cloth with her child beside her. It was a time of famine, and the rising moon reminded her of a great bread-fruit—just as in our country it has reminded some people of a green cheese. Looking up she said: "Why cannot you come down and let my child have a bit of

you?" The moon was so indignant at being taken for an article of food, that she came down forthwith and took up woman, child, and wood. There they are to this day, for in the full moon the Samoans still see the features of Sina, the face of the child, and the board and mallet.

Mr. Andrew Lang finds in an Australian legend of the moon something oddly like Grimm's tale of "The Wolf and the Kids", which, again, he likens to the old Greek myth of Cronos. The Australian legend is that birds were the original gods, and that the eagle especially was a great creative power. The moon was a mischievous being, who walked about the earth doing all the evil he could. One day he swallowed the eagle. The eagle's wives coming up, the moon asked where he could find a well. They pointed out one, and while he was drinking, they struck him with a stone tomahawk which made him disgorge the eagle. This legend is otherwise suggestive from the circumstances that among the Greeks the eagle was the special bird of Zeus, and it was the eagle which carried off Ganymede.

There is another Australian fable that the moon was a man, and the sun a woman of doubtful reputation, who appears at dawn in a coat of red kangaroo-skin belonging to one of her lovers. In Mexico, also, the moon is a man, across whose face an angry immortal once threw a rabbit; hence the marks on the surface of the planet! These same marks are accounted for in the Eskimo legend to which we have referred, as the impressions of the woman's sooty fingers on the face of her pursuer. By some mythologists the moon is thought to be Medea, but it is more common to interpret Medea as the daughter of the sun—i.e., the dawn.

It is certainly not a little curious to find the moon-lore, as the star-lore, having so many points of resemblance among such widely-separated and different peoples as the Greeks, the Egyptians, the Australians, the Eskimos, the Bushmen of South Africa, the North American Indians, and the New Zealand Maoris. The comparative mythologists would argue from this resemblance a common origin of the myth, and a distribution or communication from one race to the other. The folk-lore mythologists, according to Mr. Andrew Lang, would infer nothing of the sort. They say there is nothing remarkable in all savage races imputing human motives and sex to the heavenly bodies, for, in fact, to this day

there are savages, as in the South Pacific, who suppose even stones to be male and female and to propagate their species. On this method of interpretation the hypothesis is not that the Australians, Indians, etc., etc., received their myths from, say, the Greeks, either by community of stock or by contact and borrowing, but because the ancestors of the Greeks passed through the same intellectual condition as the primitive races we now know. And thus it is that in listening to the beautiful legends of the Greeks, we are but, as Bacon says, hearing the harsh ideas of earlier peoples "blown softly through the flutes of the Grecians".

Now, beside the personality of the moon, and the peculiar influence he or she is supposed to exercise on mortals, there has survived a world-old superstition that the moon has direct influence on the weather. Apropos of this association, we remember a pretty little Hindoo legend which is current in Southern India, and which has been translated by Miss Frere, daughter of Sir Bartle Frere. This is the story as told her by her Lingaet ayah: "One day the Sun, the Moon, and the Wind went out to dine with their uncle and aunt, the Thunder and Lightning. Their mother (one of the most distant stars you see far up in the sky) waited alone for her children's return. Now both the Sun and the Wind were greedy and selfish. They enjoyed the great feast that had been prepared for them, without a thought of saving any of it to take home to their mother; but the gentle Moon did not forget her. Of every dainty dish that was brought round, she placed a small portion under one of her beautiful long finger-nails, that the Star might also have a share in the treat. On their return, their mother, who had kept watch for them all night long with her bright little eye, said: 'Well, children, what have you brought home for me?' Then the Sun (who was eldest) said: 'I have brought nothing home for you. I went out to enjoy myself with my friends, not to fetch a dinner for my mother!' And the Wind said: 'Neither have I brought anything home for you, mother. You could hardly expect me to bring a collection of good things for you, when I merely went out for my own pleasure.' But the Moon said, 'Mother, fetch a plate; see what I have brought you,' and shaking her hands she showered down such a choice dinner as never was seen before. Then the Star turned to the Sun, and spoke thus:

'Because you went out to amuse yourself with your friends, and feasted and enjoyed yourself without any thought of your mother at home, you shall be cursed. Henceforth your rays shall ever be hot and scorching, and shall burn all that they touch. All men shall hate you, and cover their heads when you appear,' and this is why the sun is so hot to this day. Then she turned to the Wind and said: 'You also, who forgot your mother in the midst of your selfish pleasures, hear your doom. You shall always blow in the hot, dry weather, and shall parch and shrivel all living things, and men shall detest and avoid you from this very time,' and this is why the wind in the hot weather is still so disagreeable. But to the Moon she said: 'Daughter, because you remembered your mother, and kept for her a share in your own enjoyment, from henceforth you shall be ever cool, and calm, and bright. No noxious glare shall accompany your pure rays, and men shall always call you blessed,' and that is why the moon's light is so soft, and cool, and beautiful even to this day."

It is remarkable, nevertheless, that among western peoples at any rate, the moon has usually been associated with the "uncanny." It is an old belief, for instance, that the moon is the abode of bad spirits; and in the old story of the vampire, it is notable that the creature, as a last request, begged that he might be buried where no sunlight but only moonlight might fall on his grave. Witches were supposed to be able to control the moon, as witness the remark of Prospero in *The Tempest*:

His mother was a witch, and one so strong,
That could control the moon.

The Rev. Timothy Harley, who has collected much moon-lore, suggests that if the broom on which witches rode to the moon be a type of the wind, "We may guess how the fancy grew up, that the airy creation could control those atmospheric vapours on which the light and humidity of the night were supposed to depend."

But the "glamour" of the moon is not a mere poetic invention or a lover's fancy. Mr. Moncreux Conway reminds us that "glám", in its nominative form "glámir", is a poetical name for the moon, to be found in the *Prose Edda*. It is given in the *Glossary* as one of the old names for the moon. Mr. Conway also says that there is a curious old Sanscrit word, "glau," or "gláv", which is explained in all the old

lexicons as meaning the moon. Hence "the ghost or goblin, Glam (of the old legend of *Grettir*), seems evidently to have arisen from a personification of the delusive and treacherous effects of moonlight on the benighted traveller."

Similar delusive effects are found referred to in old Hindu writings, as, for instance, in the following passages from *Bhása*, a poet of the seventh century:

"The cat laps the moonbeams in the bowl of water, thinking them to be milk; the elephant thinks that the moonbeams threaded through the intervals of the trees are the fibres of the lotus-stalk. The woman snatches at the moonbeams as they lie on the bed, taking them for her muslin garment. Oh, how the moon, intoxicated with radiance, bewilders all the world!"

Again:

"The bewildered herdsmen place the pails under the cows, thinking that the milk is flowing; the maidens also put the blue lotus-blossom in their ears, thinking that it is the white; the mountaineer's wife snatches up the jujube-fruit, avaricious for pearls. Whose mind is not led astray by the thickly-clustering moonbeams!"

Such was the "glamour" of Glam (the moon) in ancient eyes, and still it works on lovers' hearts. The fascination has been felt and expressed by nearly all the poets, and by none better, perhaps, than by Sir Philip Sidney:

With what sad steps, O moon! thou climb'st the
skies!

How silently, and with how wan a face!

What, may it be, that even in heavenly place
That busy archer his sharp arrow tries?

Sure if that long with love-acquainted eyes
Can judge of love, thou feel'st a lover's case.

I read it in thy looks—thy languish'd grace
To me, that feel the like, thy state descries.

The number of human beings who have, articulately or inarticulately, cried with *Endymion*, "What is there in thee, moon, that thou should'st move my heart so potently?" is not to be measured in ordinary figures.

To return, however, to the bad side of Luna's character. We read that in *Assyria* deadly influences were ascribed to the moon. In *Vedic* mythology there is a story, which Mr. Moncreux Conway tells in *Demonology and Devil-lore*, of a quarrel between *Brahma* and *Vishnu* as to which was the first born. *Siva* interferes, and says he is the first born, but will recognise as his superior whoever is able to see the crown of his head or the sole of his feet. *Vishnu* thereupon transforms himself into a boar, pierces underground, and thus

sees the feet of Siva, who salutes him on his return as the first-born of the gods. Now, De Gubernatis regards this fable as "making the boar emblem of the hidden moon", and Mr. Conway thinks there is no doubt that the boar at an early period became emblematic of the wild forces of Nature. "From being hunted by King Odin on earth it passed to be his favourite food in Valhalla, and a prominent figure in his spectral hunt." But it is with the moon, not with Odin, that we are at present concerned, and we note two curious items mentioned by Conway. In Sicilian legend, he says, "Zafarana, by throwing three hog's bristles on embers, renews her husband's youth"; and in Esthonian legend, a prince, by eating pork, acquires the faculty of understanding the language of birds. All this opens up a very suggestive field of enquiry. Thus, Plutarch says that the reason why the Jews would not eat swine's flesh was because Adonis was slain by a boar, and Bacchus and Adonis, he says, were the same divinities. Now, if we turn to Herodotus, we find that careful narrator saying: "The only deities to whom the Egyptians offer swine are Bacchus and Luna; to these they sacrifice swine when the moon is full, after which they eat the flesh," which at other times they disdain. The meaning of these sacrifices is understood by those interested, and we do not propose to go further into the matter. All we wish to do is to point out the curious involvements, among so many nations, of the moon and the boar.

May we not even trace a connection with the superstition current in Suffolk, according to "C. W. J." in *The Book of Days*? "C. W. J." says that in his part of the world it is considered unlucky to kill a pig when the moon is on the wane, and, if it is done, the pork will waste in boiling. "I have known," he says, "the shrinking of bacon in the pot attributed to the fact of the pig having been killed in the moon's decrease; and I have also known the death of poor piggy delayed or hastened so as to happen during its increase." Truly the old superstitions die hard!

The moon's supposed influence on the weather is a matter of general knowledge. The writer last quoted mentions it as a very prevalent belief that the general condition of the atmosphere throughout the world during any lunation depends on whether the moon changed before or after midnight. Another superstition is that if the new moon happens on a Saturday, the

weather will be bad during the month. On the other hand, in Suffolk, the old moon in the arms of the new one is accounted a sign of fine weather, contrary to the belief in Scotland, where, it may be remembered, in the ballad of Sir Patrick Spens, it is taken as a presage of storm and disaster. Shakespeare has many allusions to the moon's influence on the weather, as "The moon, the governess of floods, pale in her anger, washes the air"; "The moon, one thinks, looks with a watery eye; and when she weeps, weeps every little flower"; "Upon the corner of the moon there hangs a vaporous drop profound," and so forth. Then we have the old proverb: "So many days old the moon is on Michaelmas Day, so many floods after." Other beliefs are mentioned by Mr. Harley—such as, that if Christmas comes during a waning moon, we shall have a good year, and the converse; that new moon on Monday is a certain sign of good weather; that a misty moon indicates heavy rain; that the horns of the moon, turned upward, predict a good, and, turned downward, a bad, season; that a large star near the moon is a certain prognostication of storm. In fact, the superstitions in this connection are legion, and are not confined to any country. They are as common in China, where the moon is still worshipped, as they are in England, where, in some places, old men still touch their hats and maidens still bob a curtsy in sight of the new moon. We have thus the relics of moon-worship about us still, as well as a strong popular belief in the moon as an active physical agent. Whether the actual influence of the moon on the tides lies at the basis of the belief in its influence on the weather, we know not, but it is probable, and at any rate it is curious that the Persians held that the moon was the cause of an abundant supply of water and rain, while in the Japanese fairy-tale the moon was made to rule over the blue waste of the sea with its multitudinous salt waters. The horticultural superstitions about sowing and planting according to the age of the moon, is no doubt a product of the fusion of the meteorological superstition and that of the old-world belief in Luna being the goddess of reproduction.

Any who have still doubts on the meteorological question, cannot do better than refer to a letter of Professor Nichol's—late Professor of Astronomy in the University of Glasgow—which is quoted in

The Book of Days. He asserts positively, as the result of scientific observation, that no relation whatever exists between the moon and the weather.

But does any exist between the moon and the brain? "Whom the gods would destroy they first make mad," and the moon was supposed to be the instrument—nay, still is, as the very word "lunacy" implies. The old astrologers used to say that she governed the brain, stomach, bowels, and left eye of the male, and the right eye of the female. Some such influences were evidently believed in by the Jews, as witness the one hundred and twenty-first Psalm: "The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night." It may be remarked that Dr. Forbes Winslow is not very decided in dismissing the theory of the influence of the moon on the insane. He says it is purely speculative, but he does not controvert it. The subject is, however, too large to enter upon now. Whether or not it be true that "when the moon is in the full then wit's in the wane"; it certainly is not true, as appears to be believed in Sussex, that the new May moon has power to cure scrofulous complaints.

Before leaving our subject it is well to mention a remarkable coincidence to which Mr. Harley draws attention. In China, where moon-worship largely prevails, during the festival of Yue-Ping, which is held annually during the eighth month, incense is burned in the temples, cakes are made like the moon, and at full moon the people spread out oblations and make prostrations to the planet. These cakes are moon-cakes and veritable offerings to the Queen of Heaven, who represents the female principle in Chinese theology. "If we turn now to Jeremiah vii., 18, and read there, 'The women knead dough to make cakes to the Queen of Heaven, and to pour out drink-offerings unto other gods,' and remember that, according to Rashi, these cakes of the Hebrews had the image of the god or goddess stamped upon them, we are in view of a fact of much interest." The interest becomes greater when we learn that in parts of Lancashire there exists a precisely similar custom of making cakes in honour of the Queen of Heaven. From these facts, the discovery of two buns, each marked with a cross, in Herculaneum, and other evidences, we are driven to the conclusion that the "hot-cross buns" of Christian England are in reality but a relic of moon-worship!

VICTIMS.

By THEO GIFT.

*Author of "Lil Lorimer," "An Alibi and its Price,"
Etc., Etc.*

CHAPTER VIII. THE LEGEND OF ST. TRYPHINE.

It was between ten and eleven on the following morning that George Marstrand, having rowed himself to shore from his houseboat, sprang lightly up the little wooden steps leading to the water from the Lucases' lawn, and was proceeding in the direction of the house, when a murmur of youthful voices from behind some shrubs in the neighbourhood caused him to turn his steps in that direction, on the chance of finding there some of the family he had come to visit.

The sight that met his eyes was a pretty enough one to detain him.

Under the drooping boughs of a tulip-tree, whose broad leaves cast a pleasant, dappled shade over the velvety, sun-kissed grass, was gathered a little group consisting of three very young children and a girl, youthful and fair enough to have attracted the attention of any man not unduly soured or satiated by the sex. It was the same girl—he recognised that at once—whom he had seen in that one moment of illumination on the previous evening, and had somehow thought of more than once since, with a sensation of mingled pleasure, amusement, and curiosity. But she looked far more charming now, clad in a simple morning-gown of bluish cambric, its limp, clinging folds gathered tightly under her, and making apparent the extreme smallness and delicacy of her slender, girlish figure, as she sat curled up on the warm grass, one sturdy, black-eyed child of two nestled in her arms, its dark head resting on her bosom, and its plump, rosy arms clasped round her neck; another fairylike girl of four frisking about behind her, busy in unplaiting the thick tress of ruddy hair which fell from the back of her small head, and letting the light, glittering strands flow over her shoulders like a mermaid's veil; while the third, a stout boy of six or seven, lay stretched at full length on the grass at her feet, his chin supported on his folded arms, and his face turned upwards in vehement remonstrance at the interruptions caused by his sister's operations to the story that was being told them.

"Alix does tease so," he said impatiently.

"Why do you let her, Vera? It's very rude. Alix, I'll tell mamma if you go on."

"Oh no, don't, Bengy," said Vera's soft voice. "It isn't rude if I let her, you know, and I did. I said she might."

"'Cause I doesn't tease you, does I, Vera?" put in little Alix eagerly. "I does it welly gently."

"Oh no, ducky, you don't tease. Now, Ben, I'm going on. So St. Tryphine——"

"But, Vera, I want to know something, only Alix would bother. What do you call her 'saint' for? What is a saint?"

"Oh, the Brittany people called her so because she was so good. Very, very good people are called saints when they die."

"Then my papa will be called St. Lucas," said Ben triumphantly, nor knew why the syringa and laurel bushes behind him shook as with a sudden gust of wind, "for he's awful good. He's the goodest man anywhere, except grandpapa. Grandpapa's so good he don't even need to go to synagogue. Mamma says so."

"Go on with 'tory, Vera," said Alix. "Us doesn't want Ben to talk."

"I'm not talking," said Ben; "I'm asking questions. Aunt Leah says I may ask questions when I don't un'erstand, and I wants to un'erstand one thing more. Why did St. Tryphine, if she was so good, marry a wicked old Bluebeard of a King who had killed four wives already?"

"She didn't know that he had killed them. All that anyone knew was that he had had four wives, and each of them died as soon as she was going to have a baby, and perhaps they remembered what the old magician had said, that 'Comorre should reign all over the land, and meet his death by his firstborn's hand'. Besides, King Comorre was such a powerful monarch, and so fierce, that they, Tryphine's father and mother, were afraid he might ravage their country, kill the people, and burn the houses if they didn't give him their daughter."

"Well, I wouldn't have been gived, and I think they was a very bad father and mother to give poor Tryphine away to such a wicked man. Don't you think, Vera, she was a silly to let them?"

"I—don't know," said Vera gravely; "I suppose people must do as they are told—by their parents. Anyhow, Tryphine did, and for a little time she was very happy, for King Comorre loved her very much, and gave her all manner of beautiful things—jewels and rich dresses, and——"

"And toys, an' cakes, an' sweeties—lots

of sweeties?" put in little Alix, letting the loosened hair fall through her hands, and beginning to caper about in her eagerness.

"Yes, lots of sweeties," said Vera, smiling; "and so everybody was very good and content for a time; and as the song about it says," and the girl's voice dropped into a soft, crooning melody:

"Partout Bretayne on n'y voiz
Si belle reyne, si galant roy.
Siffiez, siffiez, mes oiseaux!"

"What does that mean?" asked Ben, staring. "Don't tell it in gibberiah."

Vera held up her pretty finger.

"Hush, Ben! Bertie's going to sleep. It means—oh, it means what I said just now, that everything went well till the time came when Tryphine was going to have a baby too——"

"But what did she have one for? I don't think babies are a bit nice, I don't. She was a silly."

"Perhaps she couldn't help it," said Vera naively. "Anyhow, when King Comorre heard of it he was very angry, and determined to kill her too, so he locked her up in a tower, and told her to prepare to die."

"That was like Bluebeard," interrupted the irrepressible one; "only Tryphine had no sister Anne."

"No; but she had a ring which a good old monk, named Gildas, at her father's court, had given her when she married, telling her if she was ever in trouble to send it to him, and he would help her. So now, when she was locked up, she took the ring from her finger, and calling her pet dove, put it on his beak, and told him to fly as fast as ever he could to—— oh, Alix—Alix! don't pull poor Vera's hair so, you hurt her. Why, what's the matter?"

"Alix fwightened," sobbed the little maid, making a sudden dive under the soft meshes of hair she had unbraided, and clinging with both hands round her friend's throat for protection. "Alix see a big man behin' ze bush zere. Fink him's the baddy king comin' to kill us all."

"The man isn't going to do anything of the sort; isn't baddy at all, Alix, except for listening to a story not meant for him," said Marstrand, coming forward and adding, "Please forgive me, and don't let me disturb you," to Vera, who had started up, crimson with confusion, and was trying to assume a more decorous position.

It was an entirely fruitless effort, however, with Alix on her back, and the sleeping Bertie in her arms, and she was obliged

to subside on to the grass again, the prettiest little statue of embarrassment possible, her ordinarily pale cheeks rosy with blushes, and her loosened hair hanging round her like a warm-coloured silken cloud. Ben stood up and took a good stare at the stranger, both hands planted defiantly in the pockets of his serge knickerbockers.

"I know who you are," he observed. "You're a man what goes to see grand-papa. I've seen you in his house, and you gived me some cocoanut-rock out of your pocket. Have you got some more there now?"

"No, I haven't. I shouldn't wonder if you found something else, however, nearly as good," said Marstland, seating himself on a cane garden-chair. "Come and see; and you, too, little Alix," holding out his hand to the girl, and stooping low enough to bring his bright eyes and broad, pleasant smile on to a level with the tiny face peeping apprehensively at him from behind the curtain with which it had provided itself. "I'm not King Comorre, I assure you. Why, what a silly idea! He was killed off dead ever so long ago, and good St. Gildas put him in his pipe and smoked him."

"What! Did he really—truthfully? How do you know?" cried Benjy in great excitement, and swinging himself on to the visitor's knee.

"Well, I don't know about the pipe part—not exactly, at least; but I know that he was killed after he had killed Tryphine and cut off her head; though, as St. Gildas—he was a saint, too, by the way—stuck it on again for her, that didn't so much matter as if I had cut off yours."

"But is it all true? Is it, Vera?" persisted Ben seriously. "And how does he know it? Have you told him the story before?"

Vera blushed and shook her head, a form of negative easier than speech just then. She was not surprised at "Mr. Burt" knowing the quaint old legend, however. Had not Leah told her that he often went to Brittany to paint pictures and attend the Roman Catholic churches?

"No, she didn't tell me," said Marstland, laughing. "I found it all out for myself. Didn't you think I was clever enough for that? Why, I'm as clever as ever I can be. I've found out something else already; and that is that you are fond of stories, but you're fonder still of sweets, and Alix there is foud of them too; only she is a little afraid of me still, which is foolish,

for if she doesn't come quickly, you'll have eaten them all up without her."

This was too much for Alix, who, won by something pleasant in the big, deep voice and merry eyes, had already emerged from her covert, and was advancing on tip-toe, one step at a time and very slowly, with her hands held behind her back, and her small face expressive of a charming combination of coquetry and bashfulness, until Marstland's warning and the sight of a white paper parcel which Benjy was already extracting from his pocket overcame all scruples, and she made a bound forward, and was straightway captured and lifted on to the other knee beside her brother. Even Bertie lifted his ruddy face from its pillow and said piteously: "Me 'weeties too!" but catching sight as he did so of the shaggy head and bearded physiognomy of the ogre who had seemingly got possession of his relations, his entreaty died away in a small howl of terror, and he buried his face again in Vera's neck and clung to her tighter than ever.

"A striking example that in the human animal even greed is sometimes subservient to terror," said Marstland. "Will your more trusted hand kindly make these over to him, Miss St. Laurent? And may I hope you have forgiven me, first for making one of your audience without permission, and then for robbing you of the remainder? The latter sin was at any rate unpremeditated. I had meant to remain 'en cachet' till the end of St. Tryphine's adventures. They were too interesting (especially with the Lucas annotations) for human nature not to listen to."

"But you knew them already," said Vera reproachfully.

She did think it was very bad of him to have listened, though she had not courage to say so more directly; and, after all, married men with (perhaps) children of their own, may, perhaps, take liberties denied to less fortunate bachelors.

"Quite by chance. I came upon it one day in an old book of Celtic saints and legends. And, by the way, I ought to apologise also to you for addressing you by your name, unintroduced" ["Whose fault was it you were not introduced?" thought Vera, and coloured hotly at herself]; "but, you see, I had heard Miss Joseph's friend from Brittany was staying here, and though you don't know me—"

"I—I do know who you are," Vera faltered, feeling it would not be honest to

accept the imputation of ignorance. "I have met Mrs. Burt in London," she added timidly.

"Have you?" with a momentary lifting of the eyebrows. "Then you have met the most portentously æsthetic and religious person the world has yet produced. I hope you found it out."

Vera blushed still deeper. She supposed he meant to praise his wife; but the tone and manner of doing so were whimsical, to say the least; and how was she to agree or disagree, considering her very slight acquaintanceship with the lady?

"I—I," she stammered, and then stopped short in confusion. Marstland came to her relief, the corners of his mouth working.

"Ah, I see you agree with me too completely for words. Unfortunately, however, the lady has not as high an opinion of me as I of her; and since you say you heard of me from her, I fear it was not in a way to prejudice you in my favour."

"Oh, please don't say that, though you are joking, of course," cried Vera, rather shocked. "Indeed, she—I don't think she mentioned you at all, except, by the way, to tell Leah that you had not been working since the Academy opened, but that you talked of doing a great deal in Switzerland."

"In Switzerland! What the—what on earth should I do in Switzerland? The woman must have been dreaming! There was a suggestion that I should join them there, but I refused to go, and that would have been as a holiday. And as to not working during the summer, I should like to know what Mrs. Burt knows about that. I know she keeps old Jack's nose to the grindstone pretty severely, but as he is her husband—"

"And—and are you not, then?" asked Vera, as pale now as she had been rosy. What blunders had she not been making?

"Not what? Mrs. Burt's husband, too! Certainly not, thank goodness! Though of course it is known even in Finisterre that we buy our wives in 'Smiffield' over here, we are, as yet, only allowed to buy one at a time; and the only lawful possessor of Mrs. Burt is the happy individual who is at present enjoying the sweets of bachelorhood on board a houseboat as my guest, and came here with me yesterday evening. Didn't you know him? The fellow with a fair beard—"

"Oh yes, I saw, but I thought—I don't know how—it was very silly of me,"

stammered poor Vera—"that you were he—and he—"

"George Marstland, surgeon, now at your service. I understand, and also I now understand your righteous indignation at the impertinence of any man, not being an artist, presuming to pass depreciatory criticisms on Miss Josephs's pretty little sketches. You were indignant, you know, Miss St. Laurent. I caught sight of your face, and shook in my shoes as I rushed to the rescue. Indeed, I didn't know which to shake most for, Burt or poor little Rosenberg."

Vera could not help smiling a little. Perhaps there was something infectious in the frank geniality of her companion, or perhaps it was the remembrance of Leah's encomiums on him, "Everyone likes Dr. Marstland," for she even found courage to answer:

"I didn't think it was to their rescue you came! And I was glad you did. I could not bear to hear them sneering in that mean, unjust way when everyone must know how beautifully she draws."

"One person, at any rate, knows something more to the purpose—namely, that Leah Josephs is happy in a very enthusiastic and warm-hearted friend."

Vera shrank back a little. Madame St. Laurent had a peculiar distaste for enthusiasm, and had always checked it in her.

"Nobody could help loving Leah who knew her," she said apologetically. "You must feel that, for you—she told me so—you are a friend of hers, too."

"A very old one. I've known the Josephs family off and on for the last eight years, and have liked them more every succeeding one. I was a pupil of the old man's once, you know."

"Yes; so she said."

"And a very troublesome one, working like a tiger three-fourths of the term, and then going in for a fit of idleness and good-for-nothingism just as the exams. were drawing near. I remember Leah rowing me about it once. I had been plucked once already, and was going on in the same sort of way, thinking the less of it because old Josephs let me off so mildly, and only looked a little graver and more careworn than usual; but as I was going away one afternoon I stumbled on Leah, and didn't she give it me! 'You'll be plucked again,' she said, 'and you mayn't care, but I do, for every time you fail you injure my father more than if you put your hand in his pocket and robbed him. You make

your parents and examiners think that he does not teach well, and he does, and you know it, and are clever enough to learn if you cared to do so; but you don't. You are cruelly selfish.' By George! she didn't need to say that to me twice. I worked night and day for the rest of term."

"And——?"

"Passed? Oh yes; and rather high in botany and chemistry, Josephs's subjects. He was delighted with me, dear old boy! But it was all Leah's doing."

"It was very brave of her," said Vera; "but I should think Leah would always be brave. I couldn't have dared——"

"To row a lazy medical student?" said Marstland, laughing, as his gaze rested on the slender, childish figure and soft young face. "No, I doubt if you could ever row anybody. Do you think it would be possible for you to frighten a very, very little mouse—if you tried hard, that is."

Vera's cheeks answered for her; but not as if she resented his banter, for she even plucked up spirit to say, after a second:

"You said I looked very fierce last night."

"So you did; though I was telling a fib when I also said I shook. I only wanted to shake hands with you. I knew we should be friends from that moment, for I like Leah Josephs quite as much as you do. Now, wasn't I right?"

Vera hesitated a moment from timidity, but her answer, when it came, was simple enough to disconcert anyone flirtingly inclined.

"I hope so. I should like to be friends with anybody that Leah cares about, she has been so good to me, and she is the only friend I have."

"The only friend you have!" repeated Marstland incredulously. "You must have led a very secluded life, Miss St. Laurent."

"Yes, very," she answered quietly.

"That is why, perhaps, this seems to me so delightful that I almost dread going home again, though I feel it is wicked to do so, when I only left on account of my father's illness, and he is not well again yet."

"But you are out of anxiety about him, I hope; so that, unless he needs you at home, there is nothing to prevent your paying your friends here a long visit."

"Oh, papa does not need me. He never wants anyone but mamma when he is ill," said Vera rather wistfully; "and the Josephses have very kindly persuaded her to consent to my staying on with them while he and she go away for change of air to stay with a friend in the South of France.

They started last Friday, so—— but, please, do you think the children ought to eat so many sweets? Alix is looking quite pale."

"The little glutton!" cried Marstland, tossing the nearly empty bag into a neighbouring bush, and swinging the child on to his shoulder to console her. "Alix, if you've made yourself ill, your mother will never forgive me, and I'll never forgive you. Come, and let us find her. We've teased Miss St. Laurent long enough."

Yet he was not aware that it was fully half an hour since he landed in a great hurry to see his two friends, and make them promise to let him row them out that evening. The pretty idyll of that legend under the tulip-tree had detained him longer and more pleasantly than he imagined; and so infectious were his own ease and geniality that even Vera, after the first agony of shyness was over, forgot not only her offence against him of the previous evening, but, what many girls would have been still more conscious of, the dishevelled state of her locks, and the fact that this very dishevelment made her a great deal prettier and more fascinating in the eyes of a man like George Marstland, than the smartest arrangement of fringes and plaits could have done.

Leah, on the other hand, was keenly recognisant of both these circumstances. From her bedroom-window she had chanced to see the doctor's landing, and her first thought had been to go down at once and welcome him. It was only when she saw him pause behind the shrubs to listen (as she guessed) to the stories with which Vera was regaling the children, that she delayed her appearance so as not to spoil sport; but when he came forward and sat down among the little group, making one of them, and seeming to forget all about the other inmates of the house in sporting with the children and drawing Vera out of her shyness—more especially when she saw the latter yielding to his frank "bonhomme", checking her first impulse to run away, and finally smiling and talking to him as she could hardly ever be prevailed on to do to any man—the bright expectancy of Leah's face sobered a little, and there was a curious half-puzzled look on it as she stepped slowly back from the window.

"Vera said she did not like him at all—that she could never like him; and she would not tell me why," she thought. "Had he said something unfortunate, given her some unintentional offence, and is he explaining it now and apologising?"

If so, she has certainly forgiven him, for she is talking to him as friendly as if he were papa, and he—he seems to have quite forgotten his last night's objection to her. Well, that's natural enough, for no one could call her a Dutch doll at this minute, and I—I am very glad. I wanted them to be friends."

But something rose in her throat at that moment that was not wholly gladness, and the consciousness of it brought the blood suddenly into her cheek and made her strike her hands together with an impatient gesture as she exclaimed aloud:

"I do hope I am not little enough to be jealous because I haven't had the pleasure of making them so myself; or because I was more eager for a talk with him than he seems to be for one with me."

One special trait in Leah Joseph's character—an uncommon one among women—was an unflinching habit of honesty with herself. Many women are truthful to the letter with their neighbours, but few—fewer among good and conscientious women even than others—are equally so with themselves. Some, indeed, will actually shrink from such inward frankness as from something sinful, indelicate; will even (I have known examples of the fact) pray against it, strive against it, and make a religious duty of tying the very thickest of bandages over their mental vision, so as to shut out, if possible, the very practicability of such intrusive and unseemly introspectiveness.

Leah, however, had from childhood been incapable of seeing any force in such artificial blindness, or any greater indelicacy in being true to her own heart than to those about her. She knew very well that her feeling for George Marstland was no mere liking, but a very steady affection, begun in the days when they were still boy and girl, and strengthened by lapse of years and pleasure of renewed intimacy after long absences, until at present he was like no other man to her, nor could she indeed think of any other in the same category with him. There was little more than a year's difference in age between them, and from the time when he had been her father's favourite pupil, and had boarded for some months before his final examination for the M.B. in their house, she had known that in a thousand ways

their thoughts and sympathies were akin; and perhaps few things had given her keener pleasure than the news received in a letter from himself during her stay in Brittany, that after spending the winter and spring in Edinburgh, working in the principal hospital there, he had decided on purchasing a share in a London practice, and establishing himself in the neighbourhood of his old tutor.

Yet even the keenness of this pleasure and the knowledge that it was enhanced by his tacit assumption of her interest in his movements, brought a twinge of pain with it lest that interest might be such as it would be her duty to check before it became too absorbing.

She did not think it would be so. She believed that his feelings for her were as true and warm as hers for him; but just what the depth of that warmth was, or whether it passed the bounds of simple friendship and affection, she could not honestly tell, and did not wish to enquire. True, it would have been impossible for her even to imagine herself any other man's wife; yet that she should ever be his seemed, if she allowed herself to think of it, almost equally so, if only for the fact that she was a Jewess and he a Christian; and, though Dr. Marstland was not more dogmatically religious than the generality of young men "de son siècle", and Leah herself belonged, like her father, to the lax and modernised Reformed branch of her creed, she knew that her mother was, on the other hand, too faithful a daughter of the orthodox church, and too strict a follower of the Talmud, to look with pleasure on the union of one of her children with an unbeliever.

A man might indeed love her well enough to embrace Judaism for her sake; or, at any rate, to make such concessions to it as would enable her to marry him without any falling off from her present rooted and heartfelt loyalty to the traditions of her race; but that George Marstland would be this man she dared not assume, and was resolute with herself not to enquire. It had been enough hitherto to know that he was her dearest friend, and she is. All else she could afford to leave.

The question came to her now for the first time—could she afford it as easily as she had thought?

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A STERN CHASE.

A STORY IN THREE PARTS.

BY MRS. CASHEL HOEY.

THE THIRD PART.

CHAPTER VII. "AND WHY, DOLORES?"

"DON'T stay too long, Aunt Lillas, or we shall keep Julian waiting," said Dolores, as she and Miss Merivale followed a nimble-footed page through one of the corridors of the Langham Hotel, on their way to Captain and Mrs. Wharton's rooms. The words, uttered in the girl's clear, gleeful tones, caught the attention of a lady advancing towards them, and she looked earnestly at the speaker.

"Julian!" she thought; "it is not a common name. Perhaps she means him, and these are the friends he sometimes talks of. What a graceful woman, and what a lovely girl! I shall be able to describe them both to him; it would be odd if they should prove to be his friends."

Miss Merivale and Dolores had passed her only by a few steps, when the page ushered them into the room which the lady had just left. She had turned her head to look after them and perceived this.

"They are calling on Mrs. Wharton; I shall hear about them to-morrow," said the lady to herself, and then she went her way to the next instalment of her day's work, noticing as she passed out of the glass portico, an open carriage with a handsome pair of grey ponies, which chanced to be the only equipage in waiting. A groom stood at the ponies' heads, a pair of driving-gloves lay on the light, summer carriage-rug. "I wonder whether it's that pretty girl who drives those dear ponies," thought the lady.

Miss Merivale and Dolores were re-

ceived with great cordiality by Captain and Mrs. Wharton, and after a few minutes Rodney arrived. He saw at once that the mutual impressions of his friends were favourable, and he devoted himself to Mrs. Wharton and Dolores, in order to leave Miss Merivale free to talk with Captain Wharton.

"My daughter will be here immediately," Mrs. Wharton explained. "She has settled with Miss Denzil," she added, addressing Rodney, as one who would understand the allusion; and then she told Dolores that so devoted was Effie to music that she never failed to give some part of every day to it, no matter where she might be, and, since she came to London, had been so fortunate as to secure a lady, highly recommended, to play duets with her.

"Miss Denzil has only just gone," added Mrs. Wharton; and, as she spoke, Effie entered the room.

She was indeed a bright being—the pet-name of "Firefly" suited her admirably—and she was as little spoiled by the adoration of her parents as was consistent with her belonging to human nature at all. Her beauty was of the fragile and elegant American kind, which is frequently combined with a surprising amount of intellectual and physical energy. With a face as finely chiselled and tinted as some Greek marble of the old divine days; a coronal of hair like plaited sunbeams; eyes as lustrous as Dolores's own, but of a changeful grey-blue colour, like her father's; a light, supple figure; and the hands and feet of a child as to size, but perfect in shape, Effie Wharton presented a strong contrast to Dolores, who regarded her with wondering interest.

The visit was more interesting than visits in general, on account of the circumstances which had led to it, but those special circumstances were not alluded to. It had

been agreed between Liliás, Rodney, and Colonel Courtland that, until some information had been obtained from Cuba, nothing was to be said to Dolores on the subject of her mother's family and her own rights.

The two girls parted, well pleased to know that they were to meet on the next day, and Captain Wharton and Rodney, finding that Miss Merivale and Dolores were going on to the Royal Academy, arranged to join them there.

"It was a long time before I could bear to see pictures," said Liliás to Rodney as he was taking her to her carriage; "but now I like to look at them." She said this simply, as if it were quite natural that he should understand what she felt. "I often wonder whether Hugh would have been a great artist had he lived. I believed him to be a great artist then, and I am very glad I did. It is better to overrate those we love while they are with us. Don't you think so?"

"Better for ourselves, perhaps," he answered slowly.

"And certainly for them. If they are not to escape whipping, we may leave it to the outer world to whip them; it will do it with a will. But we can't make them too happy, seeing how little we can do, and for how short a time."

"A gentle doctrine, Miss Merivale, though it has a root of bitterness," said Rodney, perceiving that her thoughts had passed from Hugh to Hugh's daughter, and wondering whether she was in anxiety or trouble about Dolores.

It was difficult to believe that there could be any cause, judging by the youthful beauty and content of the girl's face and mien as she bowed and smiled, touched her ponies with the whip, and drove off, the very picture of happiness, irradiated with the light of hope and expectation which is to the human countenance what sunshine is to a landscape.

But Liliás was anxious and troubled about Dolores, and now that the tumult of feeling, into which Rodney's coming had thrown her, had subsided—quickly, too, by the aid of his quiet friendliness and sympathy—she returned to the source of her trouble. This was Julian. It was impossible for her to avoid the conviction that there was something wrong with him, and that meant danger to the peace of Dolores. Was the time coming when Mrs. Courtland's words of warning would prove to be words of wisdom—when she

(Liliás) would have to stand aside and witness the grinding of the inexorable mill? Something was wrong. If she could have thought it was only a trouble of the kind with which she was tolerably familiar—one to be assuaged by recourse to her cheque-book—she would not have minded so much, for Liliás, although her administration of her own money matters was orderly and exact, never did rightly estimate the moral meaning of Julian's "extravagance". But she was sure that the something wrong was not of this kind. It would not be at all like him to spare his uncle or herself the knowledge of it in that case. Was it anything that might mar their hopes for Dolores?

Twice recently Julian had assigned excuses for not coming to The Quince, which Liliás had accidentally discovered to be false. Although Liliás did not know that a man in love will violate binding obligations, incur serious risks with astounding heedlessness, neglect his own affairs, and those of other people for which he is accountable, with total unscrupulousness, go where he is not welcome, stay when he is wished away, make himself an intolerable nuisance, and be imperturbably aware that he is so regarded, rather than lose a chance of meeting the object of his passion; still her woman's wit told her that these excuses were a bad sign.

It was not Julian himself, but Colonel Courtland, who had proposed the visit to the Royal Academy, and he had promised to dine at The Quince on the next day without any of the alacrity for which Liliás (as a spectator) would have looked in a lover. To be sure, she knew nothing about lovers except in poetry and romance, and the ideal which she had formed in her girlhood was perhaps an absurd one. Nevertheless, she was uneasy. That Dolores should be perfectly and always happy; that she should have her heart's desire, and never, never discover or dream that her heart might have desired anything loftier or better; that the destiny of Hugh and Ines should be reversed in that of their child; was the single aspiration, the concentrated longing of this woman's soul. If absolute unselfishness could have secured the fulfilment of that desire, as it purified and hallowed it, the future of Dolores ought to have been very sure.

There had been one experience in the life of Liliás to which she looked back when her trouble about Julian was im-

portunate. She and Hugh had been brought together very much in the same way as Dolores and Julian, and when she grew into womanhood her stepfather had persuaded himself that she loved Hugh, but he was entirely mistaken. Was she now making a similar mistake about Julian? Thus did the instinct of a pure womanly nature shrink from the false without certainty of its falsehood, and strive towards the true unwitting of its truth.

Her own words to Rodney had set Lillias thinking again on this line, and she gave only mitigated attention to the remarks of Dolores upon the Whartons. Dolores had never seen so pretty a girl as Miss Wharton. Had Aunt Lillias? Yes; Aunt Lillias had, but she thought Miss Wharton very pretty and very charming. Dolores was sure Julian would be delighted with her, especially as she was so fond of music. Of course she played beautifully; she had promised that they should hear her to-morrow evening, and that would be such a treat for Julian. Dolores hoped Miss Wharton would be quite up to the mark, though, as Julian was very hard to please about women's playing. Finally, Dolores said:

"I used to be so sorry, Aunt Lillias, that you allowed me to give up music just because it was too much trouble, but I am glad now."

"Are you, my dear?" said Lillias, rousing herself. "Why?"

"Because my playing would never have been fit for Julian to listen to, and it is much better that I can't play at all."

"But you might have given pleasure to less fastidious ears, Dolores. After all, Julian is not the only person in the world, and——"

"There he is! There he is! Just going up the steps. He sees us! Is that gentleman with him? No; he has walked on. How delightful! We shall not have to wait for him under the clock."

She pulled up the ponies at the entrance to the Royal Academy, and flashed a radiant smile at Julian Courtland as he helped Miss Merivale to alight. Lillias had to give an order to the servant, and did not hear Dolores say: "Oh, Julian, how good of you to be so punctual!" Nor did she hear him answer in a tone which would have put all her doubts to flight:

"Was I not coming to meet you?"

Julian had been summoned that morning to a conference with his evil genius. He

found Mr. Wyndham in a surly and despotic mood. One of those ugly accidents which occasionally happen to persons in his line of business had occurred to him. He was not free from the weakness common to clever men; he never could believe that the other party to any bargain of his making might be more clever than he, and he had just sustained a serious loss by his chronic incredulity. This was the second within a week, and Mr. Wyndham, although Julian had had only two days' grace, felt it necessary to remind him again that he expected the fulfilment of his promise at very short date, under penalties.

There was not much novelty in the matter of their interview; the manner of it was, on Mr. Wyndham's part, a little more coolly implacable, and on Julian's more conciliating. The young man was, in fact, quite beaten, tired out, and in despair.

"I am going up there to dine to-morrow," he said, "and I will see how things look."

"What do you mean by that? If you haven't been dealing in empty boasts—an unsafe transaction with me—things have looked like the girl being ready to say 'Yes' ever since she's been grown up. Come here on Friday and tell me she has said 'Yes', and let us have no more nonsense about it."

Julian laughed insolently.

"I don't think that would quite do," he said, "even according to your unconventional notions. There's a dinner-party; some brand-new people from Boston, and a man named Rodney, who knew Mr. Rosslyn out in Cuba, and was an old friend of your wife, I believe—but I'm not clear on that point."

"Rodney—Rodney!" said Wyndham; "I don't remember the name. I don't think I ever heard of the man. What is he? Is he English or American?"

"How the deuce should I know? I'll tell you to-morrow."

Julian observed, with the secret pleasure that any annoyance to his evil genius was calculated to produce, that Mr. Wyndham was disturbed by this seemingly harmless communication. He tapped the table with his fingers, and repeated "Rodney, Rodney," under his breath, without heeding Julian's words.

"There's something in the note about 'Aunt Lillias being so glad to see someone who knew all about my mother', and that sort of thing," continued Julian, recovering

his memory when he saw a chance of making it unpleasant to Wyndham. "And now I must be going. I have to meet Miss Merivale and Miss Rosslyn at the Royal Academy at three o'clock."

He rose with an unsuccessful air of independence, and took up his hat.

"Wait a bit," said Wyndham; "I've something more to say. I don't like these new people and old friends coming about the place. You've had it all your own way up to the present, and you're either right about the girl's being ready to say 'yes', or you're wrong. But you may not go on having it all your own way; other people may have their views on Miss Merivale and her money, or Miss Rosslyn and hers. And if you should happen to be wrong about the young lady, the sooner we both know it the better. I feel pretty sure you're right, but I don't mean to put off making quite sure."

"And if I am wrong, what is to become of me?" asked Julian in a tone of despair.

He seemed to have sunk below everything except the motive of self-preservation, under the influence of this man.

"I have not the slightest idea," replied Mr. Wyndham with gay unconcern. "I have taken a fancy," he continued, "to have another look at the young lady who must settle that question for you; I saw her only imperfectly from the Lyceum stalls. So I shall go and have a look at the pictures, too."

"And run the risk of Miss Merivale's recognising you?"

"I'm not afraid that Miss Merivale will recognise me, and if she did, I'm not afraid of Miss Merivale," returned Mr. Wyndham airily.

Miss Merivale did her picture-seeing conscientiously, working through her catalogue herself, and for the most part in silence. She took very little notice of Julian and Dolores, and none at all of any of the other people about her. Mr. Wyndham, also a conscientious picture-seer and catalogue-consulter, had an undisturbed opportunity of observing her, sometimes standing close beside her, sometimes taking a seat and contemplating the group of three. Lilius was not likely to find much favour in the sight of Mr. Wyndham. The woman who had allowed herself to be put to ransom by him, to the amount of five thousand pounds, for a purely sentimental reason, and without the least attempt to beat him down in his demands, was to be

regarded from the intellectual point of view with contempt; while the grave and lofty refinement of Miss Merivale's aspect, the peculiar charm of a woman of highly cultivated mind, who is at the same time not a woman of the world, were things outside his ken and foreign to his taste.

"A regular dowdy old maid," was his summing up of Lilius; but Dolores found favour in his sight. "Where are the fellow's eyes," he said to himself, as he critically examined the face, figure; and dress of the unconscious girl; "where's his taste, where's his common-sense! The other's not to be named in the same day with little Dolly. Why, she's better-looking than ever her mother can have been, I should say; very like her, but not altogether like her either. What a smile, and what a laugh! That's some witticism of his, I suppose, that diverts her, little fool! She's a great deal too good for him, and if the money could be got at in any other way, I wouldn't— who's this, I wonder?"

Rodney had joined Miss Merivale and her companions. Mr. Wyndham, consulting his catalogue with great assiduity, drew near enough to hear his name, as Lilius introduced Julian to him.

"Wharton, unfortunately, could not come," said Rodney. "His daughter—"

Here a stream of people making for the nearest door came between Mr. Wyndham and the speaker, and he did not catch the rest of the sentence, but he caught Dolores's merry look at Rodney, and he heard her silvery laugh.

Then the group of four divided into two and two, and went on into the adjoining gallery.

Mr. Wyndham closed his catalogue, resumed his seat, and pursued his cogitations, which recurred every now and then to Dolores, in such a strain as:

"Who could have thought she'd ever be so pretty! The sullen little obstinate brat who cried all day at that wretched place in Praed Street after that lout of a boy! Well, well; I should not wonder if she and I were very good friends some day."

With this latter reflection—boding no good to Julian Courtland—Mr. Wyndham rose and sauntered round a couple of galleries, not unwilling to have another look at Dolores. He was, however, rather disconcerted, when turning away from a picture which he had stopped to examine,

he perceived Dolores hard by, and looking at him fixedly in the puzzled but searching way which just precedes recognition. He bent down to inspect a superb landscape, hung close to the floor, and, of course, unintelligible; then after a moment or two glided through the crowd, and gained the safe and lonely haven of the architectural drawings.

"Julian," said Dolores, "I have just seen a man—he was here a moment ago, and he wears an eyeglass—that reminded me of someone——" She hesitated—she had never heard Willeeden's name spoken in Lillias Merivale's house—"Of my poor mother's husband."

"Have you?" said Julian carelessly. "I should not have thought you remembered him well enough to trace a likeness in anybody to him. Here's the Tadema you wanted to see. Just look at the white marble!"

Mr. Wyndham avoided notice skilfully, but he took so much interest in these particular visitors to the Royal Academy that he remained as long as they did, keeping steady watch upon them all the time, and especially upon Lillias and Rodney. He followed them down the staircase at a discreet distance; then, while the ladies waited in the hall, and Rodney went to call up Miss Merivale's carriage, he placed himself by the side of Julian, who was claiming his cane from the proper custodian, and said in a tone as peremptory as it was low:

"Do it to-day. That man means mischief."

"Do you think I might volunteer to go home with you?" whispered Julian to Dolores, just as Rodney returned, and the carriage stopped the way.

"Of course you may. Aunt Lillias, here is Julian wanting to come home with us."

The girl's voice vibrated with her innocent gladness. Lillias nodded to Julian in smiling assent.

"Poor Mr. Rodney!" said Dolores, as the grey ponies trotted away down Piccadilly, "I think he would have liked to come too."

That was a delightful drive in the close of a beautiful summer afternoon. Julian was in high spirits—such high spirits, indeed, that Lillias asked herself whether she could be mistaken—whether her misgivings and her conviction that something was wrong with him were groundless. His manner to Dolores had something in it

which Lillias could not fail to observe, and which Dolores felt with trembling intensity—with a deep-seated happiness too great for words. She said little. Julian did two-thirds of the talking. Sometimes she affected to be quite engrossed with the ponies, but all the time she was radiant with content. After her first pleased and wondering perception of the change in Julian, Lillias took little notice of her companions. She was not tired, she assured them, and she had enjoyed the day thoroughly; but she liked to think over the pictures in silence.

When Julian had gone back to town that night, and Lillias was in her own room, sitting, as her custom was in the summer, at the open window, with no light but that of the stars, there came a gentle tap at the door, and Dolores entered the room, carrying a little lamp.

"What is it, dear?" asked Lillias, who had said good-night as usual to Dolores.

The girl set down the lamp, crossed the room, kneeled down by the side of Lillias, and clasped her arms round her waist.

"Well, my darling, what is it?"

"Aunt Lillias," said Dolores slowly, and with a strange solemnity, "I have always been happy. I have never had a trouble or a sorrow, that I can remember, since I came to you; but to-night I am the happiest person in all the world!"

"And why, Dolores?"

"Because Julian loves me, and has asked me to be his wife."

ART NEEDLEWORK.

NEEDLEWORK began to be practised very early on this our earth, and from the first it was, according to the workers' lights, what we call artistic. Even the cave-woman had her bone needles where-with she stitched together mantles of skins, as the Esquimaux do now, and on these skin garments they embroidered figures, even as their husbands engraved mammoths and reindeer on bits of bone and ivory. Look at a Hungarian shepherd's overcoat. He wears the wool inside, and on the outside are traced all kinds of quaint, interlacing spirals—quainter than what one sees on the collar of the fast-disappearing British smock-frock. Boadicea's fur-cloak had the same kind of ornament; so had the state robes of Red Indian chiefs. In Egypt, again, where one finds examples

of almost every kind of work, this leathern stitching was in high repute. At the Boulac museum, where the late Mariette Bey managed to get together a fair number of antiquities, one of the most interesting things is Queen Isi-em-Keb's funeral tent. This is a patchwork of thousands of squares of gazelle-skin, coloured red and green, and stitched with a cord of twisted pink leather sewn on with pink thread. The flat top is worked with vultures, gazelles, lotuses, and rosettes, forming an hieroglyphical epitaph.

But the "textiles" in Egypt are much older than Solomon's time. The earliest known pyramids, those at Saccarah, have yielded their quota; and these, wonderful to say, are strangely like the mummy-wrappings in Peru. You can see samples of both in the British Museum, and you can read about the latter in Reiss's Necropolis of Ancon. Whence this startling likeness, seen also in certain Egyptian idols of the baser sort, the counterparts of which may be picked up amid Mexican ruins, or among the non-Aryans of Central India? Shall we, with Mr. Hyde Clarke, dream of a time when there was a "King of the West", whose dominion included all western Europe, and northern Africa, and also central America, and the islands of the Caribbean Sea, and who belonged to that Iberian or Basque race of which even in our isles we have some remnants? Who can tell? It may be that man, whether red, black, white, or yellow, behaves in much the same way under the same circumstances. The old Greeks, whose sepulchres Dr. Schliemann delights to open, covered the faces of their mighty dead with masks of beaten gold, and the Ashantees do the same; yet no one supposes any sort of kinship between Agamemnon and King Coffee.

Whatever may be the explanation, the fact is certain—old Peru had her embroidered mummy-wrappings like old Egypt; and if we begin to talk of transmission, why should not both have come from China? It seems pretty certain that embroidery, and perhaps other arts, went from Babylon to Egypt; the earliest Egyptians prized those "Babylonish garments" the possession of one of which cost the Jewish Achan so dear. And embroidery is of all arts the most transmissible. It can be folded in the tent-hangings, and taken a thousand miles on camel-back without getting any hurt. Hence, along with jewels, it made up the

chief wealth of nomads. From Mongol travelling-wains to Arab tents the art was spread, and Arabs then, as now, went down into Egypt; whilst, in the other direction, it is more than probable that prehistoric China had sent out voyagers across the Pacific.

Whether, however, we claim one common origin for embroidery, or deem that it arose in many places independently, it was certainly carried to great perfection among the earliest peoples of Asia. When Sisera's mother, in the Book of Judges, looks out of the window, anticipating her son's triumphant return, she can find nothing grander for his share of the booty than "a prey of divers colours of needlework on both sides". In David's day, the King's daughter of Egypt is brought to David's son "in raiment of needlework", described immediately before as "of wrought gold". A dangerous "vehicle" that, for the use of it has caused the destruction of countless square miles of embroidery on which a countless amount of time and labour had been lavished. Think of the thirty-six pounds of gold got by melting down, in 1540, the funeral-robos of the Emperor Honorius's wife, who was buried A.D. 400! So, when Childeric's tomb at Tournai was opened in 1653, his robe of plaited gold strips was melted. How it fared with the gold brocade which in 1871 was found wrapped round Henry the Third's coffin I cannot tell. We are more art-loving now than they were two hundred years ago, but the "beaten work" of gold and silver so freely used in the Middle Ages to adorn dresses and hangings must have been even a greater temptation than the gold and silver thread which English needlewomen, beyond all others, had the art of "laying in" between their stitches. Very little of it has escaped the melting-pot, except where religion has interfered, as in the case of the English vestments which were sent abroad at the Reformation, and some of which have, since our Church Art revival, been coming back, while others, like the Westminster Abbey hangings at Valencia—are permanently lost to us.

For a different reason, wool is as little lasting as the precious metals; yet some of it has escaped the moth, and of the Egyptian wool embroidery in the British Museum the colours are as bright as when the work was done; you can identify the flowers with those still blooming in the fields by the Nile. Some of the finest pieces of wool-work have been found in

Crimean tombs. These (now in the St. Petersburg Museum) are dated about 300 B.C. In some of these the designs are painted on the material; in a few they seem woven in, tapestry-fashion; in most they are plainly needlework, making us think of the gorgeous "peplus" of Pallas Athene, embroidered every year by the Athenian maidens of highest rank, with that subject of which Greek art was never tired, the war of the gods and giants. In one of these tombs, that of "the seven brothers", at Kertch, a piece of silk has been found, not embroidered, but painted in transparent colours. From this tomb, also, was taken a bit of linen, which may be earlier than the flax-thread found in the Swiss lake-dwellings, but probably is many centuries later. These Swiss lake-people were what is called "Neolithic"—i.e., they had well-shaped stone tools, but had not learnt the use of metals; yet the loom-combs found among their remains show that they knew all about spinning and weaving. Their wool-work, if they wrought any, has wholly perished. In Western Europe, the earliest woollen fabrics belong to the bronze age; and of these some, among them the garment found in a Yorkshire barrow, at Rylston, are (says Dr. Rock) not woven, but plaited.

From sculptures and mosaics we can form a better idea of embroidery as it was than from the poor, decaying fragments taken out of tombs. This is notably the case with the Babylonian embroideries. None of them remain, but the wonderful richness of them is shown in the bas-reliefs. Look at Assurbanipal fighting lions; get a bright day, for he stands in the British Museum in rather a dark place; you see his corselet and helmet and horse-trappings—solid masses of gold wire drawn through and through, and then hammered up till they looked like jeweller's work. So in the Ravenna mosaic the Empress Theodora and her ladies are dressed—some in Indian shawl stuffs, some in embroidery after the style of Athene's peplus. It is the same with our own tombs: the recumbent figure is clad just as the living man used to be. Nay, King John at Worcester was buried in a rich red silk with gold-embroidered bordering, just like his painted effigy. This was proved when they opened his tomb in 1797. Much older and much richer was the beautiful embroidery taken in 1827 from St. Cuthbert's tomb. In Dr. Raine's St. Cuthbert it is described

as "of woven gold with spaces left vacant for needlework. The figures on rainbow-coloured clouds give it the effect of a ninth-century illumination." Aelfled, Queen of Edward the Elder, had this stole and maniple embroidered for Frithestan, Bishop of Winchester. His name and hers are on the end of the stole. When King, and Queen, and Bishop were all dead, Athelstan, making a "progress" northward, visited St. Cuthbert's shrine at Chester-le-Street, and gave these along with other precious vestments. It is a good thing they were buried, or they might have shared the fate of the Saint's banner of crimson velvet, delicately wrought with flowers in green and gold, and "most artificially worked and fringed with little silver bells in the fringe, which, having in the centre the corporax used by the Saint in celebrating mass, used to be carried into battle. But Dame Whittinghame, the dean's wife (about 1730), did most injuriously destroy the same in her fire." Another instance of embroidery reproduced in stone is the Black Prince's surcoat. The velvet still hanging over the tomb shows the very same stitches and ornaments which are reproduced in the recumbent effigy.

I spoke of embroidery as a special art for dwellers in tents. Long after the nomad stage was past it was used to ornament tents; indeed some of its greatest triumphs were wrought for tent-decoration. Antar's tent, under whose embroidered shade five thousand horsemen could find room to skirmish, belongs to romance. But Alexander's tent, erected at his namesake city, and the still grander one, with fifty golden pillars and a roof of woven gold, and curtains embroidered with figures in gold and colours, which he had made for his wedding-feast, are historical. So is the yet richer tent erected at Alexandria by Ptolemy Philadelphus. Of this the pillars represented alternately golden palm-trees and golden vines, of which the grapes were amethysts, while the hangings that divided it into rooms were embroidered with portraits of Kings and heroes. Sir John Chardin says: "The Khan of Persia caused a tent to be made resplendent with embroideries. It cost two millions. They called it the house of gold." Nadir Shah's tent—about 1700—in which was placed the famous peacock-throne, was of scarlet cloth lined with violet satin embroidered with gold and precious stones. Then there was that palace on the Tigris, built for Caliph Moctader, which Abulfeda describes as

adorned with thirty-eight thousand pieces of tapestry, of which twelve thousand were of silk worked in gold; and then again were the hangings of Chosroes's palace, representing all the flowers of spring, and wrought in gold and jewels and coloured silks. The impassive Gibbon goes into raptures as he describes them; and Chosroes entreated the Caliph Omar, his conqueror, to keep them uninjured; the destruction of such a glorious work would grieve him as much as his own downfall. But it was then early days with Mahometanism (A.D. 651); Caliphs had not yet grown luxurious; and Omar cut these grand tapestries into little bits to make praying-carpets for his officers.

War is always the enemy of culture. A few years ago the markets of Western Europe were flooded with Turkish embroideries, heirlooms stolen from the dying, or sold for a piece of bread, amid the accumulated horrors of that war which was aggravated by the cry of "Bulgarian atrocities". And peace, too, has had its waste. At a very grand funeral the pyre was often hung with tapestries and embroideries which were burned along with the body. Over his friend Hephæstion, Alexander raised a wooden palace two hundred and fifty feet high. Each of its many storeys was hung with embroidered curtains; and, aloft, in huge hollow figures of sirens, were singers who chanted the funeral-dirge. All was burnt; let us hope that the singers had good notice and were able to escape.

Of course embroidery has always been a favoured servant of religion. The Jewish tabernacle had its veils enriched with needlework; the veil which Herod hung before his "beautiful gate" was Babylonian work representing the signs of the Zodiac—the earth, and sun, and all the planets. The same was the case with heathen temples. The Bible tells how, at Jerusalem, "women wove hangings for the grove" (the graven image).

Greek temples, solid though they were, were often burnt, thanks to their embroidered hangings. The Roman style, with its round arches and great wall-spaces, specially lent itself to this sort of decoration; with the pointed arches and bigger windows of the Gothic, it gradually gave place to stained glass. But, if hangings were less used in the later mediæval churches, embroidery in other ways got more and more in vogue. Read the catalogue, made by Edward the Sixth's commissioners, of the ornaments even in the smallest parish

churches. Such a wealth of copes and altar-cloths; and these not church property, but most of them belonging to guilds (of which almost every parish had two or three), and used on their festivals, as the insignia of the Oddfellows are nowadays. People then gave liberally to their church and got something in return. Fancy what a grand function must have been at Lincoln, where the commissioners found six hundred embroidered vestments! England was specially rich in this kind of work. Matthew Paris tells us that when Innocent the Third saw some of our splendid vestments, he cried: "Surely England is a well inexhaustible; and where there is such abundance, from thence much may be drawn out." At the Reformation all this was destroyed or dispersed. A few have come back, notably the Stonyhurst cope, which was Henry the Seventh's, and is embroidered with Tudor roses—a poor, mean thing compared with our thirteenth century cope at St. John Lateran, and Thomas à Becket's vestments, sold away to the cathedral of Sens; and the Syon cope, carried, when Elizabeth became Queen, by the nuns of Sion House, through Flanders and France, till they and it found a resting-place in Lisbon. Some sixty years ago it came back to England, and is now in South Kensington.

A few palls—that of Dunstable, the Vintners, and the Fishmongers, and some in the little Norwich churches—have always remained to us; but most of our treasures were lost in that ignobly selfish scuffle for wealth which marked our change of religion. Other nations managed better. The North Germans became much more thoroughly Protestant than we did; but they did not destroy or make away with their works of art. They confiscated the endowments, but respected the art-treasures. Our reforming gentry (for the Reformation with us was mainly a political movement for enriching the higher classes) kept the endowments—family livings were too good to be given up for conscience-sake—and gave the painted glass to be hammered in pieces; and the statues to be broken down; and the broidery of copes, and stoles, and altar-cloths to be sold or pulled to pieces for the sake of the gold thread; and the illuminated missals to be cut in pieces to fledge arrows with. We were well punished for such vandalism, and that soon. Of old, needlework had been the glory of the land, a tradition since Anglo-Saxon days, if not since the time of

Empress Helena, a Welsh princess, wife of Emperor Constantine, whose embroidery Muratori, in the seventeenth century, described as still preserved at Vercelli. Bock, in his *Liturgische Gewänder*, says it is still there; if so, it is nearly one thousand five hundred years old.

It was a pity the art should die out. The series of workers had been so long kept up unbroken. In *Domesday*, we read of Alvide the maiden getting from Godric, Sheriff of Buckingham, for her life half a hide of land "if she might teach his daughters to make orphreys" — aurophrygia, the gold embroidery on church vestments.

In Mrs. Lawrence's *Woman in England* there is a great deal about our English work. It even survived the Wars of the Roses; and, in the ups and downs of that sad time, noble ladies, reduced to penury, were glad to earn a living by their needle. The religious houses had always been famous for needlework; even the monks occasionally plied the needle. Gifford, writing to Cromwell of the suppression of a monastery at Woolsthorpe, Lincolnshire, says: "There is not one religious person there but what can and doth use either embrothering, wryting bookes with a fayre hand, making garmente, karvyng," etc. With the change in religion the embroiderer, like the illuminator, was starved out. It is astonishing how soon the art died out. Queen Catherine had been a notable needlewoman, solacing her loneliness by practising the art she had learnt from her mother, "who always made her husband's shirts". Mary, Spanish in all her tastes, spent her weary vigils for Philip, who never came, in working "Spanish stitch, black and gold". There is a good deal of Elizabeth's handicraft still extant; but the taste in her day was getting depraved. Elizabethan needlework is perfect in workmanship, but wholly wanting in naturalness and beauty. In the next reign even the workmanship deteriorated. Nothing shows more clearly how the good old English traditions had died out than the Mompesson business. We used to be famous for our gold thread, it was so much purer than the Spanish or Italian; but when Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, got the monopoly and employed the Frenchmen Mompesson and Michael to get his thread made, it was soon so scandalously debased as to corrode the workmen's hands, and even the flesh of the wearers. The Villiers-Mompesson patent empowered the monopo-

lists to punish anyone whom they found making a better or cheaper article; for they made the public pay exorbitantly for this scandalous stuff.

Thus it was that, in James's day, needlework degenerated into simple crewel, a style popular since the old Assyrian times. And here, where we might have been helped by hints and patterns from India, we were cut off by that foolish legislation which even then was beginning to destroy the Indian manufactures, in the supposed interest of the British workman. The East India Company was founded in Elizabeth's reign; and, though at first other Indian manufactures were admitted, the Broderers—whom Elizabeth had just formed into a Company—had sufficient influence to keep out Indian embroidery from the very first.

Coarseness of execution went hand-in-hand with poverty of design in the Jacobean and Caroline needlework. James and Anne of Denmark figure as Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, with Windsor Castle in the background. Such clumsy allegorical work lets us down by a rapid descent to the heavy "German Louis Quatorze work" of the Georges. Early in the eighteenth century it was found that, despite prohibition, Indian patterns were coming in, and were being copied in tambour-work. A new statute, therefore, forbidding the importation from India of any wrought material, was passed by the influence of the Broderers, and our chance of assimilating Indian taste was lost for a century and a half. English worsted-work spent itself in fruitless efforts to imitate oil-paintings. Our mothers remember Miss Linwood's needle-pictures, which were so long on show in Leicester Square. These are not legitimate embroidery; they are attempts, some very clever, but mostly abortive, to do something which the material forbids. Those who could not work like Miss Linwood or Mrs. Pawsey could make life a burden with hideous Berlin-work; which, by a strange irony of fate, our missionaries' wives are teaching to little Hindoo girls, and thereby stamping out their own immemorial and really beautiful designs.

Well, to sum up, needlework is real art, and its triumphs are connected with all the grandest events of man's history. The moral is, that those who practise such an art should be able to live by it. Irish girls working their eyes out at lace which brings wealth to the regnator, to them

only a starvation pittance; English girls embroidering children's coats at such fabulously small prices the dozen that one thinks *The Song of the Shirt* was written in vain—these things ought not to be. The workers in such an old and honourable craft ought to be able to live by it; and, while one is glad to hear of the prosperity of "the Royal School of Art Needlework", one also hopes that Mrs. Heckford and those who, like her, are doing something for the East London needlewomen, will have their share of success.

OLD ACTON.

OF the great highways that lead from London with a definite purpose towards the provinces, hardly any one takes such an unpretending start as the Uxbridge Road. There is nothing, indeed, so very imposing about Uxbridge that the way thereto should attract particular attention, but it must be remembered that the highway does not come to an abrupt ending at Uxbridge, as one might perhaps infer from its designation, but continues on to Oxford, to Worcester, and the western midlands generally. The road, indeed, properly begins with Oxford Street, which has preserved its more dignified title, but seems to forget its destination altogether among the fashionable and wealthy denizens of Bayswater, and then, after an intermediate existence as Notting Hill High Street, awakes to a life with a definite purpose by Shepherd's Bush, and announces itself with humble aspirations as the road to Uxbridge. Originally, perhaps, the road was a cattle-track, used by drovers from Wales and the marshes, with its Oxford and its Ox-bridge on the way, a miry track, we may be sure, looking at the stiff clay on either hand, and scenting the smell of brickfields on the breeze. Indeed, on wintry days there is a suspicion of mud about the Uxbridge Road even now; and with the bare building fields and brickfields on either hand, with here a row of houses, and there a forlorn hedgerow that has preserved of its once rural surroundings only a deep and muddy ditch, with troughs trickling muddy water into muddier clay-pits, and a general slabby and clayey feeling everywhere—with all this, accompanied as often happens by a genial suburban fog, there is no great prospect offered of a pleasant ramble.

But then there is a tramway that bridges

over this strip of debateable land, which halts half-way between town and country, and the tramcar stops at the foot of Acton Hill, where the road assumes a pleasant, rural aspect. Not long ago the great feature of the road, as it wound up the hill, was a noble old brick wall—solid, massive, with long buttresses, containing bricks enough to build a modern street, and toned down with age to a rich and mellow hue, with patches of moss and lichen here and there, and rough, luxuriant growths of wild creepers and climbers topping its crumbling coping. Everything spoke of rigid quiet and seclusion behind this great brick barrier, of the uninterrupted quiet and seclusion of a couple of centuries at least. You might catch a glimpse from a distant hill of the tops of high trees, and perhaps of a gable or chimney-shaft, but in every other way within its walled enclosure the house was as far removed from all the stir and life outside as if it stood in the depths of some forest wild.

And then, one day, not long ago, a visit to the spot revealed a sudden transformation. The great wall had been levelled almost to its foundations, and the zealously secluded grounds were open to the public gaze—deep grass, tall elms, tangled shrubberies, the massive limbs of oaks, overgrown lawns and neglected parterres, while here and there, as if still shrinking from observation, peered a turret, gable, or chimney-shaft of the old house. Big notice-boards announced the sale of the site for building-lots, while the old iron gates which had long almost rusted on their hinges were now thrown wide open.

The old house is known as Berrymead Priory, but how it got the name it is difficult to say. No record has come down to us of any religious house having been founded on the site. And yet local tradition will have it that once upon a time there were monks at Berrymead. A chequered history would the old house have to show if its annals could be completely written. But no one has as yet dived very deeply into the antiquities of Acton, and we can only catch a glimpse of the life-history of the place at one point or another, and never very clearly.

It is likely enough that, from its secluded position and proximity to London, the place may have been used as a seminary or other institution for priests of the old faith between the Reformation and the reign of Charles the Second; but at the

latter period the house was the residence of William Saville, Marquis of Halifax. The Marquis died at the house in the beginning of the eighteenth century. It seems an appropriate place to die at, with a touch of sombre melancholy about the spot that no gilding can brighten—and there is plenty of gilding—and no sunshine altogether dispel, although the sun shines brightly enough at times.

Some time after this we find the house inhabited by the first Duke of Kingston, when King George the Second was a frequent visitor, and, after that, the Duke of Newcastle—not of the old Cavendish, but of the later Clinton stock—occupied the place, having for the companion of his solitude—so says the tradition of the place—no other than the Nancy Dawson of ballad fame. The Duke made a good many alterations, it is said, and built out the music-room and the billiard-room; but the final conversion of the place into a bastard kind of Gothic, is due to one Colonel Clutton, who was a subsequent owner. Then local tradition is at work again, and connects Lord Byron with the place; but here tradition is probably wrong, and has confounded the poet with a later peer. But if the genius loci is to be believed, Sir Edward Lytton, as he then was, occupied the house for some time, and in the dining-room occurred the final quarrel with Rosina, Lady Lytton, which led to a lifelong separation. Alas! they both had the sensitive organisation of literary artists; both were hungry for appreciation; and how could the one appreciate the other? And then a wife with a keen insight into character, and a fine sarcastic touch, such as Lady Lytton's novels reveal—how could a man so vulnerable be expected to get on with her ladyship?

The house itself seems sympathetic with the Lytton legend—recalling the days when great nobles had their houses in Clerkenwell, or in Hackney, or in localities as little fashionable at the present day; a touch of the old baronial feeling—one hardly knows whether real or sham—a little bit of mystery in passages that lead to nothing—panels that give a hollow sound, winding stairs that begin at my Lord's chamber and come out nobody knows where, old vaulted cellars that may have been prison-cells, with a possible monk bricked up behind the port wine bin; and then a music-room that Polly Peachum may have sang in, and still the melancholy, sombre shadow over all.

And then for a little Bohemian glitter commend us to the episode of Lola Montes, for whom the old house was made to glow with a kind of Oriental splendour in gilding and plate-glass. A strange career for that dauntless Scotch lassie, with the hot blood of her Creole mother dancing too fiercely in her veins! A wild story indeed it is—how she captivated old King Ludwig, and ruled Bavaria, and had her foot upon Grand Duchesses and Serene Highnesses, but was finally vanquished by students and sans culottes in a revolution in which Lola would have gladly taken the lead, if she had been permitted. Then she came to England with the éclat of her exploits upon her, drove in Hyde Park, and captivated a young Guardsman. Lola was not wanting in a kind of magnanimity. She made her admirer take three months to consider the matter; then she married him, and they went to live at Berrymead. Lola was then thirty years old, in the full power of her undoubted fascinations—not beautiful exactly, but with wonderful eyes and magnificent hair. But her domestic happiness was of short duration, for certain unfriendly relations of her husband had discovered that she had another husband alive, a certain Captain James, whom she had married at sixteen, and might well have hoped to be finally rid of. But, threatened with a prosecution for bigamy, Lola and her de facto husband took refuge in Spain, where she gave birth, it is said, to two fine children. But her temper was of the stormiest, and finally she wearied out her husband's patience. He left her, and took proceedings to annul his marriage as bigamous. And then Berrymead was once more inhabited, but not for long, for its owner soon fell into a kind of consumption, and died. As for Lola, after a strange, adventurous career in California and South America, she died in poverty and misery in New York, about five-and-twenty years ago.

Most strange are the popular legends about the old house. One might be incredulous of the existence of such legends in a London suburb, but Acton has somehow retained a good deal of local individuality. It might not be prudent, perhaps, to dwell upon ghosts, but there can be no harm in saying that tradition has it there is a large treasure buried somewhere in the grounds. For the rest, there is a fine oak-tree, at least four hundred years old, with a sturdy limb at a

convenient height from the ground, which did duty for a gallows in the days of the wicked old monks—adopting the popular view of their character—although if there ever were monks about the place, they were doubtless a very harmless, inoffensive kind of people.

Among the curious vicissitudes of the place it may be mentioned, by the way, that for some years in the present century it was occupied as a nunnery; and there was a pool at the bottom of the garden, with swans and fountains, now nearly all filled up with builders' rubbish. And, indeed, the all-devouring builder is already close upon the skirts of the pleasure-grounds. A huge board-school looks down upon a once secluded lawn; a public hall has been reared just beyond the fish-pond; the house itself has been secured for a club; and rows of villas will before long spring up all round.

As we pass through the iron gate, and reach the highway once more, we may notice farther up on the opposite side, in the recess of another very high and solid brick-wall, an ancient conduit, almost the last surviving example of a public benefit once so frequent. This is Thorney's Conduit, endowed in 1612 with a rent-charge of twenty shillings per annum; but the water is now condemned as unwholesome, and the pipe is under lock and key, and where the twenty shillings go nobody knows.

But we have not yet exhausted the associations of Acton. At the top of the hill, just before entering the High Street, we turn along Horn Lane, and there, half-way down, we come upon more high brick-walls, though not so massive or so ancient as the fallen wall of Berrymead, and peering over this wall is a solid, substantial, square, red-brick mansion, known as Derwentwater House, once the town residence of the Ratcliffes, and of that unfortunate member of the family, James, Earl of Derwentwater, who was beheaded for his share in the luckless Jacobite rising of 1715. Here, it is said, the body of the unhappy Earl rested for a night after the execution, and the great gates were thrown open for the last time as the hearse, with its six black horses, drove away on the long, dismal journey to the north. And here, again, local tradition has been busy. There is a grass-plot in the garden, adorned with an obelisk of stone, and beneath this is buried, so says the popular voice, the decapitated Earl. But here tradition can be shown to

be clearly in the wrong. The remains of the Earl lay for many years in the deserted chapel of Dilston Hall, and have, within late years, been removed to Sussex, to the private burying-place of the family who now represent the Ratcliffes. But it is just possible there may be some ground for the tradition, after all. There was a brother Charles who, after the death of his nephew, the titular earl, assumed the title of Earl of Derwentwater, and he, who had been condemned to death in 1715, but had managed to escape, was captured, in 1745, on his way to join the Young Pretender, and was condemned and executed on the former attainder. It is just possible that he may have found a grave within the walls of the family domain.

Opposite the walls of Derwentwater House is another old-fashioned house, with the air of a country manor about it, now known as The College, which looks as if it had a history, with its ivy-covered walls and low, irregular roof; and alongside this is a kind of grassy hollow, known as The Steyne, about which congregate the cottages of the laundry-people. Acton has taken rank as a laundry town, and, on Saturdays, the roads about are thronged with light carts carrying home to customers their weekly tale of clean linen, while, on Mondays, there is the same procession of vehicles loaded with soiled raiment. Tuesdays are devoted to washing and wringing. On Wednesdays and Thursdays innumerable clothes-lines are hung out, and the air is whitened with fluttering garments. Then there is Friday for ironing and mangling, and then the whole round begins again as before.

The High Street of Acton is pleasant enough—a quaint, county-town kind of high-street, with its raised causeway on one side, a sort of parade or promenade, flanked by the country shops, the saddler, the confectioner, the shoemaker, and the rest, while here and there an old-fashioned bow-window projects over the scene, full of blooming flowers, and festooned with neat white curtains. There is a feeling that here is really a public walk, like, at a long interval, the Pantiles of Tunbridge Wells; you can almost hear the rustle of the garments, the silks, and brocades, and paduasoyes of other days; you feel the ceremonious politeness of the three-cornered hats, the profound curtseys of the hoops and farthingales. And thus you feel a human interest in the fact that Acton really was a watering-place at one time, with its wells

upon the common, its pump-house, and its Assembly Rooms, where people danced, and flirted, and felt that here was a giddy maze of pleasure and delight. These things are all gone now; the wells, indeed, may be running still in somebody's back-garden, but even the memory of the Assembly Rooms is lost, although there is a modern hall which answers the same purpose, and where people, no doubt, manage to find the same interest as in former days.

And here we take another turn which brings us to the railway-station of the period, with a train for the Mansion House, or, perhaps, for New Cross, just due, and, rattling over the familiar route, the memories of Old Acton grow fainter and more indistinct.

UNDER THE CHESTNUTS.

We stood beneath the chestnuts beside the river-bank,

So still the swallows swooped and poised, and from the streamlet drank;

The sun beyond the purple moors, was setting in the west,

With the clouds like vassals round him, in gold and crimson drest.

You said the words that made life full of hope and joy to me,

And at our feet Ure shone and gleamed, on rushing to the sea.

I stood beneath the chestnuts, beside the river-bank,

And from the robin's vesper-song, as if it hurt me, shrank;

The sun beyond the purple moors was setting in the west;

I thought, so set my happiness, with all that life loves best.

And no one whispered "Be of cheer," no hand held help to me,

And at my feet Ure shone and gleamed, on rushing to the sea.

Ah, still beneath the chestnuts, beside the river bank,

Will other glad young lovers, the golden evening thank

The sun beyond the purple moors sink glorious to his rest,

And hear the pleading promise made, the trusting love confessed;

And other maidens meet the fate, that wrecked my life and me,

While all the while Ure shines and gleams, and rushes to the sea.

DUELLING, ANCIENT AND MODERN.

WHEN we read in the newspapers—as we may have done lately—that two gentlemen in high life have met in hostile encounter with no more deadly weapons than their fists, we can hardly fail to recall that in a not very remote past such a fracas would inevitably have been followed by a meeting of a more serious character—that a duel

with pistols or swords would certainly have followed the undecided boxing-match. Happily in our days quarrels, which in times past were left to the arbitrament of combat, are now adjusted in less heroic or romantic fashion. On a prosaic judge, and twelve commonplace and matter-of-fact jurymen, as a rule, devolves the duty of awarding "satisfaction" to the party aggrieved.

It cannot be denied that, even in the days when it was in vogue, the custom of duelling was more honoured in the breach than in the observance. At best it was but the pursuit of vengeance under difficulties—with the superadded drawback that the victor might possibly be hanged. Even as a means of exacting vengeance for injury inflicted, it can hardly be said to be quite effective. For instance, let us suppose that it is still in fashion, and that I have been insulted and consider myself injured by an adversary. I demand satisfaction—that is to say, I invite him to meet me on equal terms, armed with the same weapons. If I succeed in killing, or nearly killing him, I shall have obtained satisfaction at the subsequent risk of being indicted for murder or manslaughter, and no doubt afterwards grieve greatly for his fate; but if I get killed, or badly wounded, where does my satisfaction come in?

In what we moderns are pleased to regard as the barbarous ages, duelling had a more intelligible *raison d'être*; it was a particularly rough, though not very ready way, of invoking poetical justice on wrongdoers and designers of evil. By the judicial combat, or "wager of battle", as is well known, an accused person was permitted to challenge his accuser to single combat, and did victory declare for him, his innocence was held to have been incontestably established. This test, however, can hardly be considered as conclusive, since the physically weaker party must of necessity have been unfairly handicapped. Providence is said by an eminent modern authority to be always on the side of big battalions, and by a parity of reasoning may also be supposed to favour the party with the more formidable physique, so that the ordeal of combat as deciding the guilt or innocence of an accused person can hardly be considered convincing in its results.

Moreover, those olden-time duellists took exceeding pains to protect their persons. They were fearfully and wonderfully apparelled, begirt with impenetrable

steel, so that the armourer shared with the proverbial Providence responsibility for the issue.

The precautions against facile blood-letting, and the pomp and circumstance attending the mediæval duel, are strikingly set forth in contemporary records of the preparations for a historic combat—which, however, did not come off—between the Duke of Hereford and the Duke of Norfolk, in September, 1398. The former was said to have basely betrayed a private conversation, in which he alleged that the latter had dropped several expressions of a treasonable nature. The accusation was denied, and according to the usage of the times the Duke of Norfolk demanded the privilege of acquitting himself by single combat. Each of the Dukes, according to the laws of chivalry, flung down his glove, which were both taken before the King and sealed, in order to prevent any future denial of the challenge.

The King appointed Coventry as the place of combat, and caused a splendid theatre to be erected on Gosford Green, wherein the fight was to come off. Froissart maintains that neither of the rival Dukes would trust native artificers to supply their armour. One imported four armourers from Lombardy, and the other, certain equally cunning craftsmen from Germany. When the belligerents were armed for the encounter, it is said they looked very imposing, but, seeing that they wore heavy and brightly polished steel armour, that was, moreover, "elegantly inlaid" with gold and silver, however striking they were in appearance, they must have felt in person particularly uncomfortable—boxed-up like this in envelopes of heavy metal, they could hardly have been at ease, particularly as the weather is said to have been very hot. Besides, they both relied on the intrinsic strength of their armour apart from supernatural influences, for they were required to clear themselves, on oath, from having any commerce with incantations, or of rendering their armour or their bodies invulnerable by any charm—agencies that were had recourse to on similar occasions by less illustrious people.

"The Duke of Hereford," says that veracious chronicler Hollinshed, "armed him in his tent, that was set up neere to the lists, and the Duke of Norfolk put on his armour between the gate and the barrier of the town, in a beautiful house, having a fair perclois of wood towards the gate, that

none might see what was doing within his house. The Duke of Anmarle, that daie being high Constable of England, and the Duke of Surrie, Marahal, placed themselves betwixt them, well armed and appointed, and when they saw their time, they first entered into the lists with a great company of men apparalled in silke sandals, embroidered with silver, both richlie and curioslie, everie man having a tipped staff to keep the field in order. About the hour of prime came to the barriers of the lists the Duke of Hereford, mounted on a white courser, barded with green and blew velvet, embroidered sumptuously with swans and antelopes of goldsmith's worke, armed at all points."

All being ready, the first to appear was "Henrie of Lancaster, Duke of Hereford," who said in a loud voice: "I am come hitheir to do mine indevor against Thomas Mowbraie, Duke of Norfolk, as a traitor, untrue to God, the King, his realme, and me." And then "incontinentlie he sware upon the holie evangelists that his quarrel was true and just, and upon that point he required to enter the lists. Then he put up his sword, which before he held naked in his hand, and pulling down his visor made a crosse on his horse, and with speare in hand entered the lists, and then descended from his horse, set him down in a chair of green velvet, and there reposed himself, abiding the coming of his adversarie." Soon after there entered King Richard, "with great triumph, accompanied by all the peeres of the realme," and, moreover, attended by above two thousand men in armour, "least some frai or tumult might arise amongst his nobles, by quarrelling or partaking." When the King had taken his seat, a herald cried: "Behold here, Henrie of Lancaster, Duke of Hereford, appelland, which is entered into the lists roiall to do his devoir against Thomas Mowbraie, Duke of Norfolk, defendand, upon pain to be found false and recant."

Then came the Duke of Norfolk on horseback, "his horse being barded with crimson velvet, embroidered richly with lions of silver and mulberie trees, and when he made his oath before the Constable and Marshal that his quarrel was just and true," he too alighted, and sat down on his chair, that was of crimson velvet. The herald then gave the word to begin. The combatants mounted, and all was ready for the dread encounter, when—very provokingly for the reader—the King commanded them to resume their seats, where they remained

for two long hours while his majesty was in consultation with his advisers. The upshot of the whole portentous affair was that the combat did not take place, and the King decreed the banishment of both the intending combatants.

The same pomp of preparation and arrangement are noted in the accounts of other famous single encounters of this period. One of the most remarkable was the duel fought a century and a half later, in the park of St. Germain en Laye, between Francis de Vivonne, Lord of Chateigneraye, and Guy de Chabot, Lord of Jarnac, in the presence of King Henry the Second and his court. The former being dangerously wounded in the thigh was disabled, and his life, according to the rules of the combat, became forfeited to the victor, who generously waived his right, and desired the King to accept at his hands the life of the foe he had vanquished, to which request his majesty was graciously pleased to assent. Chateigneraye, however, took his defeat so much to heart that he died three days afterwards. He was confident of victory; so much so, that he had prepared a magnificent entertainment for his friends on the day of the combat. As the event proved, however, he set too much store on his own dexterity, and strangely undervalued the skill of his adversary. So strikingly was this made manifest, that the coup De Jarnac thenceforward became a household word—used to denote an unexpected manoeuvre reserved by an enemy. The King greatly regretted the loss of Chateigneraye, to whom he was much attached, and he prohibited future encounters of that kind under severe penalties.

Nearly a century later another King of France took still more vigorous action against duelling; he caused two nobles who had fought, despite his prohibition, to be put to death. In 1626, the Count de Boutteville, father of the famous Marshal de Luxembourg, killed the Count of Thorigny in a private duel, and soon afterwards, having taken part as principal in another encounter in which his second killed the second of his adversary, fled to Flanders, fearing arrest. Thither he was pursued by the Marquis de Beuvron, who had vowed to revenge the death of his friend Thorigny. By the intervention of the Archduchess, however, a temporary reconciliation was effected between the two gentlemen. The truce of seeming friendship did not last long; Beuvron soon recanted his altered resolve, and

wrote insulting letters to De Boutteville, who had retired to Nancy, re-challenging him to the combat in Paris. Des Chappelles, a notorious duellist, who had espoused Beuvron's quarrel, also wrote to him with the view of compelling him to fight.

"You make a great deal of noise, sir," he said, "giving out everywhere that you intend to fight, but this I will never believe until I see you in action."

De Boutteville, though not anxious for the encounter, could not resist such incitements. He repaired to Paris, and sent word to Beuvron that he was ready to give him satisfaction. When the preliminary arrangements for the meeting were made, it was found that the duel had resolved itself into a combat of three on each side. After each had been examined by a gentleman to see that they had no private armour the fray began. In addition to the two principals, Boutteville and Beuvron, their friends Des Chappelles and La Berthe, Bussy d'Amboise and Buquet, took part in the encounter, which had a curious termination, that is thus described: "Boutteville and Beuvron rushing forward and seizing one another by the collar, threw their swords on the ground, and held their poignards elevated without striking. At length Boutteville proposed to put an end to the combat, and they reciprocally begged their lives from one another. Bussy d'Amboise, however, was not so fortunate; Des Chappelles gave him a mortal wound in the breast; and La Berthe was also dangerously wounded by the friend of Beuvron."

This affray was witnessed by thousands of spectators, and greatly angered King Louis the Thirteenth, who at once ordered the arrest of the surviving combatants. All, however, escaped except Boutteville and Des Chappelles, who were imprisoned in the Bastille, afterwards brought to trial, and, in spite of the intercession of influential friends, both beheaded on the 12th of June, 1627. They died quite resigned to their fate, each having previously petitioned that the other might be pardoned.

"I must beg two things of you," said Des Chappelles to his judges. "The first is that justice may be satisfied in my person; and the second that you should show mercy to my friend;" and De Boutteville spoke to the same effect, pleading not that his own life, but that of Des Chappelles might be spared.

In the latter part of the last, and beginning of the present, century it was, however, that duelling most generally prevailed in most Continental countries, as well as in Great Britain and Ireland. In France, at the close of the last century, according to an eminent authority, "there was scarcely a man worth looking on who had not killed his man," and in Great Britain about the same time a gentleman's education was held to be hardly perfect until he had "smelt powder". Legislators, lawyers, judges even, and members of other learned professions, gentry and estated persons of every degree, were so jealous of their honour, and of the preservation of the "tone" of high society, that they engaged in deadly conflict on the smallest provocation. One indeed is puzzled to recall the names of more than a few of the many eminent persons of the period who are recorded as having fought duels; from "the minister down to the clerk of the crown", all public and prominent men were duellists—indeed, to doubt the morality or deny the necessity of the duel in these "brave days of old", would have been thought excessively "bad form." That it was illegal rather added to its attractiveness, and increased the zest with which it was had recourse to as the occasion seemed to require. Moreover, but few offenders were ever brought to justice, and most of them escaped punishment.

But the Emerald Isle has been pre-eminently the land where duelling flourished in the immediate past. Most of the English readers of Lever's and Lover's earlier Irish novels, no doubt, consider that the many duels arising from trivial causes on which the plots of most of them hinge, are either gross exaggerations of possible occurrences, or pure inventions of the lively fancy of their authors; but, if anything, they are but faint reflections of actual facts. Duelling, without doubt, was universal in Ireland at the commencement of this century. No gentleman was held to be qualified for admission to polite society until he had encountered, if not killed, his man. No barrister could go circuit until he made a reputation in this way, and scarcely an assize passed over without a number of duels. Sir Jonah Barrington gives a list of famous lawyers who had been often "out" with antagonists, and of judges who are said to have fought their way to the Bench; and his statements obtain ample verification in the works of contemporary historians.

In our own days it is difficult to realise that staid and dignified administrators of law, high-placed legislators of "credit and renown", not to speak of distinguished members of other learned professions, or of the nobility and gentry, engaged in encounters condemned alike of God and man; yet that is precisely what happened in Ireland, and, less extensively perhaps, in England and Scotland at the time mentioned.

Amongst the most famous of the duellists spoken of by writers of and concerning this period, was "Bully" Egan, chairman of quarter sessions for the county of Dublin, who was so good-natured that he never sentenced a malefactor without "blubbering on the bench", yet he fought more duels than any of his contemporaries. His most remarkable encounter was one that he had with the Master of the Rolls, at Donnybrook, in the presence of an immense crowd; it was, however, bloodless; the "bully" reserved his fire, and when his antagonist had discharged his pistol without effect, threw down his weapon, inviting the judge to "shake hands, or go to the devil".

It was no unusual thing, according to the same writers, for two opposing counsel to fall out in court in discussing a legal point, retire to a neighbouring field to settle it with pistols, and, if no blood was shed, as was generally the case, return to court to resume their business. Sir Jonah Barrington gives many illustrations of this comical contempt for the law held by its paid advocates, of one of which "Bully" Egan, already referred to, was the hero. That worthy person and a barrister named Keller had a tough law argument at the Waterford Assizes which became warm and personal, and both simultaneously retired from court. Everyone concerned knew perfectly well what was up, and calmly awaited the result. The two gentlemen both crossed the Suir to a field on the opposite bank, which happened to be in the county of Kilkenny, and, therefore, out of the jurisdiction of the presiding judge, where they exchanged shots without any harm being done. Having thus adjusted their differences satisfactorily, they returned to court to find the bench, bar, jury, and spectators patiently waiting to learn which of them had been killed.

Can anyone outside Bedlam now conceive such a scene possible? Or does it now seem credible that occupants of the highest positions on the judicial bench should have

had part as principals in distinctly illegal practices? Clearly not; but yet it is on record that Attorney-General Fitzgibbon, who was afterwards Lord-Chancellor of Ireland, fought with Curran, who was subsequently Master of the Rolls, with "enormous pistols twelve inches long"; that "Councillor" Scott, who became Lord Chief Justice of the King's Bench and Earl of Clonmel, met Lord Tyrawly, the Earl of Llanduff, and many others in hostile encounter with swords and pistols; that Baron Metge, of the Exchequer, was "out" with his own brother-in-law, and with other people as well; that Judge Patterson, of the Common Pleas, fought three county gentlemen, and wounded them all; and that Lord Norbury, Chief Justice of the Common Pleas, had encounters with "fighting" Fitzgerald, and many others. So tremendous was the reputation of this judge as a "fire-eater" that he was trusted by ministers of his party to frighten troublesome members of the opposition, and so rapid was his promotion in consequence that it was said he "shot up into preferment".

Equally illustrious people are mentioned as having indulged in this vicious and criminal propensity. The Hon. G. Ogle, a privy councillor, fought a duel with one Barney Coyle, a distiller of whiskey. The combatants are said to have been very determined, but ineffective, in their efforts to kill each other; they discharged four brace of pistols without result. Sir Hardinge Gifford, Chief Inspector of Ceylon, had a meeting with Harvey Bagenal, who was known subsequently as a rebel leader, by whom he was wounded. The eminent Grattan, leader of the Irish House of Commons, was also a duellist of note. He fought with and wounded the Hon. Isaac Corry, Chancellor of the Exchequer, for an alleged insult spoken during a debate on the Union. The Provost of Trinity College—that fountain-head of all the peaceful arts—was "out" with a Master in Chancery, whom he wounded, and his son, amenable to the parental example, had a hostile meeting with Lord Mountmorris.

Curiously enough, duelling was more generally practised during the continuance of the reformed Irish Parliament—from 1782 to 1800. As many as three hundred duels are said to have been fought by prominent personages within that period. Duelling clubs were established, to which no man could obtain admittance who could not show that he had exchanged a shot

or thrust with some antagonist. And it sometimes happened, as may be readily imagined, that the valour of the most confident challenger oozed out at his finger-ends before the firm front of the party challenged.

An occurrence that happened in February, 1783, is a case in point. A Member of Parliament, wearing the uniform of the Roscommon Volunteers, was assailed in a public room by a person with whom he was engaged in litigation, and for that reason he did not notice his assailant. His forbearance was misinterpreted by a young subaltern in the army who was present. Indignant at the supposed poltroonery of a gentleman wearing a military uniform, this impulsive youth snatched off the hat worn by the volunteer officer, tore the cockade from it, and trampled it under foot. As a matter of course, a challenge was the result, but the originator of the dispute soon learned that his antagonist bore the reputation of a daring and skilled duellist, and he lost no time in tendering an apology. But such a settlement of the quarrel would only be accepted on condition that atonement should be made for the insult in the same place where it was given, and under like circumstances. Accordingly the over-bumptious party was compelled to humbly beseech the pardon of the gentleman he had insulted in public, replace by another the cockade he had torn from his hat, and declare his conviction that his antagonist was well worthy of wearing it.

At this time, too, there were in Dublin men—who were supposed to be gentlemen—who seemed to have no other aim in life than to annoy and provoke their fellow-men into armed conflict. They were, in fact, reckless rowdies, whose exploits would nowadays earn for them, if not the reward of the halter, at least ensure them a long spell of degrading imprisonment. "Fighting" Fitzgerald was one of them. He made it a practice to stand in the middle of a narrow crossing in a dirty street, so that every passenger should either step into the mud or jostle him in passing, in which case the offending party was promptly challenged to fight. Another was Pat Power, of Donagie. He was a furious fire-eater, but an amusing character withal. He was rough of exterior, had small regard to his dress or personal appearance, and was possessed, besides, of a most mellifluous brogue. These peculiarities, while travelling in England, made him the object of

some practical jokes, which, however, rather recoiled on those designing them. For instance, on one occasion when seated in a tavern, a group of "bucks" of the period honoured him with their regards. They sent the waiter to him with a gold watch belonging to one of them, with the request that he would tell the time by it. Power calmly took possession of the watch, sent his servant to fetch his pistols, and, with one under each arm, approached his would-be tormentors, and politely requested to be introduced to the owner of the watch. The request was received in silence. He then put the watch in his pocket, declaring that he would keep it safe till called for, at the same time stating his name and where he was to be found, should the owner desire its return. It was not claimed. On another occasion, under similar circumstances, a waiter was sent to him with a plate of potatoes, which he ate with apparent relish. Then ascertaining from the attendant to whom he was indebted for the repast, he caused his servant to bring in two covered dishes, one of which was placed before the gentleman in question, and the other on the table at which he sat. The covers were removed, and under each a loaded pistol was seen. Power, taking up his weapon, cocked it, and invited his volunteer entertainer to do likewise, assuring that gentleman that, if he killed him, he was perfectly ready to give satisfaction to the friend who sat beside him. Needless to say, the practical joker declined the invitation. Another ferocious ruffian was Mr. Bryan Maguire. He had been in the army, and his favourite pastime was shoving peaceful people off the footways, and insulting passers-by from the windows of his dwelling-house, in the hope of inciting some of them to challenge him to fight. He was, however, rather farcical in his ferocity, seeing that he always kept his pistols within reach for use on every possible occasion. When he wanted to summon a servant, "to keep his hand in," he did so by firing at the bell-handle.

During all this time the laws against duelling were in effect a dead letter. Indeed, it would have been foolish to have put them in force, for judges, jurors, and advocates were all duellists, who were not ashamed to own the impeachment.

The custom, however, from the early part of the present century began gradually to fall into desuetude, and may be now said to be altogether extinct. We still hear sometimes of a challenge having been

sent from one gentleman to another, but the expected fight does not follow. For example, the O'Donoghue, an Irish Member of Parliament, a few years ago felt so bitterly aggrieved at being referred to by the present Sir Robert Peel as a "mannikin traitor"—a singularly inappropriate description, seeing that the "mannikin" mentioned stands some six feet odd in his boots—that he sent a challenge to the honourable baronet, who had the good sense to bring the matter under the notice of the Speaker of the House, and the O'Donoghue was not only balked of the "satisfaction" he sought, but had to apologise as well. A similar result still later attended the attempt of Mr. O'Kelly, an Irish member, to provoke Mr. M'Coan, another Irish member, to fight a duel—the professed "fire-eater" had to eat his words, and withdraw his challenge, which it is not uncharitable to believe would not have been sent had there been the remotest possibility that it would be accepted.

Society certainly is no worse for the extinction of duelling, more especially as with it has departed the unrestrained license of coarse speech and freedom of manner which, as a rule, occasioned the quarrels that were held to be only satisfactorily adjusted by conflicts with deadly weapons.

VICTIMS.

BY THEO GIFT.

Author of "Lili Lorimer," "An Alibi and its Prior,"
Etc., Etc.

CHAPTER IX. VERA GOES FOR RUSHES.

IF Messrs. Marstland and Burt had only had their house-boat brought down the river for a day or two to suit the latter's convenience, the fact of finding mutual friends settled at Weybridge decided them very soon on prolonging their stay near that pretty village for an indefinite period; and certainly they were far too great an acquisition to the society at Rose Villa for the inmates of that pleasant abode not to do their utmost to retain them. Indeed, as Naomi said, they could not even be considered as an extra tax on her powers of chaperonage, seeing that Burt, being married and mediæval, was almost as good as a woman, while as for dear old George Marstland, he was such an old friend and good, steady fellow, that he might be trusted with the girls anywhere like a brother.

Perhaps it was for this reason that,

though Mr. and Mrs. Josephs had returned from Dublin and reclaimed their younger boys, Leah and Vera yielded to the hospitable entreaties of the Lucases, and agreed to remain at the riverside villa a little longer.

"Unless you would rather go home, dear," Leah had said to her friend. "It shall be just as you like, for you know I can stay with Naomi whenever I please; so if you would prefer to be back in London with the father and mother and me——"

"Only the children would not be there," put in Vera. "I do like your home and your father and mother very much, Leah, better even than this, and—and Mr. Lucas" (she was too polite to add Naomi), "but I can't bear the idea of leaving those dear little children; and you wouldn't like to go either, would you, just as your nice friend, Dr. Marstland, has come?"

A very slight flush came into Leah's cheek. Vera's phrase, "your friend", though scarcely conventional, gave her a curious feeling of pleasure keen enough to prevent her correcting it, and she only said laughingly:

"You do think him 'nice' now, then, Vera?"

"Oh yes; he is so bright and amusing, though I think his voice and eyes are very startling all the same, and I can't help feeling that if he were ever to be angry he would be very terrible. Indeed, I can't imagine anyone daring to make him so, can you?"

"Very easily," said Leah with some amusement. "Why, Vera, I've made him dreadfully angry lots of times, and I didn't find him very terrible even then."

"Ah, that is because you are as bright and clever as he is; and, besides, he could not be really angry with you. It would only be play-anger, like when he growls at Alix, and she screams, but clings to him all the tighter."

Leah shook her head — not ill-pleased, however.

"Wait till you witness our next battle, and see if you call it play then. But I am glad that my prediction was a true one, and that you don't dislike him as you pretended you were going to do."

"I didn't pretend. You know it was only that stupid mistake of mine made me say so; and as I have forgiven him for not wanting to be introduced to me, I think you might forgive me that."

"I have never admitted that he didn't want it," said Leah; "and if he did, it

was only because you would put on that horrible dress, and I am sure he has sufficiently repented himself of it since."

For Dr. Marstland had lost no time in making a full and frank recantation to Leah of his low opinion of her friend.

"You were quite right," he said. "She is a sweet little thing—the prettiest mixture of confidingness, timidity, and little prim ways that I ever saw; and those soft grey eyes, which seem always appealing to you not to take her in, or be cross to her, are very bewitching. I wonder if they ever looked cross themselves."

"I never saw them do so," said Leah, "and I hope no one would take her in. It would be only too easy to do so, considering how guileless she is."

"Guileless! Alix is a hardened coquette, and new-born lambs not in it beside her. She might have dropped out of some other planet, or been shut up in a convent all her life, for all the knowledge she has of the world in general; and as to an opinion of her own on any of the topics which even young ladies are given to discussing, if her mind was the whitest sheet of paper ever made it couldn't be more unsecured by one."

"You have studied her, I see," said Leah, smiling gravely; "but do you mean that last remark for a compliment? I shouldn't take it as one."

Marstland flushed rather hotly.

"Undoubtedly I do. I spoke of her mind as being like a sheet of white paper, not a bag of pulp! You can write anything you like on paper, the wisest things and the most beautiful, and it will retain them. You can't write anything on pulp; and, though, of course, this is a very wonderful age for march of intellect and culture, and all that sort of thing, I must own that, if I had anything to do with a girl personally, I should like her to have some corner of her mind not so entirely filled up with her own opinions and prejudices that I could not have the pleasure of planting there some of mine."

"Frank, at any rate, and truly like a man!" said Leah, laughing; "though hardly, perhaps, the man who used so often to come bothering Naomi and me to advise him, and make up his mind for him, in old days." Then, as Marstland was going to make some eager protest: "No, don't pay me any compliments; I was not fishing for them, unless indeed——"

"Unless what?"

"I was only going to say, unless you would take my advice now."

"Now, or any time. I have never had a better adviser, and never wish for one. What is it?"

"Not to write anything on this sheet of white paper we are speaking of that its parents and owners would not approve of. Vera is so happy here, it would be hard if she were never let come to stay with us again."

The young man looked at her in some astonishment.

"Is thy servant a dog, that thou should'st ask him this thing?" he said. "Or what are these parents and owners like for such an idea to be possible?"

"Not like you or me," answered Leah, and then blushed a scorching blush at the innocent juxtaposition of the pronouns. Fortunately Marstland did not notice it. "Nor, I should think, like the generality of Breton gentry. They are very lofty gentlefolk, of course. Indeed, though not particularly well off—rather the reverse, indeed—and though the father is a surly, lowering sort of man, who potters about his farm all day, dressed in the shabbiest of clothes, I know that he comes of a very good old family, expects the slightest word from his lips to be received with the abject submission of the laws of the Medes and Persians, and would rather perish than allow his wife or daughter to associate with the wealthy bourgeois of Quimper or Pont l'Abbé. Indeed, they lead the most utterly isolated life."

"But the mother—she is English, isn't she?"

"Yes; but she is more a mystery to me than her husband, though not an interesting one; devoted to her daughter, but not demonstrative even to her, and curiously narrow-minded, timid, and uncommunicative towards the rest of the world—the most timid woman I ever saw, and more exclusive even than M. St. Laurent. Vera was not allowed half as much vulgar liberty as a young Duchess or a Princess of the blood royal, and has been so entirely occupied all her life in learning the commandment, 'Thou shalt not do this or that,' that I don't think she has even begun to learn what she may do. Of course I don't pretend to know much about the ways and habits of the English upper-upper-ten," said Leah, with so frank and sweet a smile that it would have made any protest an impertinence. "And perhaps my being of a different race altogether would make me more unfit to pronounce on them. They must always be different

from me; but my feeling at Les Châtaigniers always was that I was living in a glass house among glass people. One was afraid to move or speak, lest one should break something."

"And such excessive brittleness does not suggest solidity, I see," said Marstland slowly. "However, the names of the upper ten are well enough known. Who was madame before her marriage?"

"I don't know. She never once alluded to her own family."

"But hasn't Miss St. Laurent any relations in England?"

"She thinks not. You will hardly believe it, but she does not even know her own mother's maiden-name. She told me she asked her the question once when she was a little girl, but was rebuked so severely for vulgar inquisitiveness, she never even thought of repeating it. I must say I couldn't see the sin myself, though I didn't tell her so, for Vera's simplicity has provided her with a very happy creed. Whatever her elders say is right. It never occurs to her to question it."

Marstland gave his mouth a comical twist.

"It seems to me your mystery is easy enough to read, especially by the light of certain very funny little ways and expressions which, I may tell you—who, let me remind your modesty, belong to the oldest and most aristocratically exclusive commonwealth in the world—have occasionally startled me in a young lady who was supposed to hail from the 'vieille noblesse'. 'Upper - upper - ten people,' my dear Leah, don't sit on the extreme edge of their chairs, or use the name of the person they are speaking to at every second word, or talk of 'ungentel conduct', of someone being 'quite the lady', or an objection to 'peruse anything that is not quite nice'. If Miss St. Laurent has never known any other society than her mother's, depend on it, monsieur made a foolish marriage some years ago, and robbed his mother of her lady's-maid. Some of the French 'grandes dames' affect English maids as ours do French ones; and had madame been a peasant girl she would have had too much of nature's dignity to be ashamed of her antecedents, especially before her own daughter. Anyhow, the latter is charming enough in spite of her. And now, to turn to something else, mind, Leah, neither you nor Naomi dare to bring a crumb of anything with you to-morrow. If you can't trust yourselves to the resources of male hospitality for a picnic you ought

to do so, especially as I am ready to vow and declare that the butcher who supplies the meat shall have had his certificate, signed by the Chief Rabbi himself, if required, and that the pastry shall have no lard in it. The Talmud doesn't say anything about chocolate-creams and other sweets, does it?"

"Dr. Marstland, you are too bad altogether," said Leah. But she could not help smiling at him at the same time, and Marstland knew she was not offended.

The subject in question was a picnic which he and Burt were getting up on board their house-boat for the morrow. The Lucases, with Leah and Vera, were to be there, and one or two other friends, and they were to have luncheon on board the boat first, followed by a row up the river for those who liked it, and fishing for those who didn't; to wind up with tea, music, and cigars—a "smoking concert", as Marstland put it, till the moon was high enough to light the party home.

The programme sounded well, and, what was, perhaps, more wonderful, it went off still better. For one thing the day was perfect, not too hot—despite all that the poets and romancers say, it seldom is too hot on the Thames in late August; while a slight shower or two, which fell in the morning, had just sufficed to make the brilliant sunshine afterwards more enjoyable, freshen the somewhat fading verdure of the banks, and lend an exquisite blueness to the distance, and crispness to the lights and shadows, which would have made the most commonplace scenery charming.

The house-boat, too, presented a very inviting appearance. It was a large one, and by no means uncomfortably furnished, Marstland having a private fortune of his own and a very good idea of using it. What with pots and baskets of flowers, which he had scoured the country to procure, and which, suspended from every point of the roof-eaves, reflected their glowing colours in the water below; what with snowy muslin-curtains looped back by red ribands to the tiny windows, and long American and low basket-chairs scattered about the snowy upper deck; what with Mr. Burt's series of Thames-side Sketches displayed for the art-lovers, baskets of fruit and sweetmeats for the young ladies, unlimited cigars for the gentlemen, and iced claret-cup, illustrated papers and magazines for everybody, the aspect of this floating home excited such general admiration that

Miss James, an enthusiastic young lady in æsthetic attire, who, with her father and brother, formed Burt's contingent to the party, declared she should like nothing better than to live in it for ever and ever. Marstland promptly responded by entreating her to become its mistress from that moment; and Vera stared at them both with great, wide-opened eyes, wondering if this was really a proposal, and, if so, how he could have the heart to make it in Leah's very presence, and she to listen with such smiling unconcern. She decided that poor Dolly James was a very bold young lady, and shuddered to think what mamma would have said of her had she been there.

But though Vera herself said less, perhaps, in the way of admiration and pleasure than any of the rest of the party, it may be doubted if she did not feel more of both than all the rest of them put together. To her, after the almost conventual seclusion, the narrowness and repression of anything like youthful gaiety or freedom in her past life; after the bleak, wind-swept moors, the grey rocks and boisterous seas of Finisterre; all this gaiety and brightness, this smiling river flowing between its low green shores, and dotted with innumerable gaily-painted craft, bonny girl-faces and white-flannelled youths, this banter and repartee, freedom and friendliness on every side, seemed more like some dream of fairyland than anything real or tangible. Indeed she almost dreaded to speak or move lest she should wake suddenly from it, and find herself back under the grey, gnarled apple-trees in the orchard, or gazing out from the high window of her bare little room over the long, flat colza-fields which stretched away to the grey "dunes" and dark sea-line of St. Tryphine.

Some girls might have disturbed themselves by wonderings whether it was not wrong to shrink so terribly from the idea of going back to their own home and the parents in whom their life had hitherto centred; but Vera was not of an introspective nature, and had been as little trained to mental examination as to home tenderness. The mere prospect of that old dull life, the solitary walks, the aimless monotony of reading and practising, the uninteresting conversations between her mother and Joanna on nothing more exciting than domestic worries and economies—worse than all, the dreary evenings with those three grave, middle-aged faces bent over the whist or bézique table, chilled and depressed her, and as she stood alone at

the bow-end of the boat, to which she had wandered through the door leading out at that end of the cabin, her heart sank so low that something like tears glittered in her eyes and dimmed the beauty of the scene before her. They might have fallen in another moment but for an interruption.

"Miss St. Laurent," said George Marstland's hearty voice at her shoulder, "what is the matter? Have you quarrelled with the world, or has the world quarrelled with you, that you are standing here all alone and forlorn?"

Tea was over, and the rest of the party, to whom the arrival from town of Albert Lucas had just imparted a little fresh excitement, were enjoying themselves in pleasantly lazy fashion at the other end of the boat. Captain James, a retired old naval officer, Lucas himself with his little Alix on his knee, and Naomi leaning comfortably back in a long chair, made a group by themselves on the upper deck; while in the cabin Dolly James, perched on the table with her lap full of Burt's sketches, listened with enthusiastic interest to the explanations of them, which he was imparting to her with perhaps more low-toned fervour than Mrs. Burt would have altogether approved of, had she been there. Beyond the cabin, on the little open space at the stern, sat Leah Josephs, making a pretty picture as seen through the doorway, with her dark hair, delicate features, and pale pink boating-costume all lit up by the last rays of the setting sun, and her slender hands busy with some sheets of loose music, from which young James, reclining at her feet with his violin across his knees, was entreating her to select something to sing. Little Benjy stood near her, fishing solemnly still, and shouting to his friend the doctor to come and help with his line; and Leah herself had appealed to the same gentleman a moment before to assist in the selection of her song; but Marstland had not quite answered to the expectation of either.

"One moment, Benjy, lad. Sing? Oh, sing whatever you like best yourself, Leah. You're sure to do it better than anyone else could," he had said heartily enough.

But he did not stay, only cast an enquiring glance round, and passed through to the other end of the boat, whither he fancied he had seen a little figure retreat a few moments before.

As host, it was of course his duty to see that no one was neglected, the greatest stranger least of all; but in truth Vera's soft eyes and liquid voice had awakened

an interest in him to which Leah's sketch of her home and up-bringing had added a touch of compassionate tenderness; and now, as she looked up at him with the timid flush and start which almost made him wish she were younger, that he might stoop down as he would to Alix, and reassure her with a kiss, he saw that her eyes were moist. Yet she answered him smiling:

"I am not forlorn. I was only thinking."

"What about? It is very rude to think at picnics, you know."

"Is it really?" But his laugh answered her, and she went on: "I only came here to look at the sunset-colour on the water; and then I wondered what sort of an evening it was at St. Tryphine, and got thinking of home."

"And wishing yourself back there and away from all of us? That is too bad of you, Miss St. Laurent, when we all want so much to make you happy here. I shall tell Leah."

"Oh no; please don't! Indeed, I was not wishing that;" but, though she blushed crimson, she could not own how different her thoughts had been, and, to prevent his asking her, added hurriedly: "I had been wishing a few minutes back that I had been able to get some of those feathery reeds we passed on our way up the river. Leah was wanting some the other day, and I saw quite a number on the little islet just beyond that bend of the river there."

"Did you? Why not get them now, then?"

"Now? But I could not—could I?"

"Why not? Nothing easier. Here is the dingy," pointing to the little boat which was rocking on the water at her feet, "and here am I ready to pull you to your island in a dozen strokes and cut as many rushes as you please. Get in." But Vera protested very honestly and with crimson cheeks against such a notion. She had not thought of it for a moment. She would not dream of letting him take so much trouble; and it was only when he assured her it would be a pleasure, not a trouble, adding jestingly, "Besides, you forget; it is not for you, but for Leah," that she yielded, and said quite simply:

"Ah, so it will be, and you will like that. But I must ask leave first."

"Leave? Nonsense! Why should you?"

"Oh, but I must, please. I never do anything unless I am told I may;" and with a mild kind of persistence which amused by its contrast to her usual ductility she passed through the cabin, and going to Leah's side, asked: "Leah, might

I get some rushes with Dr. Marstrand? He says he will cut some for me. May he?"

Leah looked up at her, colouring in a way Vera did not at all understand. She understood, of course—knew that it was the very simplicity of long tutelage which merely led Vera to transfer the maternal authority which usually guided her to the friend to whom her mother had entrusted her; but she also knew and realised keenly that no one else present would believe in such a spirit of childish docility in one grown-up girl to another; and that the request must seem to bear some special application to her own feelings or rights over the person alluded to. For once she spoke almost sharply:

"May you, Vera! Why, of course. Why do you ask me? Aren't we all amusing ourselves as we please? Mr. James, this is the song I meant. Now, will you try over the air first, and then I'll begin."

Vera went away satisfied. She had "got leave", and next moment had stepped into the tiny boat in which Marstrand was standing up waiting to put her in the seat and give her the tiller-ropes. That done, he took the sculls, and pulled out into the stream.

For the first two or three minutes neither of them spoke. It was getting late. The hundred and one craft that had dotted the river earlier in the day, the big steam-launches puffing clouds of smoke and raising great waves on its glassy surface, the swift four-oars, and deftly-paddled canoes, were gone now; and the sun had set behind a light bank of vapour, leaving sky and stream suffused with a delicate rosy glow. A few silvery clouds floated softly across this haze of rose above, while the dip, dip of the oars, or the splash and spring of a moorhen sent showers of silver from the rosy bath below. It was all an enchanted dream of rose and silver—silver and rose. Even the stately swans sailed by under the shadow of the woods with rose-flushed plumage and beaks tipped with argent; even the bending willow-trees took a roseate tinge, and tossed their thin grey leaves, silver-lined, against the blushing sky. There was no other boat—no other human being in sight. They seemed, in their white clothes, like two silvery figures gliding through a mist of crimson glory, and Vera's heart so swelled with delight that it was some minutes before she could even breathe out:

"Oh, how lovely it is! Too lovely to be real."

Marstrand had been looking at her more than the scene, wondering he had never thought her lovely before; wondering if she had ever looked as much so as at that moment; her delicate figure in its simple gown of white serge, her pure child-face with its exquisite oval of cheek and chin, its softly-parted lips and tender eyes, her slender, helpless hands, and the little knitted *bérêt* (Leah's gift) made of white wool and pressed down over those soft, ruddy locks. Something rose in his throat—something foolish and impetuous; but he choked it down, and only answered coolly:

"You like it?"

"Oh, it is like floating through Paradise. One would like to go on for ever."

"Then let us go a little farther at present. It is prettier beyond the islet here, and we can get the rushes coming back."

Vera assented eagerly, but then he thought herself.

"If you will not be tired?"

"Tired! I! What can you think of my muscles? I am as strong as King Comorre himself."

Vera laughed a little.

"I do not know about his strength; but you are not as bad—I am sure of that."

"How can you tell?"

The girl's colour rose.

"I—I don't think you would be Leah's friend if you were, or that Benjy and Alix would be so fond of you."

"If Alix and Benjy's fondness is a test of virtue, how good you must be!" he said, laughing, but pleased. "Well, I hope I am not as bad as King Comorre. I haven't murdered five wives yet. The worst of me is, as my people would tell you, that I have been too selfish hitherto to earn one."

Vera's face said she did not comprehend, so he went on:

"You see, the fact is, I'm rather handicapped in life. I belong to the profession I prefer to any other, and I have money enough of my own not to need to make more by it. Ergo, as yet I haven't made more. I have revelled in sick-rooms, certainly; but they were of the really sick poor, wanting food to fill their stomachs as much as medicine to heal their pains—not of sham invalids in luxurious chambers; and I have triumphed in two or three successful operations, but on wretched crossing-sweepers, run over by some passing dray, or penniless maids-of-all-work, maimed before they were women by incessant over-work; not on fashionable

patients with large fees and abstruse, pleasure-induced diseases. That's all very well for a bachelor, and my own income has kept me very comfortably, and helped me to keep a good many of these poor wretches without more; but, as my sister, Lady Hessey, said when she persuaded me to go in for a share in this West End practice I've just bought, it wouldn't keep a wife as well, and a wife wouldn't stand it if it would."

"Leah would, I am sure," said Vera quickly. "She is fond of poor people, too. She was always going into the peasants' houses at St. Tryphine, and talking to and helping them. I did not. Mamma does not think it quite nice for me, but I often wished I might when I saw her. The people looked out for Leah, and smiled when they saw her. They used to say Dr. Dupré neglected them for the rich people. I am certain she would think your way much the nobler, and she would help you beautifully."

It was a long speech for Vera, and perhaps fortunately so, for it gave Marstland time to recover from the start and stare of undisguised amazement with which he received her first words. He said rather abruptly:

"Leah and her family have often helped me. They are all excellent friends to the poor—their own poor especially. But why should you single her out as if——" he stopped short, and laughed with some embarrassment. Vera looked more embarrassed still.

"Was I wrong? I beg your pardon," she stammered humbly; "but I forgot—I mean when you were talking of a wife I—I fancied you were naturally thinking of Leah."

It was Marstland's turn to colour.

"Why 'naturally'?" he said sharply. "You did not think we were in love with one another, did you? Surely no one has said——"

"Oh no, no!" cried Vera in great distress; "no one—nobody. It was only that I thought—I took it for granted you—indeed, I am very sorry, but I did not think you could help it."

"Help what? Falling in love with Leah? Well, perhaps I couldn't, if such a thought had ever entered my mind. As it is, it is fortunate for me that it didn't, for I am sure it would never have entered hers, and I like Leah Josephs too well, I respect her too heartily, to risk losing her

friendship by posturing before her as a rejected suitor. Surely, Miss St. Laurent, you are not cruel enough to wish to see me in that humiliating rôle?"

"Oh no," Vera began, but stopped short, blushing vehemently.

How could she tell this chestnut-haired, strong-limbed man, with the bright, keen eyes and dominant voice, that no idea of anyone rejecting him had occurred to her mind? Even to her simplicity this would have been, in her mother's and Joanna's phraseology (which reversed the usual acceptance of the phrase) "rather particular", not to say unseemly.

"I am afraid I have been very silly and—and rude, too," she said falteringly; "but somehow I fancied—— I do love Leah so."

"That you fancied no one worth calling her friend could help loving her too! Well, Miss St. Laurent, I thank you for the compliment, for I know it is one from you; and you are right. As a friend, as a sister, if you like, I love and honour Leah Josephs as well as you do. That we have never even thought of one another in any other way is natural enough, too, if you come to think of it. For one thing, she is a Jewess and I a Christian."

"Yes; but oh, surely—— would that matter?" Vera stammered, beginning to feel pitiful over both as martyrs to their religion.

"I am inclined to think that if one loved a woman and was loved by her in your sense of the word, nothing would 'matter'; but in the opposite case I do believe in race-differences as making a bar to the idea of marriage. I hope Leah and Leah's husband when she marries will be my friends to the end of our joint lives; but I am nearly as certain that that husband will be a Hebrew as that my wife—if I ever get one—will be a Christian. She is immensely loyal to her people. It is one of the finest traits in her."

"Only"—Vera spoke wistfully, almost sadly; the idea of Leah wasted on an Albert Lucas or a young Rosenberg seemed terrible to her—"I cannot imagine how any man who knows her could like even the very nicest Christian girl better."

"Cannot you?" said Marstland, smiling. He bent down over his oars so as to look into her face, the sweet, pale young face so unconscious of its own tender charm, so spiritual-looking in the fading rose-light, the silvery shadows of the evening. "Somehow—just now—I think I can!"

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PRICE TWOPENCE

A STERN CHASE.

A STORY IN THREE PARTS.

BY MRS. CASHEL HOEY.

THE THIRD PART.

CHAPTER VIII. CLEARING THE WAY.

A DINNER-PARTY had taken place at The Quinces under particularly auspicious circumstances to the minds of all concerned, with the exception of Julian Courtland. The pleasant excitement of a declaration and an engagement is irresistible to all womanly women, and although the engagement of Julian and Dolores was deprived by the long-standing intimacy of the two households of many of the usual features of similar occurrences, it fluttered everybody in an agreeable manner. Even Mrs. Courtland, when she saw how profound was the satisfaction which the Colonel and Lilius derived from the event, took a more cheerful view of it than she would have expected herself to take.

Mrs. Courtland liked Dolores very much, but she did not adore her, and although she did not like Julian, and entertained a vague distrust of him, this was chiefly because he fell so much more short of the Colonel's expectations than the Colonel would acknowledge, and she could ill bear anything that troubled her husband.

"He is the best of men," she would say to herself; "and in some things the wisest; but he makes the practical mistake of believing everybody else to be as good as himself, and one can't ward off disappointment from that sort of disposition."

She would have chosen differently for Dolores, if she might have had the ordering of her fate; but when she was told what had happened, she was able, without altogether sacrificing sincerity, to congratulate those concerned, and she summed

up the matter in a sensible way, by reflecting upon the exceeding good fortune of Julian, and the probability that he would prove aware of it. Dolores would have her trials, no doubt, and the dream of Lilius that unsullied happiness was to be the privilege of this one among the daughters of men, would be dispelled; nevertheless, the young people would start in life with such large advantages, that the chances were greatly in their favour.

Whatever Mrs. Courtland suspected Julian of, it was not insincerity about Dolores. There is love and love: he was not a man to feel the sublime and self-forgetting sort, but that he cared for the lovely girl in whose heart he had held the first place from her childhood, as much as it was in him to care for anyone, she believed. Mrs. Courtland discerned that Julian's spirits were forced, and that he had occasional fits of absence of mind, even while Effie Wharton was indulging him with the music that his soul loved; but she ascribed both of these variations from the mood becoming to a happy lover in the first flush of his triumph, to some scrape, and also to Julian's knowledge that in the general clearing-up of affairs which his marriage with a young lady of fortune must bring about, the proverbial bad quarter of an hour would have to be faced.

The satisfaction of Lilius and Colonel Courtland was perfect and unmixed. It had been agreed between them that the news of the engagement was to be imparted to Rodney and Captain Wharton, because it would necessarily influence the nature of the communication which would have to be made to the persons to whom Rodney proposed to apply for information respecting the De Rodas family. It had also been agreed that nothing should be

said to either Julian or Dolores concerning the facts of which Rodney had apprised Liliás, until a further consultation between the elders had taken place.

During the evening, Julian observed Rodney closely but covertly. He was puzzled by Mr. Wyndham's words—"That man means mischief"—although he had acted upon the peremptory command which accompanied them. He had deliberately abstained from communicating with Wyndham; he wanted time to think; he was now hopelessly committed. His evil genius had had his way, but there was something to be done which must be well considered, and he would let Wyndham wait for intelligence. He had even a petty pleasure in this little bit of futile free-will. His thoughts had, however, helped him to no conclusion up to the hour at which he had to start for The Quinces; the thing that had to be done was none the less imperative and difficult.

Never had Julian been paid a larger instalment of the wages of sin than on the day which succeeded his lying declaration of love to Dolores; the day which saw him in full assurance of fortune, and freedom from the yoke of his evil genius; the day which passed as the hours of the earthly paradise of old to the innocent, deluded girl who was watching and waiting for him, in wonderment at her own happiness. He arrived at The Quinces a little earlier than Rodney and the Whartons, had a few minutes alone with Dolores, and afterwards received the gravely affectionate greeting of Liliás, and the heartfelt congratulations of Colonel Courtland with a perfectly good grace. Mrs. Courtland did not make her appearance in the drawing-room until the whole party was assembled, and it was only by a smile and an expressive glance towards Dolores that she signified her sentiments. Julian was very glad of this; it was easy work for him to pretend, and, in ordinary circumstances, he rather liked it, but he never did it so well when Mrs. Courtland was present.

Nothing occurred to enlighten Julian as to Mr. Wyndham's meaning respecting Rodney. The young man saw in the middle-aged one a pleasant, cultivated person, who had dropped, on the strength of a sentimental reminiscence of very old date, into the position of an old friend while he was yet a positively new acquaintance, and he admired the savoir vivre which enabled Rodney to do this, while he wondered that he should care to do it.

The Whartons interested him more than Rodney. The girl was so pretty and so bright, and she played so well! Effie was not Julian's "style" either, but her playing was, although his attention did wander from it, and the touch of foreignness about her pleased him. At intervals he threw off the oppressive thought of what he should have to do on the morrow, and then he was bright and fascinating.

Mr. Wyndham was so well pleased with Julian's report of the state of affairs, that he graciously overlooked the delay in communicating it to him. He was civil to the young man, who told his story in a sullen and grudging manner. The thing was done, the end was accomplished, and for reasons of his own it suited Mr. Wyndham to adopt a different line from that by which he had driven Julian to obedience.

"Nothing could be better, my dear fellow—nothing could be better," said Mr. Wyndham; "quite a blaze of triumph, in fact. And now the great point is to get the business over as quickly as possible. Delay is proverbially dangerous, and in this case it would be particularly foolish."

"You don't want me to marry the girl next week, do you?" asked Julian with a short aggressive laugh.

"No, no; not next week. There will be the matter of settlements, and, by the way, you and I had better have a preliminary look into it, so that when it comes on for discussion you may know exactly what you mean to have done. Everything of the sort takes time, but you must press for as speedy a marriage as possible."

"Why? If the thing's secure, Dolores won't throw me over, depend upon it. Poor child!"

Julian's tone, though affectedly light, had a suggestion of remorse in it which Mr. Wyndham did not like. He could understand and deal with the young man's hesitation and reluctance on his own account, but that he should shrink from the position on account of Dolores, or be troubled by a thought of wrong to her, was a troublesome development of misplaced sentiment, and needed to be checked.

"Poor child! Why, she's absurdly in love with you, and I don't suppose you mean to illuse her. To go back to your question—Why? The answer is simple: I want my money, Courtland, as soon as you can let me have it."

He said this in the easiest way, but it made more impression on Julian in his

present mood than a threat would have made.

"And I want you to have it," said the young man with sudden bitterness; "I want to be done with it all. I wish I could marry the girl to-morrow, and pay you down on the nail. But what's the good of driving me? It is for them to fix the time, not for me. I don't suppose they've ever thought about it yet."

"Then the idea must be suggested. What about these American people? Are they going to be in London for long?"

"Only for the season. I heard Miss Wharton talking to Dolores about some place in Scotland they are going to in August."

"Have the girls taken to each other?"

"Very much."

"Then there's your opportunity. Appeal to sentiment, and you will have Miss Merivale on your side of any question." Mr. Wyndham smiled as though permitting himself to be amused by some diverting remembrance. "And what a charming sentiment to appeal to! Old friends of your betrothed's much lamented father, accepted in that touching character as new friends of your betrothed's devoted guardian, and anxious to be present on the auspicious occasion. Eh? Don't you see? Bridesmaid, and all that sort of thing! Why, it's what pious people would call quite providential. You have only to be properly pressing, to drop a hint to the two girls, and the whole business may be comfortably got over by the end of July."

"What do you mean by the whole business? You surely don't suppose I shall be able to lay my hands upon the money from the start?"

"I suppose that you will be in a position to enable me to lay my hands upon it, which is my look-out. I don't at all doubt that you will get hold of a good deal of ready money down. Indeed, the more I look into this matter, the more I like the look of it. Having got the chance in the way of my business, I have been making some enquiries, and I find that Miss Merivale has always lived below her income, and made very safe investments. She will be a rich woman, even after she has handed over Dr. Rosslyn's tenderly-nursed savings to your not quite so fostering care."

"My uncle will propose strict settlements, I am sure, even if Miss Merivale did not, or was not advised to do so. I know his ideas about things of that kind. There's no good in your thinking I shall

get the money to do as I like with it. If it was only Mrs. Courtland, she'd bar the way to that; but the Colonel would not allow it either."

"I don't object," said Mr. Wyndham with judicial gravity, "to your wife's money being settled on herself, and put out of your reach in the sense of making away with it. That will not interfere with your discharge of my claim, and it will be a very good thing for you both. The handling of the income is a different matter. Although nothing that law or lawyers can do can keep a woman's money from her husband if he is determined to have it, it is better to make things pleasant from the start. I don't want you to have to bully your wife out of cheques to meet certain obligations—supposing you don't get a lump sum, which is supposing the worst—if she should happen not to be of the coaxable kind, and that no one can ever tell about any woman until she has been tried with the possession of money."

"I should not bully her if you did want me to do it," said Julian, with a glance of sullen hatred at the blandly explanatory speaker.

"Oh yes, you would, Courtland, I assure you. We need not, however, discuss that contingency. If you cannot avail yourself of the sentimental tendencies of Miss Merivale, and the boundless confidence of your betrothed to get such settlements as will suit us both, I can only say you are a greater fool than I took you for." ("As if anyone could take me for a greater fool than I have been!" was Julian Courtland's mental comment on these airy words, for remorse was stirring feebly in his soul.) "As a matter of fact," continued Mr. Wyndham, "the whole thing is in Miss Rosslyn's hands, her grandfather having merely provided for the possibility of his son's, or a child of his son's, turning up within ten years of his own death, and appointing no guardian or trustee in the latter case, but simply taking it for granted that Miss Merivale would hand over the money. As it is impossible, for obvious reasons, to act on the real position of affairs, and you have to accept the guardianship fiction, you must just do the best you can for yourself, without offending anyone concerned, especially Miss Merivale. And, talking of her, your star is no longer in the ascendant there, if my eyes are to be trusted."

"What do you mean? She was never kinder to me."

"Probably not. To whom do you suppose Miss Merivale will leave her property?"

"To Miss Rosslyn; but Miss Merivale is not forty. And, besides, we need not talk of her money. We have got nothing to do with her, at least, and lucky for her."

He spoke with impatient disgust, which seemed to amuse Mr. Wyndham, who had pleasant recollections of having had a good deal to do with Miss Merivale's money, and a good deal of her money to do it with.

"Ah, to Miss Rosslyn! I should have taken your word for that before my inspection of the party at the Royal Academy; but I am by no means sure of it now. I told you the man who was with her meant mischief, and he does. Why, she was listening to him as though he were an oracle, and he was talking to her as though that were the one thing worth doing in the world."

"Mr. Rodney!" exclaimed Julian, with incredulous surprise; "he's five-and-forty, at the very least."

"What has that to do with it?"

"But one has never thought of anything of the kind in reference to Miss Merivale."

"And what has that to do with it? Of course I may be wrong; speculating on subjects of the sort is not in my line; but in one thing I'm sure I'm right. The man has gained an influence over her already, and anyone who wants to manage Miss Merivale in future, at least so long as he is about, will have to reckon with Mr. Rodney."

Confounded by the assurance with which Wyndham spoke, and impressed with the idea that he was generally right, Julian rapidly reviewed the occurrences of yesterday, in search of anything which might confirm this surprising theory.

He had, indeed, puzzled over the meaning of Wyndham's warning, but had not gone near such a solution of it as this. He was disposed only to ridicule it now; but he did not venture to do so openly, and he was conscious, too, that he had felt from the first a vague dislike of Rodney.

"I'm sure I don't care whether you are right or wrong," he said, after a pause. "If Miss Merivale's fool enough to part with her independence at her time of life, I suppose she must do it."

"Just the time of life to give a fortune-hunter his best chance," observed Mr. Wyndham, with as much scorn of the interested motives of a fortune-hunter as

though the transaction in which he and Julian were engaged had been of the purest morality.

"I don't know much about Mr. Rodney, but he's no fortune-hunter; or at least he is not a poor man scheming to marry a rich woman. They were talking yesterday about some property he has in England—some place he has not yet seen, that was left him by somebody."

"The sooner he goes to see it the better for you," said Mr. Wyndham, sticking to his point with a characteristic pertinacity much loathed by Julian, whom it always overbore and put down.

Julian made no reply. Little more was said between them, and they parted without having alluded to one subject which each knew to be in the mind of the other.

Mr. Wyndham was satisfied with the position of affairs. Julian had committed himself beyond recall, and whether he had arranged matters with Miss Denzil previously, or had to face the arranging of them now was of no consequence. He did not think she was at all likely to make a row or a scandal; he could even interrupt his complacent sneers at the general cross-purposes of those so-called "affairs of the heart" which of all the weaknesses of humanity he despised the most, with a passing regret that Miss Denzil should be "so good a sort", seeing that she had to go to the wall.

Julian made a pretence of doing some business that morning at Messrs. Vignolles and Jackson's, actually remaining in his room until business hours were over. But he was not thinking of turning over a new leaf—an intention with which his unwonted diligence caused him to be credited by the least experienced of the clerks—he was debating with himself how he was to meet or not meet Margaret Denzil; what he was to tell or not tell her; how he was to silence his conscience, or bear its reproaches; how he was to do without her love in his life, knowing that in its stead he had earned her contempt.

It was one of the most significant symptoms of Julian's moral downfall that he was not sensitive to disdain. He knew that where he was best known he was despised; he had latterly become aware that his footing in society was insecure, but he did not suffer from the knowledge. So long as he was not thoroughly found out, where detection might mean his being renounced and left to help himself by the unpleasant means of real work, he

did not much mind. All fear of this was at an end now; he would have it in his power to make his position whatever he chose; but the one for whose sake he sometimes felt he should like to be—and not only to seem—what she took him for, would hold him in utter disdain for ever as the very type of mean, unmanly falsehood. The more he thought of this the more he hated the man who had “brought him to it”, and the more he tried to relieve his pain a little by dwelling on the prospect of washing his hands of him by payment in full, and by rehearsing the form of words in which he would renounce acquaintance with Mr. Wyndham from thenceforth.

Several times during that day, and in the course of some profitable transactions—for his luck had turned again—Mr. Wyndham's thoughts were occupied with Julian Courtland; but they took a different direction. He greatly liked the looks of Dolores, and, though by no means a lady's man, he intended to be the house-friend of the future household.

It came to after office-hours, and Julian had not made up his mind how the thing that had to be done was to be done. He had not seen Margaret since the night at the play, nor had he written to her; she must be already surprised and anxious, and this was just as well. Something might occur to make the thing that had to be done easier to do; she might get angry; he might pretend to quarrel with her, and, having parted with her thus, leave her to find out the full measure of his baseness by the announcement of his marriage. In these turnings of his tormented thoughts the mere simple telling of the truth to Margaret, and throwing himself upon her mercy, had not failed to present itself to him, but he dismissed it hastily. He could not tell her the truth, he could not acknowledge the means by which he had got into Wyndham's power; and besides, if he could do this, and she were to forgive him his own past and her misery, how would she regard the treachery to Dolores, which was, perhaps, the worst deed of his life! He did homage to the woman whom he was deserting by his quick, instinctive conviction that she would look upon the woman for whom he had deserted her as the more cruelly wronged of the two. No; he had not yet devised a way of doing the thing that had to be done, but he could not do it by the way of the truth.

Evening came, and found him in the same perplexity, with added irritation and impatience. He raged and chafed under his own unusual and importunate thoughts; the touch of remorse was horribly disagreeable; that he should be forced to look at anything in his conduct or his fate with a view to its effect on other people, was as odious as it was novel. The irksomeness was almost worse than the pang of the loss of Margaret, because it was new; the other he had been reckoning with for some time. He would do nothing until after to-morrow; he must keep his head cool and his nerves steady, for he was expected at The Quinces, and he would go there bent on getting the business settled and the marriage hurried on with all a lover's alacrity.

Julian dined at his club, and afterwards went to a dance at a house in Harley Street—it was the same house at which the ball took place on the night of the great thunderstorm and of Hugh Rosslyn's death—and there he met Miss Merivale and Dolores.

The girl was radiant with loveliness and happiness. It had always been delightful to dance with Julian; it was a new kind of delight to dance with him now.

The summer sky was flooded with rosy light when he put Dolores into the carriage and bade her “Good-morning”, with a smile as gay as her own.

Dolores was on the lawn, attended by the dogs, when Julian arrived at The Quinces, and she intercepted him on his way to the house with a pretty little manifestation of petulant discontent, which would have been irresistibly flattering and delightful if Julian had been in love with her. She was very simply dressed in white; her hair was piled high upon her head, and her mother's pearl-set comb adorned it. She looked very lovely, and formerly Julian would have told her so, but his dark mind was actually full of resentment against the innocent victim of his treachery. He could not even admire her now; he hoped he should not hate her in the time to come.

“Oh, Julian,” she said, blushing beautifully, “I came out to meet you because you are going to be taken up about business, and they don't want me there; so I thought I might just see you first. Dinner is put off for an hour, and altogether it's a bore.”

“Business!” said Julian, having kissed

her hand with much grace, and a discreet recollection of the drawing-room windows. "What business can I be wanted for?"

He mentally added "so soon", and wondered whether Fate was giving his affairs a push forward for him.

Now this was precisely what fate was doing.

"I don't know. I'm not to be told until it is all settled. Indeed, I have hardly seen any of them. They seem very solemn over it."

"Any of whom?" asked Julian, startled by her words. Business, in which he was concerned, and over which people were looking solemn, had an ominous sound.

"Aunt Lillias, and the Colonel, and Mr. Rodney, and that Mr. Ritchie who dined here on Thursday."

"I did not know they were expected to-day."

"They weren't. They came out together in a hansom two hours ago, and they've all been talking ever since. You had better go in, Julian, or they will say it is my fault."

He went in, and was made acquainted with the facts that Rodney had imparted to Miss Merivale, and also with an important occurrence which had just been revealed to her and to Colonel Courtland through the instrumentality of Mr. Walter Ritchie.

When Julian Courtland left The Quinces that night, he carried with him a good deal of additional material for thought; but yet it did not crowd out or smother that question of the thing that had to be done on the morrow, and of how to do it. He was so tired that he soon fell asleep, in spite of his perplexity, and his last waking thought was not of this—it was that he would have at least one solid triumph over Mr. Wyndham.

"When I am out of his hands for good," said Julian to himself, "and when I am spending the money that he might have had to spend if his wife hadn't been so unaccountable a fool, I shall let him know that his stepdaughter was doubly an heiress; but not a word of it till then."

Julian slept till late next morning, and was hardly awake before the remembrance of the thing that had to be done came back to him. He took up his letters. One of them was from Margaret, and when, after a slight hesitation, he read it, he knew that fate had indeed been working for him. The thing was done! And fate had used the delicate hands of Effie Wharton to do it.

"When these lines reach you," wrote Margaret Denzil, "I shall have left London. I have heard what I suppose you would before long have told me yourself. I was engaged by Miss Wharton to play duets with her, and I went to the Langham Hotel yesterday for the second time. Miss Wharton told me, describing her first English dinner-party, of your engagement to Miss Rosslyn, and the happiness which it has caused to several good people who love and trust you. The narrative left nothing to be explained, or I should have asked you for an explanation in the name of my dead mother, who also loved and trusted you. The first time I went to the Langham Hotel I saw Miss Rosslyn, but I did not know that it was she. She is very beautiful, and she too loves and trusts you. Be more merciful to her than you have been to me. I am going to a friend in a foreign country, who told me to come to her if life should ever be too hard for me where my work was, and she would find work for me in a strange place."

"I wish," muttered Julian, as he looked at the reflection of his haggard face in the glass; "I wish I had the courage to cut my throat!"

AN AFRICAN ARCADIA.

FOR centuries traditions have been current as to the existence of a mysterious mountain in the centre of Eastern Equatorial Africa. Sometimes these traditions have been associated with wonderful tales of fabulous mineral wealth, at others only with fierce and unconquerable savages. Yet the mountain itself is, as it has always been, within comparatively easy reach, for it is within one hundred and eighty miles of the coast opposite Zanzibar. Upon that coast the Portuguese were settled four centuries ago, and although it is through them that we received the stories, not one of them seems ever to have attempted to reach the mountain.

Just below the third parallel south of the equator, and, as we have said, within one hundred and eighty miles of the coast, rises high above the surrounding country the immense mountain mass which is called Kilimanjaro — the name, according to Mr. H. H. Johnston, being taken from "kilima", mountain, and "njaro", a demon supposed to cause cold. By this name, however, it is only known to the people of the coast, while it is unrecognised in the interior. Thus "remote, inaccessible, silent, and

lone," it was addressed by Bayard Taylor, but "inaccessible" it is no longer, for we are about to tell of a recent journey to it.

The mountain, collectively called Kilimanjaro, consists of two grand peaks—the one, called Kibo, rising to an elevation of eighteen thousand eight hundred and eighty feet; the other, Kimawenzi, rising to sixteen thousand two hundred and fifty feet. Both peaks have their summits above the region of eternal snow, and both are the craters of extinct volcanoes.

It must have been known by repute to the Portuguese in the sixteenth century, for in that century Enciso, a Spanish pilot, speaks of it in his book of travels as "Mount Olympus". But the first European to actually discover it was the German missionary Rebmann, and that was not until 1848. Rebmann was followed by another German named Krapf, and again in 1861 by the Baron Von der Decken. Ten years later the first Englishman to reach Kilimanjaro was the Rev. Charles New, a Methodist missionary, who ascended fourteen thousand five hundred feet up the sides of Kibo, and reached the snow. New was robbed by a chief of one of the tribes of the Chaga people who inhabit the southern slopes, and died on his way back to the coast. After this the veil over Kilimanjaro dropped, not to be raised again until Mr. Joseph Thomson, in 1883, passed round the mountain on his way to Masai-Land. But Mr. Thomson, although giving a most entrancing account of the country and of the awful beauty of the snow-peaks, did not spend much time there, and only ascended to an altitude of nine thousand feet.

The name, we should mention, is variously spelt Kilima-Njaro and Kilimanjaro, and is pronounced Killymanjahro. It means, according to Mr. Joseph Thomson, "The Mountain of Greatness," but as we have said according to Mr. H. H. Johnston, "The Mountain of the Demon of Cold." Either signification seems appropriate.

In 1884, a joint committee of the British Association and the Royal Society was appointed to form an exploring expedition, for the purpose of which a fund of one thousand pounds was formed. Mr. H. H. Johnston, who had previously explored the Congo, and who is an accomplished naturalist, was appointed leader, and he left for Zanzibar in March of the same year, proceeding thence to Mombasa, and then, after the delays and vexations which seem inevitable in the formation of an

African expedition, finally started for the interior with a train of one hundred and twenty porters. He himself was the sole European member of the expedition, and combined in his own person the offices of leader, botanist, historian, trader, and taxidermist. After six months' residence among the Chaga people he returned, and having seen more of the mountain and its surroundings than any preceding traveller, his narrative may be taken as offering the most authoritative information about it.

The great attraction to naturalists of this mountain, and the main reason for the expedition, rests in the fact of such a snow-clad mass lying in the equatorial zone, and exhibiting such an extraordinary range of climates on its slopes. Perpetual snow under the equator is only elsewhere to be found in Central and South America, and isolated mountains of great height often, like oceanic islands, serve as shelter and last resting-place for peculiar types and forms of fauna and flora. Many curious features were, therefore, expected to be found on Kilimanjaro, and it was Mr. Johnston's mission to examine, to record, to collect specimens of animal and vegetable life, and to acquire as much information of a scientific character as might be possible within six months, that being the term which it was calculated the fund would cover.

The result of his observations, we may say in brief—for it is not our purpose to go into scientific details—has been to reveal a state of Nature almost equally divided in its affinities between Abyssinia and Cape Colony. Which is the progressive form, however, is an interesting problem yet to be solved. But even to the non-scientific there is something altogether wonderful in the aspect of the Kilimanjaro region. "The summits," says Mr. Johnston, "clothed with virgin snow, the upper regions bearing the humble plants of temperate climes—the heather, the hound's-tongues, the forget-me-nots, the buttercups, clematises, anemones, violets, and geraniums; the bracken, polypodies, and male-fern, that are always associated with the flora of our chilly lands; and then, descending through rich forests of tree-ferns, draccenas, and moss-living mimosas, to the vegetable wealth of the equatorial zone, to the wild bananas, the palms, the orchids, the india-rubber creepers, the aloes, and the baobabs, that are among the better known of the myriad forms of vegetation clothing the lower spurs and ramparts."

As to the fauna, Mr. Johnston found

monkeys much more abundant than on the West Coast, and among them an entirely new variety with white heavily-plumed tails. Bats were seldom seen; lions and leopards are abundant and bold, also the jackal, wild-dog, and hyena, civets and genets, but no kind of weasel or badger. The elephant inhabits Kilimanjaro to a great height, Mr. Johnston observing a herd at an altitude of thirteen thousand feet. At the base, the rhinoceros is abundant; in Lake Jipé, the hippopotamus; on the plains, vast herds of zebra, buffalo, giraffe, and many varieties of the antelope. Hartebeests are literally in myriads, and the ostrich also abounds. Such are the general features of animal and vegetable life; but there are many details of great interest and vast scientific importance which it is impossible to refer to here.

To reach this varied and remarkable region, the traveller has to undertake something like a fortnight's march through a tract of country of little interest, and for the most part devoid of water. The weary traveller, however, may be cheered by an occasional peep of the mountain giant, who seldom reveals all his grand bulk at once. Seen, as Mr. Johnston first saw it, "weird, in the early flush of dawn, with its snowy crater faintly pink against a sky of deep blue-grey, wherein the pale and faded moon was sinking," Kilimanjaro is awful in his grandeur and beauty.

Then from the sun-scorched wilderness the traveller suddenly reaches a region within the benign influence of the mountain—the area of perpetual moisture and luxuriant vegetation. Within this district is situated that Arcadian spot—Taveita—of which Mr. Thomson has given some description, and which at Mr. Johnston's hands now reveals fresh attractions. Says Mr. Johnston: "The River Lumi, which flows through Taveita, and creates all its luxuriant forest, is uninhabited by noxious creatures, such as crocodiles or leeches, and only harbours harmless fish, which are good to eat, or great, timid varanus lizards, who never interfere with one's bathing. Its water is exquisitely cool, clear, and sweet, and comes from the snows of Kilimanjaro. Here and there amid the lofty aisles of the Taveitan forest are little clearings, pretty homesteads of yellow beehive-huts, neat plots of cultivated ground, groves of emerald-green bananas, which are the habitations of the happy Arcadians who have made this tropical paradise their home."

The toils of the journey are passed when this beautiful spot is reached, but not, perhaps, all the dangers. Even in an Arcadian forest man may meet with foes, and certainly in Central Africa. Thus, in what is described as a perfect paradise of a camping-ground, occurred the following incident:

"Soon after we had retired to rest, when the men had begun to snore round their fires, wrapped up in dusky-white cloths like so many mummies, and when the leader of the caravan was curling himself snugly between the blankets, the most terrific roar you ever heard startled us all into sudden wakefulness. Though the lion that uttered it was probably forty or fifty yards distant, the sound of his thunderous bellow seemed to come from our very midst. I sat up in bed and looked uneasily around me; but nobody complained of being eaten, so I lay down again, and even began to think this very interesting and very African, full of local colour, and so on. But now, on our right and left, on either side of the river, a chorus of loud roaring began. The night was as yet pitchy dark, for the moon would not rise till the early morning. We could see nothing beyond the blaze of our cordon of fires. However, feeling that it was despicably tame to lie still in bed and go to sleep while my porters shivered with fear, I arose, took my gun, and fired into the bushes where the roaring was loudest. This, the men informed me, was the unwise thing I could do. Of course, I killed nothing, and the noise of the firearm, instead of awing the lions into silence, only seemed to exasperate them. I certainly never heard anything like the noise they made. My men averred that we were surrounded by ten beasts—I suppose they distinguished ten different roarings. Certainly, the next morning, when we examined the precincts of our camp, the many footprints, of different sizes, which were marked in the soft vegetable soil of the surrounding woodland and in the red soil of the river-bank, indicated unquestionably that a whole troop of lions had been in our immediate vicinity during the night. I noticed a curious fact connected with the unseen approach of these beasts. Whenever a lion was nearing our camp, and before he attested his vicinity by a roar, we were, when we had learned to read the warning, made aware of the fact by the sudden nervous twittering of the small birds in the branches above. It was a tremulous diapason of fear, most singularly impressive. On several subsequent occasions the

approach of large wild beasts has been signified to me in the same manner."

Taveita is on the border of the Chaga country, which is practically the inhabited belt of Kilimanjaro. It is thus within no great distance of the little kingdom of Moshi, where Thomson had resided, and where the missionary New was robbed. Moshi is ruled over by a chief called Mandara, who, in some respects, is above the average of African kings, but who has the greed peculiar to all of them. Mr. Johnston was well received by Mandara, and, after the usual presents, he succeeded in obtaining an allotment of land on the banks of a rivulet some distance up the mountain. Here a miniature village was built for the accommodation of his followers. Gardens were planted with the seeds of European vegetables, etc., brought with the expedition, and soon there was an abundant crop of everything. Milk, horses, sheep, and bullocks were obtained from Mandara's people in exchange for beads, and a happy time followed, during which collections of animals and plants were diligently made.

But Mandara being at constant feud with all the neighbouring chiefs, Mr. Johnston was unable to ascend the mountain while living under his protection, for between Moshi and the summit are other warlike tribes, all of whom live in carefully entrenched kingdoms. To prosecute his design, therefore, Mr. Johnston had to leave Mandara, and make friends with a rival chief, who provided him with guides. Then, for a second time, the attempt was made to reach the summit.

It was only partially successful, for the Zanzibari followers were unable to sustain the fatigue and cold of the upper regions, so that our traveller was left alone for the final effort. He attained an altitude of sixteen thousand three hundred and fifteen feet—i.e., within nearly two thousand feet of the summit of Kibo—but then being caught in a mist, and after being nearly lost in a snowdrift, he had to give up the attempt to reach the awful, isolated crater. He resided, however, for some time at an altitude of ten thousand feet, in order to carry on his observations and collect specimens.

Then he descended, and proceeded by a new route to Taveita, passing through a delightful country, averaging between eight thousand and nine thousand feet above the sea, with an almost cool temperature, singularly English in look, with open, grassy spaces, and apparently made by Nature for a European settlement.

Within the region traversed there is necessarily a wide range of temperature, and an infinite variety of climates. In the low salt plains, extending between Taveita and the coast, you may be parched and scorched by the hot desert winds. In the forests of Taveita you have the unvarying moist warmth of the tropical lowlands, where the utmost range of the thermometer in the twenty-four hours will be ten or twelve degrees. But midway up the mountain there are lovely regions, mild, equable, and moist, resembling the climate of a Devonshire summer. In these parts the intense verdure and the luxuriance of fern-life "testify to the constant showers of gentle rain". In two days' climb in Kilimanjaro you may escape from a tropical atmosphere and surroundings to a lifeless wilderness of ice, rocks, and snow.

Snow is never absent from either of the twin peaks—Kibo and Kimawenzi, but on Kibo it varies almost daily in extent. After a rainy night on the lowlands, for instance, the snow may be seen down to a level of fourteen thousand feet, and a day later will have withdrawn a thousand feet or so higher. The least snow is observable in July and August, and the most in October. There is also a great deal in February and March, but the natives say this is the best time to ascend the mountain, because the mists then are not so frequent, and the cold is not so intense. It is this abundance of snow which causes the numerous rivers and streams, which render the southern slopes so fertile. No streams flow down the northern slopes.

Remembering what we have just said about the snow, it is remarkable that vegetation extends up to fifteen thousand feet. At between seven thousand and eight thousand feet tree-ferns abound, and from eight thousand feet to the snow-line giant senecios, gorgeous gladioli, many-coloured irises, and other flowers are found at a great altitude, and even between ten thousand and fourteen thousand feet some brilliant specimens were gathered. After thirteen thousand feet ferns cease, and the vegetation becomes more stunted, but at fourteen thousand feet heaths and everlasting flowers were found, which give place within the next thousand feet to lichens of several kinds. Bees and wasps were observed at thirteen thousand feet, and birds seven hundred feet higher, while the traces of buffaloes were found up to fourteen thousand feet.

As to scenery, there is infinite variety.

That of the Chaga country is described as charmingly soft and pretty, like Devonshire hills and coombes in general aspect. At six thousand feet are grassy downs of short, springy turf scattered over with clumps of splendid forest, while brilliant wild flowers abound. Looking out from his first settlement in Mandara's country, Mr. Johnston says that the beauties of the scenery never palled, never grew monotonous. The varied atmospheric changes produce kaleidoscopic effects in the landscape. Now Kibo is veiled in mist, and anon only his summit is seen gleaming out above the clouds in rosy effulgence. At noontide the vapours vanish and the velvet forest is glowing in gold-green and dusky purple shadows, with the precipices and jutting rocks of Kibo as an effective background, and so on, with constant change of afternoon and evening glories, while far below the eye rests on the sunlit plains, with the lines of forest, the winding streams, and the stretches of open pastureland spreading away in the distance.

About Lake Jipé, in the neighbouring Pará hills, the scenery too seems enchantingly lovely, wooded crags, rich valleys, emerald-green banana-groves, rippling streams, and splendid waterfalls. Here is situated the village of Gonja, which, with its clear, swift river, its splendid groves, and its luxuriant plantations, seems a second Taveita.

Again, on the descent, after scrambling through a dense, dark forest on the eastern flank, our traveller was ravished with the beauty of the scenery and the magnificence of the view from a height of eight thousand five hundred feet. "The distant valley, with its sinuous lines of green forest, the mountain mass of Ngweno, with hills and hillocks in all directions, the nearer forests, the natural lawns sloping downwards towards the cultivated zone; and, lastly, the awful, jagged, snow streaked and spotted Kimawenzi rising to the north—all were irradiated with a tender, smiling light, the very shadows of which were attenuated and softened."

The region generally seems a sportsman's paradise, for nowhere else in Africa is big game found in such abundance. The plains are covered with compact herds of antelopes, moving in squadrons, with straggling companies of zebras and giraffes, and flocks of ostriches. Rhinoceroses are so numerous that their horns are a great article of trade, and those who have read Mr. Thomson's book will remember the

extraordinary number he shot without going out of his way. But, contrary to Mr. Thomson's experience, Mr. Johnston found the neighbourhood of Kilimanjaro to abound in elephants, and the water to abound in hippopotami.

All these things are attractive not only to the sportsman but also to the trader, for they mean ivory, and skins, and feathers. As to vegetable products, there is an immense growth of fine timber; gums are produced in some parts; india-rubber can be produced from at least one creeper; coffee grows wild and would succeed admirably if planted in many districts where it is not native; orchilla-weed is found in incredible quantities; and the natives cultivate the banana, the sweet potato, the sugarcane, Indian corn, millet, and several varieties of peas and beans. Add to all this that vast herds of cattle are kept both by the mountain and the agricultural tribes (Mr. Johnston used to purchase a bullock for about the equivalent of ten shillings), that goats and sheep are abundant, and that fowls are kept by most of the tribes, and it will be seen that not only is there an abundance of flesh-meat, milk, cheese, and eggs to be obtained, but that hides and wool are possible articles of trade also. As to the fertility of the soil, it may be mentioned that Mr. Johnston's plantation at Mandara yielded him potatoes, onions, carrots, peas, tomatoes, cucumbers, melons, etc., within about three months after planting.

These are some of the features of the natural wealth of the country, and besides, Mr. Johnston says that iron-ore is found in some abundance, and copper also, while nitrate of soda covers vast plains to the south, west, and north of Kilimanjaro. The special wealth of the country, however, consists in its vegetable resources, and in its adaptability to cultivation of almost any kind. Considering all this, and the advantages of climate, Mr. Johnston is of opinion that this region between the coast and the Victoria Nyanza lake is more worth possessing and opening up than many other parts of Africa which are being run after. He is convinced that here lies a new field for commerce.

On the other hand, we find Mr. Joseph Thomson in recent lectures declaring that the commercial potentiality of East Central Africa is practically nil! Where travellers differ so much, how shall others agree? Perhaps the best way would be for a number of merchant adventurers to com-

bine and send out an exploring expedition on purely commercial lines. There seems no reason why our great commercial people should leave exploration entirely to geographers, naturalists, and missionaries.

ON BEING ON THE TOP OF THE HILL.

On the top of the hill! What thoughts are not suggested to us by the mere words!

In a moment we realise the sense of exhaustion; the while we feel a glow of success, when we think that at last we have climbed the long ascent, and stand breathless and triumphant, gazing over the landscape that unfolds itself before us, and that is a thousand times more beautiful than we had ever believed it to be. Lingered there for a little, we look round us, and wonder how we ever reached our present elevated position, even while we realise that we have to begin to descend before our day's journey is over; and we allow our eyes to stray first from this object and then to that, until the lengthening shadows, or a sudden chill in the atmosphere, reminds us that night is coming, and causes us to begin our downward task.

And although we have high authority for regarding life as a "wale", we cannot ourselves resist comparing ourselves generally with anyone who has for the moment climbed a material hill.

Once allow youth to be parted with, once recognise that there are other folks around us, grown up, whose birth we remember as if it were yesterday, and we may be quite sure we are either on our own especial summit, or are passing along downhill.

It is not often that people can realise that they have reached the highest altitude they are ever permitted to attain, until they are passing away from it, for there is invariably something in the human temperament that causes it to look forward, and that cannot understand that the zenith has been reached—aye, and been passed by—while they were still straining their utmost to obtain the unattainable.

Still, there are some who do comprehend their position, and can either gaze from it, content to know they have done well, and so can rest for a while, or else stretch out a helping hand to those still behind them; though it is not often that they find this taken by the young folk, who are all so sure they know so much better than anyone else did, and are quite positive that they will never fall into any of the

traps and pitfalls into which they often enough stumble at the very moment in which they are carefully explaining to us that no pitfall that was ever made can take them in.

Naturally, some of life's pilgrims attain but a low eminence, after all.

Either their ambitions are circumscribed, or their circumstances are such that they only wander along, scarcely conscious of climbing at all, until, their utmost being done, they sadly and unconsciously turn their backs on progress, "worsening" imperceptibly as they saunter towards the end of all things, their faces turned towards that mysterious fog and mist that, more effectual guardians of death's portal than anything more tangible could ever be, drift ceaselessly between us and the gates of another world.

Then there are undoubtedly other folk who reach the summit without any exertion on their own part—at all—who borrow the wings of the immortals, and so find themselves suddenly in the rarefied atmosphere of the hilltop, with no long life of labour to act as ballast, and enable them to keep their footing.

Sometimes the fine air acts only as an intoxicant, and causes the climber to lose his balance entirely, making him fall suddenly and swiftly into outer darkness, amid a taunting chorus, from those he passed so suddenly, of "I told you so!"

But this is not always the case. To the true genius whose feet are winged, and whose eyes are fixed on the stars, are sometimes vouchsafed a head that knows not giddiness, and a mind so simple, so child-like, that he never realises his own greatness, the while he wonders greatly why the world is so pleased with him.

Indeed, he feels inclined to gratefully thank those who discovered the excellence in his work, of which, indeed, he was hopeful, but for which he dreaded far more than he expected.

To such a one as this the top of the hill is as a very Paradise.

He drinks in the bright, fresh air that blows to him straight from the elysian fields; he looks over the earth, which invariably shows her best side to the successful man, and pronounces it to be very good: and though, at times, he may be a little lonely because so few of his own age are there with him, he so dreads disappointing his good friends the public, that he works better than ever, because there is no one there to draw him away from his

duty to those, who look to him for so much.

Imagination and fancy stand beside him; he is too high for jealousy to reach or for spite to wound; and, fortunate to the last, Fate often enough calls him away suddenly before he turns his back on the sun, and has to begin that descent which has always to be faced, and which, either as old age, or failing powers, or lessened income, can never be anything save a bitter and trying promenade.

There are others who imagine that once the hill-top is reached, they may behave there precisely as they themselves like best.

They forget how far a figure is seen against the sky-line, and take advantage of their exalted position to cast conventionalities—aye, and even decencies, to the winds, believing themselves to be too tall, too grand, for the earthworms behind them to criticise, much less condemn.

The fact that a man or a woman possesses genius should not surely exempt them from the ordinary rules of life; nay, rather should this ensure a greater care—a more circumspect walk, remembering that a city set upon a hill cannot be hid, and recollecting that evil done by those in high places is seen of all, and often enough is copied by those who excuse it in themselves because it cannot be so very bad if so-and-so is guilty of the fault.

Such folk as these appear anxious to demonstrate that genius and lunacy are, indeed, closely allied; and one is tempted to wish for them a speedy exit from a world that can never look on at anything outré without some of its members longing and striving to emulate it.

Can a great statesman recollect where he stands—the influence he has thrown aside, when law and justice tap him on the shoulder and pillory him in his private capacity before the world, thus causing him to give the open lie to his public and oft-quoted sentiments? Can yonder preacher realise his widespread influence at all when he gives forth marvellous sermons on a Sunday, that the whole world of fashion flocks to hear, the while his ostentation, his expenditure, his fine horses and carriages are flaunted in the faces of the poor, who are unwelcomed in his church, and who know their parish priest barely by name, and who would no more seek him in trouble than they would go to the nearest Duke or Marquis for spiritual advice?

Still, apart from these more prominent

examples, it is well to remember that all of us, even the very meanest among us, is higher at times than someone else, and that few exist whose example or whose actions do not form either a guide or a warning to some poorer neighbour.

Sometimes we realise this with a shudder, as we hear that words we have forgotten ourselves, either written or spoken, have influenced someone immensely with whom we may be personally unacquainted.

Or we may be brought face to face with the fact that extravagant living, or silly and bad management in our own house, may have been copied by a neighbour, and what in our own case resulted only in temporary embarrassment has brought him to ruin; and we learn, too late, that carefulness on our part would have helped him to bear privations that only became unendurable when we appeared to be able to have everything, and rather more than we required.

Of course we should all be strong enough to stand firm; but few of us are; and to those few we all look, recognising their position, and being bitterly disappointed if they do not come up to our expectations.

For there are some who are actually and forcibly put on the top of a hill, without either desiring or deserving to be there.

The lover places his lady at a very high altitude, and revenges it on the wife if she does not keep a situation in which he himself put her.

The child elects his parents to a height even surpassing that of the adored one. And who can express the agony that child endures when either mother or father fails him, and show themselves as they are, and not as the child believed them to be?

The pain is none the less real, the husband's disgust none the less hard to bear, because the pinnacle was never desired by the person who was placed there, and who, we doubt not, is extremely glad to get down therefrom and stand once more on a safer and lower level.

Of the few people who can really realise and enjoy a well-earned eminence, surely a dramatic author is most to be envied!

He sees his public, drinks in his success, and, though he knows to-morrow's papers may make him growl, he recollects that Smith, whose head he punched at school, will only be too glad to return the blow in the

columns of the Snarler, whose critic he is, and that Jones's wife, of whom he was foolish enough to say that he remembered her grown-up when he was a boy, is on the Monday Mauler; and so laughs at the arrows that cease to be barbed when he knows the hand that forged them and the petty, jealous motives that winged them on their way.

Of course we all of us must realise that period of middle-age that sometimes is the only appreciable height we can reach; when we turn to grasp the hand, if only for a farewell, that gave us once so much assistance, and find we only clasp a shadow; when we look back and see our path is marked by tombstones; and when we discover that eager-eyed youth has parted company with us, and that instead of laughter and song, sorrow and fatigue have taken up their stand by our side.

And even if we only know our position, all may be still well with us. No grave can hide the kindly manly heart that once beat so strongly near our own; no touch obscure the love of nature, the knowledge of bird and beast, that taught us so much; and though we know he sleeps beneath the yew in that Dorset churchyard, beneath the shadow of the church where he taught so well and so manfully, we, from our eminence, look up, and know he is no more dead than is that friend of ours in Australia, of whom we have had no token for twenty years or more, and yet exists, we know, because others have seen and spoken unto her.

Others have seen and spoken with those of whom we hear no more, save from memory; and as we rest for a while on our summit, content to gaze even upon the tombstones that have marked our way, we seem nearer now than we ever were to those who passed from our lives when we were in the thick of the fray in the valley, and had scarcely time to say good-bye to, because the future was then so much more to us than the present.

The present and the past become very real on the top of the hill.

Life is gentle, is slow. It has done us so much harm, dealt us so many blows, we feel its worst is over. It has taught us so many lessons, we cannot have any more to learn; and for the few years we remain there, we can look back or simply rest happily, contentedly, because our climbing days are over at least, and the worst of the work is done.

Delightful as is the eminence occupied

by genius, or taken possession by talent, it is too dangerous, too lonely to be really happy; the way up to any summit must mean exertion and toil. Therefore, surely, the best height of all is that calm, beautiful table-land of middle-age, where we rest a while, contemplating the long line of pictures time has painted for us, numbering those nobler, stronger natures who have won their rest, and only looking forward for our children, or towards that marvellous land of shadows where they walk who were once with us here, and who seem very near indeed to us once more as we linger for a while silently, thankfully, on the top of our own particular hill.

ALMOND-BLOSSOM.

At last I draw the veil aside,
Come, darling, full of wifely pride,
And see my finished work;
Lift up those cloudless eyes of thine,
Deep wells of happiness divine,
Wherein no shadows lurk.

Look at the canvas. Dear, like thee,
My pictured maid is fair to see,
Like thine, her eyes are blue;
Like thine, the clusters of her hair
Wave golden on a forehead fair;
She looks, as thou art, true.

Like thee, she wears a robe of white,
Like thine, her smile, as sunshine bright,
Doth all her face illumine.
Thy perfect parallel, she stands
Loose-holding in her slender hands
A branch of almond-bloom.

Ah, wife! that tinted almond-flower!
Dost thou remember that dark hour
Of anguish, long ago,
When I, with all the world at strife,
Heart-sick of labour, tired of life,
Was vanquished by my woe?

Dost thou remember how I spake
Rash words of God, and tried to break
The spirit from the clay?
How now? Thy tears fall down like rain;
Thou wast the braver of the twain,
Dear heart, on that dark day.

The cold spring twilight filled the room,
I saw thee standing in the gloom,
Thy girlish cheek grown white;
The tears of pity in thine eyes,
Without a murmur of surprise,
Or tremor of affright.

And in thine hand an almond-spray;
God gave thee words of hope to say
To me in my dark hour;
I know not now what words they were,
I know I blessed thee, standing there,
Holding the almond-flower.

And when the storm was overpast,
And I could meet thine eyes at last,
Thy gentle hand laid down
As gage of hope, the almond spray,
So on life's drearest, dreariest day
I won love's golden crown.

And now the budding year doth bring
New hopes, like almond flowers in spring,
That deck the branches bare;
Foretelling summer days to come,
The blossom-time of heart and home,
A perfect life and fair.

But lo ! the picture—it is thine,
Love, let it be a sacred sign
Of all thou art to me :
Far more than wife, far more than love,
And only God in heaven above
Can pay my debt to thee !

CHRONICLES OF ENGLISH COUNTIES.

MIDDLESEX. PART III.

It was a strange and not altogether happy destiny which drew London out towards the west. An admirable site for the development of a great capital lay ready at hand. The fields that gradually sloped upwards to the northern heights afforded an excellent site for public buildings, for theatres, temples, and the palaces of the great nobility, as well as for the settlement of a large population. Till the end of the seventeenth century such a development seemed possible. When curlew and snipe fed among the marshes about the site of Grosvenor Square, the mansions of the nobility clustered thickly around the pleasant suburbs of Highbury and Islington, and the wealth and dignity of the city took its airings in the verdure and shade of Clerkenwell Green. But the town has followed the Court, and its centre of gravity lies now nearer the swampy flats of Pimlico and Belgravia, than the healthy suburbs to the north.

Chief in the chaplet of villages once surrounding London, but now enclosed within its compass, is Hackney, with its savour of quaint Puritan traditions, its red-tiled roofs, and solid, substantial dwellings. And there are few finer sites than where the hill rises with a bold sweep, crowned with the villas and gardens of Stoke Newington and wealthy Clapton, looking down upon the green valley of the Lea—little but the corpse of a river now—empested and smelling vilely, but beautiful at times in its winding course with the light of the sky reflected from its placid reaches. It is not to be wondered at that Hackney was a favourite residence with the ancient nobility, that Templars and Knights of St. John built their preceptories thereabouts, while the two ancient manors of the Lord's hold and the King's hold seemed to show that royalty too may have had a favoured seat in the same favoured parish. Crowded, too, is the church and churchyard with ornate monuments. Nevils and Percys mingle their dust with great City dignitaries, and ancient meeting-houses have their own records of departed worthies.

We may picture worthy Pepys at Hackney Church among the crowd of periwigs and powdered heads and rustling silks. "A knight and his lady very civil to me when they came," writes Pepys; "being Sir George Viner and his lady, in rich jewels, but most in beauty; almost the finest woman that ever I saw." While he naively confesses: "That which I went chiefly to see was the young ladies of the schools, whereof there is great store, very pretty, and also the organ."

The complete history of Hackney has yet to be written, for which there is ample store of materials in Hackney itself—a whole library of local deeds, books, maps, and other documents being now gathered together at Hackney Town Hall, the gift of the Rector of South Hackney; and out of these riches we may expect a full harvest of memoirs by local historians.

From Hackney to Islington we pass through a wilderness of houses. Merry Islington is chiefly noticeable here as the beginning of one of the great highways leading out of London. From the Angel we may start on an imaginary tour by coach, in the direction of that green and pleasant country which must lie somewhere beyond the noisy streets of the whirling town.

In days when travelling was a more leisurely affair than now—even before the age when speedy, well-horsed coaches had superseded the crawling waggon and the creeping stage-coach, a traveller on his first entry into Highgate was the subject of a mock ceremony of initiation, which recalls the frolics of seamen, not yet quite obsolete, on crossing the line. There is a Rabalasian flavour about the oath taken by those who were sworn at Highgate, but the ceremony was interesting from its antiquity, and may have once represented the necessary affiliation to some guild of carriers, or to some transit company of the remote past. In the days when the highway over Highgate Hill was a mere track through the forest, an anchorite, it is said, established his hermitage close by, and for long afterwards the cell was never without an occupant. One of these hermits, of a more industrious temper than the generality of the brotherhood, is said to have devoted all the time he could spare from his devotions, to building a causeway to Islington, filling up the muddy pools with stones, and bridging over the Slough of Despond with faggots and trunks of trees. If people are sceptical as to the industry of the hermit, they may

place more faith in the vigour of the Bishop of the period, who presently erected a toll-bar upon the hill, and enacted toll from all who crossed his domain—an exaction that was only removed at the general clearance of toll-gates about the metropolis. The hill was a terribly steep one for all kinds of vehicles, and early in the present century, when coach travelling had arrived almost at perfection, it was proposed to make a tunnel through the hill under Hornsey Lane, and thus spare the cattle and save the time of the eighty or so of fast coaches that daily passed that way. The tunnel in its progress caved in, and a cutting was necessarily substituted, across which was thrown the famous Archway, whose giddy height has proved as tempting to suicides as that of the Monument, till the latter was finally caged in.

In the valley beyond, where rises Muswell Hill, crowned by the now desolate courts of the Alexandra Palace, is the source of a little stream called the Mosell, interesting for its name, which may recall its more famous sister—the sparkling tributary of the Rhine. But it is probable that the original name of the stream was the Mose or Meuse, whence Muswell, as the head-spring of the little rivulet. In the pleasant meads about Muswell, where are now racecourses and tennis-grounds, was formerly established a dairy-farm of the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem, whose head-quarters at Clerkenwell were within the compass of a short and pleasant ride. To our Lady of Muswell the good knights dedicated a little chapel, and the well itself had a reputation as a healing spring, and was the object of a yearly pilgrimage from the country round about.

Close by, Wood Green preserves the memory of Tottenham Wood, once famous in adage and old saw. "You shall as easily move Tottenham Wood," it was said of old, but the task has proved within the ability of modern times. And now villas, and terraces, and eligible building-sites have replaced the merry green wood; and the Well of St. Dunstan, that once in its deep forest seclusion was regarded with something like superstitious awe, is no longer to be found. Another mystic saying may be quoted:

When Tottenham Wood is all on fire,
Then Tottenham street is nought but mire—

a distich that suggests the after-glow of a stormy sunset, and the woods that seem to be enveloped in fiery vapour, with the wet and streaming highways, that are

touched in turn with ruddy reflections from the skies.

Miry enough was the way by Tottenham High Cross when the weather gave the least excuse for mire. This was the chief highway to Cambridge and the fen country, and was often impassable on account of floods. According to some of the old chroniclers, Alfred the Great drained Tottenham Marsh, in order to dry up the Danes in their stronghold at Ware, which inland place, as we are accustomed to regard it, the Danes had contrived to reach in their swift galleys. But the drainage of the marsh was not of a very perfect character, and scholars travelling to Cambridge, or traders on their way to Stourbridge Fair, might find it necessary to take a guide at Tottenham Cross to conduct them through the labyrinth of waters.

But although Tottenham village is little but a traveller's settlement, which has sprung up about the crossways, yet the manor of Tottenham is of high and ancient importance. Of old time the manor belonged to Waltheof, the son of old Siward, the conqueror of Macbeth, and through Waltheof's daughter, Maud, it fell to David, King of Scotland, Maud's second husband, and so for a time shared the vicissitudes of the crown of Scotland. The question of disputed succession which agitated Scotland, and brought about a series of destructive wars between north and south, affected also the succession to the honours of Tottenham. But here the question was settled in a peaceable manner by sharing the spoil among the chief claimants. Robert de Brus, father of the future King of Scotland, got one share, and built a castle on his demesne, of which the name survives in a modern house upon the site. John de Baliol was awarded another; a third was allotted to Henry de Hastings. Bruce's manor preserved its name to the last, but Baliol's became known as Dawbenys, from a later owner; both these manors having been seized by the crown during the Scotch wars. The Hastings third received the more modern name of Pembroke. Although the manor was once more united in the last century in the person of a London Alderman, yet its history has left its traces in local nomenclature. Other suburban settlements may own as sponsors distinguished builders and contractors, local squires, or speculators in building lots, but Tottenham may claim a derivation for its local names from Kings and Princes,

proud feudal nobles, and other mighty men of old times.

Another memorial of history in its humbler aspects is preserved in certain almshouses at Tottenham, which were founded by Balthazar Sanches, a Spaniard, said to be the earliest confectioner in England—the first, at least, to practise the art and mystery of comfit-making as a distinct trade. Skilful, too, were the publicans of Tottenham in compounding spiced and luscious drinks for the citizens, who often made parties to drain a cup of sack in mine host's garden in the summer time—such as Walton and his friend, Piscator, who, in some editions of the Complete Angler, are seen enjoying convivial converse in the arbour of the garden of The Swan at Tottenham.

Edmonton, too, has its claims upon the memory, if only for the famous journey

Unto the Bell at Edmonton,
All in a chaise and pair.

But John Gilpin was not the first to discover the gaiety of Edmonton. The place has an ancient reputation for fun and frolic even from the days of

The frank and merry London 'prentices
That come for cream and lusty country cheer.

No play was more popular in its day than that called *The Merry Devil of Edmonton*; we have the testimony of Ben Jonson to that effect. And it must be said that the play has great merits, with touches in it that are worthy of Shakespeare, and with the light of true comedy shining through the rude mediæval humour. And yet it is strictly a local play, the scene the country about Edmonton, and as such may claim a little notice here.

The merry individual with the ill-sounding name is brought before us in a short induction:

'Tis Peter Fabel, a renowned scholar,
Whose fame hath still been hitherto forgot
By all the writers of this latter age.

Peter is an astrologer and magician, an English Dr. Faustus, a Cambridge scholar, too, and professor, who has nightly communed with the starry firmament from the towers of Peterhouse. Like Faust, our Dr. Fabel has committed himself too deeply with the Evil One in his thirst for knowledge, and the latter claims his bond, but is threatened or cajoled into giving another seven years.

The action of the piece begins at the sign of The George, in Waltham, where a knight has just alighted with his train: his wife, and his son, and his daughter being among them. Here a meeting has been

arranged to settle the preliminaries of marriage between the daughter, Millicent, and young Mountchesney, the son and heir of a neighbouring knight. The young people are warmly attached to each other, but the girl's father repents of his bargain, as he hears that old Mountchesney's affairs are embarrassed, and he has in his mind a better match for Millicent, in the son of a wealthy friend. Hence he resolves at the last moment to cry off from the bargain with Mountchesney, under the pretext of having vowed his daughter to a religious life. So Millicent is snatched from her lover's arms and taken to the nunnery of Cheshunt.

Here the magician of Edmonton comes to the aid of the parted lovers. For young Mountchesney is a favoured pupil, and ere his friend and disciple should lose his promised bride, the doctor declares, with some recollection, perhaps, of Alfred and the Danes:

I'll first hang Envil in such rings of mist,
As ever rose from any dampish fen;
I'll make the brined sea to rise at Ware,
And drown the marshes unto Stratford Bridge,
I'll drive the deer from Waltham in their walk.

The matter, however, is arranged without any such catastrophe. By his art the magician assumes the person of the Abbot of Waltham Abbey, and forthwith receives into the brotherhood young Mountchesney. By old custom, a confessor from Waltham is sent to shrive all newly-admitted novices in the neighbouring nunnery, and, by the order of the mock Abbot, the newly-admitted brother is deputed for the office. Thus the lovers meet, the enamoured Mountchesney and the love-lorn damsel, his promised bride:

But since she now became a nun,
Called Millicent of Edmonton.

Impassioned vows are exchanged in the shadow of the monkish cowl, and all arrangements are made for an immediate elopement. The keeper of Enfield Chase is a good friend of the young knight, and has consented to receive the fugitives in his secluded lodge in the middle of the forest. When night comes the lovers are away together, and presently are wandering in the wilds like the lovers in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Here the humorous element appears, in a party of jolly poachers, who are scouring the forest in search of a fat buck. Here are mine host of The George, who "serves the good Duke of Norfolk", a jovial parish priest, Sir John, whose catchword is,

"Grass and hay, we are all mortal. Let us live until we die, and be merry, and there an end." And with these Smug, the honest smith of Edmonton, and all find themselves astray in the forest, and this while the friendly keeper is abroad after the poachers, and the old knight and his confederates are pursuing the runaway novice and her lover. All these meet, and play at cross-purposes in a way that affords a good deal of fun for the groundlings; and everything winds up happily, with Sir John to marry the pair and the fat buck from the forest to furnish the marriage-feast.

Altogether the play gives a favourable notion of the taste of the unlettered multitude in their dramatic diversions, with faithful friendship, true love, and jolly lawlessness furnishing the motive of the play, and with tenderness and wit in the dialogue, and plenty of fun and movement in the action. But we lose sight of the doctor's entanglement with the Evil One in the dénouement. Still, the doctor himself does not seem to take his doom very seriously, and we may hope that the merry magician somehow contrived to elude his bargain, and that his ashes now rest peacefully in Edmonton Churchyard, where lies a kindred spirit, in humour and general friendliness — the genial essayist: Charles Lamb.

At Enfield, again, we have memories of Charles Lamb, who lived in the neighbourhood for many years, and whose favourite walks were in the wild and rural scenes about the ancient chase.

A wild and lovely country was this in olden time, haunted by witches and warlocks, by Egyptians and conjuring folk, as well as the occasional resort of robbers and highwaymen, who found a refuge here when their more frequented haunts became unsafe. Here Dick Turpin and his friend, Tom King, are said to have contrived a secret lurking-place. Once noted for its oak-trees, whose hearts of oak furnished forth the navies of the Commonwealth, the forest was almost cleared and partly enclosed during the civil wars. But at the Restoration it was once more afforested, and stocked with deer. From this time the resident population, comprising many who had been evicted from their enclosures, devoted themselves mainly to poaching and deer-stealing, and associated bands of lawless men, the most noted of whom were the Waltham Blacks, often set the authorities at defiance. To end this state of things,

as well as for the profit of those concerned in the operation, the Chase was disafforested by Act of Parliament in 1779.

Some five - and - twenty years before, Enfield Wash was the scene of an adventure which for long set the town by the ears. Elizabeth Canning was only a servant-maid in the house of some obscure citizen, and when she disappeared from her place, and was no more seen for a while, the circumstance seems to have excited little attention. But, a month later, Elizabeth reappeared, pale and emaciated, and told a wonderful story of how she had been waylaid in Moorfields, seized, and carried off to a place which, by her description, was identified as a cottage near Enfield Wash. An old woman, the tenant of the cottage, and a gipsy-woman who resorted there, were identified by Elizabeth, and arrested as being concerned in her detention. They were tried at the next assizes, convicted on Elizabeth's evidence, and sentenced to death. The girl's story had created an immense amount of popular enthusiasm and excitement, but many cooler heads looked upon her story with suspicion, and eventually the two women were respited, and Elizabeth Canning was put upon her trial for perjury. The evidence was conclusive that neither of the women she accused could have been concerned in the matter, and thus, in spite of the tide of popular feeling, which ran strongly in the girl's favour, a verdict of Guilty was returned, and Elizabeth was sentenced to transportation. All this time there was such a fire of pamphlets, broad-sheets, and brochures about the case, that the literature of the subject is as bulky as if it had been an affair of national importance. And although Elizabeth was transported, yet it was in quite a triumphant manner, accompanied by the blessings and good wishes of her adherents, and by something more substantial in the way of a large sum of money that was collected for her; and, thus endowed, it is said that Elizabeth, soon after landing on the shores of America, was wooed and won by a planter of Maryland or Virginia, and perhaps helped to found one of the celebrated first families of those ancient States.

But Enfield has other memories more savoury — Raleigh's cottage, Uvedale's school, the elder Disraeli's house, Charles Lamb's house by the wayside, to say nothing of its ancient royal state, when Kings and Queens held their court at

Enfield, and its roads and lanes were blocked by trains of horsemen, or the lumbering gilded coaches of the period, while state processions and royal progresses were matters of everyday occurrence. Enfield has something to show in the way of a royal palace in the town itself; but, in all probability, the chief residence of royalty was at Elsyng Hall—an old house now pulled down, the site of which may still be traced within the grounds of Forty Hall.

The earlier manor-house of Enfield is said to have been placed among some ancient earthworks which bear the name—itsself suggestive of high antiquity as mostly applied to British or Roman works—of Camlet Moat. The site is described in *The Fortunes of Nigel*, and within it is a deep well, at the bottom of which, according to popular tradition, is an iron chest full of treasure. Another tradition tells, with what might strike a novelist as a wasteful expenditure of useful incident, how the last owner, or perhaps chief keeper of the Chase, being attainted of treason, and pursued for his life, hid himself in a hollow tree, and toppled over into the well—and there an end.

Another and better authenticated tragedy is that of the Witch of Edmonton as dramatised by Ford and Dekker in the seventeenth century, what is actually founded on the true story of a poor old woman, a denizen of Enfield Chase, who was executed for witchcraft in the year 1622.

Although Enfield ceased to be a royal residence after Queen Elizabeth's time, yet the frequent presence of the court of James the First, at his favourite hunting-seat of Theobalds, kept up the associations of the place with royalty. Popular tradition describes King James as frequently unbending, and mixing incognito with the humble people about. The sign of The King and the Tinker celebrates one of these occasions, which is also the subject of a famous old ballad. The King, after hobnobbing with the tinker, and winning his heart by his good fellowship, draws from him the admission that the great wish of his heart is to have a good look at the King. The disguised monarch, who, without the trappings of royalty, looks as much like a brother tinker as anything else, offers to gratify his companion, and bids him mount behind him on his horse :

Then up got the tinkler, and likewise his sack,
His budget of leather and tools at his back,
They rode till they came to the merry green wood,
His nobles came round him, and bareheaded stood.

"But where is the King?" asks the tinker. To which the King replies that, as they are the only two who remain covered, it must be either one or t'other. Whereupon the poor tinker rolls off the steed in abject devotion, expecting to be led away to instant execution; but the King bids him rise, knights him on the spot, and assigns him a revenue of three hundred a year, which is just as a King should do, from a minstrel's point of view.

Since those happy days the gipsies and tinkers of Enfield have not had much chance of foregathering with royalty. But there have been many settlers of rank and influence who, in one way or another, have obtained slices of the old forest. The various lodges which still remain to mark the extent of the Chase have been occupied by various distinguished personages. The Earl of Chatham had the South Lodge, and Lord Loughborough the East Lodge; while at an earlier period Lord William Howard, the Belted Will of Border legends, had his house at Mount Pleasant, in Enfield Chase. White Webbe House was a rendezvous of the conspirators of the Gunpowder Plot. The Earl of Lincoln had a seat at Ponder's End; the Cecils had a small establishment at Pymmes; and there were many other pleasant seats in the neighbourhood. One Hugh Fortee gave his name to Forty Hall and to Forty Hill, which sometimes figures as Fourtree Hill. Then there was Bury Hall, once the seat of President Bradshaw, the chief regicide, and at that time a great resort of the chiefs of the Parliamentary party. But none of the distinguished people who ever lived here have left any distinct traces in the locality, and persons unknown or obscure have given their names to the flourishing settlements of Potter's Bar and Ponder's End.

Enfield and Edmonton were once noted for their fairs, which were resorted to by the London citizens, and once gay and busy enough, but which have mostly been put down now as public nuisances. James the First, enclosing some of the parish common land on Enfield Chase to add to his hunting-ground at Theobalds, granted in exchange the right to hold two fairs, called the Beggar's Bush Fairs—a bad bargain for the parish it would seem, for the land is still there, but the fairs have been abolished.

Beyond these regions lies Hadley or Monken Hadley, having once belonged to the priory of Saffron Walden—a pretty rural place, whose ancient churchyard is rich with the dust of nameless warriors,

who fought at Barnet Field close by. On the square solid tower is reared an ancient beacon-cresset, which may have been lighted when the Armada was in sight, and which was last fired in honour of the Prince of Wales's marriage.

And now there is only South Mims to visit and its ancient church, with interesting Norman features, in a pleasant, diversified landscape, with seats and mansions scattered here and there, but with no striking features in its local annals.

And now we may retrace our steps towards London, of which we may perhaps catch a glimpse from some of these northern heights. All round lie her rising settlements, evidences of the marvellous growth of the mother city, while winding here and there, crossing and interlacing, twine the serpent-like wreaths of steam from the passing trains; and the continuous murmur of their progress suggests how widely stretch the arms of the great city which lies there shrouded in the mystery of her garment of smoke and vapour.

VICTIMS.

By THEO GIFT.

*Author of "Lal Loringe," "An Alibi and its Price,"
Etc., Etc.*

CHAPTER X. LESSONS IN LOVE AND OTHER THINGS.

ON the house-boat the prolonged absence of Marstland and Vera was beginning to attract notice not altogether favourable. Dolly James made a little joke about it, and by-and-by Naomi came fussing up to Leah, and observed in an undertone of decided petulance that she thought it was very odd of Miss St. Laurent to have walked off with George Marstland in this way.

"It is getting late, you know, Leah, and we ought to be going home. Alix will be sure to catch cold sleeping on Albert's knee like that."

"Take my shawl to cover her," said Leah quickly. "It isn't really late, dear. Besides, this sunset time is the pleasantest part of the day on the water, and Vera and I won't be here to enjoy much more of it."

"You might be, if you would only stay with us till our term was up," said Naomi hospitably; "but seriously, Leah"—in a whisper—"I was surprised when Burt said that George and Miss St. Laurent had taken themselves off together directly after

tea, and had not been seen since. It isn't civil of George to leave all the host's duties to his friend; and as to the girl, I thought you said her parents were such tremendous sticklers on the score of propriety."

Leah looked annoyed.

"So they are; but surely there is no impropriety in going with George Marstland to get a few rushes? I would have done it in a minute."

"You? You are old friends; and Miss Vera has known him about a week. I never believe in these seemingly ultra-shy girls. There! it's striking seven now."

"Never mind if it is. Don't make a fuss, Naomi dear, when we are all so comfortable," said Leah, distressed lest anyone should hear, and trying to coax her sister into the seat from which she herself had risen; but fortunately at that moment there was a splash in the water and creak of oars quite near them, and out of the purpling twilight two white figures rose suddenly into sight as, grasping the rail of the house-boat with one hand so as to draw the dingy alongside, Marstland held out the other to help Vera to her feet.

"Did you think we were lost?" he said in his loud, cheerful tones. "It was Miss St. Laurent's fault more than mine, however. I promised to cut her a few rushes, and she would be hardly content with less than a ton, and a lapful of water-lilies into the bargain. I thought the boat would have gone under with the weight of them more than once."

"We thought it had gone under long ago," said Naomi sharply, but checked herself as much out of natural kindness as in deference to Leah's look of appeal, as she stepped forward, holding out both hands to help her friend on to the deck:

"So long as you've got the rushes, it's all right," she said pleasantly. "I thought you would find it take you some time, Vera; they are so stiff to cut. I hope some of them are for me."

"Why, they are all for you, Leah," said Vera, smiling up at her from where she stood, a picturesque little figure in the soft, violet haze, with the drooping lily-buds in her hands, and the sheaf of rushes at her feet. "You said you wanted a quantity, and that was why Dr. Marstland took me to get them for you. Are they not feathery ones, too? I thought you would be pleased," and she looked so bright and unconscious of having done anything unconventional that even Naomi had not the heart to look grave,

though annoyed more than she would have cared to avow, both by the girl's conduct, and by Leah's instant and cordial acceptance of the rushes which had served as a pretext for it.

As it was really getting late by now, however, and Alix had woke up and begun to whimper, the adieux were hurried, and the party broke up: Burt accompanying the Jameses to Weybridge, and Marstland lending an oar in the Lucas boat. He was in high spirits all the way, teasing poor Benjy about his empty fish-basket, rallying Leah with quite brotherly sauciness on young James's admiration for her, and telling one good anecdote after another till little Mr. Lucas was kept in a perpetual giggle of laughter, and Naomi's round face was nothing but a coruscation of dimples. But when they had landed, and he had carried Alix up to the house, and given her into the arms of the parlour-maid, he declined to come into supper, and saying they had had quite enough of him, bid them good-night rather hurriedly, and strode off whistling. They could hear the air, "My love she's but a lassie yet," quivering out of the summer darkness for some minutes after the dip and splash of the sculls told that he had started on the return journey.

"Well, you people seem to have had a very good time. Those fellows fed us capitally, didn't they?" said Mr. Lucas cheerfully. "And how did you enjoy it, Miss St. Laurent?"

"Enjoy it! Oh, I think it was the pleasantest day I ever spent anywhere," said Vera, waking up from a reverie with a sudden shine in her eyes which more than endorsed the words; but even pleasure did not make her more conversational than usual, and Leah noticed that she rather shrank from than sought their customary bedroom confabulation after retiring for the night, and that her eyes had a curious, pitying expression in them as they kissed each other before saying good-night.

She had noticed before, wondering whether anyone else did, that though Vera was the only one Marstland did not jest with or talk to on the way home, he always broke off in anything he was saying if she spoke, and, encumbered as he was with Alix, managed that it should be his hand which helped her to shore, and hers which he held in a second good-bye after he had already said farewell to the whole party once.

Silly to take count of such trifles;

strangely silly for a sensible girl like Leah, and still more so to suffer them to weigh on her spirit so heavily that, even though tired enough by the long day's outing to be glad when the moment for retiring came, she felt no desire for bed, but having undressed and extinguished her candle, sat down by the window, and gazing out on the faintly-silvered ripples of the broad river gliding blackly between its shadowing trees, gave herself up to reflections grave enough to provoke more than one heavy sigh.

It was well, perhaps, that the shadow under those trees were so black, or she might have seen a boat lying there with a solitary man seated in it, his arms resting on the suspended sculls, and his gaze fixed, not on the wing of the house where her room was situated, but on a lighted window in the main body of it, behind whose drawn white curtains Vera was even then preparing for rest after her usual methodical fashion, but with the happy look which had floated about her lips all the evening still resting on them.

Suddenly a thought occurred to the young French girl. Marstland had asked her, as they returned to the house-boat under the light of the first stars of evening twinkling through the twilight blue, if she was fond of astronomy, and had observed that Orion had shone out particularly brightly the last night or two after the moon was down.

"That wouldn't be till eleven, however," he said; "and I don't know if you could see it from your room. It is only visible from the river-side of the house."

"Oh, but my room is on that side," Vera answered. "It is just over the breakfast-room. I must look out to-night." And Marstland had said "Do", and changed the subject. Only in taking her hand to say "Good-bye", he had half-whispered:

"You won't forget Orion?" and though she had not answered, indeed she had had no time to do so, the sound of eleven striking from the hall-clock below stairs brought it to her remembrance now, and, dropping the comb and brush with which she was just manipulating her long tresses, she stepped to the window, drew aside the curtain, and looked out.

Marstland was right. The moon had disappeared, and the stars were shining brightly indeed, the sword and belt of Orion glittering like a double triplet of jewels above the tufted willows on the farther shore of the river, and being reflected in

broken glimmers on the rippled surface beneath. But their very brightness came upon her like a painful shock by recalling to her nights in her lonely girlhood when she had watched them drearily from her chamber window at Les Châtaigniers; and involuntarily she shivered, the smile on her lip faded, and after one long, wistful gaze, she dropped the curtain again and turned away without even a downward glance at the river where, shrouded by the darkness, the lonely boatman, in his little skiff, sat still and motionless as if carved out of ebony. He had not wanted her to see him. He had chosen his position, indeed, with the opposite intent; but as the slender, dark figure, with its loosened veil of hair, stepped back from the window, and the curtains fell together again over the space it had occupied, a long murmuring sigh broke from his lips—a sigh which formed itself into the words: "She did remember, Heaven bless her!" and, letting the blades of the sculls drop into the water, he bent once more over them, and with a couple of long strokes, was in the middle of the stream and out of sight.

Not before Leah had spied him, however. The flash of the blade as it struck the water had caught her eye almost simultaneously with the sudden darkening of a bright patch of yellow light which, for the last two minutes, had been reflected from Vera's window on to the lawn below; and, though it was too dark for her to distinguish more than the outlines of the oarsman, and there was nothing extraordinary in anyone being on the river at eleven o'clock on an August night, the knowledge that he had been there stationary and unseen by her came upon her mind with a sort of shock, and in conjunction with her previous train of thought, and the disappearance of that light from her friend's window, forced a sudden suspicion into it.

"Could it have been he?" and "Have they come to assignations already?" was the double thought it contained, the last an intensely bitter one; but the next moment her face flushed hotly with genuine self-contempt, and she stepped back from the window, pulling down the blind with a jerk, as she muttered:

"How despicable I am growing! As if she might not have said the same of me! Was I not standing there too? And suppose it was he, what right have I to complain?" She was too honest with herself even then to try to deceive her vanity with the thought that it was her

window he was contemplating. She knew too certainly that it was not.

And she was right. Marstrand had fallen in love, and being of an impetuous and energetic temperament, had done so with all the energy and impetuosity which might have been expected of him. He had seen Vera St. Laurent six or eight times perhaps within the last ten days; and at first sight had pronounced her ugly and uninteresting; yet he felt and believed now that there was no single moment in all that time that she had not been the most charming of all women in his eyes; and was prepared to prove the same by any act of chivalry and devotion, however romantic or imprudent, which came into his head. To him, indeed, it would not have mattered a jot had the whole world seen him playing the love-sick swain under his lady's window. Why should it? If a woman were fit to be worshipped at all, he would have said, it were fitter and more manly to worship her openly than in secret; and in his then state of mind Vera, with her soft voice and limpid eyes, her naive ignorances, childlike docility, and tender, serious enthusiasms, was a creature as worthy of worship as any "Madonna Laura" or "blessed damozel" in the golden days of mediævalism.

Nor was he like the æsthetes of to-day, satisfied with worshipping his goddess. He wanted to possess her; to become "guide, philosopher, and friend," husband and lover in one, to appropriate for his very own this tender maiden before some other hand, less reverent perhaps, should rub the bloom off that spotless innocence: some other soul, less loving, dim those unclouded eyes with the shadow of this world's wisdom. He had been in love before, more than once perhaps. There are few men of six-and-twenty who have not; but these had been brief, ephemeral passions, fancies and flirtations, light of life, and lightly laughed over when extinguished; not to be compared even with his far more deeply rooted affection and respect for Leah Josephs. This was the first time that he had ever seriously thought of marriage, but now he desired nothing so ardently, and if he could have gained Vera's consent would have been overjoyed to rush off the following morning and have his banns put up in the parish church at Weybridge. True, he had not known her long; but he knew that she was pure, and gentle, and sweet-natured; her devotion to Leah and the little ones proved

that she could love, while Leah's regard for her was—from a woman like Leah—a testimony in itself as to her other merits.

His own parents were dead, and the only relation nearly interested in him was a sister, very happily married herself, and most anxious to see him so, while of Vera's parents he had only heard enough to feel that he need not stand in much fear of them. They might be everything that was disagreeable; but "disagreeable people-in-law" (as Max O'Rell hath it) do not so much matter when they are on one side of the Channel and you and your wife on the other; and it certainly did not occur to him that the small "seigneur" of an impoverished property in Brittany, and with an English nobody for his wife, was at all likely to refuse his daughter to an English gentleman of unblemished character, excellent family connections, a good profession, and a fair private income.

The real question was, would the daughter consent? And this was the only one which he kept turning and weighing in his head. Of course he was not worthy of her! What true man ever thinks himself worthy of the woman he loves? But might not her sweetness overlook that, and take him as he was, in spite of his unworthiness?

Of one thing he felt convinced, that as yet she was fancy free; her whole bearing and conversation proclaimed that, even if Leah would not have been sure to know had the reverse been the case; and then he thought—he almost knew—she liked him; and liking, with very young girls, is often only one step from love—so small a step, indeed, that frequently the mere revelation that they are beloved is sufficient to lift them over it. "La jeunesse aime l'amant"; and it was with a sudden, daring desire to prove the extent of this liking and of his influence over her that he had proposed that little test of the stargazing.

Vera had not known it was a test—had scarcely thought of him at all in it; but, as he sat in the darkness watching her shrouded window, he said to himself:

"If she doesn't look out I shall know I am nothing to her as yet; that she does not care enough for me or my words to pay a moment's heed to them."

And when the curtains were drawn back, and she stood there, framed in the yellow light, it seemed to him as if she had come in answer to the yet unspoken prayer of his heart; and he blessed

and thanked her for it, and went home rejoicing and feeling as though a great step had been gained and the battle half won.

He called at the villa the very next afternoon. Naomi was out; but Leah happened to be in the garden, cutting flowers for the drawing-room, and came forward at once to greet him with all her wonted cordiality: continuing her occupation afterwards while she talked to him of the past day's enjoyments.

For once, however, Marstrand did not seem to respond to or even appreciate her expressions of pleasure. Poor Leah! Heaven alone knew how little pleasure there had been in the day to her. He answered, of course, but in so absent a manner, that she saw he was not attending to what was said, and as he kept glancing round as if in search of someone else, she said quite frankly to him:

"Vera is in the morning-room, working at Naomi's sewing-machine. Wouldn't you like to go in? I will follow you in a minute. Indeed, I have got nearly enough flowers as it is."

Marstrand's handsome face coloured like a girl's. He had not expected so direct an answer to his wandering gaze; and it was not without a good deal of embarrassment that he managed to say laughingly:

"Working at a machine! Well, that is the last thing I could have pictured Miss St. Laurent doing. Those soft, white fingers of hers seem too helpless for any form of work, but if you have got enough flowers let us go in and contemplate the anomaly by all means. There is a decided east wind to-day, and I don't think you ought to be standing out in it."

"You are too careful of me!" said Leah, and then reproached herself for the dryness which she could not help detecting in her own accent. It was very hard to keep it back, however—very hard to stand still and see her best and dearest friend drifting away from her into the possession of someone else, just at the moment, too, when she had begun to realise with a shock of absolute anguish how dear he really was to her. But she had to see it, all the same, for they were no sooner in the house than he was at Vera's side asking anxiously how she was after yesterday's exertions, if she was sure, quite sure, that she had not caught cold from his keeping her so long upon the water in that little dingy, and going on to tease her about her laborious occupation, declaring that he knew she could not do it, and volunteering to assist

her with it. Naomi found them so when she came in, with both their heads bent over the machine, and Vera laughing as happily as a child, while Leah sat at some distance sewing frilling on to a frock for Alix, and with a worn expression on her face which caused her sister to welcome the young doctor far less effusively than usual, and to decline his proposition of taking them for a row with a decision, which not even Vera's look of timid disappointment could soften.

But the look more than repaid Marstrand for the refusal. It was another proof that she cared, and when he pleaded for the following day instead, Leah came to his assistance, and cut short the objections her sister was beginning, by saying that she and Vera would go in any case, and take Benjy and his fishing-rod to make the number even. Vera thanked her for it afterwards with frank gratitude, more difficult to bear than Naomi's shrug of disapproval.

"I am so glad we are going, because he had promised to teach me to row, and I do so want to learn. He says he taught you, and that I could do it quite easily; but I doubt that. He doesn't know, I expect, how stupid I am."

"Well, it would be rather wonderful if he knew much about you in any way, considering the shortness of your acquaintance," said Leah rather sharply; but the next moment she repented, and added in her pleasantest voice: "There is no reason, however, that he shouldn't learn, or you either. You will find him a very good teacher, dear."

Perhaps Vera was a bad learner. Marstrand was right in calling her fingers helpless ones, and her decided clumsiness at the oar justified the careful and protracted lesson which he found it necessary to bestow on her. It took all Leah's pride and patience, more than all her generosity, to prevent her from wearying of being seated at the helm while Marstrand wasted happy moments in trying to teach that soft wrist how to bend the oar to its right intent, and those pretty fingers to clasp or unclasp their pressure at the proper moment. To him it was an hour in Paradise, a delicious luxury to touch that precious little hand, a passionate joy to look into those wistful eyes, with their innocent appeal, "Is that right?" a proud triumph to see the soft cheek pinking with tender roses at his words of praise or encouragement. Probably it was sweet to Vera too, for she showed no inclination to

shorten the lesson, and, even after they had landed, suffered him to delay her on the bank, listening to final instructions, and making plans for future lessons, until Naomi had to send down one of the children to hurry her in to dinner, and even Leah wondered if this was the same girl who had been wont to start from shadows the most figmentary, and entertain qualms and scruples as to the propriety of walking through the village unattended, or saying a few kind words to a servant in passing, at Les Châtaigniers.

Neither of the sisters, however, were prepared to see their guest make her appearance at the breakfast-table on the following morning, hatted and smiling, with a pretty glow on her cheeks and two little blisters on her hands, which she held up to them as she announced that she had just been out for an early practice with Dr. Marstrand, and had rowed "quite a great bit without catching a crab or doing anything stupid."

This was too much for Naomi, and, despite all Leah's entreating looks, she took the girl upstairs after breakfast and gave her a good lecture, which had the effect of making Vera cry bitterly, and of puzzling her quite as much as it distressed her.

"How should she know that there was anything particular in going with Dr. Marstrand? Leah had said that she might do so when she asked her leave the first time, and had also said there was no reason he should not teach her to row, and she was sure Leah wouldn't let her do anything that was not quite nice. As for her mamma, she had never said a word about boating, or the doctor either. Mamma had only warned her against getting intimate with the Jewish young men, and she had been careful to obey her. She always was."

"Oh, bother obedience!" said Naomi bluntly. "Surely, my dear, you're woman enough to have instincts of your own, and you must know that to take yourself off alone to flirt with young men isn't the thing for a girl, unless she wants to be talked about."

"I never flirt!" said Vera indignantly. "Of course I know that would be most unseemly, but I never did, and I only went alone because Leah looked tired last night, and nurse wouldn't let Ben or Alix go before breakfast. Besides, Dr. Marstrand asked me to come, so he couldn't have thought it was wrong, and he must know. Leah says he is a very good man. and tha-

everyone likes and trusts him ; she said he was a man to be trusted, and she wanted us to be friends. Mamma put me in Leah's care."

It was evidently hopeless. Vera was perfectly sincere, but she also did not like, or look up to Naomi, and the result was this timid, tearful obstinacy which irritated the latter and made her agree the more readily to Leah's proposal that the two girls should return to London, and the more efficacious direction of Mr. and Mrs. Josephs.

It was impossible, however, to achieve this without Marstland being acquainted with the fact and its cause. Vera's reddened eyelids and nervous, altered manner when they next met would alone have betrayed that something was wrong, and he immediately devoted all his energies to securing a tête-à-tête with her, and finding out what the "something" was.

The result may be easily guessed ; for as soon as he was gone Vera went in search of Leah, and flinging her arms round her neck sobbed out :

"Oh, Leah, Leah, what do you think ? He loves me, and he wants to marry me, and not let me go back to France any more. Oh, dear Leah, aren't you glad ? Do say you are, for now you know we shall always be near one another ; and, besides, he is coming up to London by the next train after us ; and he wants you to be our friend, and tell your father and mother before he arrives."

Leah's face was very pale, but she had felt what was coming, and spoke quite calmly :

"My dear child, it is your father and mother that have got to be consulted, and I think mine will only say he should have done that before speaking to you. Suppose they should not consent ?"

"Oh—but, Leah, they will," said Vera confidently. "No one could help liking him, and he says he does not even want a 'dot' with me ; and, besides, he could not ask them till he knew if—I cared, too. He was afraid—oh, Leah, fancy him afraid !—afraid of vexing me !"

"And do you care for him, dear ?" Leah asked with her arm round her friend's waist ; but it was well the latter could not see her face as she answered, hiding her own the while and begging anew for Leah's friendship and help, they "were both so fond of her". The Jewish girl's reply was full and clear as it could be :

"I am your friend now—his and yours too. I always shall be so, and I will help you both at any time, and all I can."

There was no denying that Mr. and Mrs. Josephs looked grave over the news, and thought, as Leah predicted, that the young people had been too hasty ; but they were kindly, easy-going people who had always allowed full freedom of choice to their own children, and had besides too warm an esteem and liking for young Marstland not to look hopefully on his chances. So, when they found that both he and Vera had written to the St. Laurents even before leaving Weybridge, they merely insisted that there should be no whisper of an engagement or lovers' privileges till the answer came, and did not carry their severity so far as to forbid the house to the young man in the interim.

And Marstland fully availed himself of his implied liberty. Those four days that followed were very happy and peaceful ones to the two young lovers ; days of suspense, indeed, but of suspense brightened by hope and anticipation, sweetened by mutual sympathy, and filled full of the novelty and deliciousness of first love.

They were sitting together on the afternoon of the fourth day. Vera had begun to get nervous as the time for a letter to arrive drew nigh, and Marstland was seated beside her on the broad window-seat of the pretty, old-fashioned drawing-room, stroking one of her little hands as he tried to console and encourage her, while Leah, with her back turned to them, was diligently practising on the grand piano, when the door opened and the maid announced :

"A person, please, m'm, to see Miss Laurence."

"A person to see me !" repeated Vera in amazement ; but the next moment her face changed and she started up with a low, agitated cry at the sight of a thin, red-haired, plain-featured woman in black, who had entered the room behind the servant. "Joanna !" she exclaimed faintly. "You !"

"Yes, Vera, it's me," said the woman grimly, not coming nearer or looking at anyone else in the room. "I've been sent to fetch you home, as your mother couldn't be spared to come herself ; and, if you please, I'll help you to put up your things at once. The mail-train leaves at nine this evening."

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

A Weekly Journal

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A STERN CHASE.

A STORY IN THREE PARTS.

BY MRS. CASHEL HOEY.

THE THIRD PART.

CHAPTER IX. FOUND OUT.

IF Henry Rodney, at the date of his meeting with the daughter of Fair Ines, had seated himself upon Prince Hassan's carpet, and had been forthwith deposited in Santiago de Cuba, to refresh his memory after twenty years, he would have found less change in Don Norberto de Rodas than in any other individual of his former acquaintance there. Don Norberto at twenty-five had looked ten years older, but at forty-five he seemed to be standing still in life. His hair was still densely black, and he was as lean and light of movement as of old, with the same furtive restlessness in his black eyes.

In his moral nature there was as little alteration. His life was as vicious, and his heart was as evil, as in the days when his cousin had crossed his path to her own ruin; his ambition and his covetousness were also unsatisfied now as then.

Don Saturnino de Rodas had died three years after the making of that will, concerning which Norberto had foreboded evil, and his prevision had been realised. The distrust, gradually growing into dislike, with which Don Saturnino had come to regard his nephew, would probably have been more plainly manifested if he had lived longer and seen more of Norberto. But, for a year before his death, Don Saturnino resided at La Valladoncella, not coming to his house in Santiago at all, and he had no fault to find with his nephew in his business capacity.

The relations between Norberto and Doña Mercedes had been considerably

strained from the time when he had expressed his annoyance at her failure to ascertain the provisions of Don Saturnino's will, with so much candour and so little caution. Her pride, not to be subdued by her complicity with his wickedness, then received a wound which she never forgave.

He had to wait three years, and then to learn that his forebodings had fallen short of the truth. His uncle had done less for him than he had calculated as the very least he could do, in common decency—an elastic term when we apply it to other people's duty—and he had made mention of his lost daughter.

That Doña Mercedes was really ignorant of either of these injuries, which he ranked as equal, so unslaked was his hatred by time and death, Norberto refused to believe. He was convinced that the mention of Ines by her father was in reality prompted by Doña Mercedes, and that she had played him false, as he called it, from some superstitious motive. He had observed symptoms of this kind of weakness in her more than once, especially when anything occurred to make her uneasy about Ramon. Don Saturnino's reference to his daughter was to the effect that he had never been fully satisfied of her death, and, in the event of her return to her former home, or making appeal to Doña Mercedes or her brother, he charged them to receive her, or to reply to her, treating her in all respects as though she had not forfeited her place or her claims. The portion to which she was entitled by inheritance from her mother, and which had remained in his hands, would, of course, be hers. He added that these injunctions were also to hold good in the case of any child or children of his daughter, whose identity should be duly established.

Ten years had elapsed since the flight of

Ines de Rodas when those forgiving words saw the light, and three since her death. Norberto had the proofs of that event in his possession ; but he kept his knowledge to himself as closely as ever, and merely observed to Don José de Silva that the injunctions were not of a practical nature ; that Don Saturnino's entertaining the idea of his daughter's possible reappearance might be made to bear the interpretation of insanity, were it anybody's interest so to stigmatise it ; and that there would be a fine chance for the rogues who make a profession of personation, in the loose and sentimental testamentary dispositions of his uncle. He might have seen that Doña Mercedes was painfully impressed, but his fixed idea of her falseness to him in the matter on which he was morally insane, blinded him.

To Don Norberto his uncle bequeathed a sum equivalent to the half of that which would have been the dowry of Ines, had she become the wife of her cousin. And then came the crowning proof of Don Saturnino's confidence in Doña Mercedes. Convinced that he could best assure the future welfare and happiness of his son by placing them unreservedly in the charge of the boy's mother, he bequeathed to her the whole remainder of his property, to be at her absolute disposition.

Norberto's rage at finding himself treated by his uncle so much worse than he had feared, was at once intensified and controlled as to its outward manifestations by this final blow, this last revelation of the "uxorious imbecility" of Don Saturnino. True Doña Mercedes had been, to a certain extent, Norberto's accomplice in the past ; but not in a way that gave him any hold over her, to compare with the enormous advantage she possessed in wealth, power, and independence. All things, save one, had prospered with the house of De Rodas, for many years past, and the handsome, reserved, stately widow of its late head was a very rich woman. She was a clever woman also, one whom it would be difficult for him, whom she had every reason to regard with mistrust, to deceive ; and there was nothing to bind her to prolong his association with her affairs, if it were not her good pleasure to do so. With his usual tact he accepted the situation, abandoning any notions of domineering which he had entertained while his uncle's will was yet a secret, and falling into his place of trusted subordinate with readiness that imposed on Doña Mercedes.

She had seen but little of Norberto for a long time, and in addition to her sincere grief for her generous and devoted husband, there was a trouble in her life, which dwarfed other things and put them at a distance. The Doña Mercedes who set at ease the dark mind of the man who had garnered up out of all the past only a store of hatred for the living and the dead who had befriended him, treating their interests as one, and his management of affairs as a matter of course, was more altered in mind than in person from the Doña Mercedes who had hated her husband's daughter, and had sanctioned the suppression of the desolate young widow's appeal to her father.

Of the manner of the rejection of that appeal, Doña Mercedes was innocent ; of the ferocious threat which had driven Ines into the power of Willesden, through her desperate fear for her child, and the urgent necessity for hiding herself and the infant under another name and a changed condition, she was as ignorant as of the results which it produced. The girl had defied and deceived her ; let her suffer for it ! She had disgraced her family for the sake of a stranger. That he was dead was a fitting punishment for her, but no palliation of her offence to them. Let the family of the stranger see to her now ! If they did not take proper care of her, Ines would make her moan again, no doubt ; and then Doña Mercedes might think about her case. Until then, her father's weakness, already much to blame, should not be practised on.

Thus had Doña Mercedes made herself the accomplice of Norberto, and, as time went on and the silence was unbroken, she had readily accepted his view that Ines was dead. What other explanation was to be offered ?

When Don Norberto's apprehensions as to his own future position were allayed by the prompt tact of Doña Mercedes, he had leisure of mind to exult in the secret knowledge which he possessed, and which, he soon began to suspect, would have been very precious to her. He would have been glad had that knowledge been of a different kind ; he was forced to conclude that the child who had found a home with Hugh Rosslyn's sister was well cared for, and he would have liked to think of her as an outcast and a beggar ; still, it was pleasant to watch the workings of Doña Mercedes's mind, now that she would give anything to be able to carry out her

husband's wishes, and to feel that he could quiet them if he would.

After the death of Don Saturnino, the big house in Santiago remained practically shut up, a few rooms being retained by Don Roberto for business purposes and his own use; but Doña Mercedes and her son residing at La Valladoncella. In the third year of her widowhood Doña Mercedes took her son to Spain, and they were absent for several months. Before that time, however, odd things had been said about the boy, and the extraordinary seclusion in which his mother was bringing him up. It was only vague talk, but Doña Mercedes was a person of importance while Don Saturnino was not forgotten, and people did wonder why Ramon was so little heard of, and never seen in the city. Occasionally there was a revival of curiosity about the girl, the child of Don Saturnino's first wife, who had gone into a convent in a queer sort of way. Attempts were occasionally made by ladies of the more dauntless sort to extract information about Doña Mercedes and her son from Don Norberto; but he was politely impenetrable. Doña Mercedes, whom numbers of the actually existing society had known as one of the leaders of it, was said to be so plunged in devotion that there was little to choose between her house and the cloister. She heard none of the fitful speculations upon herself and her son; she kept the even tenour of her way, with the idol of her heart, and the sin which had "found her out", for all her company.

Year had followed year in a monotonous course. Norberto de Rodas was, as Captain Wharton had guessed him to be, a local magnate. His capacity as a man of business was rated very high, but otherwise he was of evil repute, and as unpopular as in the long-ago time when Rodney and Hugh Roselyn "talked of the wolf, and they saw his ears". He was no favourite even with those who shared his vices, and profited by them, and he was still the favourite aversion of Don Pepito Vinent.

Doña Mercedes was a white-haired lady, in whose face might be read the constant schooling of sorrow. It was still pride that looked out of those strange blue eyes, but a softened pride, and the lines which patience had graven about the mouth tempered its imperiousness.

Her son at twenty-five years old resembles his mother, having the same clear, high-bred look, the same strange

blue eyes. But Ramon is still a child, and he will always be a child. This is the explanation of Doña Mercedes's secluded life—this is the constant sorrow that has softened the pride in her eyes, and trained her in the school of patience.

There had been nothing wrong with the boy until a year before his father's death, when he had a very bad fever, from which his body recovered completely, his mind not at all. Don Saturnino died without having learned the truth; he fancied his son's condition was only a protracted convalescence, and was latterly too lethargic to think about it. Upon his mother the knowledge had come with unerring and unsparing certainty, and afterwards, with the hearing of the paragraph in Don Saturnino's will relating to Ines, had come the recollection of what she herself had done, and the conviction that judgment was upon her.

Norberto had discerned correctly enough the strain of what he called superstition in Doña Mercedes. It was, in truth, the striving of conscience and an early-implanted, but unfruitful faith, in a soul to which piety was unknown. When this strife was first kindled, the boy was but fifteen; the dreadful change, the arrest, or rather the retrogression of intelligence was of recent occurrence; there surely was—there must be hope. Might there also be some sort of possible propitiation? Was there a place of repentance for her? Then it was that she betrayed the direction of her thoughts to Norberto, to his unmeasurable contempt, and that he steadily withheld from her the fact of the existence of Ines's child.

Ten years! The silence of death maintained for ten years! That could only mean death. She must bear in mind that at the time the fullest enquiry was made, without result, to satisfy Don Saturnino; it was impossible that anything could come of a renewed enquiry now. How were they to set about it? Thus did Norberto meet her timidly-hinted wishes and her unconsciously-revealed remorse. Then, too, he had referred to his own part in the catastrophe with a half-careless regret, treating it lightly as a young man's exaggeration of a fair-enough feeling, but conveying in words, tone, and manner, that for him the whole thing was dead and gone to the very verge of that dead-and-goneness which becomes boredom beyond bearing.

Time passed for the boy who had become

a man, but remained a child ; his mother lived for him only, while Don Norberto ruled over the affairs of the house of De Rodas, and the name of Ines was never uttered by either of the two who had driven her to her doom.

There was little change in the course of Doña Mercedes's life for several years, and the changing world around her interested and occupied her not at all. But, in the same year that, in England, witnessed the events just narrated, the "thing which she had feared" befell her—Don Ramon de Rodas died. Her grief was beyond telling; and not the least part of it was the knowledge that there were people who said it was a happy release, a great blessing, and all the other things that people do say about afflictions outside their personal experience, and which they regard from their comfortable standpoint of no-feeling.

Don Norberto behaved very well on this occasion, which promoted him to the position of an heir-presumptive. He had probably never approached so nearly to contentment as when, after the funeral of Doña Mercedes's son, he betook himself to a contemplation of his own position and prospects. The former was very good, and, above all, it was safe; the latter were brilliant. There did not exist anybody, so far as Doña Mercedes knew, who could be, upon any reasonable grounds whatever, interposed between himself and the ultimate possession of the whole of his late uncle's wealth. That he was only a few years younger than Doña Mercedes was a consideration which did not trouble him, or disturb his calculations.

Don Ramon had died at Santiago, and his mother remained at her town house, but in complete seclusion. Don Norberto naturally indulged in some conjectures respecting what she would be likely to do with the remainder of her life. Its sole occupation for so many years had been her son, that Don Norberto was at a loss to imagine in what direction she would seek employment for her time. She had renounced society, and society had forgotten her. For a short time he had thought it likely she might have gone back to Spain, after Don Saturnino's death, to reside among her own people, leaving him master of the position at Santiago, and he had ardently desired that solution. The affliction that both overshadowed and filled her life was, however, even then too plain to be mistaken, and it deprived her of all

care for anything outside itself. She had no wish to see her native country again. None of her kin whom she had ever known were living now. There was no competing interest to trouble Don Norberto's security. He was aware that in one sense he was nothing to Doña Mercedes, but in another—the only sense he cared about—he was all she had.

While he was reflecting upon these things in a mood as nearly pleasant as he was capable of, a happy idea occurred to Don Norberto. Supposing Doña Mercedes were to take to religion! Propitious fate could only do him one better turn than this.

He welcomed the notion with warmth; indeed he caressed it so fondly as to lose the sense of its incompatibility with all previous indications of character in Doña Mercedes, and to arrive, after a short time, at regarding it as the likeliest thing in the world.

The solitary respect in which the life of Doña Mercedes de Rodas now resembled that of twenty golden years ago, was her invariable attendance at early mass at the cathedral. Every morning she might be seen, wearing deep mourning attire, and with her silver-white hair, covered by a long, black veil, kneeling in the chapel of San Ignacio, on the same spot where fair Ines had knelt at her side, in the beauty of her bright girlhood. She was usually the first to take her place in the chapel, and the last to leave it. Was the happy thought of Don Norberto near the mark? Was fate going to do him that supremely good turn—was Doña Mercedes taking to religion—taking to it, that is, in the serious way which would lead to her retiring to a convent?

It was not surprising that Don Norberto should regard these questions in a cheerfully affirmative light, when on a certain day, having asked to see Doña Mercedes on business, he was told she had gone to the Convent of Las Anunciadas.

No disturbing idea was suggested to him by this. It was with light-hearted expectation of the happiest results from the visit that he went to his interview with Doña Mercedes in the evening.

He found her in the inner corridor—that which overlooked the patio, where the fountain played as of old, and the flowering-plants made a central spot of colour. A few lights were twinkling in the offices, but the balcony was dim.

Doña Mercedes was seated in the shade, and her face was not distinctly to be seen, but there was nothing calculated to disturb the serenity of Don Norberto in her manner of receiving him, and listening to his business communication. Her demeanour was now habitually grave, and her voice was always low. When he had said what he had come to say, and the matter was disposed of her composure was slightly shaken as she asked him to remain with her, in order that she might speak to him on a matter of grave import to them both. In the dim light he shot an eager glance at her, and his hopes rose high.

Doña Mercedes lifted her black fan, and shaded her face. Why did that movement send Norberto's memory travelling twenty years back, and show him Ines in the day of her scorn and his defeat? So vividly did the image of the girl, as she had defied him, rise up before him, that the years seemed as nothing, and the old hatred and revenge, fulfilled yet baffled, swelled his heart anew.

"I have reopened a sealed book to-day," said Doña Mercedes, "and read strange things in it. Do you know where I have been?"

"At the Convent of Las Anunciadas, I believe."

"For the first time for many years. I will tell you, Norberto, what made me go there. It was remorse."

"Remorse!"

"Yes. Since my son was taken from me I have been learning that my sin had found me out, and with the knowledge came despair, because I could see no place for repentance; because no reparation, however late, was possible; and I must bear the curse, together with the punishment, to the end."

"What do you mean? What folly is this?"

"You know well what I mean, Norberto; and I am not speaking foolishly."

She let her fan fall to the ground, and faced him now, with her hands tightly clasped, and her features set in resolute self-control.

"I will not reproach you—do not fear that. My own share in the wrong that was done to my husband's child is too great, too heinous, to give me the right to reproach you, even knowing what I now know."

"What do you know?"

For all the hardihood of his tone there was fear in it.

"That Ines had a child, that she appealed to her father in the name of her child, and that you suppressed the appeal. Do not deny this, Norberto; but, for Heaven's sake, tell me the truth. Now, after all these years, tell me what you really did know; let this awful thing be cleared up between us."

He gripped the sides of his chair, and ground his teeth as though he were striving to suppress the manifestation of bodily pain. The same kind of convulsion that had seized him when Doña Mercedes told him that Ines had died passed over him now, and although she could hardly see his face, she divined the passion that distorted it.

"Who told you?"

"The English nun, Sister Santa Gertrudis, who was Ines's friend, has long been at the head of the community, and when I asked to see the reverend mother I recognised her. It is not necessary for me to repeat to you the reminiscences, the questions, and the answers, which led to her discovery that I had never known of the existence of the child. I did not try to excuse myself for the part which I had taken in the separation of Ines from her father, and the venerable nun, who had never forgotten her, did not hesitate to condemn me as I deserved. But when she asked what had become of the child, she saw that I was innocent and ignorant of wrong in respect to her—for Ines's child was a girl—and she knew that the guilt of her abandonment must lie at the door of the person who acted for us in everything. I need not repeat her words; they sank deeply into my heart. I entreat you to tell me the truth. We may both find peace and pardon yet in undoing what has been done."

Her voice failed her here, and tears rolled down her pale and wrinkled cheeks.

Don Norberto neither spoke nor moved.

"I entreat you," she repeated, "to tell me all the truth. I will not blame you for anything which you did or left undone. What right should I have to blame you? We were accomplices, and you went beyond me—that is the only way to look at it now. I cannot undo my sin, and the punishment of it can never be remitted in this world; but there is something that may be done, if you will but tell me all, and help me."

"Now, if I were but sure how much or how little the old woman in the convent knows," thought Don Norberto, "I might beat them both yet." But he said only:

"You could have had the truth at any time by asking for it. It was your policy from the first to say nothing, to ask nothing, to know nothing. I followed your lead. You hated the false wretch who brought disgrace upon our name as much as I did, though not with such good reason, and it was your line to know as little as possible about what had become of her, while it was mine to know as much."

"I grant all that," she said feebly, "but it is vain to speak of it. Every feeling of mine, except the one wish to make what atonement may be mercifully permitted to me, lies buried with my son."

"You do not doubt, I presume, that the woman is dead?"

"Oh no, I do not doubt that. But the child?"

"I cannot tell you whether she is living or dead, because I do not know. If you were wise you would abstain from enquiring. I don't profess to understand your present frame of mind, or how you account for its extraordinary contradiction of your consenting silence for all these years. Nor shall I waste breath in the attempt to justify my own conduct. It suited your purpose in the past; it suits your purpose no longer. So be it. You shall hear all that I can tell you."

"And you think she is living, and safe with her father's sister?"

"I see no reason to doubt it, and the fact is easy to be ascertained."

"She has not suffered as her mother suffered?"

"Not at all. I fancy she has been well cared for."

"I will write by the next mail," said Doña Mercedes, "and send my letter through the agent whose address you have. Notwithstanding all time's changes, there will be someone responsible for its reaching the right hands. I thank you, Norberto. This has been a painful interview, but I have well deserved all that it has made me suffer. Let us bury the past now."

Lights had been brought in, and he could see her face, as she rose and stood for a few moments, with a forlorn, lost look in her faded eyes. Then she bade him good-night, and left him, confounded no less by what had occurred, than by the quietness with which this scene of startling import had passed. His own concentrated rage was beyond relief by words. At first it was all the blind wrath of defeat and dis-

appointment, but that phase was soon succeeded by another.

On the following day, Doña Mercedes de Rodas addressed to Miss Merivale, under cover to Mr. Walter Ritchie, a communication whose first effect was to cause Rodney to abandon his intention of going out to Cuba.

MODERN TASTE.

THE Georgian period was the dark age of taste in England. Art of all kinds was then at its lowest ebb. As nearly as might be England had "reeled into the beast." Manners, music, painting, architecture, dress, furniture, were all unlovely. The mind of a generation that had tolerated habitual drunkenness at home, and for amusement watched prize-fights and cock-fights, expressed itself outwardly in the most cumbersome and unmeaning style of dress, architecture, and furniture that the world has yet seen.

About the beginning of the present generation, that is to say about thirty or forty years ago, a change became evident. People began to have a dim idea that the taste of their fathers was not all it might have been. They began to rebel against such things as the decoration of carpets and chairs with flowers; they felt there was something unpleasant in trampling over or sitting on blossoms; but it was rather a feeling that something was wrong than a knowledge of what was right. The parents had eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth being consequently on edge, their first efforts were not happy. They invented mauve and magenta for their persons, and ribbon-gardening for their pleasure grounds, and honestly admired them all. In those early days of revival we were almost more barbarous in our tastes than our fathers and grandfathers had been. By degrees, however, taste improved, and, when the present generation began to grow up and settle itself, it was able to some extent to avoid the barbarous if it did not quite know what was right. The "advanced" people struck out a line for themselves in the right direction; but, unfortunately, those who wished to be considered as belonging to the new school followed them blindly and caricatured their ideas. The new taste said our mothers' rooms had been too bright and gariah; and, before long, rooms were nearly black. It said that china was a beautiful manufacture that ought not to be hidden away in cup-

boards; and immediately every drawing-room in London broke out into an irruption of china. It was hung on walls, and even on doors, in every possible and impossible place, till a lady's drawing room looked as if it had been arranged for pistol practice. Half the world went mad about china. Enormous prices were given for it, and you might hear people disputing whether a more than ordinarily ugly and ill-made figure was "Old Chelsea," and worth several guineas, or "Fair ware," i.e., the common pottery sold at country fairs, and not worth twopence. About its artistic value, its power of gratifying the eye, there was no question whatever. It was represented by a minus quantity; but that did not enter into the question.

Then came the Chippendale mania. If you would be considered as a person of taste, you must worship Chippendale furniture. No room was tolerable unless it was furnished with Chippendale. The ugliest piece of furniture that could be said to be Chippendale was more admired than the most beautiful and graceful thing in any other style. If it was not Chippendale it had no merit, though its lines might be perfect.

This craze was subsequently modified, and the appliances of a house must be "old." Age was the only qualification. A gentleman was heard buying, in a shop in town, some old chairs the leather of which was torn. It was explained to him that the rents could easily be mended; but he utterly refused to have them touched. Their appearance of age was their value in his eyes, and this appearance was enhanced by their torn and ragged condition. The shape and make, the mellow colour, and other characteristics of age were nothing to him; the mere fact of age was everything.

A gardener knows that when he buds his roses he must carefully suit his briars to the roses he is going to graft on them, for if the briar is too strong for the graft, it will overpower it and throw out branches from its own plebeian stem instead of nourishing its gentler-born nursling. In this gentleman's case, the briar was evidently too strong for the artistic ideas he had attempted to graft upon it.

As a rule, people take what is established without question, without it occurring to them that there is anything wrong with it. They have no innate sense of fitness to be offended; all they want to know is whether it is in accordance with the prevailing fashion; but, as soon as the

unknown authority that settles these matters decides that an alteration is to be made, the new thing is right and the old intolerable.

It is to be hoped, therefore, that our domestic art authorities will soon turn their attention to some of our daily surroundings which sadly want reform.

What can be more hideous than that flat slab, stuck in the wall without visible support, which does duty as a mantel-piece in most houses? It is impossible to look at it without an uneasy feeling that it ought to tumble down; a feeling which we accentuate by putting on the shelf heavy ornaments like clocks and bronzes. Almost the only suggestion modern taste has made on the subject, is to disguise the shelf by putting on it a trumpery nondescript thing made up of little shelves and pieces of looking-glass, and patches of velvet stuck about with bits of china and other meaningless ornament. The eye demands that whatever has to bear a weight shall have an adequate support. The old solid mantel-pieces, with only such shelf as could be made in the thickness of the material, were good. They could evidently bear all the weight that was put upon them, and gave opportunity for carving and other graceful ornamentation that made a pleasant resting-place for the eye. Even our modern shelves could be made unobjectionable by the support of brackets, which themselves give scope for graceful design.

Glass is another thing that wants the reforming energy of an artistic genius. The glass itself, the material, is exquisite now. It is made as clear as a diamond and as thin as a bubble. There never was anything of the kind so beautiful before as far as we have any evidence; and now and then the manufacturers get hold of a good shape. The things of every day use, however, wine glasses for instance, are, as a rule, utterly bad. Among the things to which the modern revived taste objected was our fathers' glass, and, in rebellion against their heavy shapes, the artistic genius of the day invented "straw-stemmed" glasses. From the manufacturer's point of view, no doubt straw-stemmed glasses are good. Their use must give considerable impetus to trade; but it is the only merit they have. It is difficult to conceive anything more inartistic than one of our big modern glasses full of wine, supported on a stem that the least shake will break, and with nothing to protect the bowl from being pierced by its thin pedestal. Had the

designer studied the formation of a rose, he would have seen how to avoid that radical mistake. The tall, narrow glasses our fathers used for champagne, were at all events graceful, even if they were a little difficult to drink out of; but our glass saucers stuck on spikes have nothing to recommend them.

In our plate too we have improved very little. Plate, like wine, improves with keeping. Use rounds off too obtusive angles, and gives a softness of outline which cannot be produced with tools. If the lines are true, and the material solid, use only softens down and mellows the outline.

In our plate of the present day the workmanship is excellent. The mechanical finish, the surfaces, and so on, leave nothing to be desired, but of imagination it shows little trace. The public for whom the silversmith caters do not want imagination. They want the money they mean to expend on the purchase spread over as large a surface as possible; and so the silversmith rolls out his metal into a very thin sheet, and moulds it into shape with a machine. If ornament is wanted it is stuck on. Such work as this must needs be painful to artistic eyes, but it gives you bigger and cheaper things.

Now and then you see silversmiths with artistic instinct rebelling against this debasement of their handicraft, and turning out very beautiful work; but they do it more for their own satisfaction than from any hope of profit from it. Modern eyes are satisfied with the Houses of Parliament, and find no music in the roof of Westminster Abbey.

Silver work finds its lowest depth however in that dreadful thing, a piece of presentation plate. Who does not know it? An unsupported vine standing erect, and bearing on its topmost leaves and tendrils a group of cut-glass dishes. Those whose memories go far enough back remember that those dishes bore chutney, and olives, and anchovies, and such like things, during dinner, and, when the cloth was removed, were replaced by other dishes containing fruit. The vine tendrils were equally appropriate in each case.

Another development was a collection of silver dolls. If the recipient were a merchant the dolls carried bales on their backs or led draught animals. If he were a soldier or a sailor he had little silver representations of his own men. We have so far improved now that we do not always trust our own invention. When we have

to make such a presentation we prefer to copy models that have received the approval of many generations, but we have not yet arrived at the creation stage.

It is hazardous to criticise women's dress. Fashion has nothing to do with fitness, and women's dress is governed by fashion alone. Men groan over the terrors of trains, and will continue to groan, until trains give place again to the still greater absurdity of crinolines. There is a barbaric splendour in a great lady sweeping through palatial rooms, with her train flowing in graceful curves behind her; but the sight of Mrs. Jones gathering up her long skirts, and forcing them into the small space allowed to her in a crowded suburban drawing-room, is painful to those whose sense of humour is not of that robust kind that rejoices in the ludicrous. Chaucer declaimed against trains, and our great-grandsons will no doubt continue to do the like. A few years ago some women made a feeble attempt to popularise a prettier style of dress, but the female æsthete took the idea and burlesqued it to death. The vagaries of female fashion are among the things that men have to bear as they best can. We can at least be thankful that we have not as yet returned to the crinoline age.

About jewellery one need not be so reticent, seeing that most of it is at all events bought by men, and about modern jewellery there is not much good to be said. The jeweller's taste seldom seems to go beyond dumping precious stones into lumps of gold, like plums in a pudding. They are so pleased with the idea that they repeat it in lockets, in rings, in earrings, in bracelets—even in clocks and table ornaments. It is the rarest thing to see any grace of form or originality of idea in their work. The ancient Egyptians were fond of making gold ornaments in the shape of serpents and reptiles. Many of them are found in the Pyramids, and you can see at a glance what kind of serpent the smallest ring made in that shape is intended to represent. The finish is not as good as you will see in Bond-street, but then you cannot identify the species of a Bond-street serpent. Silversmiths, and goldsmiths, and jewellers will, however, tell you if you ask them about it that they are obliged to make what will sell. People like to have what other people are buying, and they will not have anything to which they are not accustomed until it has received the sanction of some

authority in which they believe. The average people require guidance in their taste, as well as in their religion and their politics.

In painting and music we have less cause to grumble. If few great pictures are produced now, at least there is plenty of good work, and Nature is reproduced with a tenderness and insight seldom before attained to; while no one need listen to bad music when a Saturday Popular Concert can be heard for a shilling.

In the matter of domestic architecture also we have made some advance. We have rebelled against the square-box architecture of our fathers, and though we build six-roomed "Queen Anne" houses with balconies into which a cat can scarcely squeeze itself, at least we have many buildings that are pleasant to the eye. The genius of the age runs rather into the line of mechanical than of artistic invention, but after all in many things a revived taste chooses good models for imitation and gives some hope of coming creative genius.

NOSEY BLAKE AND HIS GALAXY.

NOSEY BLAKE'S Galaxy, like political, literary, artistic, dramatic, and most other galaxies, is a galaxy of talent. At least it claims to be so, and that boldly and "in print." Their special line of talent is the pugilistic. Nosey Blake, the landlord—or as he is usually styled in the window-bills announcing benefits at his house, "Mine Host"—of The Bull and Butcher, is a "professor of the manly art of self-defence," and his galaxy consists of those whom he employs as "practical exponents of the noble science." As there is no college for granting—or even selling—pugilistic degrees, it may be assumed that Nosey's title of professor is self-conferred. But he is not without legitimate claim to so style himself. In his day and way he was numbered with the mighty men of valour. He belonged to the old school of fighting men, and flourished in the latter part of the "palmy" era of the fistic ring. His name figures in the pugilistic roll of fame, "Fistiana," and the record of his performances in the roped arena are chronicled in the pages of "Bell." When "mellared" with drink—and he often is so mellared—he is more than willing to fight his battles o'er again; to toe the scratch, and show how "mills" were won in the brave days of old. "To witness if he lies," the cuttings from "Bell's Life," neatly scrap-booked in

chronological order, are "to be seen at the bar." The same scrap-book likewise furnishes proof that Nosey has even been celebrated in verse. On one of its leaves is to be seen pasted a copy of the Broadsheet, in which a ballad-monger of the Catnach press has sung of the battle between Nosey Blake and Bill Burgess, alias Fishy, alias Live Eels. The ballad opens by calling upon "all sportsmen bold, and lovers of fistic fame," to give ear while the poet relates how

"Two heroes bold
Fought for the wreath of victory and a hundred
pounds in gold"

It then goes on to give the details of the battle in very slangy phraseology, and strangely varied and halting versification. It describes how the heroes

"Did gaily toe the mark, as if it were a lark one
might suppose,
And went to work ding dong, and neither was far
wrong
As they landed straight and strong—on the nose."

How

"First blood went to Nosey, and first knock down to Bill;"

And how

"Bill did stop, and Nosey prop, and both did get away."

As the battle progressed, Nosey, we are informed, "took the lead," whereupon—

"At six to four and three to two the bets went
freely round
That Nosey bold would win the fight before he left
the ground."

As a matter of fact he did win, and the reader of the ballad is called upon to

"Drink success to Nosey bold all in a flowing
bowl.
Who gained the wreath of victory and the hundred
pounds in gold."

But the poet, while he lauds the victor, does not go upon the principle of woe to the vanquished, for he further calls upon his hearers to

"Drink a glass to Bill also, who did his best to win,
For his backers were well satisfied although they
lost their tin."

In addition to these printed memorials, there are likewise "to be seen at the bar," the silk handkerchiefs, technically known as the "colours," which bound the manly waist of Nosey in his various encounters in the "roped arena," together with the fighting-boots and pants worn by him in his great battles with Sledge-hammer Wilkinson—the battle in which he got his scar of honour in the shape of a broken nose, and

in which, though he suffered defeat, he was held to have covered himself with glory, by reason of the "gameness" which he displayed.

"You would hardly believe, to look at me now, I used to fight at eleven stone," Nosey will sometimes regretfully remark, and it certainly would require an effort of imagination to picture the Nosey of to-day as an athlete. At the present time he is over fifty years of age, and has waxed exceeding fat and scant of breath. He is Falstaffian as to figure, Bardolphian as to countenance—so much so indeed as to have been made a subject for scornful jests in those respects. On one occasion for example, while disguised in liquor, he fell into a cellar and became wedged there. A rescue party of the galaxy was sent for to free him, but upon arriving at the scene of action they professed to be unable to extricate him by hand power. Going to a neighbouring workshop they borrowed a set of shear-legs with block and tackle, and obtained the assistance of a gang of labourers. Returning thus provided, they slung the chains around the fallen man, and then hoisting away with a will brought him up as though he had been a pocket of hops. Then for some minutes they kept him struggling and spluttering in mid air to the intense delight of a jeering and howling mob, who, having "got the office," had assembled to witness the sport provided for them. Another time one of the galaxy, in the course of a quarrel with his chief, earned quite a reputation as a wit, by sarcastically suggesting that Nosey should "put himself in the hands of a vet, and get cured of the rinderpest"—a saying that was considered a happy and delicate hit at the inflammatory and be-pimpled condition of Nosey's features. But if familiarity has introduced a spice of contempt into the regard in which Nosey is held by near neighbours and immediate associates, he may still on the whole be described as a highly respected personage.

Many there are who are proud to know him or be noticed by him, and those of a class much higher in the social scale than his neighbours or the members of his galaxy. Locally, the trade of The Bull and Butcher is but a pot-house trade, but the house does not depend to any considerable extent upon local custom. It is a sporting house—the police authorities and sterner critics generally are unkind enough to describe it as a low sporting house—but however that may be it is as a sporting

house that it thrives. In its capacity of sporting "crib" it is "used" by numbers of young "swells" and would-be swells, mostly young fellows who fondly imagine that they are seeing life and graduating as men of the world. It is a well-known resort of the boxing fraternity, and is patronised by a variety of other sporting characters—by self-styled bookmakers, who are probably not wronged by being suspected of belonging to the welshing brigade; dog breeders, and trainers and fanciers of the type generally credited with combining a little judicious dog-stealing with their ostensible calling; the smaller fry of rowing and running men, and their backers, managers, and "owners." It is chiefly, however, in relation to pugilism that the house is a "draw," and in that connection Nosey Blake is distinctly king of the castle. Compared with the members of his galaxy—the best of whom he is wont to assert would have been a mere "chopping-block" to him in his best day—he is as a triton amongst minnows. They are only glove men, are unchronicled and unknown, while, as already intimated, Nosey figures on the bead-roll of (pugilistic) glory, and has been made famous by the pens of the sporting chroniclers of old. To the young swells who frequent the house the gallant and song-celebrated Nosey is an object of hero worship. They regard him as the representative of days in which there were giants, as one

"Meet for a time when force was fame."

To shake hands with him; to be seen in his company; to be of the audience, fit but few, to whom he recounts the incidents of his more notable fights; they esteem privileges. They delight to honour their hero, and the hero, it must be confessed, delights to be honoured—in the fashion of honouring that prevails at The Bull and Butcher; the fashion namely of "standing" drinks. It is a leading article of Nosey's trade creed that a landlord, being above all others bound to consider "the good of the house," should never refuse an invitation to drink at a customer's expense. In this respect he certainly acts up to his creed. He never does refuse an invitation to drink, and he has probably imbibed as much bad and fabricated champagne as any man breathing. For keeping "the good of the house" strictly in view, he invariably names champagne as his tippie when asked to drink. This custom of "mine host" sometimes leads to an amu-

sing bit of comedy in real life. Occasionally some "masher"-dressed youth trading on his appearance and with "more brass in his face than in his pockets," will, while on a first visit to The Bull and Butcher, ask its redoubtable landlord "what he will take?" The question is put with a money-no-object air, but the thoughts of the pinchbeck masher are of two of whiekey cold, or of three of rum hot, or at the outside "a glass of sherry wina." When therefore Nosey, in the tone of one conferring a favour, replies, "I don't mind if I crack a bottle of sham with you," the rash imitator of what he believes to be "swell form" looks unutterable things. If by the sacrifice of his all in the way of pocket-money he can, in the phraseology of Nosey himself, who has a grim sense of the humour of the situation, "muster up the pieces, he outs with 'em," trying, though generally unsuccessfully, to smile and look indifferent. As a rule, however, this type of young man of the day cannot "muster up the pieces." Under the circumstances here in view he is wise enough to know that it would not do to "put side on"; to talk of people trying to "have" him, or anything of that kind. Having put his foot into it by trying to do the grand, there is nothing for it but to slink off, which he does, amid the jeers of other customers and the objurgations of the galaxy. The latter worthies consider that they have a personal and material interest in the matter. Save on rare and festive occasions they do not expect to have champagne, but "swells as is swells" are in the habit of "standing" them more plebeian drinks. In their opinion the man who, dressed as a "'owling swell," is capable of making himself parlour company at The Bull and Butcher, while lacking pieces or the will to spend them in standing treat, is one "whom it were base flattery to call a villain."

Nosey Blake, seated in his own parlour, "faced" by a knot of young swells of the right—that is the money-spending, champagne-standing—sort, is a study. With the portraits of a line of champions, from Tom Cribb to Tom Sayers, looking down upon him, with cigar in mouth, his glass in hand, his bottle at his elbow, the scrap-book, the fighting costume and colours on exhibition, a group of admirers hanging on his words, and the brighter stars of the galaxy flitting about—Nosey, set in these surroundings, is quite a picture. So much and so literally so that, on the occasion of

the annual benefit of the proprietor of the local music hall, the great attraction of the evening is the realistic scene, "The Parlour of the Bull and Butcher," with the great Nosey himself presiding.

As between Nosey Blake and his galaxy it is a case of Eclipse first, the rest nowhere. But with the great gun out of comparison the galaxy are persons of consideration—in their way. They are held by others besides themselves to be a very complete team, ranging as they do from Bantam Johnson, who barely scales seven stone, to Nosey's Big 'un, who stands six feet two in his stockings, and has to train hard to get down to thirteen stone ten. It comprises several men in each of the three divisions of light, middle, and heavy weights, and includes left-handed and other special, not to say phenomenal, performers. As it is esteemed both honourable and profitable to belong to Nosey's team, mine host of The Bull and Butcher has his pick of the profession, and being a good judge of talent, his galaxy are really expert boxers, are quite entitled to their description of "practical exponents of the art of self-defence." They can generally "give a bit of a start and a beating" to the best of the amateurs who come to practise with them—if it is their cue to do so. If they can depend upon the good sense and good temper of amateurs who specially stipulate that they are to do all they know against them, they show their form, and a good display of boxing will ensue. But as a rule their aim is not to box up to their own form, but to suit themselves to the form of their patrons. The swells, they reason, do not come there to be knocked about; they come because they fancy themselves, and their liberality is likely to be proportioned to the degree with which they are impressed with the belief that they have held their own, or even had a shade of the best of it, with a professional. The object of the professional is therefore to box down to that shade. Occasionally, however, if the self-satisfied amateur waxes very "bouncable," or happens to "land a stinger," the professional throws prudence to the winds, and goes for his man, who suddenly finds himself reduced from the give-and-take level to the position of being "receiver-general." It is in the bouts between themselves, that the members of the galaxy really become practical exponents of the noble science. To the connoisseurs frequenting The Bull and Butcher, the great

boxing treat is a "set-to" between two of the star "glovers," with the great Nosey judging and calling the points.

Apart from their professional position, the galaxy are a very mixed and very rough lot. They are a powerful set of fellows, but their greatest admirers could not speak of them as handsome. Low foreheads, beetling eyebrows, small and sunken eyes, snub noses, and heavy jowls are the typical characteristics of their features. They are bullet-headed, and look markedly so by reason of the fact that they always keep their hair closely cropped. That is "the thing" professionally, and in their case it has the advantage that if they have been "in trouble"—a thing that frequently happens with one or other of them—the "state of the poll" on their return from exile does not attract attention, does not of itself suggest that they have been "doing time." The galaxy affect what is considered to be a sporting style of dress—tight-fitting trousers, cut away and much bepocketed coats, highly coloured silk handkerchiefs tightly "wisped" round the throat, and close-fitting caps, which, in conjunction with their closely cropped hair, "show off" their abnormally large ears to what most people would regard as a great disadvantage. Only one of the galaxy—Chumpy Ellis—it may be remarked, can boast of the distinction of the trade-mark—a broken nose. And even he is a fraud in that connection. He leads outsiders to infer that it is an honourable scar received in battle, and the belief that such is the case brings him many a drink for which otherwise he would not come in. As a matter of fact, it is a scar at which his acquaintances jest. They know that it is anything but a scar to be proud of; that the wound was received in brawl, not battle, that, in fact, it was inflicted by the hand of a woman—wielding a quart pot—whom he was "slogging" in the course of a public-house row.

Some few of the galaxy who, in addition to being in more general request among the patrons of The Bull and Butcher, have got "private lesson" engagements, manage to knock out a living as boxers. The bulk of them have to turn their hands to other things also to "make a do of it." They will undertake the rôle of "Big Dog" to young swells who are seeing life; or they will procure the vermin for gentlemen given to the noble sport of ratting; or act as agents between dog dealers and dog

buyers. If they can hook on to athletic associations as odd-job men, they will do so for what they can pick up, preferring money of course, but taking liquors or cast-off clothing if nothing better is to be had. On the strength of their acquaintance with sundry "waterside characters" they sometimes do a little trade in spirits, tobacco, and cigars, which, with all the mystery and mannerisms of the turnpike-sailor type of bold smuggler, they allege to be contraband. If the allegation is true, the excise authorities are in these cases avenged, for the goods are of such a quality that they invariably make the consumers ill. In this connection it may be mentioned that minor members of the galaxy occasionally earn a shilling or two, and their "bacca," by colouring pipes for young swells, who, as smokers, are more ambitious than seasoned.

In the summer season some of Nosey's team attend certain races and fairs as leading performers in a boxing booth company, while in the winter they frequently obtain engagements to keep order at public meetings. At least that is how those who employ them on such occasions put it. Less euphemistic, the galaxy themselves speak of such engagements as chucking-out jobs. It is darkly whispered that there are those among the galaxy who for a consideration will undertake to "bash" any victim pointed out to them by their employer for the time being. Lastly, one or two weaker brethren among Nosey's satellites have been known, when very hard pressed, to take a day's honest labouring. Such a proceeding upon their part, it need scarcely be said, is regarded by the general body of the Talent as being highly derogatory, and the sort of proceeding that, if persevered in, would righteously involve loss of caste.

While the rank and file of Nosey Blake's galaxy are willing to turn their hands to a variety of such things as those indicated above, the police are unkind enough to be disposed to rank them with the no-visible-means-of-support class, and the authorities probably have good grounds for such a classification. As already hinted, members of the galaxy occasionally become subjected to prison discipline, and the offences which lead to their periods of enforced retirement, though frequently, are not always assaults. It is the interest of these men to pose as a sort of modern gladiators, and sundry gilded and other youths, being in their green and salad days, and young in judg-

ment, are given to—in more senses than one—treating them as gladiators. The prosaic truth is, that they are little else than sheer ruffians. Their strength and science only makes them brutal, and their brutality is untempered by any gleam of chivalrous feeling. They are in a certain sense a curiosity of civilisation. A few years ago their type seemed to have reached a vanishing point, while such a house as The Bull and Butcher, and such a landlord as Nosey Blake, would have been chiefly interesting as illustrating a phase of life which had apparently passed away never to return. But so much could scarcely be said in the present day. Within the last year or two there has been a distinct, if not an obtrusive, revival of pugilism. Many more "little mills" than those of which some record finds its way into the papers are brought off, and men of the Nosey Blake's galaxy type are flattering themselves that there is a good time coming for them. Since this revival movement set in the first rankers of the galaxy have been "on the job" in the old-fashioned prize-fighting line.

Among a certain set it is quite understood that whenever any syndicate of swells or "sports" like to subscribe a purse of twenty, ten, or even five sovereigns, Nosey and his "aides-de-cong" will find the men to fight for the money. Often enough these fights are "arranged" in a double sense. That is to say, after they have been arranged by the backers, the principals come to a private arrangement, under which they agree to divide the stakes and settle who is to win, and that they shall not knock each other about to any greater extent than is absolutely necessary to make a good show. But many of these affairs are genuine, and in proportion to their genuineness is their brutality. That there will be a full-blown re-establishment of the prize-ring, as a public institution, need not be feared. Nevertheless, the revivalistic movement in that direction is bad as far as it goes, and ought to be crushed. To talk of prize-fighting as an incentive to, or illustration of, pluck or endurance is nonsense, is the innocent talk of greenhorns, or the interested talk of those who trade upon them. Boxing is no doubt a capital exercise, and "the manly art of self-defence" a thing to be desired; but it is the interest alike of the art and the artists that they should be dissociated from forms of ruffianism, which they cannot touch without being defiled.

STUDIES OF OVER THE WAY.

A HOUSE IN THE EUSTON ROAD.

IN THREE PARTS. PART I.

MY tenancy of the rooms I engaged in the above-named thoroughfare was a very short one; but, short as it was, it was not unfruitful, and in one respect it was peculiar. Never before or after did I succeed in unravelling the thread of the over-the-way mystery without the aid of Simpson; but the story of the young man who lived opposite to me in the Euston Road I mastered by myself alone, and I am rather proud of it on that account.

On the very first morning after I had taken possession, I espied the pale face of my opposite neighbour at the window. He was a very handsome young man, but one could hardly think of his good looks for the terrible seal of melancholy which fate or misfortune had stamped upon his countenance. He sat still, staring into vacancy, till a quarter to eleven, and then he disappeared. At eleven the front door opened and he came out, leaning upon the arm of some one who looked like a confidential servant, and the two walked away westward. At one o'clock they returned, and then till the dusk fell I could see the young man's face at the window, except in certain short intervals which I concluded were taken up with meals.

Day after day this was the unvarying routine. At the end of a week I began to get restless, and, as Simpson did not appear, I determined to do a little investigation on my own account. One fine day I followed my neighbours in their morning walk, and found that they repaired to the ornamental water in the Regent's Park, and spent an hour or so in feeding the ducks. I passed and repassed them several times, but found no opportunity of entering into conversation with them. The elderly man broke up the biscuit and threw it to the water fowl, but his companion took no heed of it. The handsome young man sat gazing as sadly and as vacantly at the ducks and the children here, as I had seen him before surveying the cabs and omnibuses in the Euston Road.

For four days I deserted the study of metaphysics at eleven a.m., and did my bit of amateur spying, and all with no result. I was indeed beginning to feel that I was certainly not a born detective, and to long more ardently than ever for the return of Simpson, when on the fifth

fate was kind to me, and gave me the opportunity of getting a word in private with the sad-faced, handsome young man. It fell out as follows.

The two were sitting in their accustomed place by the ornamental water, and I was located on a bench a few yards in the rear. The ducks and geese were enjoying the bits of biscuit, and a lot of children down by the brink were seemingly as much pleased at the sight of the feast, as if they themselves were demolishing cakes and strawberry creams. All at once one of the little ones, a curly-haired darling about five years old, staggered down the slope, and before she could recover herself fell into the water. Even the young man gave a start of excitement, and his companion sprang up at once and dashed into the water after the child, who by struggling had by this time been carried several yards from the land. No sooner, however, did the young man find himself alone than he started up from the bench and took to his heels as if the police were after him. The police—represented by the vigilant officer on duty, who was engaged in peeling an orange—took no heed of him; but I did. By the time he was clear of the Park I was within ten yards of him. I kept this distance between us till I saw him turn into a coffee-house, and then I followed him straightway, and in a minute's time was sitting in the same box with him face to face.

As soon as he saw me he gave a terrified start, showing that my face was not strange to him. "Sir," he said, "for several days I have noticed you in the Park, and, attracted by your benevolent countenance, I have more than once determined to lay before you my wretched state. If you have now a few minutes to spare, I will beg of you to give me a hearing; and, if I do not convince you that I am the most ill-used man in London, your looks strangely belie you."

"I can assure you, sir," I replied, "that I shall listen to your story with great pleasure. I, too, have remarked you and your companion in your daily walk, and have learned to take an interest in you; and here allow me to congratulate you on the possession of so brave a man as your friend. How splendidly he rushed to the rescue of that drowning child! I fear though that, during the winter months, rheumatism will remind him of the noble deed."

The young man smiled bitterly as he listened.

"Friend, ha! you little know what you are saying. Friend? He is my bitterest foe! That man keeps me a stranger to all that makes life worth having. I am, so my friends declare, a harmless lunatic, and the man from whom I have just escaped is my keeper. Ever since a strange adventure which befel me some years ago, I have been under his charge—a strange state of things in free England. My story is this: About a year ago I was with my brother, staying at a quiet watering-place on the south coast. During my last year at Oxford I had keenly taken up the study of biology, and I was at the period above named engaged in getting together some materials for a brochure to disprove the pretensions which certain persons, calling themselves mesmerists or electro-biologists, were then putting forward and raising no small excitement thereanent. My brother was an enthusiastic naturalist, and would spend the whole day hunting for fossils in the cliffs, or sea-weed on the beach; but in the evening he would, now and then—in a spirit of banter, I fancy—take up the position of a believer in the semi-supernatural rubbish I was labouring to discredit. But we were none the worse friends on this account. There could never have been a more perfect example of brotherly relations than that which existed between us till that ill-starred day, when my brother, in common with the rest of the world, arrived at the conclusion that I was not fit to manage my own affairs. But I must tell you it was not brotherly affection, nor the search of literary quiet which attracted me to L——. I was engaged to be married, and Kate Lawson, my fiancée, was living then with her uncle, Mr. Sinclair, and it was on account of a certain matter connected with Mr. Sinclair that the first cloud of estrangement between my brother and myself arose. When I first introduced my brother to the family at the Abbey he was almost as much taken with the uncle as I had been with the niece; but by degrees a coolness grew up between them, and my brother, who was not a good dissembler, soon let it be seen that Mr. Sinclair was no favourite of his. 'He's a queer fellow, Bob,' he said to me one evening, as we sat smoking, 'and the sooner you take Kate away out of his influence the better it will be for both of you.'

"But what do you mean, Jack, by such a vague expression as that? You surely don't intend to bring any charge against Sinclair's moral character. There is no

one in the place so much esteemed and respected.'

"I say nothing about his morals, either pro or con. I say that his influence is unwholesome and uncanny. If I did not fear to put you in a towering rage, I should say that he really possesses a sort of mesmeric power—a power to which you yourself, with all your scepticism, would fall an easy victim.'

"Oh come, this is a little too strong! I said, firing up.

"There, I said how it would be,' Jack went on with provoking coolness, 'but all the same I maintain that he has an influence over you. Whenever you happen to meet him, I notice that you are restless and unstrung for hours afterwards. I have noticed too, over and over again, that you cannot keep your eyes off his face.'

"I was too angry to answer—all the more angry because I was forced to admit to myself that there was a grain of truth in what Jack had just said.

"Sinclair certainly was a most fascinating man. Nobody could deny that. His well-formed intellectual features with his pleasant, half-sarcastic smile; his entertaining manners, as far removed from affectation as from vulgarity; his figure modelled after manly symmetry, and as yet unbent with years; all combined to form one of the most charming companions that a man or woman could wish for. When he chose to give his social qualities free play, few could be more attractive. Yet I often detected, in the midst of genial pauses, a commanding not to say obtrusive expression in his eyes, which seemed to claim obedience; and at such moments I could not gaze upon those keen grey orbs without thinking, with a sort of shudder, that their quick intelligence and fire, unseen yet felt, were but the expressions of a mind capable of conceiving boldly and executing unscrupulously. In his presence I never felt perfectly at ease. An almost irresistible desire came upon me to gaze into his face and seek to fathom the meaning of his look—to pierce to the centre of that pupil, as it gathered to a flashing point or expanded with sudden radiating gleams. And yet the effort was painful, as painful as it was involuntary. It was one of those tendencies not yet explained by science, and on that account quoted by the vulgar as a glimpse of the supernatural; but I was not going to make myself uneasy about a certain peculiar expression in Mr. Sinclair's eyes. I cut the conversation short; but it was vividly pre-

sent in my memory as the next day I walked up a winding path, formed out of the face of the cliff, that led from the shore towards an undulating and well-wooded slope which formed one of the chief beauties of the little watering-place. It was enclosed, but the fences were so badly kept that it was almost public property, and was briefly termed the Park. Kate's uncle lived in a quaint old house at the further end, the former character of which survived in its name—the Abbey. One of its great charms consisted in its nearness to the Park. Mr. Sinclair had, unquestioned, cut a doorway through the high brick wall of his garden and used the Park as if it were his own.

"As I mused over my cigar, I heard some one approaching along the gravel, but hidden from my sight by a projecting mound. A second after, Sinclair himself appeared, strolling on with his eyes fixed upon the ground as if in deep meditation. To walk on seemed strangely opposed to my inclination, yet it would have been rude to turn back. A dread such as I had never before experienced took possession of me, but yet, summoning up all my resolution, I advanced to meet him. When I was within ten paces of him he raised his eyes and drew them slowly along my body from foot to head. I could feel a strange sensation, somewhat as if a snake were crawling upward over me, as his gaze rested upon me; but when his eyes met mine, a shocklike electricity thrilled through me, and I tottered to the side of the path. For an instant I seemed to lose all consciousness. Then I heard a quick, sharp exclamation, and in a moment more I was seated on the bank at the other side of the path, with a grasp like a vice on my arm. Sinclair had saved me from being precipitated over the cliff, where the fall would have been dangerous, if not fatal.

"Good heavens! Ferrers,' he exclaimed, 'what has come over you?'

"I staggered to my feet and, with muttered thanks for his timely aid, moved towards my lodgings, still supported by his arm. To his eager inquiries, I returned but confused answers, and never shall I forget my feeling of relief when I sank exhausted on the sofa of my sitting-room, and heard the door close behind him as he left the house. I was in no state to wonder at his sudden departure. The one idea present to my mind was that I had escaped a great danger, the nature of which I could not define. The very vagueness of my thoughts added to my apprehensions. It

was by this time nearly nine o'clock, and so, leaving a message for my brother, in case he should call, I retired mechanically to bed.

"But when sleep was wanted it refused to come. Hour after hour I rolled from side to side, hearing the town clock strike with tedious regularity, till, unable any longer to endure such toilsome rest, I sprang up and obtained a light. The night was warm, so, hastily slipping on my clothes, I threw up the window, and to while away the time lit a cigar. Soon, this too became monotonous, so, jerking the end into the street, I proceeded to explore a small book-case at the further end of the room. I found my worthy landlady had left it unlocked. The collection was evidently not her own—possibly some student's library left in her charge. My eyes ranged over one shelf after another, but I was difficult to please. Some of the books were familiar, some had unpromising titles, none were exactly to my taste. At last I came upon one with no title on the back, and out of the merest curiosity, I took it down and opened it. At the first two lines I read, I started; then, sinking into a chair, I composed myself, and read on. I shall not easily forget that paragraph. Coming so soon after my experience of the previous day, tallying so exactly, as it appeared, with my case, a mere assertion struck my excited fancy with all the force of truth, and bred in me spontaneous conviction. It ran as follows:

"It is a well known fact that some men, by their mere presence, obtain a wonderful ascendancy over others. The old belief in the Evil Eye may possibly have some foundation in natural laws. To what degree this influence may be acquired has not as yet been investigated by competent authorities, though numerous instances are said to be on record in which it has extended to every action, whether of the body or the mind."

"Was this the influence that Sinclair possessed over me? I answered instinctively. It was. Had my brain been less excited, I should no doubt have reflected more both as to the ground of the statement I had just read, and its application to myself. But rushing with or without reason to my conclusion, a huge dumb terror began to swell within me, and to paralyse all power of will. Trembling, I threw myself upon my bed once more, and tried to drown consciousness in sleep. But in feverish and transient dreams, I thought

myself deep down in slimy seas, sucked towards some half-described, unthinkable horror, entwined in a thousand fibrous coils; or sitting spell-bound before two monstrous eyes, behind which was a vague hideous shape, the fear of which chilled even fear to numbness—till with every effort of my nature I broke the spell, and woke.

"With the dark shadow of my dream still resting on my senses, the first resolve I made was never to see Sinclair again. But then there arose a vision of Kate's sweet face and soft brown eyes, and auburn hair, and the thought of her roused all my dormant energies and determined me to meet him, and by the force of a resolute will, to free myself from his control. Before long, pride came to my aid, and I sat for an hour putting my will against his, and, in imagination, winning the victory. I little thought then what was before me.

"By degrees my mind grew calmer, and, as the morning was breaking, I betook myself to bed again, and slept profoundly.

"When I awoke the sun was shining brightly in at my window. The birds chirped merrily overhead, and far away into the distance stretched the bright expanse of sea. It was impossible to be gloomy amid such universal joy. The events of the day before, the strange coincidence of the night, seemed like a dark dream that had passed away for ever, and I went down to breakfast with as light a heart as if nothing had occurred to disturb my equanimity. At twelve my brother called. He had heard that I had been indisposed the previous evening, and questioned me rather closely as to the cause, but seeing that my answers were evasive, and that his solicitude was somewhat troublesome, he changed the subject. I was to drive Kate out in the afternoon to a curious old ruin about ten miles away, and after that to dine at the Abbey. My brother had spoken the day before of business which would occupy him the whole day, and I was therefore surprised when he proposed to accompany me on the way, and stated that he intended to eat a mouthful of lunch with us at the Abbey before we started.

"Take your macintosh," he said, flinging it over my shoulder—an ugly, white, conspicuous thing, but useful enough in a shower. 'It's big enough to hold you both,' he said, laughingly surveying its ample folds. 'And you must take care of little Kate, you know.'

"On our road to the Abbey my thoughts once more reverted to Sinclair. In the full blaze of a summer's day, and with my practical brother by my side, I felt perfectly sceptical as to any influence Sinclair possessed over me, and I was on the point of telling my brother, as a joke, all my fancies of the previous night. But I remembered his admonitions, and felt too proud to own that they were not entirely ill-timed. What would I not now give to have told him all my mind!

"We entered the Abbey garden from the Park. Kate ran across the lawn to meet us, and cleared away the last shadow of unpleasant thought from my mind. She was vivacity itself, and even my sober brother was forced to smile at her playful sallies. Sinclair did not appear at lunch, but he sent a message excusing himself on the ground of a slight indisposition. He hoped to be able to see me at dinner. I could not help noticing that my brother seemed annoyed at Sinclair's absence.

"Lunch over, Kate tripped upstairs to prepare for the drive. My brother looked steadily at me for a moment, and then, as the carriage I had ordered drove up, departed without a word.

"I shall never forget that afternoon. The warm sun overhead, the gentle breeze, the quiet country lanes with their solemn vistas of trees, the ramble over the quaint old ruin, the drive homeward in the still golden sunset, and above all, Kate in a thousand moods, capricious, playful, tender, trustful, and loveable in all; but I must not continue thus, or I shall very justly merit all my brother's accusations. Yet, oh! the happiness of that halcyon day, and the black storm gathering from the night!

"During the whole of the afternoon, not a thought of Sinclair had presented itself. When, after our return, I entered the library, I found him pacing up and down before the fireplace, with clenched fists and knitted brows. He started as he caught sight of me, smoothed his features rapidly, and accosted me with unusual friendliness. He once more apologised for his absence at lunch, and expressed a hope that I was none the worse for my walk the previous evening. The contrast between his expression as I entered, and his present tranquillity, which I felt sure was only assumed, was by no means pleasant, and yet, such was the fascination of his address, when he chose to make himself agreeable. that all sense of annoy-

ance vanished as soon as it made itself felt. Still, I determined to be guarded. I thanked him for the assistance he had so promptly rendered me the day before, saying that I suddenly felt faint, and stumbled, but that I was now in my usual robust health. I then alluded, with courteous regret, to his indisposition in the morning, and we were soon, apparently, on the best terms in the world.

VICTIMS.

By THEO GIFT.

*Author of "Lil Lorimer," "An Alibi and its Price,"
Etc., Etc.*

CHAPTER XL.—A ROMANCE IN A RETROSPECT.

DR. MARSTLAND had not been exactly correct in his deductions when he suggested that in the days of his youth M. St. Laurent had run away with a lady's maid; but he had gone rather near the mark. Madame St. Laurent, it is true, was never a lady's maid; she only came from the class (a highly respectable one) from which upper servants are generally taken; her grandfather being a carpenter in the little town of Leytonstone in Essex, and her father a baker and confectioner of the same place who, from being the boy to take out the bread, had worked himself up by prudence and steadiness to the post of foreman, and had then married his employer's widow, succeeded to the business, put in a new plate-glass front, and become a leading member of the strictest Dissenting chapel in the place, before the birth of his only child, a daughter whom he named Joan, after his own mother.

This worthy baker had a brother, however, who, having succeeded to the carpenter's bench, married while still a mere lad, had three boys whom he buried one after another, and finally lost his wife within six months of the birth of a daughter, also called Joan, whom he speedily provided with a stepmother, a lady of uncertain temper, who presented him with any number of unruly boys, beat his daughter, and made him so miserable that he was glad to seek consolation from her in drink. The upshot of this was that, coming home one night from the public house in a state of helpless intoxication, he dropped a paraffin lamp among the shavings in the shop, and set the whole place on fire.

Shop. house. tools and furniture were all

burnt to the ground. Only the inmates were saved; and as poor James Higgs had not a penny in the savings' bank and very few friends (his brother not excepted) even to sympathise with him, he was obliged to begin life again as a journeyman carpenter and let his wife take in washing; while little Joan, who till then had attended a respectable day-school with her cousin (now called Jane for greater gentility) was forced to bring her education to an end, and return home to assist in the housework.

Some people thought John Higgs might have come forward to assist his relatives, and indeed he did go so far as to take his eldest nephew into the shop; but as the lad was dismissed a fortnight later for idleness and disobedience, and as Mrs. James immediately called on Mrs. John and gave her "a piece of her mind," the baker retaliated by bidding his brother keep "that woman and her brood" from ever crossing his doorstep again. After this the relations between the two families became so strained that nearly all communication between them ceased, and would have done so altogether but for the lame and intermittent friendship still kept up between the girl cousins.

They had been almost like sisters, those two little pale, red-haired, freckle-cheeked girls; but after Joan, unable to bear her stepmother's nagging, had at thirteen found a "little place" for herself as nursemaid to the butcher's baby, while Jane, aged eleven, was still learning "To Have and To Be and the Rule of Three," wearing neatly-braided black aprons and frilled pantalettes, the intimacy naturally decreased; and though they still continued to write to one another even after Miss Jane Higgs had been promoted to a still more genteel "seminary for young ladies," the correspondence soon died out, owing to that young lady's natural shame at the mirth evoked in her chief friends, (the Baptist minister's daughter, and the principal draper's "young ladies,") by the sight of one of poor Joan's grubby and ill-written letters addressed to "Miss Higgs At Miss Smith's Simmary," and commencing, "my oan Dearest Kuzzin."

For even then Jane Higgs had started on the path which eventually carried her so far; and had shown herself not only a clever, plodding, cold-natured girl, but possessed of an amount of quiet ambition and narrow-minded tenacity of purpose not common among young people of either

sex. Her parents had originally intended to apprentice her, when her education was over, to some good milliner or dressmaker, so that in the event of anything happening to them, or her not marrying, she might be able to set up for herself in a respectable and paying business. But no sooner did Jane find out that the minister's daughter was being educated for a governess, as also that governesses—gentle governesses that is—might employ, but could not be intimate with milliners, than she decided on discarding the latter profession and going in for the former. Why not? If Selina Smith could learn well enough to teach others, why should not she with the same advantages? And with this end in view she plodded on at her books so persistently, as not only to induce her parents to give in to her views, but to obtain an offer from her schoolmistress on her sixteenth birthday of becoming a pupil teacher in that good lady's seminary, and so obtaining all future instruction, including even such extras as French, music, and deportment—dancing Mr. Higgs' religious views would not allow—without further expense to the baker's household.

The plan worked well with one exception. Plodding and drilling not only made Jane familiar before long with Murray and Mangnall, Walkinghame and Miss Corner, but taught her to use such refinements of speech as the words "chest" instead of "stomach," "limbs" instead of "legs," and "intoxicated" instead of "drunk"; to cast down her eyes in walking, sit on the edge of her chair in company, and spread out her little finger when drinking. By the time she was seventeen-and-a-half she had not only learnt to blush unaffectedly at her father's mode of substituting a knife for his fork, and her mother's misplacement of aspirates, but could write a French essay grammatically, and play through a set of quadrilles without a wrong note. The exception consisted of something which not even plodding seemed able to remedy. She could indeed write that French essay correctly, but when she came to read it no human being could have guessed in what language it was written. It was not only that "French of Paris was to her unknown," but she failed to imitate even the "French of Stratford-atte-Bow," spoken by her instructress, and this was the more distressing as Miss Smithers herself told her that without French nowadays a girl could never hope to earn her living as a governess.

Fortunately that lady could suggest a way out of the difficulty. A cousin of hers who had married a French dancing-master, and in conjunction with him kept a "pension pour les jeunes demoiselles Anglaises et Françaises" in an unfashionable part of Paris, was in want of an English teacher, and Miss Smithers offered Jane the post.

The difficulty, however, was to get her parents to consent to her taking it. She was their only child, and, in addition to the insular dislike for "furrin things" generally, inherent in the small British tradesman, Mr. Higgs held a rooted belief that Frenchmen in particular were all frog-eating, blaspheming card-sharpers; while Mrs. Higgs shuddered over them as a race of idolaters given over bodily to the devil, and felt sure that they would welcome Jane and her Bible with a summary "auto da fé," if they did not prefer the slower process of bricking up both in the wall of a convent.

Nevertheless, the daughter got her way, as indeed she had done in most things. It was not that her opinion of the French nation differed in any degree from that of her parents. What they believed she had been brought up to believe also, and, if she had progressed beyond their use of the aspirates, she had not done so beyond their prejudices. But with her the one thing just then to be considered was the improvement of her pronunciation, and, consequently, of her position, pecuniary and otherwise, as a teacher; and to this end she had even entered into communications with Madame Le Brun before applying to her parents for their consent.

That they did give it, after a fashion, at least, was a comfort to her in later years when she was a mother herself. But it was given with sore hearts, and the hearts would have been sorer still had they known, what in truth came to pass, that they would never see her again.

She was still at Madame Le Brun's two years later, and she had never had a long enough holiday to make it worth while to go home, when she first met M. St. Laurent. At that time she was not unlike Vera, with less, perhaps, of the latter's sweetness of expression and softness of outline; but taller, more alert in her movements, with a touch of fresh English red in her cheeks, and a few of those small, light-brown freckles, which Frenchmen always find so charming in relief to an otherwise fair skin. She could speak French now, but with a kind of broken stiffness and slowness, which,

coming from the pink lips of a very young woman, had an additional charm for M. St. Laurent.

However it was, he fell in love with her, and to no one's surprise more than his own. He was then thirty-two, jaded and blasé already by a life of self-indulgence; and his object in visiting the pension was to see after the welfare of one of the scholars, towards whom an intimate friend of his held certain parental obligations, which for reasons of a domestic nature it was not advisable for the latter to perform in his own person. The demoiselle in question being some twelve years old and big for her age, Madame Le Brun did not consider it proper for her to receive the visits of her guardian, or be taken out by him, except under the chaperonage of a governess, and, Miss Higgs being chosen for the purpose, St. Laurent found himself able to combine his benevolent surveillance of the youthful "pensionnaire" with a very warm and rapidly marching flirtation with her prim little governess, more easily than might have been expected.

Not that Jane flirted. She would not have been guilty of such a thing for her life. M. St. Laurent described her to a friend as being "d'une farouche virginité," "d'une pudicité non plus menaçante que suggestive"; but in truth there was to a man of his sort something inviting even in the menaces of a modesty which, being always on the defensive, suggested a knowledge of the dangers from which it was protecting itself.

And suggested it truly! Extreme prudence is indeed seldom compatible with perfect innocence, a fact proved every day by the follies and rashness into which young girls, brought up in that absolute ignorance of certain evils possible among the ranks of the upper ten, are so frequently betrayed by their very innocence and unconsciousness of danger. But to the children of the working classes this ignorance is not possible, and when our learned judges speak, as some have done, of the sin of offending it, they speak of an absurdity. Jane was as familiar from her infancy with such homely incidents as men getting drunk, or girls "going wrong," as young ladies in aristocratic schoolrooms are with the lesser errors of greediness and telling fibs. These former things were the common accidents of the class to which she rightfully belonged. She had only raised herself to that far less honest intermediary one which thinks it "nice" to affect the

ignorance it does not possess; and which in private giggles and whispers, or purses up its mouth and listens, to the discussions of social dangers, which it is none the less on the alert to avoid, because in public it makes believe to be unaware of their existence. Jane never giggled. Her early chapel training led her to be of those who only purse the mouth and listen; but she was always on the alert, and she made believe so skilfully, that, instead of taking her in, Monsieur was taken in himself. He believed her to be "une vraie ingénue," all the more because, while always keeping him at a distance, she never avoided or even appeared to dislike his society. She accepted his presents with modest thanks, but never suffered him even to snatch a kiss in requital; and thus, while thinking to compromise her, perhaps even secure her dismissal, and drive her to seek consolation in his arms, M. St. Laurent found somehow that he had compromised himself. Indeed, thanks to the prudent wariness of the maiden who, however flattered by her conquest of so great a gentleman, and won by his compliments and fascinations, not only managed to lose her heart without once losing her head; but even to secure Madame Le Brun's co-operation in her matrimonial efforts, the man about town woke one morning to find himself committed to a marriage of which assuredly he had never dreamt through the whole course of his courtship.

He submitted, and was married. Jane had won the day. She, the baker's little daughter, was Madame St. Laurent, the wife of a gentleman of family and fortune, with fine friends and connections, with carriage and horses, an estate in the country, and a box at the opera; and yet it may be said that, with the day of her marriage, Jane's troubles in life really began. In the first place, though a foolish and vulgar shame for her true position had led her, while her husband was still only her lover, to represent her parents as having merely "come down in the world for a time," and being "reduced by pecuniary losses to keeping a superior place of business," the petty deceit had not been any good to her. M. St. Laurent made it a "sine qua non" of marriage that she should drop all intercourse, save by letter, with her relations in England; aye, even with her father and mother, the good old people, who had worked so hard to raise themselves and her, who had been so fond and proud of her, and whose only

child she was. And Jane had consented; consented, but with a lingering pain which rankled uneasily in her religious and natural feelings.

Nor was this all. Once married, and in the first flush of gratified passion, St. Laurent was disposed to justify the step he had taken by showering presents and attentions on his young wife, taking her everywhere, and introducing her to his friends; and had the latter been only of his own sex and nation, the test might not have been such a dangerous one; since to these Jane was simply "une jeune mes Anglaise," and her awkwardness, stiffness, and want of conversation, due to the misfortune of a barbarous nationality. Unfortunately, however, there were her husband's women friends to be considered, and still more unfortunately it happened, that among these were the wife of the English Ambassador then accredited to Paris, and two or three other English and American ladies of good position belonging to the same circle, and these, finding that "that shocking roué St. Laurent" had actually married an English girl, were the more anxious to make her acquaintance. They made it; and—alas for poor Jane's aspirations!—from that day she learnt the bitterness of the Dead Sea fruit of empty ambition.

A fashionable bride, the wife of a man of property and position, who could not walk across a room with ease, lounge with grace, or take a gentleman's arm with dignity; who came from nowhere, seemed to have no family connections, and knew nobody; who was visibly distressed as to the question of "knife or no knife" with regard to fish, and hopelessly puzzled as to the use of a variety of wine glasses; who had never heard an opera, and thought the ballet "improper"; who owned to acquaintance with "Bow Bells" and the "Christian World," but not with Carlyle or Goethe; who said "Sir" in speaking to gentlemen, and "my lady" at every second word to the Ambassador; such a young woman had not only never been in society herself, but had never belonged to, or come in contact with persons in society either. She might have been a nursemaid, or a national school teacher (not a milliner or a lady's-maid, the ladies agreed, as in that case she would have had some idea of dressing herself); and as for St. Laurent, he had been guilty of a grave impertinence in introducing such a person into their exalted circle, and representing her as a

young lady, the daughter of well-born parents in reduced circumstances.

In effect Madame St. Laurent was dropped almost as soon as she was taken up, and Monsieur was made to learn the reason why; not only through the sympathetic confidences of certain of his friends, but by the chilling manner and restricted smiles of the great ladies themselves. Of course he was disgusted, furiously so, but, alas! more with his wife than with the fastidious friends who had weighed and found her wanting. In truth his brief passion, swiftly satiated and not kept alive by any charms of wit, conversation, or even sympathetic companionableness on the part of his young wife, was already dying out. He felt that he had made, or, as he put it, had been trapped into making, a hopeless *mésalliance*, and for the future took the easy course of ignoring it, leaving the bride whom society rejected at home, and going abroad "en garçon" himself, after the manner of old times, finding also consolations after the same manner for the pruderies, the timidity, and primness which, however provocative in a mistress, were unendurable in a wife.

At first Madame was rather glad of the change. She had made her plunge into society, and had been at once chilled and appalled by it. She had climbed to the top of the social tree, and felt about as comfortable there as a fish at the same arboreal altitude. The fine ladies she thought to ape so successfully, the genteel society in which she considered herself formed to move, had disappointed and flouted her. Though she could not understand one part in ten of their conversation, she understood that they had somehow fathomed her real position, and looked down on her as of erst she had looked down on her tipsy Uncle James and poor Joan. Though she was too dull to even detect the particular points in which she failed to pass muster, or to correct them, she was not too dull to detect that she was snubbed, and to feel irate thereat. For, indeed, if her ideas on the subject of dress (full dress especially) moved the fine ladies' mirth, theirs shocked her unaffectedly. If her vulgar little pruderies, affectations, and narrowness disgusted them, their breadth of ideas and careless coolness, their freedom and ease, puzzled and appalled her. It positively seemed to her like a going back to the jovial anarchism of the lowest class of all, and she would not, if she could, have

imitated it. Indeed, it was far easier to her to admire and model herself on the ceremonious courtesy and formal condescension shown her by the old French families; the venerable Comte de Mailly and his young wife in particular—persons of the "ancien régime," whose life-long intimacy with her husband gave them an influence over him which they would willingly have used for the benefit of his wife as well as himself.

It was the de Maillys, indeed, who had so often joined his lawyers in advising him to marry, and who were the only persons besides those functionaries who knew of the almost hopeless state of embarrassment into which St. Laurent had allowed his monetary affairs to drift; and it was therefore in the purest spirit of kindness that, when they saw that the marriage had so far failed that he was already drifting back into his old habits, the Countess decided on calling on the young wife, opening her eyes to the true state of the case, and urging her to use all her fascinations and influence with her husband to induce him to give up Parisian life altogether, and settle himself on his estate in Brittany, where, with economy and mutual affection, the couple might yet lead a life of homely dignity and domestic affection.

Unfortunately poor Jane had neither the breadth nor generosity of spirit necessary for taking the kindly-meant counsel well. She had not been in ignorance of her husband's character when she married him; but then to girls of her kind it seemed a natural and accepted thing that gentlemen should be "a little gay," and addicted to ruining girls who were "silly" enough to let them. They steadied down after marriage of course; and when she saw, or suspected, that in St. Laurent's case this "steadying down" had not taken place, it was more consonant with her own character to affect ignorance of the wrong done to her, and swallow her mortification in private, than to either shrink in horror from the sinner or try, from the depths of her own love and purity, to win him back to virtue. That the de Maillys should be aware of her humiliation was therefore a reason for Jane to dislike them with all the rankling intensity of a petty nature, and to take a small pleasure in repulsing their overtures of friendship; but in truth the loneliness of her position was almost unendurable, and her remorseful yearnings for the home and parents she had so lightly abandoned so added to it that she entreated

her husband to be allowed to leave him, if only for a visit of a few weeks to her father and mother.

St. Laurent refused, and the de Maillys encouraged him in doing so. It seemed to them indeed a peculiarly ill-judged request; not only because they had just succeeded in inducing him to give up his Paris residence and prepare to return to the home in Brittany he had so long neglected, but because Jane herself, being near her confinement, it appeared of all things desirable that the son and heir hoped for should be born under his father's roof-tree. And the poor woman submitted in silence. There was nothing else indeed for her to do, but perhaps distress of mind contributed to the fact that the son, when he did arrive, was born dead, and before she had fully recovered her strength again she received news of the decease of both her parents from small-pox within a fortnight of one another.

All vestiges of girlhood died within Jane St. Laurent from that day. Even the pink colour went out of her cheeks, and the youthful lightness from her step, and, though she said little of her sorrow—always reticent, since to marriage she had become more so than ever—the signs of inward suffering were too apparent in her not to rouse all her husband's pity and tenderness; and, when she humbly begged him to allow her to engage the person who had nursed her parents through their last illness for her own personal attendant, he gave the required permission with positive cordiality. She did not say that the person was her own cousin Joan, who had left her place as general servant to perform the absent daughter's duties to her uncle and aunt. Madame St. Laurent had too much false shame still with regard to her connections, and too little trust in her husband, to dare to be frank with him even then; but she wrote plainly and urgently to Joan, concealing none of her woes and troubles, and entreating her to accept a home for life with a good salary and the position of housekeeper and confidential maid at Les Châtaigniers, on the one condition of not betraying the relationship between them.

And Joan consented; not without some contempt felt and expressed for her cousin's shufflings and cowardice, but with a shrewd practical perception of the advantages contained in the proposal for herself and those of her family who needed her help, and with only this condition in return. She

would stand by Jane to the death, and work for her as willingly as for anybody, but call her own flesh and blood "ma'am," or "missis," she wouldn't, not to save her life, and nothing would make her.

With this proviso, therefore, Joan—afterwards called Joanna, for greater grandeur—came, and with her coming Madame St. Laurent felt as if she had taken a great step in retrieval of her past shortcomings towards her family, and began to reap a speedy reward in the companionship and sympathy of her homely kinswoman. They had plenty to do and think of now, both of them, for M. St. Laurent's affairs were in a far worse state than he had in any way supposed, and it was only by most careful management and economy, aided by loans from the Comte de Mailly, that they were able to retain the property at all, and make both ends meet for some time. Fortunately for Madame these economies did not affect her, as they might have done a person used from childhood to the comforts and luxuries of life; and, still more fortunately, she developed, with the need of them, a perfect genius for household saving and good management, which filled her husband and even Joanna with surprise and admiration, and caused the former to regard her for the first time with something like positive respect. That a whole establishment should be kept up in decency and moderate comfort, and a margin afforded for his own "menus plaisirs" during the year with less expense than it cost him to maintain his bachelor apartments for a month, was a marvel to him—the one consolation for what he bitterly regarded as the cruelty of his exile from the only place where life was worth living—and if it was obtained at the cost of a niggardly parsimony both abroad and at home, grinding down of wages and illiberality to the poor, that mattered little to him. His long absence from Brittany had made him more Parisian than Breton in his sympathies, and it only roused a keen feeling of dislike against his wife among the deep-feeling, impulsive Bretons, already prejudiced against her by the fact of her alien nationality, and by whispers emanating from the kitchens at Mailly as to her plebeian origin.

And then Vera came!

M. St. Laurent had always been indulgent to his wife in one respect, he had not interfered with her religious views. In the beginning, indeed, he had taken it as a matter of course that she should go to

Maas; but that was when he was still "furiously" in love with her; and when she broke from her usual submissiveness to plead with more passion and fire than he had ever before seen in her, that she would rather be slain then and there than "bow her knee in the temples of Baal," he gave up the point.

To obtain the same liberty for a daughter, however, was a different thing, especially when the reckless pleasure-seeker of those days was transformed into the sulky and discontented country gentleman. But Madame made her petition just when her own health was so impaired by nursing him through a long and severe illness, that the doctors warned him that only the greatest care and consideration could avert the risk of a similar disappointment to that which had before overtaken them. St. Laurent made haste to pacify his wife, therefore, by granting her petition. It was only a hypothetical one after all, and he certainly hoped that no girl might arrive to call for its fulfilments; but, when a few weeks later, the girl did make her appearance, it must be said to his credit that he showed no disposition to go back from his word, or to prevent Madame from sending Joanna for the Protestant chaplain at Quimper and having the babe baptized before it was a month old.

He nicknamed it "La petite Huguenote," and cared very little for it from the first; but to his wife this was of small moment. What she wanted was her daughter for her very own; a daughter who should be always with her, never forsake her, never look down on her or imagine that it was possible for others to do so, but who should have no other guide than her mother's voice, no higher motive than her mother's will; and who withal should be in every particular "quite the lady;" not, perhaps, after the pattern of "those Paris women" of whom Madame still retained an uneasy and resentful recollection; but after that upon which she had desired to model herself in early days,—her own very superior and superfine teacher, Miss Smithers for example, and a certain Mrs. Jones, the wealthy widow of an ex-alderman and the leading lady in the gloomy little Dissenting congregation to which Jane had belonged. This was her double aim, to achieve which, and to achieve it so perfectly that her husband should have no excuse for taking her daughter from her, and sending her to some fashionable and godless boarding-school, while Vera on the other hand

should so grow up in dependence on her mother as to have no wish or ambition to leave her side, formed the one untiring endeavour, the one gnawing anxiety of her life. It was for this end that she so scrupulously attended to Vera's education, and modelled it on the pattern of her own, so that no strange or unsafe ideas might find their way to the girl's mind; for this end that Vera was never allowed to soil her gentility by speaking to the under-servants or peasantry in the neighbourhood, lest, in so doing, she should seem to betray an affinity with the working classes which might reflect on her mother; and withheld as far as possible from intimacy with girls in a superior station for fear they, on the other hand, should inspire her with any thing like discontent or dissatisfaction with her own home régime: for this end even that, when some supplementary teaching in music, etc., were found absolutely necessary, Leah was chosen in preference to several ladies advertising themselves as of high degree and aristocratic refinement, for the very reason of her supposed mediocrity and amenableness to Madame's patronage.

Poor mother! Such ceaseless striving, such constant anxiety for so poor an aim, so pitiful and narrow a summing up of a life unspeakably pitiful too in the very shallowness and vulgarity of its highest aspirations and bitterest disappointments; its entire absence of anything like one noble thought, one pure or lofty principle, one spark of that human passion or religious enthusiasm which can kindle equally in peer and peasant, and elevates both alike!

And, after all, she could not even keep the one object of all this watchfulness and jealousy for ever. Nay, she was not even to keep her as long as many mothers do. Vera was only fourteen when M. St. Laurent came to his wife with a communication which sounded to her like the death-knell of her brief happiness. At that time the girl was tall for her age and looked almost as full grown as she did at twenty, though with the contrasting charm of almost infantile softness of feature and delicacy of complexion; and it was this contrast which struck the present Comte de Mailly, as, visiting at Les Châtaigniers after an absence from Brittany of nearly two years, he came upon the maiden singing softly to herself, as she swung to and fro on the pendent bough of an old apple tree; and the picture was so charming a one that he crossed the grass to speak to her. Vera answered simply and shyly

enough; but with that indefinable sweetness of eye and languor of lip which she had inherited from her grandmother; and though the Count's Gallic sense of propriety did not permit him to detain her five minutes, he went straight from her to St. Laurent's study, and then and there made the proposal to him which it so overcame Madame to hear. She could hardly gasp her answer:

"Marry her! My Vera! That baby! Oh, it isn't possible."

Her husband cut her short roughly, and with that look in his eyes which always cowed her.

"Pas possible? Et pourquoi donc? Tiens, ma femme, art thou then still so 'bourgeoise' as to be unable to appreciate the pleasure of seeing thy daughter a Countess; or is it that thy mediocre training has unfitted her for the position of a lady of rank? Dame! but in that case it will be advisable to send her at once to the Convent of the Sacré Cœur, in Paris, to acquire a little polish and become like other demoiselles of position."

And before that threat Madame succumbed almost without resistance. In effect too was it not a grand thing for a woman of her mental calibre that her child, the baker's little granddaughter, should become the wife of a nobleman, the mistress of a magnificent chateau within a mile of her mother's roof, and where she could still live almost under the shelter of her mother's wing? In truth there were consolations in the picture; and when Joanna spoke of the Count's age, which was identical with that of Madame herself, and called it selling the child, the poor lady blushed nervously, and said:

"Ah, no, it's that which will make it safer for her. They—gentlemen I mean—get so much steadier when they are middle-aged. You see, yourself, Monsieur has done so; and after all it is in his hands. He might have proposed something worse, some one who would have taken her quite away; while now—who knows what may happen before she is grown up!"

For Madame had made one stipulation, that the marriage should not take place till Vera was twenty-one. "English girls are

children till then, and she is specially childish," the mother urged, and rather to her surprise, the Count himself acceded, with less difficulty than her husband. In truth he was in no hurry to marry and settle down. He liked bachelorhood, and had amusements of his own which fully satisfied him for the time being. What he desired was the pleasure of knowing that a soft, fair, innocent creature was growing up for him till the hour when he should tire of his present life and claim her; and for this he was not only ready to do without "dot," but to release M. St. Laurent from the heavy debts which he had already incurred towards the de Mally estate, and make him fresh loans for the improvement of his own. Further, he suggested a stipulation which coincided so exactly with Madame's wishes that she could almost have embraced him for it. Vera was not to know of his proposals till the day when he was permitted to renew them; and in the meantime she was to continue to live in the country with her parents, and not be introduced to society and the admiration of other men.

The bargain was made and concluded; but during the last year Madame St. Laurent had begun to feel it a hard one. It seemed to her that the Count was not only master of the situation, but of her husband and her child. Everything had to be referred to him in a way mortifying to any woman. Even the improvement in her accomplishments which led to Leah's visit was his suggestion; and of late, as he grew older and Vera more womanly, he had manifested such an evident desire to curtail the time of his probation that Madame, dreading to lose her one treasure a day before it was necessary, jumped even at the excuse afforded by her husband's illness for sending the girl out of his sight for a time. But she had never expected such a result from her action, as had actually come to pass. She thought indeed that she had guarded most carefully against even the risk of it; and her dismay at the news contained in Vera's letter was as great, as the wrath and excitement roused in both her husband and the Count by that of Dr. Marstrand.

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A STERN CHASE.

A STORY IN THREE PARTS.

By MRS. CASHEL HOBY.

THE THIRD PART.

CHAPTER X. THE DOWRY OF DOLORES.

THAT Don Norberto de Rodas was a person "bad to beat," all who had ever contested a point with him, or supported an interest opposed to his, could testify. His modes of manifesting that badness, were, however, as various as the occasions that provoked it, and different men would give different versions of his character under circumstances of antagonism to him. He could be violent and sudden when it suited his purpose; but he could as readily be temperate, smooth, and plausible. In all his dealings with Doña Mercedes he had adopted the gentle and conciliatory course: firstly, because he had never underestimated the strength of her position as compared with his; and secondly, because he wisely recognised that, in relations so permanent as theirs, suavity was the only quality by which he could hope to replace regard and confidence. In the long past days, when Doña Mercedes was a young wife, with a possible rival in her beautiful stepdaughter, the kind of confederacy which Norberto had established between himself and her had been invaluable for his purposes, although it had failed to accomplish the chief of them, and he had never been so wanting in tact as to remind her of it since it had ceased to have an active existence. That confederacy had not been succeeded by intimacy when the death of Don Saturnino, and the mental condition of Doña Mercedes's son, made Norberto the inevitable as well as the natural protector of her interests. He did not forgive her for having neglected to

use her influence to procure a more liberal provision for him by Don Saturnino's will; and she remained entirely engrossed in the one object of her love and source of her grief. It was, therefore, as new as it was startling to them both to be again brought together by anything that lay beneath the surface of their respective lives.

The effect upon Doña Mercedes of the discovery which she had made at the Convent of Las Anonciades was overwhelming. She had not crossed that threshold since her politic visit after the flight of Ines, and she had not now gone thither with any hope of gaining consolation, but only under the compulsion of her late-stirred remorse, and in the mood which tries to shift the pressure of pain, but does not hope to get rid of it.

Doña Mercedes convinced Sister Santa Gertrudis that she had been up to that moment ignorant of the existence of Ines's child, by the agitation which she betrayed on being questioned. The nun's astonishment was great; she had taken it for granted that the child had been brought up in England, and if she had sometimes thought it strange that a formal announcement of the death of Ines—sent by Don Norberto de Rodas—was the only communication which had been made to her, she had not resented the fact. The convent had unpleasant associations for the De Rodas family; it was not unnatural that they should drop the convent.

Her dreaded interview with Norberto over, Doña Mercedes set herself to reflect upon it calmly, and was thankful that it had passed so quietly. She was, of course, conscious of the strength of her own position with respect to him, but the old fear, which had lain dormant for so many years, revived when she had to stir the ashes of the past, and would not be laid.

She believed Norberto's statement so far as it went; but she suspected him—as it happened, wrongfully—of the suppression of a personal communication from Ines. She did not believe that the sole source of his information was the communication made on behalf of Miss Merivale by Mr. Ritchie. Her instinct told her that Ines would have made another effort for her child's sake, when death was drawing near to her; and she believed that Norberto had destroyed a letter written under those circumstances. She knew, however, that she would have to abide by what he had told her; for if he had indeed done this thing he would never acknowledge it.

The night was sultry, and Doña Mercedes could not sleep. Hour after hour she slowly paced the floor of the large, cool, moonlit room, and communed with her own strangely softened heart in the utter solitude made around her by time's changes.

What if she had loved Ines, and faithfully tried to replace the mother whom she had lost? Not for the first time was Doña Mercedes confronted by this question; but hitherto she had angrily put it from her. Now she hearkened to it, with all its pain and reproach, and with a great retrospective pity for Don Saturnino.

There are times in our moral life when hours do the work of years. This was such a time in the life of Doña Mercedes. The dawn broke in upon her sleepless vigil, and found her with remorse changed into repentance, and all her mind set on making reparation to the daughter of Ines, if happily she were living, for the injury done to one who had been so long beyond the reach of reparation.

Don Norberto was to bring to her the letter which had been written by Mr. Ritchie, thirteen years previously, together with a copy of his own. He had stated, falsely, that the appeal of Ines to her father, written at Southampton, had been destroyed, and he had, of course, made no mention of the threats to which he had resorted in his reply; so that Doña Mercedes was, like Lillas Merivale and Henry Rodney, without a clue to the mystery of the second marriage. Had she but known of those threats; had she been aware that the man whose nature she held, with reason, to be so implacable, had vowed a vendetta against Ines' child; she would probably have devised some other means of making the reparation upon which she was bent than that which came readily to her hand.

Norberto also had thought a good deal over the position, although he had not sacrificed an hour's sleep to it; and when he came to Doña Mercedes on the following day, bringing the promised documents, he was prepared for any course into which her contemptible superstition might drive her. Several courses were open to her, and he was but little concerned as to which of them she might adopt. The fabric of his tranquillity had been rudely shaken; the passion of a past time had been re-awakened; but his profound and cultivated dissimulation was ready for use in the emergency.

He showed Doña Mercedes at once that he meant to take the whole thing for granted, and to treat it in a business-like fashion.

"That is the correspondence," he said, handing her two papers, "and it sums up my knowledge on the subject. You will see that no material wrong to the child was done by my concealment of this communication—at the time for your good, as I think you will not dispute."

"I shall not dispute anything, Norberto. I blame you in nothing; you acted for the best. Myself I am free to blame, and I look to you to advise me, and to help me to make atonement."

"That is a matter of course," he answered, with a well-assumed air of relief. "When you have told me what it is you wish to do, I will give the best of my ability to the doing of it, even though it must be at the cost of admitting a serious mistake on my own part."

This unusual tone surprised Doña Mercedes. She was, however, too much relieved by it to listen to her suspicions.

"Thank you, Norberto," she said. "I will tell you all that is in my mind."

She glanced over the copy of his letter to Mr. Walter Ritchie, and observed how skilfully, by his statement that he wrote on behalf of Don Saturnino de Rodas, he had covered his responsibility; but she laid down the paper without allowing him to see that she had perceived this.

"When we have ascertained where the daughter of Ines is—for our purposes we take it for granted that she is living—and in what position, I should like to propose that she should come out to reside with me for as long a period as her English relations would permit, in order that she may become acquainted with her mother's country, and with what may be her own future home, if she likes to make it so."

"Do you bear in mind that she will be

quite English in her education and ideas, and that you have never fallen into the way of liking the English!"

"I don't forget that; but I do not hesitate, nevertheless. If you have no greater objection to make, we may pass over this one."

"Very well," said Norberto, in cheerful assent; "then the ground is cleared. You will write the invitation to my uncle's unknown granddaughter, and I shall enclose it in my explanation to this Señor Ritchie or his representatives; then we shall see what will happen. I can only say that I hope everything may turn out according to your wishes."

"If she comes to me," said Doña Mercedes nervously, and with an involuntarily wistful look at Norberto, "I hope I may be able to make her happy."

Don Norberto repressed the sardonic smile of retrospective meaning that hovered about his thin lips, and answered gravely:

"To will, with you, has always been to succeed."

On the following day, that of the dispatch of the mail to England, Don Norberto brought the draft of his letter to Doña Mercedes. She approved of it and gave him her own letter, which was in French and addressed to Miss Merivale, to read.

This letter was feelingly and most courteously composed, and Don Norberto read it with as much wonder as anger; but he expressed his approval in terms as well-chosen as its own. It would have taken a keen observer indeed to discern in his even phrases the deadly wrath of a man beaten in his dearest hopes, and defeated in his steadiest and worst purpose, for the second time—after a lapse of years sufficient in any ordinary case to subdue the strongest of passions, and to efface the keenest of memories.

From that day forth Doña Mercedes began to resume her former interest in her surroundings; she was rehearsing for the time when the daughter of Ines would be with her; she was filling her life with purposes in order that phantoms might find no place there. She placed the girl's figure in the large, bare, vacant rooms. She disposed their scanty furniture in imagination for Ines's child as she had never done for Ines herself; she even pictured to herself a return to the world and its ways, for the sake of the girl to whom this foreign home would be so new, and might be made so pleasant. She did not forget her grief, nor did she

imagine that the vacant places in her heart could ever be filled, but the bitterness was assuaged. She had asked Miss Merivale to send her a photograph of Miss Rosslyn, and she began to be impatient for the answer to her letter long before it could arrive. Would the girl be like Ines? Doña Mercedes hoped at first she might not prove so, but as the agitation of her discovery wore off by degrees, she blamed herself for this, as a shrinking from a just part of her penance; and she had the covering removed from the portrait of Ines's mother, which might have been that of Ines herself, and would sit before it for hours, busy with her embroidery and her thoughts.

When in due time Don Norberto de Rodas received Mr. Walter Ritchie's answer to his communication, it occasioned him a good deal of thought. One immediate result of the perusal of his reflections was his searching for some papers relating to a large transaction with a certain Spanish house of business, and taking them with him when he went to see Doña Mercedes.

"The mail is in," he said, "and the letters we have been expecting have arrived. Here is one for you."

She took it eagerly, but her eyes did not leave his face.

"The Señor Ritchie tells me strange news, and in a brief way. The girl is living, is still with her father's sister, but is to be married very shortly, with the approbation of all her friends, including that man who, as you may remember, brought the other to your house, and whom I always suspected of having a share in what happened."

"In the flight of Ines?"

Don Norberto nodded. He never uttered her name or Hugh's.

"Yes—Rodney. You remember him?"

"Perfectly."

"I had heard that he was dead, and I repeated the statement to the agent. This Señor Rodney has appeared in London among these friends of the other Englishman, and was intending to come to Cuba and tell us all the news that we have learned without his troubling himself so much, when our letters arrived and spared him the voyage. You had better read Miss Merivale's letter; I am referred to it for further information."

Doña Mercedes, with her fear of him revived by the tone of his voice, which revealed that he was struggling with some feeling too strong for him for the moment,

obeyed him. Miss Merivale wrote in French, most graciously, and with an expression as frank as it was dignified, of her gratification at the nature of Doña Mercedes' communication, and then she entered into the particulars of Dolores' position at the moment. The marriage was to take place in six weeks from the date of Miss Merivale's letter, and not only was a photograph of Dolores enclosed, as requested, but one of Julian Courtland was also sent. The feelings with which Dolores had heard of the recognition of her by the survivors of her mother's family were gracefully conveyed, and due acknowledgment was made of the generous intentions towards her, intimated by Doña Mercedes in addition to her statement of the sum to which Dolores was entitled in right of her mother. Then came a passage that quelled the tumult of disappointment and regret with which Doña Mercedes had read all the foregoing portion, with its announcement of the subversion of her plans, and the defeat of her hopes. What might not Dolores have been to her? She was to be nothing to her now. There was to be no chance for her, no new spring of hope and consolation for her, nothing but the poor, bare reparation of money! But Miss Merivale went on to propose that the visit which Doña Mercedes had invited Dolores to make to her should still take place, the bride and bridegroom extending their tour to the "Pearl of the Antilles."

Doña Mercedes read the letter aloud, and Norberto de Rodas listened to its contents and her comments without a word.

"Dolores!" she said. "A name Ines liked, as I remember; but I wonder she did not give the child her mother's name, Modesta. And this is she. A lovely creature; very like Ines, and without the least look of her father, whom I remember perfectly. See."

Doña Mercedes held out the photograph to Norberto, but he put it aside, and said roughly:

"I am no judge of likenesses."

She looked up at him; his face wore a fierce look which she had not seen there for years.

"Can it be possible," she thought, "that jealousy and resentment are living in him still?"

She replaced the two cards in the envelope, taking no notice of his rude speech, and simply asked him what he thought of Miss Merivale's letter.

Don Norberto thought well of it on the

whole. He could have wished for the sake of Doña Mercedes that the girl had come out to her free, so that she might have remained in Cuba had she wished to do so; but, as this could not be, Miss Merivale's proposal was the next best thing. He supposed there would not be any likelihood of this Señor Courtland—another barbarous English name—wishing to settle at Santiago. Miss Merivale had said nothing of his profession, and it might be that he could do so. Don Norberto said this so carelessly that he threw Doña Mercedes off her guard, and she answered:

"If they are both what we like, there could be no such good way of building up the old house again."

"Precisely my meaning," said he, with an approving nod. Then they talked over the letters, and the mode in which a quick reply might be sent, so as to reach Dolores before her wedding, and Don Norberto had completely removed the impression which his momentary failure in self-control had produced, before he asked the permission of Doña Mercedes to turn aside for a while to the discussion of a pressing matter of business. He then produced the papers he had brought with him, and having explained the matter to which they referred with his customary lucidity, effectually recalled the wandering attention of Doña Mercedes by informing her that he considered it absolutely necessary for him to go to Spain in order to secure certain jeopardised interests. He had been arriving at this conclusion for some time past, but had not liked to trouble her on the subject until after her mind had been set at rest by the arrival of letters from England, and now he felt no time must be lost. He regretted the necessity, but was quite satisfied that it existed.

Don Norberto's explanation was plausible, and Doña Mercedes had nothing to do except agree to his proposal.

"Of course I also regret the necessity very much," she said, "especially as you will be away when Dolores and her husband arrive, if you start immediately, and they make their visit here shortly after their marriage. This will be a most unfortunate occurrence."

Don Norberto smiled in the most frank and amiable way as he replied:

"There is no help for my being away when they arrive, but as I do not entertain any doubt of your persuading them to remain as long as you wish to detain them, that will not matter so very much after all."

I shall make no delay, but will start for home the very hour my business is done."

Don Norberto's preparations were made expeditiously, and he took his departure by the next outgoing mail. At his last conference with Doña Mercedes, she consulted him upon the subject of the dowry of Dolores, as to what sum she ought to add to the original inheritance of Ines, and the most convenient manner of arranging the affair. Never had she found Don Norberto so agreeable, so ready, so liberal-minded; for he was usually much averse to witnessing the expenditure even of other people's money. The interesting nature of the strange circumstances seemed, however, to have completely transformed him; his vicarious stinginess and his habitual tendency to undervalue all claims which had to be recognised in money, forsook him for the nonce. He entered into the matter in the most liberal spirit, only proposing to Doña Mercedes that she should wait until she had had an opportunity of forming a serious estimate of the character of the young Englishman with the barbarous name, before she handed over money to his keeping. He reminded her that her offer had been made to Dolores only, and could not have been taken into consideration with regard to the marriage. In a word he said: "Give lavishly, but do not be in a hurry about it," and she recognised the soundness of his counsel.

Thus it happened that when Don Norberto came to take leave of Doña Mercedes, he found her in a very pleasant frame of mind respecting him, and they parted with a display of greater cordiality than had existed between them from the time of Don Saturnino's death.

Great was the delight and the excitement of Dolores, when she was made acquainted with the new events in her own history. The story was told to her by Lillias, under the instruction of Rodney, in such a way as to convey the smallest possible amount of condemnation of her mother's relatives, and she was too young and too little versed in the ways of the world to suspect that anything was kept back from her, or to put questions respecting the far past either to her informants or to herself. The prospect of distant travel with Julian, with such a goal in view as her mother's old home and the welcome of her mother's people, was enchanting to

her imagination and her feelings, and she was never tired of discussing it with her great friend and ally, Henry Rodney. For that much-travelled gentleman Dolores entertained ardent admiration. He knew everything, and he had forgotten nothing. How vivid were the pictures which he drew for her of her mother's country, its physical features, its people and their manners and customs! His memory was so vivid and minute that he could describe the house in which her mother had lived as though he had seen it quite recently, and he had endless anecdotes to tell her of his brief companionship with Hugh Rosslyn. That he had known the father whom she had never seen, and of whom, strange to say, her mother had never spoken to her—she was certain of that, and persisted in the assertion—was Rodney's great charm for Dolores. There was a portrait of Hugh, by no means remarkable as a work of art, which he had painted for Lillias in very early days, and Dolores had been most anxious to know whether his friend thought it so good a likeness as Aunt Lillias did. The portrait was very like Hugh Rosslyn, and gave one of his best looks. Then Dolores wanted Rodney's opinion as to whether she resembled her father at all, and was so much disappointed when he represented to her that it was impossible she could do so, being the living image of her mother, that he reconsidered his judgment and thought he detected a likeness in the expression. Dolores reported this to Lillias in triumph, and Lillias, who justified Mr. Wyndham's foreboding of her amenability to Rodney's influence, was very soon able to recognise the "look" which had never struck her previously.

It was arranged that the young couple were to sail for the West Indies in the last week of their honeymoon, and great was the effect of this decision upon the important matter of Dolores's wedding-clothes. Rodney knew all about what she ought to take, and what she must leave at home, and was, in fact, simply invaluable. In truth he was deeply interested in the girl, sincerely fond of her, and involuntarily, unreasonably, instinctively, sorry for her. He was careful to check himself upon the latter point, for he did not know any fact to the disadvantage of Julian Courtland, and he could not have said anything positive except that he had not taken to Julian, and Julian had not taken to him.

It was strange, but true, that if there

was a drawback which Dolores would have admitted, to the happiness of the weeks which preceded her marriage, it existed in Julian himself. She wondered why it was that she did not feel so much at her ease with him as before she was blest with the knowledge that he loved her with lover's love, and why she sometimes failed to please him now, even in those very things which had formerly pleased him most. But when she ventured to put these timid girlish doubts before him, he would always turn them off by protesting that he was out of humour with the fuss, the preparations, the delay, the people about them, and that when they two should have left all this worry behind, he should be perfectly happy. Now Dolores, a simple, happy, healthy-minded girl, liked all the things which he included in the opprobrious term "worry," and was sometimes not quite sorry when "business" detained Julian in London. She dwelt with delight upon his assurances that all he wanted was her uninterrupted society, and she devoured and treasured his little notes of excuse, which he turned very prettily.

Money matters were arranged satisfactorily for Julian, or rather for Mr. Wyndham, although as that astute person had foreseen, Mr. Rodney was consulted. Julian might confidently look forward to paying Mr. Wyndham off, and getting finally rid of him, as soon after the marriage as he could with propriety devote himself to affairs of so prosaic a kind. An arrangement was made between the two that they were to meet at Paris, where Julian and Dolores were to pass a few days on their way back to England, other business taking Mr. Wyndham thither at the same time.

Julian regarded the prospect of the trip to Cuba with favour. He wanted to get right away. He told himself constantly that he should be all right when he was in a new scene and among totally new people; that a man can always forget things if he chooses, and that he (Julian) did choose. Also, that he meant to behave well to Dolores, whom he really liked until he had to think of her as his wife, instead of Margaret whom he really loved; and that she was such a fool and so absurdly in love with him that she would never know the difference between the sham and the true, and being a thoroughly good girl, would not be too tiresome when she got over her romance. After all, it was worth anything to be free, and then, he could not have helped it. To that point

all his attempts at consoling himself came back. He had, however, one source of pure, unalloyed pleasure; it was Mr. Wyndham's ignorance of the Cuba affair. Had this man known that Dolores was doubly an heiress, he might have put the screw on Julian much more tightly; as it was, he would be paid, dismissed, and done with, and his victim would be speeding towards a second fortune, with no lien upon it, not one shilling of which should ever find its way into Mr. Wyndham's pocket. And the beauty of the thing was that the money he should never touch, never hear of, was money that he might have enjoyed, that had actually been his wife's by right. The malicious pleasure with which Julian contemplated this instance of the irony of fate, constantly reminding himself of it when he was with its unconscious subject was, in fact, the chief alleviation of this period of his existence.

Mr. Wyndham was, indeed, unaware of the Cuban incident; so far Julian was well entitled to the enjoyment of his joke; but he was fully cognisant of his friend's intention of getting rid of him altogether by the approaching money settlement between them. Now, Mr. Wyndham greatly liked the looks of Miss Rosalyn, and whenever he saw that Julian's intention was particularly present to Julian's mind, he would repeat to himself:

"She and I will be very good friends some day."

So time went on, and the wedding-day of Julian Courtland and Dolores Rosalyn arrived.

CHRONICLES OF SCOTTISH COUNTIES.

THE BORDER COUNTIES.

WHEN we cross the Borders to Scotland, it will be preferably by the Ladykirk ford, within sight of

Norham's castled steep
And Tweed's fair river broad and deep
And Cheviot's mountains lone;

for here we are at once among the most stirring reminiscences of the old Border region. By this ford, what armies have crossed in olden time, what trains of knights and men-at-arms, what bands of rude Border prickers, and of yet wilder warriors from the Highlands! all eager to share in the spoil of the English land. At Holiwell Haugh, close by, the English King met the Scottish nobility at a famous conference, which was to settle the claims of Bruce and Baliol to the crown—the be-

ginning of a series of mutual wrongs and injuries that estranged the two kingdoms, which had hitherto had but little ill-blood between them.

There was always peril in crossing the broad bed of the Tweed, a river sudden in its floods and capricious in its moods. James the Fourth was nearly drowned one day in crossing, and vowed in his peril a chapel to Our Lady should he escape. The chapel was duly built, and gave its name to the ford; but no power could stay the doomed King from that last fatal crossing, when he led his chivalry

Of gallant Gordons many a one,
And many a stubborn Highlandman,
And many a rugged Border clan,

to the fatal field of Flodden.

Once over the Tweed and we are in the county of Berwick, and in the fertile district of the Merse. When Marmion took the same journey

The Merse forayers were abroad.

But there is no danger of that kind now, as the Merse is one of the richest and best settled districts of Scotland. "Marche and Tevidale are the best mixt and most plentiful shires for grass and corn, for fleshes and bread, in all our lands." It was thus of old, even when Border feuds and raids sometimes spread desolation around; but now, after centuries of peace and prosperity, the district has become known as the garden of Scotland—a garden hedged about with bleak mountain ranges, but everywhere green and luxuriant with hedgerows and stately trees; with charming cottages half hidden in the foliage; with solid farm-houses that rise almost to the dignity of mansions, surrounded by handsome farm-buildings and well-filled stackyards.

Beyond is the moorland region of Lammermuir, with here and there a rough Border peel or tower crumbling to decay among the heather: a district of wide sheep farms, whose sturdy, hospitable farmers are built of a mould more grand and liberal than elsewhere.

In following the Scottish side of the Tweed upwards, Coldstream is the chief town we come to, a thriving place once, as much resorted to as Gretna Green by runaway couples eager to be married. There was no blacksmith, indeed, at Coldstream who set himself up as competent to forge the boards of wedlock, but the innkeepers undertook the business, and did a thriving trade in consequence, till an alteration in

the English marriage laws put an end to the traffic over the Borders. Coldstream has also a familiar sound to English ears dating from the time when General Monk lay here in 1659-60, waiting events and raising that regiment of his, hereafter to be known as the Coldstream Guards.

Half-a-dozen miles above Coldstream the Tweed becomes entirely a Scottish river, and the Border line turns abruptly southward, marked by the gently swelling ranges of the Cheviot Hills.

The county town of Berwickshire is Greenlaw, a place in nowise remarkable, but the place of most importance is Dunse, as testified by the old saying, "Dunse dings a'." But whatever fame may attach to Dunse as the birthplace of the famous medieval scholar, Dunus Scotus, belongs more properly to the old town which was pulled down a good while ago, and whose site is now within the grounds of the modern castle of Dunse. The chief feature of the place is the green, round-topped hill of Dunse, or Dunse-law, the view from which is well described in one of the best of Wilson's "Border Tales." "Ye have the whole Merse lying beneath your feet like a beautifully laid out and glorious garden, the garden o' some mighty conqueror that had converted a province into a pleasure ground, and walled it round wi' mountains. There ye behold the Blackadder wimpling along, the Whiteadder curling round below you, and as far as ye can see, now glittering in a haugh or buried amongst wooded braes. Before ye are the Cheviots, wi' a broad country, the very sister of the Merse lying below them, and the Tweed shining out here and there like a lake. To the right ye behold Roxburghshire in the dimness o' distance, wi' the smoke of towns, villages, and hamlets rising in mid-air. On each elbow ye have the purple Lammermuir, where a hundred hirsels graze, and to the east the mighty ocean and the ships wi' white sails spread to the sun," or as the Border poet sings, the author of the "Day Festival":

The herds beneath some leafy tree
Amid the flowers they lie,
The stable ships upon the sea
Tends up their sails to dry.

With all its tranquil beauty the scene has often been filled with the smoke clouds of war, and the passage of marching legions, as well as fierce and random broils of Border warfare. An incident of this latter class was the slaughter of the gallant

and accomplished French nobleman, de la Bastie, known among the Borders as Tilliebatie, who had been appointed by the Regent Albany, in the years of confusion and disorder which followed the fatal field of Flodden, Warden of the Eastern Marches. The office of Warden was claimed as a right by the powerful family of the Lords Home; but the chief of the house had recently been executed by order of the Regent, and the Homes resolved at once to assert their right, and avenge the death of their kinsman at the cost of the intruding Frenchman.

Some Border fray about the old tower of Langton—no longer in existence, but a noted place of arms in the Border wars—brought the active and zealous young Warden upon the scene to regulate matters. The whole matter was arranged, it is thought, as a snare for the Warden's destruction, and no sooner did he appear at the head of a small following, than he was surrounded by swarms of Borderers. Tilliebatie rode for his life, hoping to reach Dunbar, the nearest point of safety, but, becoming entangled in a swamp still called *Batie's Bog*, he was surrounded by pursuers and killed, when David, the fierce laird of Wedderburn, cut off his head, and hanging it by its long silken locks to his saddle-bow, rode home in barbarous triumph.

A century later, and the whole condition of things had undergone a complete change. The union of the crowns of England and Scotland had abolished the *raison d'être* of Border warfare. The wild Border chieftains had become prosperous and wealthy landlords. The rude pricklers of a former day, full of wild superstitions, and who had clung to the old faith when elsewhere all the altars had been overthrown, were succeeded by a race of staunch Presbyterians, ready no longer to lay down their lives for Douglas or Gordon, for Home or Graham, but for Holy Writ and the solemn League and Covenant.

Scotch and English were once more arrayed against each other when Alexander Lesley encamped on the hill of Dunse with twenty-two thousand foot and five hundred horse, while he watched the movements of his royal master, who was posted on the English side of the Tweed. The hill was garnished at the top with mounted cannon, the soldiers lay encamped around in wooden huts thatched with straw, while the officers, among whom were many of the chief nobles of Scotland, were accommodated with more spacious canvas booths. Ministers, too,

were there in numbers, to keep alive the embers of hostility; and psalms and hymns in rugged harmony were heard around the hill of Dunse. The bold front shown by the Scotch made the King recoil from his project of re-establishing Episcopacy by force of arms.

Of some fame, too, in the annals of the Merse is Polwarth, with its famous green, where once stood the old thorn round which all newly-married couples must dance three times, and which the lads and lasses danced about *ad libitum*.

At Polwarth on the green,
If you'll meet me on the morn
Where lanes do convene
To dance around the thorn.

Tradition ascribes the origin of the dance around the thorn to the romance of the Sinclair girls, heiresses of Polwarth, who loved their neighbour lads the Homes of Wedderburn. A cruel uncle intervened, and shut up the girls in a tower in the Lothians, but they contrived to let their lovers know of their plight, and the Homes, raising the men of the Merse, stormed the tower, and brought away their brides in triumph, when the nuptials were celebrated in a wild dance round the thorn. This recital shows that even at the uncertain date of the story the dance round the thorn was considered an essential and valid part of the marriage celebration.

Whether the dancers brought the musicians, or vice versa, it will be difficult to settle, but it is certain that Polwarth was noted for its fiddlers—the last minstrels of the district, whose descendants in foreign climes may still perhaps half knowingly repeat the old lilt of Polwarth on the Green. Now the fiddlers are all gone, and with the arts the industries have declined. Where are the coopers of Fogo? And there are other places noted for souters where now perhaps but a solitary cobbler plies his trade. For, alas! the Borders have been cleared much as the Highlands have been. You may meet with traces of the expatriated race, in patches of cultivated ground now thrown into sheep walks, in the crumbling walls of ruined cottages, and hearthstones that have long been cold.

There is a black well at Polwarth from which the stranger should not incautiously drink—for, says the Doom, if one drinks one never leaves the place. There is a similar superstition, it will be remembered, about an old well at Wineheles; and it is curious to meet with the same tradition in places where there is no con-

necting link in the way of migration or settlement to account for it.

Polwarth is noted, too, as the ancient seat of the Humes, Barons of Polwarth, of whom a younger son, Alexander, was a poet of no mean order, if we may judge from his "Day Estival," already quoted. Of the same family was Patrick Hume, Earl of Marchmont, who, in danger of losing his head from his connection with the Covenanters, lay hidden for several weeks among the bones of his ancestors in the vault under Polwarth Church. His daughter, of whom the memoirs of Lady Grizel Baillie give a graphic account, was accustomed to visit him at night with supplies, braving all the superstitious terrors of the place, the tomb-lights and corpse-candles, to carry her father his nightly meal in his gruesome abode. The chief danger of discovery arose from a vigilant house dog at the manse, which barked at the disturber of the graveyard quietude with a persistence that threatened discovery. But, by raising the scare of mad dogs in the neighbourhood and by sacrificing a lap dog of their own, the ladies of the family induced the unsuspecting minister to destroy the faithful guardian of his premises.

"As the gloomy habitation my grandfather was in," writes Lady Grizel in a passage familiar to the young people who are now getting old, in the pages of Miss Edgeworth, "was not to be endured but from necessity, they were contriving other places of safety for him, particularly one, under a bed which drew out in a ground floor, in a room of which my mother kept the key. She and the same man worked in the night, making a hole in the earth after lifting up the boards, which they did by scratching it up with their hands, not to make any noise, till she left not a nail upon her fingers; she helping the man to carry the earth, as they dug it, in a sheet on his back, out at the window into the garden. He then made a box at his own house large enough for her father to lie in with bed and bed-clothes, and bored holes in the boards for air. When all this was finished, for it was long about, she thought herself the happiest creature alive."

Before leaving the Merse there is to be noted the beacon on the hill by Hume Castle which gave the false alarm of French invasion described in Scott's "Antiquary."

It was on the last days of January, 1803, that the watchman by Hume Castle caught sight of the glow of the beacon on the

coast, as he thought, and set light to his own fire. Terviotdale, Tweeddale, and Liddesdale were aroused, the men armed themselves and set out for the mustering places, marching in with the pipes blowing before them—

My name is little Jock Elliot
And wha daur meddle wi' me ?

The women cheered and urged them on their way, while one old dame, in the Spartan spirit of Old Scotia, greeted an armed band that passed her cottage with the words, "Come back victorious or come not back at a'," while a less martial note is echoed in the utterance of the parish dominie, "But if the chiel Buonaparte should come owre to Britain, surely he will never be guilty o' the cruelty and folly o' doing onything to the parish schoolmasters."

Close by is the ancient seat of the Gordon clan, the original gowks o' Gordon, celebrated in the musical rhythm of the old ballad—

Huntley Wood—the wa's down
Bassandean and Barrastown,
Heckspeith wi' the golden hair,
Gordon gowks for ever mair.

Something may here be said of the Border clans, whether Gordons, Grahams, Scotts, Armstrongs, or others, who have little in common with the Highland Septs, united by a common ancestry and by a complete and complicated system of inheritance and tenure. The Border clan was a much more simple affair, and is rather an association for mutual defence and for common cause in raid or foray. Originally the population of the Borders differed little from that of the rest of Northumbria south of the Tweed. On the western March there may be some admixture of Celtic blood from the regions of Cumbria and Strathclyde, while the pure Scottish element can have been but small, although powerful; and eventually leavening the whole lump. But, till the Norman conquest of England introduced a more rigid distinction between the two nations, there was no trace of any national animosity between the two countries, with no need for any special organisation beyond the ordinary townships and hundreds. And thus the Border clans seem to have come into existence from the pressure of circumstances, a federation of fighting men for the protection of their own flocks and herds, and the acquisition of those belonging to other people, and leagued in alliance against the English power on one side and on the other against him whom the Borderers contemp-

tuously called the King of Fife and Lothian. Any bold fighting man who would swear fealty to the Chief was welcome to join the clan and assume its distinctive surname, while an equitable distribution of the plunder acquired by the tribe stocked the pasture lands of Chief and clansmen.

The rude towers of the Border chiefs are nowhere more plentiful than along the course of the Whiteadder river, where probably the Borderers only adopted and renewed the fortalices and entrenchments of an earlier race. All tradition points to this district as the final refuge, and the scene of the eventual extermination of the Picts.

As to the very origin of the Picts we have little to guide us; but tradition points to there having come from the north a strange uncanny race with perhaps Mongolian features in their dark and swarthy complexions, driven like the Finns and Lapps from the favoured parts of Scandinavia, by incursions and settlements of the fair-haired Teutonic tribes. Like the Lapps they were accounted great magicians, and they have survived in popular mythology as Pixie, Elf, Brownie, or Billyblind. Each Border tower is haunted by its familiar Redcap, a name which perhaps suggests the character of the Pictish head-dress.

It is no unlikely site this for the last stand of a defeated race. To the north there are steep ravines which a handful of men might defend against an army, and which at a later date were actually closed against Cromwell and his army, before the victory of Dunbar, by a small detachment of Covenanters. To the east are precipitous defiles, and the broad Tweed cuts off access from the south. When the outer defences of the land were carried or turned, the last stand of the Picts was made, so tradition says, on Cockburn-law, between Cranshaw Castle and Dunse. And here the remnants of an ancient race fought their last fight and were slaughtered—all but two, as old tradition says, an old man and his son, who were saved, as it seems, for a purpose.

To the Picts belonged the secret of a wondrous drink, a delicious and wholesome liquor, distilled from heather-bells. The manner of making it, says an old writer, has perished with the Picts, as they never showed the craft of making it except to their own blood. Now to turn the heather-bells to good advantage must have seemed a grand invention to a Scot, seeing that so noble a harvest was growing all around,

A wide domain,
And rich the soil had purple heath been grain.

or, according to an older rhyme, aeneat the possessions of the bold Buccleuch,

Had heather bells been corn o' the best
Buccleuch had had a noble grist.

And thus to utilise a natural product seemed to the conquerors of the Picts a consummation worth a little pains. So the old man and the young one were brought before the King of the Scots, who offered them both their lives if they would reveal the secret. "Kill the other one first," said the father, pointing to his son, "and then I will tell you." The youth was quickly despatched. "Now kill me," said the old man; "my son might have yielded to your threats and promises. I never shall. Quick! Despatch!" The King condemned the old man to live on. And live he did, far beyond the ordinary span of human life, far on into later times. Then the old Pict, blind and bedridden, heard some youth of the period boasting of his athletic feats. "Give me your wrist," said the old man, "that I may judge if your strength is equal to that of the men of old." Prudently the bystanders handed the old man a thick bar of iron, which he twisted and bent, and then thrust away, saying, "You are not feeble, but you cannot be compared with the men of ancient times."

It has been whispered, indeed, that the secret of the wonderful drink of the Picts was not altogether lost, and its survival may be thus accounted for. The Picts, when they first landed in Scotland, consisted of men only, their womankind they had been obliged to abandon to their conquerors. In this hard case they applied to the Britons as well as to the Scots to provide them with wives, but neither race would ally themselves with the hated intruders. The Gaels, however, were not so particular, and bestowed their daughters on the strangers—the ill-favoured ones for choice, like muckle-mouthed Meg for instance. In this way the secret leaked out among the relatives of the Picts' wives, and thus the race became possessed of the art of making that ambrosial drink, called usquebaugh, or, in modern language, whiskey. And it is a curious fact, when you come to think of it, that among no other races than the Gaels of Ireland or of the Scotch Highlands is this liquor made in perfection.

The Borderers, and the Scotch in general, did not take to whiskey till a

period comparatively modern. Indeed, from an early date, London porter, or London beer at all events, seems to have been a favourite beverage, as in the "Day Estival" we have the labourers in the heat of the day refreshing themselves in this manner :

Some plucks the honey plumbs and pear
The cherry and the peach,
Some likes the reamond London beer
Their body to refresh.

We may now pass on to Lammermuir, whose hills and ravines formed the defence of the fertile Merse, hills which break off in a rugged coast-line, the chief promontory of which is St. Abb's Head. The Head itself consists of two high mounts cut off from the mainland by a natural dyke. On the western height stands the broken tower of Fast Castle, gloomy and almost awful in its loneliness and desolation. The most seaward of the two is the Kirkhill, where once stood the old church, the earliest of all the churches of Scotland, almost on the verge of the precipice, where innumerable sea-fowl scream, and the surges thunder below against the rocky buttress. A tiny strip of beach affords a perilous landing-place, and one day the anchorites in the lonely church above saw a boat approaching, driven by wind and waves, but steered by a strong and skilful hand towards the beach. As well as the steersman the figure of a woman could be discerned, and the venerable fathers, hastening downwards by the perilous path, were just in time to receive the boat as it grounded. But there was only one passenger now on board, a young and beautiful Princess, from Northumbria, who had been cast adrift in the boat to perish. Clearly the boat had been steered to its haven by angelic hands, and the young Princess, forthwith taking the veil, founded the Priory of Coldingham, near at hand, and was afterwards canonized as Saint Abba.

The Priory of Coldingham, the mother of all the monasteries of Scotland, has left only a few foundations to preserve its memory: but the aspect is delightful, and the village which occupies the site is the pleasantest all along the coast. Coldingham Moor was once noted for its famous football play, where, once a year, there was a great match between married and single. The goal to be kicked by the former was any part of the sea-shore, while the single men had to drive the ball into a hole in the ground, or later, beneath the lintel of a barn-door. Under these unequal condi-

tions the married men, it is said, nearly always gained the victory.

The road that winds over the hills of Lammermuir was once greatly frequented by the farmers of the Merse, who rode to market at Haddington, each carrying his sack of corn. The chief stopping place on this lonely road was Dunakein Inn, about which a gruesome tale is told. The landlord, once upon a time, was a desperate and determined villain, and, if a guest was driven to seek shelter with him for a night, that guest was never more seen alive. Even those who only called at the house to bait and refresh, he would pursue at a distance till they arrived at a lonely and desolate spot among the peat bogs, when he would shoot down his victim; and soon the yielding bog concealed all traces of the deed. So daring and yet so cautious was the man that, although long suspected, none had ventured to bring him to justice, till a Marquis of Tweeddale himself essayed the adventure. Disguising himself as a travelling merchant, he stopped to drink at the inn, and then rode on alone. Presently he heard the muffled sound of hoofs behind him, when a man masked and armed rode swiftly forward. But the Marquis was prepared, and, with a pistol-shot brought the villain to the ground. He lived long enough, it is said, to confess his crimes, and his body soon swung high on a gibbet, as a warning to evil-doers.

There now remains only Lauderdale to visit—the vale of the River Lauder. And a few miles above the junction with the Tweed is Earlston, with Cowden-knowes close by, the Parnassus of Scotland, a hill of no great height, overhanging the village, with irregular ridges which are the knowes.

More pleasant far to me the broom
So fair on Cowden-knowes,
For sure so sweet so soft a bloom
Elsewhere there never grows.

Somewhere close at hand grew the Eildon tree, where Thomas the Rhymer met the Fairy Queen, and, snatching a kiss from that sweet face, was presently carried off to serve his mistress in fairyland for seven years. Thomas is, perhaps, better known as prophet than poet, and his dark sayings even yet are not all fulfilled, while Thomas himself is said at intervals to revisit these glimpses of the moors :

Mysterious Rymer, doomed by fate's decree
Still to revisit Eildon's lonely tree,
Where oft the swain at dawn of Hallow Day
Hears thy black barb with fierce impatience neigh.

But except for Earlston and the Rhymer

there is nothing very taking in the Vale of Lauder or in the memoirs of its cruel Duke ; the last and worst letter in the Cabal ; whose memory is still execrated among the descendants of the Covenanters.

A SPRING SONG.

SWEET! let me see thine eyes, and place thine hand,
Thy fair small hand, in mine: nay, thou can'st
trust.

I love thee so! None other in the land
Can love as I.

Nay, do not sigh.

Spring walks the earth and whispers thee, "Thou
must

Be one with me—and join my happy band!"

Sweet! kiss me on the lips! each day that's born
Brings us new beauties. Spring-tide has begun,
Yon hedge was black and bare but yester-morn,
Until the sun

Its prize had won!

And with a kiss, the sweet buds that did scorn
His vows, were bought—'twas thus the deed
was done.

Sweet! lay thee in mine arms—close to my heart.

The life-blood rises, pulses but for thee.

See, as the sun shines forth how shades depart,

Away they flee;

They may not be,

Where love and spring-tide act their joyous part,

Where thou and I shall wander presently.

Fair flower-buds that all this winter-tide

Have lain asleep, are blooming in yon bed;

Whispering and nodding, as there side by side,

They meet once more:

For once before

They loved and kissed, till autumn's leaves were
shed,

And when they slept, the world was bleak and
wide.

Nay! an thou hast not loved; I'll teach thee,
sweet!

What were thy life, should love ne'er be the
prize,

'Twere spring without its flowers. Life is fleet.

Love me, mine own,

E'er spring be flown;

'Tis true that clouds will hide these dappled
skies.

That we must part, need not forbid we meet!

Sweet—let me see thine heart! Spring-tide is there!

The flower of love was born there yesterday.

What though nor I nor thou canst truly swear

That there for aye

'Twill live away.

'Tis now the spring—'tis now thou'rt fresh and fair;

So let us love—e'er spring-tide dies away!

STUDIES OF OVER THE WAY.

A HOUSE IN THE EUSTON ROAD.

IN THREE PARTS. PART II.

"DINNER passed very pleasantly, and under the influence of Kate's charming presence, and Sinclair's flow of humour, I gradually forgot my caution. When Kate left us over our wine, with an injunction not to let her remain too long alone in the drawing-room, every atom of reserve towards my host had vanished. We conversed for a few minutes on general topics,

and then threw ourselves into easy-chairs. Sinclair handed me a cigar, and for the first time that evening I thought he was gazing at me very attentively. I dismissed the action at once, however, blaming myself for my foolish suspicions. But before long a pleasant drowsiness began to steal over me. The puffs of smoke took fantastic shapes before my eyes, and every now and then changed colour in strange, but not unpleasing transitions. I felt as if in a quiet dream from which I did not wish to awake. Then a deadly torpor spread through my limbs, and a heavy weight dragged down my eyelids. A minute more, and a dull dark wall seemed to shut out every recollection of the past, and for a considerable time my memory is a blank. A succession of great physical exertions followed, of which, however, I was but vaguely conscious. One object, nevertheless, I afterwards called to mind—a huge, gnarled oak, around which a pale green light seemed to hover; and then complete oblivion took possession of my senses.

"Another bright summer's morn, tuneful with the song of birds, the rustling of the breeze, and the murmuring of the ocean. I was in bed in my own room, but how I got there, I knew not. One by one, the events of the previous evening unfolded themselves, but only to excite greater astonishment. A vague, horrible dread began to steal upon my breast. Again the words which had so startled me before began to ring upon my ear; again I thought of those instances in which one man had been known to command every thought and action of another. I looked at the tower clock in the distance. It was nearly noon. Springing up I dressed hurriedly, and went downstairs. I found that my brother had called to see me half-an-hour before, looked in at my door, and seeing me asleep had gone away again, leaving a message that he would return later on in the day. I asked the slatternly servant what time it was when I returned, saying, and with truth, that my watch had stopped, and that I had no idea of the hour, although I knew I had been very late. She replied that she had sat up for me till two o'clock, and expressed a good-natured wish that I was better, for, she said, when Mr. Sinclair took me upstairs, I looked pale and ill. I replied shortly, and commanded my features with an effort till she left the room. But then a wild, unreasoning fear unmanned me. I trampled in every limb, and my breath came and went

in quick, hard gasps. What did it all portend? I remembered nothing, or next to nothing; I had appeared ill, and Sinclair had brought me home. The first definite thought that presented itself was to question Sinclair, and so, dashing on my hat, I rushed from the house. The air refreshed me and cooled my brain, and by the time I had got half way to the Abbey I was calm enough to reflect that it would be wiser to think twice before speaking to Sinclair. Half-an-hour could not make much difference, and so soon as I got inside the Park, I turned down a shady avenue leading away from the Abbey, and strolled along, trying to arrange my scattered thoughts. A sharp turn in the road brought me suddenly beneath a vast oak. Casting my eyes up, I saw before me the very tree I remembered in my torpor. There, rising before me, was the same huge trunk, with one side blasted by lightning, and above, the great boughs knotted and contorted, as if in endless throes of anguish. Every detail came out clearly now, and I knew, knew with a convulsive spasm of dread, that I had been there the night before. And a horrible foreboding filled me, as I asked myself the question, Why?

"As I stood there, filled with terror, and vainly trying to realise my position, I became conscious that something unusual was occurring beyond the straggling hedge which formed on that side the boundary of the Park. Walking towards the nearest gaps, I descried about two hundred yards farther on an excited group of people standing round an object in the field. I hurried up, and pushed my way through the throng. The sight that met my eyes chilled my very heart's blood. A man was lying on his face, with the handle of a knife protruding from his back. A rustic, bolder than the rest, raised his head, and the face was fearfully battered. In an instant, a fearful thought flashed across me. My violent exertions the night before, the gnarled oak, the dead man, all presented a chain of evidence that seemed incontestable. The very idea was madness. My limbs trembled beneath me, my eyesight failed, and I should have fainted on the spot, had not I felt a strong hand upon my arm, holding me up, and leading me from the throng. The touch served to recall me to myself, and by a violent effort I suppressed all outward indications of the horrible dread within. Turning my head, I saw it was my brother who had come so opportunely to my aid.

" 'Robert,' he said kindly, "you mustn't try yourself by so fearful a spectacle. Some poor wretch has, I fear, been foully murdered. Let us leave the matter in the hands of justice.'

"We walked slowly home. I have but faint recollections of the rest of that day. It seemed like a terrible dream, and I could hardly persuade myself of its reality. I did not dare to question my brother, did not dare to speak of the day before, lest some fresh link should be added to the awful evidence, lest I should be branded as a murderer. All through the night the horrid knife was present to my eyes. The ghastly head haunted me like a phantom, and not till the light of dawn broke through my window did I fall into a troubled sleep.

"As I was coming down to breakfast late the following day, there was a violent ring at the door. A minute more, and Kate rushed, pale and agitated, into my arms, and burst into a flood of tears. For a short time she was unable to speak, and I was about to ring the bell and summon assistance, when she convulsively grasped my arm, and implored me in trembling accents to let no one enter till I had heard her story. At first she was almost incoherent, but grew calmer as she proceeded. She told me that after dinner, two days before, I had entered the drawing-room in a strangely absent state, and had gone away as if in a dream. Sinclair accompanied me, saying that he would see me home. That night she was unable to sleep. After the tower clock had struck two, she distinctly heard the front door opened by a latch-key, and a footstep in the hall she recognised as her uncle's. He went quietly to his room and closed the door. The lateness of the hour astonished her, but she thought little more of it at the time. At this point of her narrative she took a newspaper from her pocket, and begged me, in a faltering voice, to read a paragraph she pointed to. It related to the murder, and was to the effect that, on the night when it was committed, a tall, well-built man, in a white macintosh cloak, was seen by several people lurking under a large oak-tree near the spot. My own white macintosh was lying in a corner of the room, where I must have left it that evening, and towards it we both involuntarily turned our eyes.

"I saw plainly enough that the shudder which ran through my frame did not escape Kate's notice. She tried to smile and to say some cheerful words, but this attempt, as well as her simulated attitude of uncon-

cern, ended in dismal failure. The horror we neither of us dared to name spoke from our eyes. We were both of us conscious of its hateful presence: but to me, as I saw it, it was ten times more mystic and terrible than it was to the brave and loving girl who would have given her best blood to shield my head from the swoop of its hateful wings. Kate saw that suspicion would probably attach to me with regard to the murder. I saw this likewise; but I saw besides something far worse—the fulfilment of the dread which had been lately haunting me, the dread that there was another will which had equal share with my own in shaping my actions. It would have been terrible enough, supposing this will to have been uniformly benevolent. How frightful was the revelation, now almost a certainty, that it was sinister, cruel, and unscrupulous! I could bear Kate's agonised looks no longer, and rushing from the room I went, as if drawn by some strange fascination, out into the Park. I could see the towering branches of the blasted oak, but I dared not approach it. I sat down on a broken stone bench in a secluded corner. I remained for more than an hour, with my mind intensely bent on the solution of the mystery—the strange confused struggle of my vision, half mental, half physical, desperate as if I had been in the grip of death; the oak-tree suffused in the mysterious green light exactly like the tree near which the murdered man had been found; the white macintosh, that damning link in the chain of evidence. Beyond these three facts I found it hard to travel. I tried to start over and over again on a fresh train of thought; but my mind always reverted to them as so many proofs that Sinclair's influence over me was real and terrible, and to the conviction that he had singled me out as a subject for the exercise of his mysterious power. My imagination did not stop here. A horrible dread shaped itself that it might really have been my hand, urged by Sinclair's will, which had driven the knife into the heart of the victim.

"A footstep startled me. I looked up, and there was Sinclair close upon me. 'Robert,' he said in his soft, silvery voice, 'I have been looking for you everywhere. Come with me into the house. I want to talk to you.'

"I looked at him, dazed and terrified. I dreaded to see him, to speak to him, much more to go alone with him into his room. Seeing me hesitate, he sat down beside me. 'I know what is worrying you, my

dear fellow: but don't be cast down. These local police are always over-officious, and we must take this story of the man in the white macintosh for what it is worth. At any rate, yours is not the only one in the country; but come in with me now.'

"He rose and led the way back to the house, and, as I walked, I felt the same hateful, numbing spell creeping over me. My brain was half paralysed, and I could but liken myself to a helpless bird under the glare of the serpent. All power of volition seemed passing away when suddenly, I cannot say how or why, the thought arose that it was only one man's will I had to fight against. Hitherto the odds had been all in my adversary's favour. He had attacked me by stealth, and had overcome me before I even knew there was a contest. But now my eyes were opened, and possibly I might find this will to be no stronger than my own should I meet it on equal terms.

"We entered the library, the room in which my terrible trance had fallen upon me, and Sinclair motioned to me to sit down in the same chair I had occupied the last time I was there. As I sat down I resolved that his victory this time should be no easy one. I determined, however, on no account to undecieve him. I would feign submission to his spells and find out, one way or another, the secret of the devilish plot he had in hand while he should be off his guard. I would let him believe he still had over me power as great as ever, and mark what he would do as soon as I might appear to have succumbed to his influence.

"As Sinclair motioned to me to sit down there floated over his face a smile which had often fascinated and terrified me, and deep down within his eyes I could discern a brightening glow which I recognised and dreaded. Now I knew the moment had come when I must put forth all my powers of will; but, clearly as I saw this necessity, I felt that these powers, even as I would call them into their highest activity, began to fail me. The lethargy which stole over me, fatal as I knew it to be, was not unpleasant. Sinclair moved behind my chair, and I was almost sure I saw him make one or two rapid passes with his hand as he crossed the room. Still I held out, though hard pressed. How long I might have done so I cannot say, had not the church bell at that moment began to toll. It was like the prelude of my impending doom, and its mournful notes seemed to arouse

my failing energies. I sat motionless and silent, with my eyes fixed as if I were in the deepest trance, but my mind was no longer spell-bound. After a moment I knew I had conquered. The spell was broken. My faculties were more clear and active than I had known them for long past, and I sat and awaited the next move.

"After a minute or two Sinclair passed round the table and stood facing me. He again made mesmeric passes before my face, and pressed his finger on my forehead between my eyes. Though I was terribly agitated I kept my composure. Then he told me to sit down at a writing-table and copy what he would repeat to me. I took a pen and wrote word for word the stanza of a poem which he dictated, and as soon as I had finished he came round and looked over my shoulder at what I had written. He then told me to tear it up and put it in the waste basket. This was repeated three times, and after each copying I obeyed his command and destroyed what I had written.

"Then Sinclair rose, and going to a carved oak cabinet he pressed his hand on the head of a grotesque figure, fashioned in one of the angles. A panel fell down, disclosing a secret recess, out of which he took a packet of letters. He read them over carefully, making notes from time to time, and when he had finished he gave me a fresh sheet of paper, and told me to write again as he should direct.

"The words he dictated to me are graven on my mind as if in letters of fire. Should I live for a thousand years I could never forget one of them. They were these:

"MY DEAR SINCLAIR,—I write to you in great trouble. I feel I must tell some one what straits I am in, and there is no one in the world I would sooner make my confidant than you. There is a wretched story in my life which you know nothing about. It will not profit to tell you the whole of it, so I will tell you just enough to make you understand how hard I am pressed, and no more.

"The prologue I will pass over. It is just the ordinary succession of weakness, folly, crime, desperation, and impending ruin. I am at once the sinner and the victim. If my secret were my own I should only have conscience to reckon with, and there it would end; but it is not so. This miserable secret is known to one who has been my bane and evil genius from the beginning, a villain who is now

driving me mad by his threats and persecutions. I am well-nigh ruined in pocket, and every week this devil threatens that, if I do not give up the little that remains, he will tell the world all he knows, and lodge me in a prison before sunset. He has ordered me to meet him to-morrow evening under the great oak in the Park here, and my first thought was that I had no alternative but to obey; but the more I think about it the more clearly I see that I shall incur well-nigh as much danger by going as I shall by disregarding his summons. A rat will turn and bite if it be pressed too hard, and I feel it may be difficult for me to keep my hands from this villain's throat if I meet him alone. Shall I go or not? I know I may trust you, my dear friend, to keep my secret, and to give me your best counsel. Only one more word: judge me not too harshly should you hear I have been unequal to further self-restraint."

"I signed and dated the letter two days before the date of the murder as Sinclair directed me, and sat still as a dead man till he spoke again. 'Now put what you have written into an envelope, and seal it with the signet ring you wear on your finger.' I dared not hesitate, though these last words of his showed me how surely and inextricably he was making me knot the halter round my own throat; and I resolved that, at any cost, this writing should never pass into his hands. I detached two sheets of paper as I prepared to blot what I had written, and it was the blank sheet which I folded and placed in the envelope. I then sealed it with my signet ring, and having addressed it to Sinclair, waited again for his commands. The sheet upon which I had written I slipped unnoticed, thank Heaven! into the sleeve of my coat. Sinclair then advanced towards me, and taking up the letter he cut open the top of the envelope with his penknife, so as not to injure the seal. He then put it away in an iron safe, and replaced the letters he had been reading in the secret drawer, and closed the panel. Then he made some horizontal passes across my body and face, and shook me to recall me from the stupor in which he believed I had been cast. I at once caught the cue, and feigned to recover as from a mesmeric trance. I rubbed my eyes, and gave a sleepy assent to Sinclair's bantering remarks about my drowsiness. 'You have had a nap, Bob,' he said. 'It will do you good. I did not disturb you, as I could see you were worried by what

has happened. I don't like to trouble you about it, but there is one thing I must tell you. The police are watching this house, as well as other houses in the place. I have seen the superintendent, and have ventured to promise in your name that you will not leave L—— till after the inquest.'

"I murmured a few words to the effect that he had done quite right; and after some commonplace remarks, during which I felt it a hard matter to retain my composure, I took my leave.

THE DUKE OF THE SAUCEPAN.

"BRAVO! Bravo, Duca! Oh, the generous soul! The dear one! Oh, beloved of the San Stefanati! Oh, noble mind! May the benediction of our Lord, and the protection of the Madonna and all the saints be with him!" And then, crushing, struggling, shouting, smiling, the populace of Verona crowd up to the gates of the palazzo of the Via San Alessio, and make a wild rush to kiss the hand of their benefactor. What piles of loaves, what mountains of meat and grain, what rivers of wine that generous hand has dispensed to-day! No wonder old Monna Tita, hump-backed and lame as she is, is willing to be jostled and trampled under foot almost in order that she may press the Duke's hand to her lips and heart, and shedding the rare tears of old age, implore the blessing of Heaven to rest upon him and his for ever. With the characteristic good humour of an Italian crowd, even her jostling fellow townsmen find time to say a kind word to her and to each other. "There she goes! Monna Tita, eh, yes! Coraggio, mother! don't mind a little tumbling. And there's Gianni the zoppo (lame one), he too! What has the Duke given you, brother?"

"Four flasks of wine, and two sacks of grain, and *pane* and *paste* (bread and macaroni) for a royal dinner!"

"That's right, Gianni! Bravo! To the Duke again! Eh, he's fallen down, poor fellow! He can't reach Eccellenza's hand. So, there, there! Wait a little, Luvio, to kiss the Duke's hand, for Gianni's fallen down. Eh, bravo, Gianni! Good people, Gianni's kissing the Duke's foot, since he can't reach his hand; and right enough too, for the Duke is the saint and guardian angel of the Veronese! Evviva, Evviva! Long live the Duke of San Stefano and the Pignatta!"

And once again the gay crowd, clad

in the motley-coloured garments of the Carnival, raise a shout of acclamation which rends the very skies, as a shower of golden grain and copper coins falls upon them from the hand of the Duke, who, escaping at last from their loving, grateful grasp, has had the palace gates shut, and now appears on the terrace, from whence he throws his largesse broadcast. No doubt it is a proud, as well as a happy—nay, a blessed moment in his life. To have the power to shed the light of happiness on so many worn and weary faces, to clothe the naked, to feed the hungry, to bring comfort—even plenty—into many homes where for years it has been nothing but a name, all this it has been his to do. And more. Born in the dark and wretched quarter of San Stefano in Verona, yet feeling for that particular quarter a patriotic and local love which none but an Italian with his strong local attachments can understand, he has been able, alone and unaided, to reclaim it in a great measure from beggary, dirt, and squalor; and every night he lays his head on his own luxurious pillow with the happy consciousness of having lightened the burden of many hearts that day; while, if grateful prayers can bring deep sleep and happy dreams, no slumbers can be more blessed than his.

To the long list of his splendid and almost fantastically generous charities, he has to-day added the crowning generosity of the "Feast of the Pentata," or in the Veronese dialect, the "Pignatta:" that is, every poor family in Verona has to-day dined sumptuously at his expense, and an abundant largesse has, as we have seen, been given at his palace gates. It is a beautiful abode, that palace of the Via San Alessio, with a noble court and staircase, adorned with palm-trees and bronze leopards; a splendid loggia, shut in by lofty windows of stained glass, and furnished with rich divans and magnificent bronzes; and to the west a noble view over the wide and lovely garden of the Convent of San Giorgio. Within are long suites of sumptuous and richly furnished rooms, the door of one of which, on the ground floor, bears the inscription: "I never lend." The poor Duke is so assailed by beggars that it has become necessary for him to defend himself in some way. And it is a proverb in Verona that, though he may refuse to lend, he never is unwilling to give.

To-day, as we have said, his happiness, as his generosity, is at its height. Not only has

he feasted the populace of Verona, but the light of official approval has been given to his "Bacchanalia della Pignatta" (Revels of the Saucepan) by the presence of the Sindaco and other Veronese officials. And everything has gone off well. The feasting and revelry have been kept within decent bounds; the generosity has been unlimited, and the gratitude of the populace is in proportion. Now, as the night creeps on to the small hours, as the palace gates are shut, the lights extinguished, and all the world asleep, a single figure lingers in the Via San Alessio. It is poor Beppo, the blind man, to whom the night is as the day, and who has come to repay, in his own simple way, the princely charity he has received. It is true that the Duke sleeps; he will never know, in all probability, the full extent of the blind man's deep gratitude, but nevertheless Beppo will stand there at the palace gates, all night long, murmuring prayers for the welfare of his benefactor. And when the bell rings, at four o'clock, for first mass, and he creeps into the church of San Giorgio, with a cheerful sense that his vigil is over, and that he at least has done his duty to the beloved Duke, Beppo knows well that the church will be crowded with the Duke's pensioners, and that all about him the worshippers—poor and humble ones, most of them—are imploring blessings on their guardian angel.

Surely the Duke must be blessed above measure to win such ardent gratitude! "Vox populi, vox Dei," says the proverb, and does not a still more ancient proverb say that he for whom the poor cease not to pray, shall never want for happiness? If that be so, there is no need to tell the fortune of the Duke of San Stefano and the Pignatta; he is fenced from all evil chance by the prayers of the poor whom he has succoured. The stars have looked down to-night upon the innocent revelry of which he has been the author, and upon the grateful watcher at his gates, and they are still hanging in the sky as the worshippers come out from the first mass where they have been to pray for him. But they are not soothsayers, those fair cold stars, or they would turn blood-red, as a sign of evil portent, since, if the Duke is to be rewarded, it must be in some other world than this. Here, in but a few days, a solitary, dishonoured death, and an unblessed grave awaits him.

Siro Zuliani, dubbed by the populace of Verona the Duke of San Stefano—the

quarter in which he was born—and also quite as often the Duke of the Pignatta, or saucepan, was born in Verona some thirty-five years ago, of a very humble family. He was always a silent, reserved, and rather melancholy boy, with a taste however for whatever was bizarre and eccentric in costume, and, whenever he had the means, he arrayed himself in clothes which were as far as possible a travesty of the reigning fashion. Quite early in life he obtained a situation in a commercial house in Verona at a stipend of 200 francs a month, and he retained this situation and discharged its duties to the entire satisfaction of his employers up to the last day of his life. About five years before his death he became suddenly—no one has ever known how—possessed of an ample fortune, and he at once launched out into a wild extravagance which was a never-ending source of wonder and interest to the Veronese. He bought an old convent in the Via San Alessio, and converted it into a superb palace, which he furnished in the most luxurious manner. He added a garden, a conservatory, and an aviary, and his equipages were on a scale of equal splendour. Fortunately for his fellow townsmen his generosity kept pace with his taste for luxury, and it was a favourite saying with the Veronese that, for every mouthful His Excellency put into his mouth, he gave two away. As an example of the scale of his charities, it may be as well to mention that he gave to the husband of his wife's sister a pension of 1,500 francs—sixty pounds—a month, and that his other gifts were on the same scale. "He had a passion for beneficence," said one of his friends, and it was a passion which he indulged without stint.

The great families of Verona have long since ceased to be very rich, and though charitable, cannot afford to be lavish in giving, so that Siro Zuliani soon became a famous person. He was the idol of the populace, and it was the popular voice which awarded him the sobriquet of Duke of St. Stefano, when he had only been for a few months a public benefactor. For long before his death he was never addressed by any one, even by his employers, otherwise than as "Duca." This gentle-hearted, open-handed man, was proverbially serious, silent, and reserved. Never; even to his wife, with whom he lived on terms of the greatest affection; did he betray the secret of his wealth, which was neither inherited, nor earned.

nor stolen, nor won in a lottery—the popular mind suggested all these hypotheses, and rejected them all. Among other things it was whispered that Zuliani—who was a Mason—had been concerned in an enormous robbery, planned by the Masonic confraternity in general, and that he was appointed almoner of the ill-gotten goods! This ridiculous fable was exploded after a time as the others had been, and the mystery loomed more impenetrable than ever. But the poor of the quarter—the Sanstefanati as they are called in Verona—invented a theory which satisfied them completely, and even called a smile of approbation, though not of assent, to the Duke's grave face. The Duke—so the Sanstefanati asserted—had found a pot or saucepan, in some place unspecified, and the said pot or pignatta was full of golden coins, each coin of fabulous value. "In truth it was the best story which had yet been invented," the Duke said, and the populace were happy.

During the years—five in all—that Zuliani was leading this life of luxury, extravagance, and beneficence, he was invariably punctual in attendance at Casa Laschi—the bureau of his employers—and scrupulously faithful in the discharge of his duties, always spending the allotted hours at his desk, and never absenting himself on any pretext whatever, or assuming any airs of independence with his employers, who, whenever questioned as to the origin of his fortune, replied that he was an honest man, and did his duty so thoroughly by them that they never ventured to inquire into his affairs.

The Italians are a loving and a grateful race, and, during the last two years of his life, the Duca della Pignatta could scarcely move along the streets of Verona without being conscious of receiving an ovation of a quiet kind, in the looks of affectionate welcome and the murmur of approbation which followed his footsteps. His prosperity and popularity reached their height, as has been said, on the Monday in Carnival week—the Monday before Ash Wednesday—when he feasted all the poor of the city of Verona. Several of the gentlemen who stood beside him on the balcony over his palace gate, as he threw his largesse to the crowd, noticed that, as the shouts of acclamation reached his ears, he seemed more deeply moved than usual. Never very demonstrative, he did not in any way abandon himself to the enthusiasm of the moment, "but the peculiar brightness of the eye, very perceptible

in him when he had performed a kind action," was more vivid than usual, and once or twice he seemed to be struggling with suppressed emotion.

The festival, however, drew to its end; the guests departed. In two days more the Carnival ended and Lent began. Early in Lent the Casa Laschi audited its accounts. They were found to be perfectly correct, showing no deficit whatever; but there was a mistake of 8,000 francs, which needed correction. Zuliani's attention was called to this—it may here be observed that there was absolutely no deficit, but that there had been a mistake in copying merely—and he at once said that he would take the books home and examine them. This he did, and, early in the evening, sent his wife to bed, observing that he was obliged to sit up and write letters. Left alone, he called his valet, with whose assistance he drenched the books with petroleum, and then carried them on the terrace, where they were burned. He then wrote a letter, directed and sealed it, and placed it on his library table. Later, he went into his wife's room and bid her good-bye, saying that he was obliged to spend a day at Mantua on business; but that hereafter he should lead a quiet life, adding: "I am weary of these perpetual agitations." He took the three o'clock train for Mantua, which place he reached at five in the morning, and he went at once to an albergo, the Croce Verde, where he locked himself in his room. He never left it again. The door was broken open at five in the afternoon, and the body of the unfortunate Zuliani was found, lying face downwards on the ground in a pool of blood. The revolver, a small pocket one, with which he had shot himself, lay on the carpet beside the body. On the table several letters, each duly folded, sealed, and directed, were lying, and two telegrams, upon each of which the requisite fee was placed. The letter which he left on his library table in Verona was addressed to his brother-in-law, and ran as follows:

"DEAREST BROTHER-IN-LAW, — The Laschi have assumed that I was a bad man, and I now show myself to be such. I have burned their books, and now depart to make an end of myself. My secret will go with me to the tomb. Two persons of the highest distinction alone know something—. The monthly pension of 1,500 francs ceases with my life.

"Sell the house and furniture, pay my debts, and provide for my wife with what remains.

"If my wife wishes to marry again, she has my full consent to do so; and I hope that she may find some one who will love her as well as I have done. And now farewell until we meet again in heaven with the dear Mother.

"My best compliments to the Sindaco, the prefect, and my colleagues.

"SIRO ZULLIANI."

Some days before the poor fellow's death he said to a friend: "My life, like my death, will remain a mystery. The Veronese will wish to know something of both; but it is too late." When urged to explain what he meant, he added that he had "distressing thoughts." Although of a generous and affectionate disposition, he was extremely excitable, and, when angry, very violent, and apt to break whatever he laid hands on. These moments of intense excitement, however, were rare, and passed quickly, and for some time before his death, though profoundly melancholy, he had not been in the least excited or irritated. The letters he wrote at Mantua were addressed to the prefect and to his wife, and contained each a few words of adieu. One of the telegrams was to his employers of the Casa Laschi, and was on business, the other was addressed to his brother-in-law, and ran as follows:

"Protect the two poor women. Be a father to them. Kiss my poor Luigia for me.

"SIRO ZULLIANI."

All Zullian's affairs were found to be in perfect order, his private account books accurately balanced, and his receipts duly filed. He had been harassed by many difficulties for some time before his death, but his debts only amounted to about 20,000 francs, a sum that was amply covered by the sale of his horses and carriages. Nothing was ever discovered which accounted in any way for his distress of mind, or for the act of suicide; and the origin of his fortune, as well as its loss—if lost it was—still remains wrapped in impenetrable mystery. All that was found to belong to the "Duke" was the Palace in the Via San Alessio, with its furniture, which was sold for the payment of his few debts and for the support of his widow.

No sooner did the news of his death reach Verona, than the populace crowded the Via San Alessio and the streets leading in that direction, and the sound of mourners was heard in the city of Verona, "as if there were not a house in which there were not one dead." The theatres were

closed, and at all the usual places of rendezvous but one subject was discussed, the death of the popular hero.

His dead body lay for three days in a small mortuary chapel at Mantua, which was constantly visited by his friends, and then buried at midnight, and, necessarily, without religious ceremonies of any kind. Later, a subscription was raised in Verona, and the remains were transported thither. The poor, who from the time of his death had not ceased to throng the Via San Alessio, now crowded to the railway station to receive his dead body, and with "weeping, and wailing, and many bitter cries," accompanied it to the grave. As the vast procession crept slowly through the beautiful city, the sounds of lamentation and of prayer rose and fell with the trampling of many feet, and not the least pathetic part of the procession were the blind, the halt, and the lame, who, struggling far in the rear, still followed patiently until all that was mortal of their benefactor was laid in the earth.

The grave of the poor "Duca" is covered by a handsome monument with a bronze medallion, but in point of fact it is not the monument which distinguishes it from its kindred mounds. Leading directly to it is a small footpath, worn through the grass by the tread of many feet, and there at morning and evening, and often far into the night, kneeling figures are to be seen—the faithful grateful poor, who go there to pray for the soul of their benefactor.

VICTIMS.

By THEO GIFT.

Author of "*Lili Lorimer*," "*An Alibi and its Price*,"
Etc., Etc.

CHAPTER XII. A SUDDEN RECALL.

FOR the first minute or so after Joanna's announcement no one spoke. Vera, indeed, who had started to her feet at the unexpected sight of the old servant, and made as if to dart forward, stood still instead, white and staring; while Leah, who had stopped playing and was leaning forward, her hands still resting on the keys, and Marstrand, slowly drawing himself into an upright position, and frowning surprisedly at the harsh-voiced intruder, appeared (as was indeed the case) uncertain as to whether they had heard correctly or not.

It was Vera, after all, who had to speak, and spoke first.

"To—fetch me home!" she repeated.

the dismay caused by the suggestion showing so plainly in the trembling of her voice, that it was all Marstland could do to restrain himself from putting his arm round her. "I—I don't understand. Is papa worse then, Joanna?"

"Not as I'm aware of," said Joanna curtly. "Leastways he was nearly well till your letter came. After that he wasn't so well, or your ma would have come for you herself. They'll be at Les Châtaigniers, however, before we shall, so you'll see him soon enough."

There was so little encouragement in the tone of these last words that Vera trembled more than ever, and Leah, who felt annoyed at what she considered the insolence of the woman's manner, thought it time to interfere.

"You haven't seen me yet, I think, Joanna," she said, rising from her seat at the piano, "and your sudden appearance has taken us all by surprise, Miss Vera especially. Sit down, pray, while you talk to her, and I will order some refreshment for you. You must be very tired, if you have only just arrived from your long journey; but I hope M. and Madame St. Laurent are not really wanting your young lady at home."

"They're not wanting her only, Miss Josephs; they've sent me to fetch her," said Joanna, with decided emphasis on the final verb, "and I'm in no need of refreshments, thank you. If Vera'll show me which is her room, she and me can begin packing at once; for trains and steamers wait for nobody, so there ain't no time for delay."

"But—you are not dreaming of taking her to-night!" cried Marstland, unable to repress himself longer, or keep one hand from closing in a protective clasp on the drooping shoulder of the girl he loved. "The idea would be madness. Besides, there must be a letter from her parents. Vera, dear, this person cannot mean—"

"Begging your pardon, sir, whoever you are," Joanna interrupted, "Vera knows well enough that 'this person,' as you're pleased to call her, generally do mean what she says; as likewise that she isn't likely to ha' come all this way, and crossed that beastly sea for nothing. Here's your ma's letter, Vera. I'd have kep' it for you till we were alone; but if you like these folk to see it that's your affair."

She held out the missive as she spoke, and Vera took it, but with such evident reluctance and alarm as puzzled Marstland,

and made Leah almost impatient with her. She did not even open it, only held it helplessly in her hand as she asked, very low and wistfully:

"Joanna, is—is mamma angry?"

Joanna shrugged her shoulders, a gesture more significant than respectful; and Leah, seeing that Marstland's indignation was rising beyond restraint, broke in laughingly:

"My dear Vera, why should your mother be angry with you? What a nervous child you are! Why, you know, dear," coming up to her friend and taking her little cold hand soothingly, "we quite thought your parents would want you home once they got your letter. We were talking of it only this morning, though we didn't realise then that the parting would be so soon."

"It cannot be," said Marstland hotly. "It is out of the question. Why, what time is it now? Nearly six! Darling, read your letter, and you will see it is some stupid mistake. You will not go to-night."

The strong deep accents, and the pressure of those powerful fingers on her shoulder seemed to give Vera courage. The colour came back into her face, and she looked up at Joanna with a faint smile. "It is some mistake," she repeated; "but don't stand there, Joanna. Sit down while I read mamma's letter. She will tell me what she wants."

And in the fewest words! The letter when opened only covered half a sheet of paper, and ran as follows:

"MY DAUGHTER,—Your father has been so horrified and upset by the news received this morning, that he is neither able to go to you himself nor to spare me. We are sending Joanna, therefore, with authority to bring you home to us at once; and you are to look on her as taking my place, and comply with all her arrangements without making extra trouble and difficulty for her. Do this, unless you wish to increase your papa's anger, and pray never mention again the foolishness about which you wrote to me. We expect you to put it out of your head at once, and to assist us to forget it also. I send no message to the Josephses, as I consider they've behaved most indelicately and dishonourably with regard to the trust I put in them; but your papa says he intends to send them a cheque for your keep. Lose no time now in returning to your grieved and displeased

"MOTHER."

Poor Vera! The letter fluttered down

into her lap, and both hands went up to cover her face, but only for a moment.

"Oh, she can't mean it!" she exclaimed piteously, as Marstland, rather pale himself, uttered a sound of interrogation. "She says I am to come back and forget—forget! Oh, you said it was a mistake, and it must be. Leah, read it and say it is. She—she can't mean to forbid——"

She had turned towards her lover as she spoke, stretching out her hands to him as if for protection; and he took them both in a firm clasp, though his eyes were turned on Leah, whose flushing cheek and sparkling eye, as she read, told plainly enough the indignation aroused in her by one part of the epistle.

"I do not quite know what your mother does mean, Vera, except that you are to go back," she said, trying to speak calmly, "but she has certainly made more than one mistake which—— ah! here comes father," for at that moment Professor Josephs entered the room, surveying the agitated little group with curious eyes as he asked quickly:

"Why, George—why, girls, what's amiss here? Surely——" his mind leaping to a sudden conclusion as he became aware of the presence of a hard-featured woman in black, whose red hair was just then strongly illumined by the setting sun, "this is not Madame St——"

"No, father, it is Madame's maid," said Leah quickly, though struck anew by the resemblance which she had before noticed between the two women. "She has come to take Vera home—at once."

And as Vera and Joanna repeated the same thing in different words, the old gentleman had no need to ask further as to the disturbance on the lovers' brows. He turned to his young guest, who had crept nearer to him, as if for sympathy, and spoke to her in a low tone, but with his kindest smile.

"To go home, eh? Well now, you know, this is what I rather expected. I warned George, you know, that you had both been a little hasty in settling matters for yourselves, and then looking on them as settled; and you mustn't wonder if the old people don't see it in the same light, and want to see and know something of this young man before considering his proposals. I bet you that's what I should do if Leah there had written me from Brittany, that she had got engaged to some young Frenchman—and I suppose that's the state of the case, eh?"

"Except that Vera's parents don't seem to want either to see or know me," said Marstland bitterly, "or to look on my proposal as worth considering. No, Vera, dear, don't show him the letter," as the young girl, with that curious dulness of perception in matters of good taste or delicacy which she sometimes manifested, and which had allowed her to show it to Leah, held it timidly out to him. "It was meant—to be private, I don't doubt, and would only annoy the Professor to read."

"I should certainly decline to read any young lady's letters from her mother," said the Professor briskly; "but haven't you one yourself then, George?"

"No, sir; they haven't condescended even to answer me, and——"

"If this gentleman is Dr. Marstland, he should ha' told Mr. Sinlorren he was living in the same house as Miss Vera here, and then he'd have had his letter at the same time," Joanna put in hardily. "Madame told me he gave his address as 111, Phillimore Gardens, and I posted a letter to him there as soon as ever I got to Waterloo this morning."

"And it is probably there now, seeing that that is Dr. Marstland's address, and that he is only calling here this afternoon," observed the Professor, checking Marstland's attempt at a more haughty rejoinder. "At the same time, as I do not think it respectful to Miss St. Laurent to be discussing these matters before her servant, I will ask you, Leah, my child, to have some food got ready for this good woman. We can easily put her up till her young mistress leaves us, which, if your mother says 'at once,' means, I suppose, my dear, a good-bye to us as early as to-morrow."

"Joanna said to-night!" said Vera plaintively, and with a glance of piteous appeal in Marstland's direction. The Professor raised his eyebrows comically.

"Then Joanna is a much-to-be-envied person, my dear, for possessing a stomach capable of standing out two nights on the Channel. Still, if your mother wishes it——"

"Which, if you please, sir, she does," said Joanna, though in a more respectful tone. Despite the old scientist's lean, bent form and shabby coat, there was evidently something in the mild dignity of his manner, his long beard, and a certain humorous twinkle behind the spectacles which shielded his keen-looking eyes, which inspired her with more deference than the youthful and stalwart manliness of George Marstland.

"Not that you're right, begging your pardon, as to me being a good sailor, sir, as dogs couldn't be sicker every time I set my foot on a steamer's deck; but Mounseer, he said to me, 'Now remember, I trust to you not to delay even a night in England,' and when I'm trusted, I'm to be relied on. I should ha' been here hours ago if Vera hadn't written from Barnes, so that her ma thought she would still be there."

"Oh, Joanna, I am sorry," said Vera penitently. "I left there directly after writing; but——"

"Oh, it don't matter, so I've found you in the end," Joanna interrupted. "I'm a first-rate packer, and I've just had a good meal, thanking the gentleman for his offer all the same. So if you'll take me to the room where your things are——"

"My daughter will do that for you," said Mr. Josephs quietly. "If Miss St. Laurent has to start so soon on such an unforeseen and tiring journey, she will want both rest and food before starting, and must take them, whatever other people do. Don't think me too authoritative, my dear," turning to Vera with his old kind smile; "but while you are in my house, you know, you are like my child, and I am your guardian and bound to arrange what I think best for your health and well-being. Therefore, put yourself in that big arm-chair and stay there till I give you leave to come out of it; and, Leah, take this good woman to her young lady's room and tell your mother, in passing, what has happened, and that we want dinner to be ready in half-an-hour at latest."

It was in vain for Joanna to protest. She did try to do so, smarting inwardly under the superiority assigned to Vera over her, the girl's own cousin; to insinuate even that her instructions had been not to let the young lady out of her sight once she had reached her; but fate, or the Professor, was against her. With a perfectly bland and polite perversity he seemed unable to hear or understand what she was driving at, and only reiterated his orders with a peremptoriness which even she felt compelled to obey.

She followed Leah from the room accordingly, fearing that if she did not do so she might after all miss the train through her own fault; and as soon as they were gone the Professor turned to the two lovers and observed:

"Now, George, I'm going to be good-natured enough to fetch that letter of yours

for you. Only don't begin to cry your eyes out as soon as I'm gone, my little girl; and you, Marstrand, be a man and keep up her heart. Remember, if you had spoken to her parents first this wouldn't have happened. As it is, you've got to do so now, and win her humbly, and cap in hand, instead of looking on her as won."

"As if I wouldn't win you on my bare knees, if needful!" cried Marstrand passionately as the door closed. "My darling, come here. It is impossible that they should refuse you to me when they know how we love one another. It is quite true that I forgot about your father being French, and that I ought to have propitiated him first; but you will forgive me for that, Vera, won't you, dearest? For you know that it was only because it was impossible for me to remember anyone or anything else when you were present."

And then, as Vera only answered by a burst of tears, the more unrestrained because with difficulty kept back till now, the young lover took her, for the first time in their brief courtship, into his arms; and in the work of soothing her it seemed only a bare minute or two before the bang of the hall-door and the Professor's cough outside showed that he had returned. He was merciful to them even then, however, for he only put in his head, and handed the letter to his ex-pupil, saying with a great affectation of haste:

"Here it is. Came by two o'clock post. No, I shan't come in. I've a load of work waiting. Keep the child resting, that's all." And off he went again to his study below. No one else came near them; and Marstrand, kneeling beside Vera, with one arm round her waist, tore the letter open, both of them trembling with eagerness.

It was in French, and, translated, ran as follows:

"MONSIEUR,—I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your proposal for the hand of my daughter. In declining the same absolutely, and without the customary apologies, permit me to mention that gentlemen, in this country at least, are ordinarily too honourable to condescend to the cowardices of intriguing the consent of a young girl when away from her parents' roof, and without applying to them in the first instance. When you receive this, Mdlle. St. Laurent will have been reclaimed within the protection of her family, and I am under the necessity of begging that from this moment your acquaintance with her ceases.

"Accept, monsieur, the assurance of my very humble devotion, and believe me, etc., etc.,

"PHILIPPE MARIE ST. LAURENT."

Perhaps in all London that sunny afternoon in late August, there were not two young faces paler than those bent above the letter just transcribed; but Maratland's was white with indignation, and in his effort to hold it under control and keep back the words, "Insolent, overbearing old fool!" he crushed the paper together, and striding across the room stood looking out of the nearest window without speaking. He had not remained there for more than a minute or so, however, devouring his wrath and mortification in silence, when his elbow was very timidly touched, and turning he saw that Vera was at his side, her face still blanched with the pallor which had come over it on reading her father's curt, contemptuous missive; but wearing also an expression of mingled terror and desperation such as he had rarely before seen on a girl's features.

"George," she said, trembling very much, and the words so thrilled and fired him, for it was the first time her shyness had ever permitted her to use his Christian name, that he forgot everything else, and snatching her to him covered her lips with kisses. "George, what—am I to do?"

"To do, my own darling? How do you mean?"

"You see," she almost whispered, "papa says our acquaintance is to cease now, now! and mamma tells me to forget. What am I to do?"

Maratland smiled scornfully.

"My acquaintance with you, Vera," he said, in the full, strong tones which seemed as though by an electric current to fill the girl's feeble veins with new blood and vigour, "will never cease while you and I are alive, nor, please Heaven, after our death. And for you—but you know best—do you think you will forget me, love?"

"Forget you! How could I? You know I could not," she answered quite simply. "After death—well, I suppose we shall be in heaven. One cannot think about that, it is so far away; but I would rather be here with you, just as we are, even than that; and so—so—George, I don't know how to bear it. I feel that if I once go away—go back there—I shall never see you again. They will not let me; and I would rather die. Tell me what to do. You are so strong and clever.

you must know what is best. I will do just as you say."

And in that moment Maratland felt certain that she would. It was a temptation and a test too, a powerful one for a young man of strong passions and impetuous energy, this frail, slender creature clinging to him with her soft hands, gazing at him with her appealing eyes, and he knowing that he had only to say: "Don't go. Refuse. Say you are ill, that you must have a day's grace, and slip out in the morning to be married to me," and that she would do it, and would probably never repent it through all the happy years that they might live together. A terrible temptation indeed! and whatever others he may have succumbed to in after years, it should be remembered to Maratland's credit that he did resist this; thrust it scornfully away from him as it rose in seductive colours before his eyes, and only infused an extra tenderness into his tones as he answered, holding her close to him and speaking brightly and cheeringly:

"Do, my own darling? Why, go back and be strong and true for me, as I will be for you. If you love me like that—Heaven bless you for it, sweet!—no one living can separate us; and though I promised the Professor we would not enter into any engagement before hearing from your parents, and even as things are I will not ask one pledge from you till I can do so under their roof, I engage myself to you now, and swear to be true to you and you only while life is in us. Be brave, my Vera. Don't look so unhappy, dear, or I shall blame myself more than your father blames me for having made you so. How long do you think it will be before I am in Brittany? Just twenty-four hours after you. And then if I have to go on my nose and knees to propitiate your parents I will."

"But if—if—," Vera was only partially comforted, "if they should not—"

"Why should you think of such 'ifs'? As they really know nothing of me they can have no personal objection to me as yet; and you tell me you do not know of any other. But even supposing the worst, it is but waiting a little. You are almost of age, as it is, and when it is a question of a woman's happiness or misery for life, she must judge for herself. Be sure of one thing, my dearest, if you trust your happiness to me you shall never regret it."

They were almost the last words spoken between them. The next moment the door-handle turned rather noisily, and

Mrs. Josephs entered, her wrinkled, sallow face eloquent with all motherly kindness and sympathy, to say that Vera must come to her dinner. It was waiting, and the Professor insisted on it.

There was very little said at that meal: a few disjointed words of regret or encouragement from the family party, and a repeated entreaty to Vera to eat—that was all. She herself never spoke a word; and though she tried meekly to obey, and put the food set before her in her mouth, the effort was evidently almost beyond her, and she seemed to derive her only strength from keeping her wistful eyes fixed on her lover, who waited on her himself, in silence too, but with tenderest assiduity. Leah did not appear. She was still upstairs, busy in helping—perhaps it might be truer to say hindering—Joanna in the work of packing Vera's clothes and other properties: an operation, however, which that experienced servant seemed determined to get through in good time under all difficulties.

The moment for starting came all too soon. Joanna insisted on going for a cab herself, saying that she had pre-engaged a particular one on the stand at the corner of the street; and had any of the family been looking out of the window they might have been surprised to see her return from there, not alone, but in company with a stout, well-dressed, foreign-looking gentleman, who, however, left her within two doors of the house and turned back. No one was thinking of Joanna, however, except to be glad of her absence. Those few minutes that elapsed between her going and returning, had been given to the lovers for their farewell, and when they were over Vera came out alone into the hall, where all the kindly household were assembled to bid her good-bye.

It was a very affectionate leave-taking. Good Mrs. Josephs had tears in her eyes, and the Professor kissed the girl's forehead as he bade her good-bye, adding cheerily and with the hope of bringing the colour into her pale cheeks, that he should be the first to call on a certain young doctor's wife in the good days to come; while David and John joined in an eager chorus of, "Come back soon, and pay us another visit, Vera. There'll be no one to tell us Breton fairy stories when you are gone."

But it was to her first friend after all that Vera clung at the end with sudden passionate tears and kisses; and it was Leah who said the last word to her, a

bright, tender word, spoken with a pale face but shining, steadfast eyes, the thought of which cheered the weeping maiden for long afterwards:

"Good-bye, darling, and remember I don't pity you a bit! Love that is worth anything is all the better for a few trials, and since you love one another everything is sure to come right for you in the end."

That was the last. The cab drove off. Vera's brief life in England had come to an end, and with it, as it seemed to her, all that made life worth living. She sat crouched together, her face hidden under the thick veil she had pulled over it, and never spoke or even attempted a reply to the rough but good-natured efforts at enlivening her which—now that she had got the girl in her power—Joanna, who was really attached to her, bestirred herself to make from time to time.

Vera did not even look up or rouse herself when they reached Southampton, but stood shivering and helpless beside her luggage on the platform while Joanna went for a cab; but when they were in it and driving to the docks, she lifted her head suddenly and asked:

"Joanna, who was that gentleman you spoke to at Waterloo, and who was on the platform here when we got out of the train?"

Joanna hesitated a moment, glancing at her as if uncertain what to answer, and then said brusquely:

"If you saw him, Vera, I should think you recognised him. It was the Count de Mally."

"The Count here! But—if so, he knew I was with you. Why didn't he come and speak to me?"

"Well, I don't know, Vera," said Joanna crossly. "Frenchmen is that stiff in their ideas o' politeness, he might think you wouldn't care to be bothered with him when you was travelling alone with me. He come over on business, and he's going back by the same steamer as us, so we'll have him to look arter us in case o' need; and I don't doubt he'd be only too glad to come and talk to you if you like."

"Oh, no, no! I should hate it. I don't want to see him or anyone," cried Vera, bursting into sudden tears. "Please—please don't make me." And when they alighted she clung closely to the maid's arm, and kept her face more hidden than before till they were on board, and she could hasten to bury herself in the ladies' cabin. She did not see the Count again.

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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A STERN CHASE.

A STORY IN THREE PARTS.

BY MRS. CASHEL HOEY.

THE THIRD PART.

CHAPTER XL. LIGHT AT EVENTIDE.

THE sun shone brightly on the marriage-day of Julian and Dolores, and all the omens were good. Nobody wore green, nobody was moved to tears by the ceremony. The wedding was a pretty one, and although it was a very small and simple affair in comparison with the sumptuous nuptial celebrations which she had witnessed on her own side of the Atlantic, Effie Wharton was delighted with it. Lillias had given her whole mind to making the grand occasion all that it ought to be—an unchequered recollection of brightness for Hugh's daughter to look back upon all her life. Dolores had four bridesmaids, Effie Wharton being one of them. Colonel and Mrs. Courtland came up from Lisle, where they had passed the few weeks of Julian's engagement, and whither they were to return on the day after the wedding, accompanied by Lillias. The Whartons were going to Scotland, Rodney to make his unreasonably-deferred visit to his place at Southampton. Colonel Courtland had invited him to come to Lisle so soon as he had had enough of his proprietorial solitude, and Rodney had accepted the proposal with alacrity. He frankly acknowledged his conviction that he was destined to make a conspicuous failure in the character of a country gentleman.

The wedding-day was, therefore, one of general break-up, and Lillias was glad of this. She was sending Hugh's daughter away from her to be as happy, she truly believed, as was consistent with the lot of humanity; nevertheless parting was

parting. The time of which Mrs. Courtland had warned her was come; the time when she must stand aside, a spectator only of the fate and fortunes of her beloved charge. She was glad that she would have to accustom herself to this, at a distance from the familiar surroundings; there was a change in herself too, and the knowledge made her restless. Her love and pride were fully gratified by the bright beauty and the beaming happiness of Dolores upon her wedding-day. Never had that name seemed less appropriate to the bearer of it. No fairer bride than Dolores had ever knelt at the altar rail, to

Lay aside her maiden gladness for a name and for a ring,

as the desponding poet of a sentimental epoch sings, and no better behaved bridegroom than Julian had ever played his comparatively unimportant part at a wedding.

The carriage was in readiness to convey the happy couple the first stage on their life's journey, and the bridesmaids, having given the last touches to her travelling dress, left Dolores alone with Lillias. The snow-white wedding-dress, and the superb white lace mantilla, Rodney's gift; which Dolores—who also wore her pearl-mounted comb—had substituted for the ordinary wreath and veil of an English bride; lay on a sofa, and all around was the pretty, luxurious disarray of the occasion. Smiling at the reflection of their two faces in the glass, Dolores said:

"Now give me my rosary, Aunt Lillias, and put it round my neck yourself. Mr. Rodney told me yesterday how he recognised my mother from my father's description of her when he first saw her, by the rosary of coral and gold; so it is a kind of relief both of them, and the only one I have."

Lillias put the rosary round the girl's

neck, concealing it with the lace at the top of her gown, and clasped her close in an embrace that might have been a mother's in its fervour.

"Tell me again," she said, "that you have been quite happy with me."

Dolores, still held in her arms, looked seriously into her face, her bright eyes veiled with sudden tears, as she replied:

"Aunt Lilius, I don't believe there was ever in the world anybody so happy as I have been with you."

The wedding guests dispersed in due time after the departure of the bride and bridegroom. The Whartons were the last to go, and cordial farewells were exchanged between them and Lilius, with anticipations of a pleasant meeting in the winter. The house was left to the peculiar blank that follows a wedding, and Lilius to the equally inevitable sense of being unable to settle down to her ordinary occupations. Colonel Courtland had gone out on horseback; his wife had retired to her sitting-room; Rodney, who was staying at The Quinces, had also disappeared. Lilius changed her wedding finery for a walking-dress and set out for the Heath. It was growing late in the afternoon, the sun would soon be setting; she would have just the one hour that she liked best in which to think, amid a favourite scene, of the events of the day, and the new life that had opened for her.

She bent her steps to her chosen spot, the little ridge upon the Heath below the road, from which the widest prospect was to be commanded; she sat down in her accustomed place, but she could not give her thoughts the orderly direction she had intended. They persisted in taking another course, and she was obliged to let them have their way; a profitless way she knew, but she could not help that. And so she gave herself up to them, promising herself that it should be for the last time, and was tasting to the full their bitter-sweet, when a quick step upon the solitary road above her caught her ear. It was not a thing to note, for such sounds were of course common; but this was a step she knew. In another minute Rodney was standing by her side. She was absurdly unable to address him in the matter-of-course fashion that befitted the occasion, for the simple reason that it was of him she had been thinking, and she rose hurriedly, with some embarrassed remark about the lateness of the hour.

"Are you going home?" he asked, with

evident disappointment. "I fancied I might find you in this direction, and that the postponement of dinner would give us time to see the sunset."

She resumed her seat without a word, and he placed himself on the grass a little below her; but he did not pay any attention to the sun, although the clouds of glory were beginning to muster for the grand "good-night." He leaned upon his elbow and looked at her.

"The wedding went off very well," said Lilius, "and our young people seemed very happy." She knew she was making a stupid remark, and that it was also superfluous, for she had said those very words to Rodney five minutes after Julian and Dolores went away; but she could not think of anything else to say.

"We agreed upon both those points a couple of hours ago," said Rodney, with the slow smile to which she had grown used, "and I don't propose to talk about our young people. They have been talked of, and thought of, quite as much as is good for them or for us, and I now mean to change the subject."

She still watched the muster of the clouds of glory, and he still looked at her.

"To-morrow will see our pleasant companionship broken up, as to-day has seen the old order of things in your home pass away for ever. Before that happens I want to tell you a story."

"A story?"

"Yes. A love story. It is not an uncommon one, and I shall tell it briefly. It is my own story. When I was a very young man, and quite ridiculously poor, I fell in love with—an angel. That, you know, is what we generally do when we are young, and especially when we are poor. She was, however, an angel who lived upon this solid earth, and she had a mother, who cannot, I think, have ever been an angel. But this mother was a wise woman, and, when I had won her daughter's heart, or at any rate, her promise, she offered no violent opposition to our engagement, but put her trust in absence and time. My calling was one that took me away to far distances for long periods; we had no idea of an immediate marriage; my angel and I parted with all the usual protestations, and I am sure the purest intention of everlasting constancy. I got a valuable commission—of course I was to save largely—and I started for the ends of the earth in high hope and profound grief."

She was looking at him now, and her sensitive face was all alight with interest.

"My journeys were difficult, the means of communicating with me were uncertain. I heard from my angel but rarely; after some time I ceased to hear from her at all; and when at the end of ten months, I again reatned civilised regions and found a bundle of letters awaiting me, the first I opened informed me that the young lady—who ceased to be an angel as I glanced over the first lines of her mother's jubilant epistle—had married very well indeed, and hoped to hear that I had done, or was about to do, likewise. It cut me up at the time to an extent which I should be ashamed to acknowledge to any one but you, and it did me a great deal of harm. Such experiences always do harm men, I think, just as unkindness to children injures their natures. At all events, it made me a savage for a long time, and a cynic, or so I believed, for good and all."

"Were you a savage or a cynic when Hugh knew you in Cuba?"

"I had got over the first stage by that time; but I was cynical enough, and if I had not been moved by considerations for him of a more serious kind than what he might suffer about Ines de Rodas, I should have left him to his disappointment in that respect with but faint compunction."

"Should you? That would have been hard surely."

"To you with your earnestness, unselfishness, and constancy, it would seem so of course; but I should not have blamed myself; for I did not then believe in love, except as a young man's fancy, of which he is much better barked in nine cases out of ten."

"Hugh would never have got over it," said Lillias, with the sincerest conviction; "and he might have been harmed as much as you were. I would rather think of his fate as it was, with all its sadness, than that he should have had so much to suffer."

"I have been sure ever since I have known you," said Rodney, "that you are one of those rare women who hold the old faith which has so few votaries now—the faith that love is everything, that love is enough. I have seen that faith manifested in your life, which has no self in it, and I have wondered whether you had learned any lesson of disappointment, such as I was taught, bearing no fruit of bitterness, but only that of peace and charity and all the graces of womanhood, in you."

Her colour rose, her heart beat fast at these strange words. She took them as a question, and she knew not how to answer it. He paused for a moment; but she did not speak.

"I will go on with my love story," he continued. "You think it has been told, but that is not so. I was a very young man at the time when wisdom was so amply justified of one of her children, in the person of the mother of my angel, and I took a long, long leave of love of the illusory sort. The years that have put my youth far behind me have taught me a deep lesson. The woman whom I love I reverence; the wife whom I humbly aspire to win is the ideal of all my later, better, more instructed life. That is my love story. Lillias, what do you say to it?"

With these words he rose to his feet and stood before her with outstretched hands. But she did not speak.

"Lillias," he repeated, "what do you say to it? It is as true a story as ever was told. Is there any chance for me? Is there any hope that in my evening there shall be light?"

She looked up at him; but her eyes fell hastily before the deep, calm, masterful gaze of his. Then she said, very low, but distinctly:

"I never had a love story in my life—until now."

The clouds of glory were all radiant in crimson, and purple, and gold; the sun had gone down in awful majesty, saluted by the evensong of birds; the evening shadows were falling; as Lillias and Rodney walked home together through a world transformed to both. She said but little; he had so much to say. He had to tell her how the charm of her unworldliness had appealed to one who had seen so much of the opposite; how the lofty simplicity and disinterestedness of her mind had first surprised and then delighted him; with what lively curiosity and interest he had studied her conduct to Dolores, and contemplated the steadfast constancy with which she cherished the memory of the dead and the associations of the past. Of all that he had noticed in her of unlikeness to the rest of the world, the latter had struck him most as being least in accordance with his ordinary experience, and with the fashion and custom of these latter days. The old-world "piety" of Lillias had a wonderful charm for him in his

middle age; but perhaps he would not have denied that in his youth, at the period of the angel, he might have scoffed at it. He had to tell her, too, how altogether lovely she was to him in her dignified, self-possessed womanhood, with her clear eyes, her smooth, thoughtful brow, her grave, sweet smile, and that air of perfect purity in thought, word, and deed which was always around her. All this and much more he had to say to her, with many words of love, and some pleasant sketches of their days to come, for whose speedy beginning he pleaded in his own whimsical way, in the double character of a true lover and an elderly man. Liliás heard it all, amazed at her own good fortune and supreme happiness, half doubting whether it could be true, because it made so very much of her—and her humble rating of herself was all unfeigned—yet trusting it wholly because it was said by him. There was something of awe in her mind when she re-entered, as the affianced of the only man she had ever loved, the house which she had so recently left with the sense that her life had come to a standstill, and that its vitality and beauty had gone out of her home. How much of that feeling had been due to the love that she had not dared to acknowledge to herself, until the owner of her heart had claimed it, Liliás did not ask.

The postponed dinner was a pleasant repast. There was an unaccustomed shyness about the manner of Liliás, Colonel Courtland thought: and this Rodney noticed too, and appreciated, as so true a lover should. They were soon left to themselves, for Mrs. Courtland had excused herself from coming down to dinner on the plea of fatigue, and the Colonel joined her when Rodney sought Liliás in the drawing-room.

It was natural that they should talk of Dolores; and it pleased Rodney to draw Liliás on to telling him of what her own care and solicitude for the girl had been, of her faithful fulfilment of Hugh Rosslyn's trust, and also of the closing years of his father's life. She was wholly unconscious of the testimony that she was bearing to herself, and of the profound admiration and respect with which her simple matter-of-course narration was inspiring him. But he soon made her understand both, as he protested that henceforth it should be his pride to surround her with the love and care that she had hitherto lavished upon others.

It was late when these old-fashioned lovers parted, but much later when Liliás closed her eyes, after this day of wonder and delight, in perfect happiness, and slept with such a smile upon her face as had not touched it since Hugh was lost.

Mrs. Courtland was not only very tired on the evening of Dolores's wedding-day, but she was unaccountably out of spirits. She tried to rouse herself when the Colonel came upstairs, but it was not to be done, and he found her particularly disinclined to talk about the wedding. There was no great improvement in her spirits on the following day, and the good Colonel, who genuinely regarded all his fears and troubles with respect to Julian as ended, now that he had the best girl in all the world for a wife to make a delightful home for him, and keep him safe in it from the temptation of bad company—the Colonel was always down on Julian's supposed tempters—felt himself decidedly snubbed. Things would be pleasanter, he hoped, when they got back to Lislea.

Rodney took leave of Liliás and her friends early on the day after the wedding, and left town for Southampton the same evening. Colonel and Mrs. Courtland and Liliás started at noon for Lislea. The Colonel's hopes were realised; things were much better when Mrs. Courtland found herself at home again; but this was only because she had come to a wise resolution that she would keep to herself the matter which was troubling her. Nothing could be changed; the wrong that had been done was irredeemable.

Now the matter that was troubling Mrs. Courtland was the following:

Late in the afternoon of Dolores's wedding-day the post brought Mrs. Courtland a foreign letter, which had been forwarded to her from Lislea. The writer was Madame Isambard, who had retired to Florence, and the contents consisted of the story of Julian Courtland's conduct to Margaret Denzil, who was staying with her. "She has come to me, as I desired her to do if ever she was in trouble," wrote Madame Isambard, "and she did not know, neither does she now know, that I am acquainted with you. I tell you this pitiful history—not to harm the young man, though he might be the better for some sound punishment, and not to help Margaret, for nothing can help her but time and her own good sense. Both these will act soon, I trust, the former in the natural course, the latter by showing her

that she was in love with a creation of her own fancy, not with Julian Courtland. I tell it to you in the hope that the other poor girl may be saved; you will know best whether that can be done, and, if it can, how to do it. I know how deep an interest you have always taken in her. Margaret Denzil has seen her, and tells me she has grown up a lovely creature."

The fears, suspicions, and forebodings of Mrs. Courtland were fulfilled. But the "other poor girl" could not be saved; and the best thing to be done, for the sake of all concerned, was to keep silence herself, and to entreat Madame Isambard to do the same.

Colonel and Mrs. Courtland learned the good news which Liliás told them, after the arrival of a letter from Rodney gave her a ready opportunity of speaking of him, with unqualified pleasure. They were not so much surprised as she expected. Mrs. Courtland had observed the impression that Liliás made upon Rodney; and as she was not prepared to accept her friend's own humble estimate of her powers of pleasing, it had occurred to her more than once that a marriage might be the result of their strange meeting. She was, however, too wise to drop a hint of such a thing to Liliás, who would immediately have been placed at a disadvantage by her embarrassment. The pleasure with which she heard the news had, too, a strong element of relief in it. The evil to come could not be averted; it was in the inevitable sequence, in the fitness of things, but it might be made to wear a less terrible aspect to Liliás, with Henry Rodney to support and console her when it came. The Colonel, in whose thoughts there was no complexity, rejoiced with simple gladness, declaring that he had never met a finer or a better fellow than Rodney, and that, if any man could be worthy of Liliás, Rodney was that man. So, amid the heartfelt congratulations of her friends, and with her heart filled with deep gratitude, true love of a quality as uncommon as her own nature, and exquisite measureless content, Liliás began the visit to Lisle, which was to be brightened by constant letters from Rodney, with his presence in prospect, and by the news of her dear Dolores. She was wonderfully happy. Sometimes she caught sight of her own face in a glass, and could hardly believe it was hers, so soft, smiling, and youthful was it. Just before he said good-bye to her, Liliás had asked Rodney

whether he did not think Hugh would have been pleased, and Rodney had answered: "I think, my love, we may change the tense, and assure each other that he is pleased."

Dolores sent short but charming letters home. She was delighted with "abroad," as she called foreign lands generally; she liked the hotels, the people, the streets, the shops, the churches, the dogs, and the food. She was sure Aunt Liliás would be shocked at her extravagance when she should see the heap of lovely things she had bought everywhere; but it was Julian's fault, he thought she ought to have everything she wished for. They had seen such beautiful places. Dolores was sure "abroad" had improved greatly since she and Aunt Liliás were there, although that was so short a time ago, and she should like to stay for ever, only that "at home" was going to be so delightful too. Julian's name appeared in almost every sentence, and when it did not, it was because Dolores mentioned him as "my husband" instead.

A fortnight passed. The weather was beautiful. Liliás and her friends almost lived out of doors. Rodney sent charming accounts of the nice little estate which he had once called "that confounded place of mine at Southampton." Now he considered that it only needed the rule and governance of Liliás to be an ideal home.

It was situated within a short distance of Southampton Water, and commanded the prospect that is said to have suggested to Dr. Watts the image of the spiritual Canaan.

Rodney sketched the place, and marked where

Sweet fields, beyond the swelling flood,
Stand drest in living green,—

sent her flowers and fruit from the gardens, and proposed that the whole party, having seen the young pair off from Southampton on their voyage to the West Indies, should afterwards make an inspection of the lucky legacy that had brought him to England.

By the same post which brought this pleasant proposal, Colonel Courtland received a letter from Julian, with the latest information about the plans and movements of the happy pair. They proposed to reach Paris by the middle of the coming week, and had bespoken rooms at the Grand Hôtel Universel. Dolores was quite well, but slightly inconvenienced by the loss of her maid. She intended to engage a substitute in Paris.

Below Julian's signature was written :

"A LINE FOR AUNT LILIAS.

"No one in the world was ever so happy as Dolores Rosslyn, except

"DOLORES COURTLAND."

"A testimonial to character," observed the Colonel, as he carefully tore off the lower half of the sheet on which these words were written, and handed it across the breakfast-table to Lilia. "Yours, Julian's, and her own."

On the following Monday at noon, Lilia received a telegram from Rodney, despatched from the railway station at Southampton. The message was in these words:

"I have made an important discovery, relating to events of interest to you which took place here, and I am coming up to town to-day. Expect me at Lisles by the first train to-morrow."

FADING FLOWERS.

THERE is nothing stranger among the facts of biology—it used to be called Natural History—than the very partial distribution of plants. Take the Galapagos Islands; almost every separate islet has to some extent what is called its own flora, i.e. some species which are not found in any of the others or on the American continent. In the lonely islands of the Atlantic this was far more noticeable; for there the distinctive forms were not merely new species, allied to, though different from, those found elsewhere, but plants the like of which were not to be seen in any other part of the world. Of these the most are hopelessly lost, thanks to the goats and rabbits left on the islands by old navigators. Some, like the dragon-tree of Teneriffe, have been just saved in time. Man has interfered, and has fenced round one or two as samples of what used to be a staple product of the island; though probably man might have fenced in vain were not the dragon-tree by no means so palatable as the primeval woods which used to clothe Ascension and New Amsterdam so richly, as to make scholars who landed there remember what they had read about Circe's Isle.

Man will have to interfere in Oceania, too, if the flowers about which we read in the old legends, and of which chiefs and common people alike used to make their garlands, are to be prevented from going the way of the dodo. There every island

group has, of course, its own plants; and no wonder, for almost every island group is as far from any other group as Norway is from Timbuctoo; ay, many of the islands which form the separate groups, and on the map look pretty close together, are really scarce nearer than London and Vienna. The wonder here is, not that the "floras" differ so widely, but that some plants are found over almost the whole Pacific. How can this have come about? Is it that, as some have fancied, these island groups are the mountain-peaks of a submerged continent? Or are ocean currents answerable for such a wide dispersion of plants; and are those which are found everywhere of such as have strong seed-cases, able to resist the action of salt water? However it comes to pass, some plants are in the Pacific as ubiquitous as the nettle is in Europe; others are confined to a very few places, or even to one, like that lovely flower which Miss Gordon Cumming tells us is only found among the volcanic debris close to the crater of Mouna Loa, in the Sandwich Isles. And it is these plants which are in danger of extinction; many are disappearing year by year, so that, when Mrs. Francis Sinclair has stated the number "of flowering species in the Hawaiian Isles at four hundred," she at once corrects herself, and says: "But probably there are far fewer now, for this enumeration was made some years ago." What a good thing it is that she took in hand to paint them—such beauties many of them are! I hope some one out of the many London ladies who can paint flowers will copy her pictures, and hang them up in one of the Kew houses, perhaps in the vestibule to Miss North's gallery of tropical trees and flowers, so that those of the public who cannot afford to buy Mrs. Sinclair's costly book, may have a chance of learning what the plants are like which the white man is killing out as surely as he is killing out the brown man who delighted in them.

How sad that even about that delight one has to use the past tense! Everybody testifies that no race on earth had such a love of natural beauty, showing itself in a fondness for flowers, and a skill in using them for decorations, as this brown race. And everybody is astonished at their strange loss of heart in these latter days. They seem to know they are going, and not to want to stay. Why? May it not be due to the way in which "civilisation" has come among them? First came the

whaler, English and American. He seemed to be a god with his death-dealing fire-tubes, his ships with great white wings, his iron—such a wonder to people who knew no metal. He was drunken often, and diseased as well. But then, their own gods had human passions; and, therefore, low-lived brute though he was, the great gods might have chosen to visit them in that form. Next came the missionaries, and showed them a better way. And they, too, were as gods, great in knowledge and in wisdom. But they hated flowers and dances, and everything that put brightness into life. "Dance now, wear flower garlands now, and you'll burn everlastingly," said the holy man in black. "Let your women wear poke-bonnets and your men shirts and trousers, and worship inside blank white walls, and then you may hope for safety." What an alternative! Either the mad orgies of the sailors—a whole island drunk for a week, as was too often the case when a ship brought in a cargo of spirits—or the depressing dulness of the teachers. One hopes that the Bishop of Honolulu and the Roman Catholics in Wallis Islands and elsewhere are at last showing the brown race that beauty and true religion can go together, and that God may be worshipped with flowers and art-decorations quite as faithfully as in the bare ugliness of an old-fashioned chapel. In the Roman Catholic religious colonies—for their plan is to form their people into communities apart—the population is actually increasing.

Why don't the Roman Catholics try to keep plants as well as people from dying out? And why should not Hawaii, which has its Constitution and its Houses of Parliament, and everything that a civilised community ought to have, set up also a botanic garden, a Pacific Kew, in which the plants that are disappearing may be kept alive till better times?

I think the Catholics are right in isolating their converts. To teach a Kanaka and then send him back to his tribe, is simply to give him new powers for mischief. He will throw off his clothes, kill somebody to prove his mettle, and use the skill that you have developed in him in circumventing his neighbours. I am speaking of the wilder islands which are still in the tribal state. The Hawaii group has passed out of that; the Samoan is passing out of it, the process being helped or hindered—it seems very doubtful which—by the rival consuls of England, America, and Germany, in

whose hands the King is a mere puppet. Tribes are always at war with one another, till one has so thoroughly got the upper hand as to make all resistance hopeless; and the labour-traffic keeps up this state of constant war. Prisoners are sold to the "black-birders," whom the High Commissioner seems more powerless to check than were the captains of cruisers in the days when they could act independently. Payment is always in muskets, powder being a sort of small change; and wars are therefore far more exterminating than they were when men had no weapon but a club. From the New Hebrides come the best workers, and there the drain has been so severe that no more men are forthcoming. The Chinese are filling up the gap left by the dying out of the Kanakas; already in the Gilbert Isles all the trade is in the hands of a house rejoicing in the name of Ong-Chang. The "black-birding" (sometimes helped by using a sham missionary as a decoy) is mostly kept up by Queensland planters. They must have "hands." Chinese cost too much. Coolies the Indian Government will not give them, except under restrictions which they think vexatious. So they go in for islanders of all kinds, who are nobody's subjects, and therefore unprotected, except by the farce of an agent who shuts his eyes to all the tricks that go on in order to secure a shipload. It is slavery over again, with "browns" in the place of "blacks," and is fast killing out the population in the islands to which no whaler ever went, and which missionaries have not yet taken in hand. Planting needs "hands"; "hands" must be paid for in guns; guns kill faster than clubs—that is how the system works.

And the planter, too, is mainly answerable for the disappearance of the flowers as well as of the human population. On the big German farms in the Islands, for instance, are grown cotton, and oranges, and cocoanuts, etc., for which the ground has to be broken up and the "weeds" got rid of. And, besides, on every plantation there is a quantity of "stock," and these, wandering high and low, nibble off the shrubs which, growing in poor soil on rough ground, would be pretty safe to escape spade and plough. That is why so many plants are dying out; they never had to stand against such enemies before. Like the New Zealand birds, which had not learned to hide their nests, because Maori boys never thought of taking the eggs, the plants in these islands have been for ages

growing in an easy, careless style, and cannot all at once develop the cautious ways of an English weed, whose life has so long been a struggle against man and beast. What with tillage and forest fires, and, above all, the ravages of animals, Mrs. Sinclair says you may travel for miles in the Sandwich Islands without finding a single native plant. They were all trampled in, or eaten off, or burnt down; and, before they could recover, the ground was taken up by some foreign weed which had come in with the cotton or other seeds.

With plants, as with men, it is the survival of the hardiest. The nettle, for instance, has so long had to run the gauntlet that it will last while the world stands. See what a root it has come to have; you never can get all of it out, no matter how thoroughly you break up your ground. But neither the delicate kokio-keokeo (*Hibiscus Arnottianus*), which is the subject of so many songs and legends, and which, with its white petals and rich pink stamens, used to drape the sides of rocky ravines, nor the red variety with which girls used to adorn their hair, ever had any struggle for existence till the goats came, who have made them both very nearly things of the past. We have lost plants in England, who can tell how many? The "lady's slipper," daintiest of our orchids, is almost extinct. Perhaps in one of the lovely dales of West Riding, in a sunny spot where thick woods all round keep the air damp, you may find it; but I never did. I have seen it in a garden near Pen-y-gant, and of course it is in the orchid-house at Kew. Then another fine orchid, the great white helleborine, used to grow on Bathwick Hill, near Bath, but building and high farming (that foe to botany) have improved it off. I dare say the draining of Whittlesea Mere lost us some plants, as it certainly lost us the big copper and perhaps the swallow-tailed butterfly. It is not every plant that you can treat as you can corn-bottle and poppy, which grow anywhere and stand any amount of ill-usage. A poppy, by the way, the puakala, (*Argemone mexicana*), is the only Hawaiian plant that has really got a firm foothold. Captain Cook noticed its snowy blossoms; and its leaves and stems have covered themselves with rough hairs as if to resist the beasts which he first introduced into the islands. Moreover, its seed has the same wonderful vitality as that of white clover. When ground is cleared by a fire, the puakala is sure to come up, though it

had not been seen on the spot for thirty or forty years. As its name shows, the puakala is also found in America; but this is not so wonderful as the fact that the ohia lehua (*Metrosideros*), a dark evergreen with scarlet blossoms—which, as shrub and tree, is so universally present in Hawaii that in song and legend it takes the place which the heather does in Scotland—grows also in New Zealand, a quarter of the world's circumference away. So, by the way, does that gaudy creeper, the ieie (*Freydenetia*), which in Hawaii is being killed out by rats, who gnaw off its succulent bracts.

The kou, too, the most useful of the Hawaiian woods, soft and yet durable, and of a beautiful brown, is found in some islands south of the line, though not in New Zealand. This tree (*Cordia*) is being killed out; but if there is any wisdom in the Hawaiians they will surely take measures to preserve it. Unhappily their old handicrafts are also dying out. Nobody nowadays makes a kou-wood bowl or dish. He buys an ugly, imported stoneware one; and so the skill which came out in the old home manufactures will soon be lost past recovery. It is very fine to be able to sing hymns which one does not understand, and know the names of the twelve apostles and the minor prophets; but to be able to make a bowl of kou-wood, or build a canoe, making the outrigger of the cork-like wood of the wiliwili (*Erythrina*), whose scarlet blossoms were used for decking hair, and its still brighter scarlet beans for garlands, or to catch birds with a view to feather cloaks, or even to compound herb medicines, is better still. And all this the natives have forgotten. The chiefs don't wear feather cloaks; on grand occasions they put on dress-coats, and look very awkward in them. The sick have given up trusting to simples, and take patent medicines which play the mischief with their unaccustomed stomachs. They are forgetting their folk-lore, in which flowers played such a conspicuous part; they are even (says Mrs. Sinclair) forgetting the names of the commonest plants, as well as the stories connected with them.

I hope that Mrs. Sinclair will fill another volume or two; and that what she is doing for Hawaii some one else will do for Tonga, and so on. What better occupation for a missionary's wife? What more graceful work, too, for the girls' schools? These brown maidens, with whom the love of flowers is a passion, would surely

be apt scholars in sketching and colouring them.

Thanks to chromo-lithography, what is done in this way can be reproduced at small cost for the delight of the English working-man. Of old, a book like Mrs. Sinclair's would have been a precious thing for a King or an art-patronising noble; now there is no reason why every free library should not possess it, and, displaying it on a convenient easel, let designers of all kinds come to it for lessons in form and colouring. What can be more graceful, more helpful in art-decoration, than the *Ipomœas*, of which Mrs. Sinclair figures six kinds? These beat all the rest in form, glorified *Convolvuluses* as they are; and the *Hibiscuses* (mallow tribe, to which also belongs the indigenous wild cotton) in colour. And, then, the *ohai* (*Sesbania*) and other plants of the pea tribe. Fancy our Tufted Vetch transformed from a slender creeper into a big shrub, and its lilac blossoms quintupled in size and turned to the brightest coral; that is the *ohai*—nearly extinct, alas! so popular is it with cattle. Over and over again, in Mrs. Sinclair, one reads "like most Hawaiian plants, it has feeble roots and is therefore soon destroyed." Whereas our buttercup, not content with being absolutely uneatable, and producing any amount of seed, has in one or two of its species developed a creeping root which runs along like couch-grass. That is the way to last; be so unpleasant that nothing will touch you, and continually keep strengthening your hold on your surroundings. If, like the *poolanui* (*Coreopsis*) you are a useful fodder plant, there is no hope for you; you will be eaten down till you disappear, and then people will wonder what makes the forest look so sombre that used to look so cheery in spring when it was lighted up with your gay blossoms. Even the *ae-ae* (*Lycium sandwicense*), which thrives on the edge of salt lagoons, and gets on without rain, sucking up through the sand the brackish water, is in danger of being exterminated, for during droughts cattle are only too glad to browse on its thick juicy leaves. I said the *kou* was dying out; so, too, is the *kouili* (*Alphitonia*), a fine, large, hard-wood tree, which the natives used to like for house-posts because *kouili* posts would last a life-time.

One peculiarity of the Hawaiian flora is the number of shrubs which grow down at the water's edge. One expects

convolvuluses—one of them creeps through the sand of our English coasts. One is not astonished to find a sort of *cistus* or substitute for a rose, with yellow blossoms and seed-pods, armed with stout thorns, the *nohu* (*Tribulus*); but it does not seem natural for a shrub just like a *daphne*, white flowers, green berries, shiny leaves, to be growing within the wash of the waves. Another peculiarity is the scarcity of eatable fruits. What there are, too, are disappointing; the *akala* (*Rubus hawaiensis*) looks like a very fine raspberry; but it is quite flavourless. Even that brilliant giant, the *ohia-ai* (*Eugenia*), whose blossoms, just like those of the *Pyrus japonica*, make it the glory of the Hawaiian woods, bears a wretchedly insipid pear. The natives used to live largely on this poor fare; they often suffered from famines, during which they were glad to cook even the very bitter tuber of the *hoi* (*Dioscorea*). Yet in those old days they did not dwindle away, as they do now that common food is plentiful and wholesome.

Another tree, the *iliahi* (*Santalum*), or sandal-wood, is almost extinct, not owing to ravages of cattle, but because it was so remorselessly cut down and sold (too often for rum) to skippers who carried it over to China and sold it at an immense profit. This again is one of the plants which are found from one end of the Pacific to the other, as is also the *aalii* (*Dodonæa*), of the hard wood of which Maoris as well as Hawaiians used to make spears and paddles. I hope the *ohenaupaka* (*Scævola*), a sort of yellow honeysuckle, will not die out; for it is described as "living on the bleak, misty precipices, 5000 feet above the sea, wet with trade-wind clouds, and braving the gales which rush upward from the ravines." Another mountain plant is the *kolokolo-kuahiwi* (*Lysimachia Hillebrandi*), with dark blue flowers, delicately scented. The name means that, if it is plucked, heaven will shed tears. Hence the natives were careful never to gather it when on a march, for they dreaded the cold rain as much as coolies do during the monsoon. Alas! nowadays very few natives have ever seen it; they stay at home instead of roaming freely over the hills. Above all things they eschew the windward side, where—like the *Edelweiss* in the less-frequented Alps—many plants still thrive which have been quite killed out on the drier and more frequented lee-side of the mountain ranges. They have even given up most of their old games. No one now thinks of making a

swing of nukuiwi (*Strongylodon*); it is "improper" to swing. I wonder "the authorities" have not set their faces against the displays of fireworks with which every visitor is so delighted. These take place on the north side of Kauai, where the cliffs rise sheer out of the water to a height of nearly 2000 feet. On a moonless night the spectators put to sea in their canoes, and the "pyrotechnist" walks up the cliff with a bundle of dry papala sticks (*Charpentiera*) with their feathery blossoms. He lights one and flings it down, and the wind, which blows up the face of the cliff, catches it and whirls it about. Then he launches another and another; and soon there is a grand display of stars careering madly about, until, when the wind drops, they glide down gracefully into the sea.

The Hawaiians must regret their disappearing plants; they must, with their keen sense of beauty, see that a pasture sown with artificial grasses is a poor exchange for a natural meadow with its grass all festooned with the beautiful blue convolvulus. They must be thankful that the akaakaawa (*Begonias*) by the waterfalls are not likely to die out; and that the simple little nohuanu (*Geranium cuneatum*), so like an English field-flower, is not likely to become extinct because its home is in the bleak upland swamps, 4000 feet above the sea, out of the reach of cattle, and seldom visited by man. Well; the world will be distinctly poorer when the brown race and the flowers which were its loved companions disappear from Hawaii. There will always be Germans enough in the world, and they are not in general a very interesting people; and there will always be as much cotton and sugar in the world as the world wants. Does not it seem a pity that, after his Anglo-Saxon brothers have set the brown man's feet so firmly on the downward path that there seems no chance of his pulling up again, the German should complete the work of destruction by killing out the native plants for the sake of a little more cotton and sugar?

THE MIRACLE OF ERBREZZO.

THE English race has ever been considered the most gregarious race of all, but those tourists who have travelled much in Italy return to England fully convinced that in the love of wandering to and fro the Italians beat us hollow. The question with them is not, as with us, "Where shall we go to?" but "Where shall we hurry

from?" The first case is terrible from hesitation and uncertainty; the second is quickly answered, and resolves itself into the simple response, "From whatever place we may happen to be in at the moment." Now that place is never "home," for the modern Italian knows it not, and half Italy is always on a visit to the other half, which second half hurries to return the visit as soon as possible. Even strangers seem bitten by this strange mania of locomotion, and you may witness the flight of whole bands of foreigners rushing from one place to the other without any apparent motive than that of changing locations with their friends and fellow-countrymen.

During my stay last year at Verona, whither I had hastened to fly from Milan, leaving my comfortable quarters in that city to an English family flying from Verona, I was seized with the same kind of vertigo which falls upon all Italy at certain times, for I had scarcely arrived in the place before I could fully understand this Southern mania of flight. It differs entirely from the yearning we Englishmen experience for the free sea-breezes or the fresh country air. It is no yearning for that which we have not; it is simply a disgust for that which we have.

Now in my own case the attack came on after four-and-twenty hours' sojourn in Verona. I had seen most of the sights in that time, and could behold the rest in my mind's eye with sufficient clearness to be convinced that they were not worth beholding otherwise. And now the dreaded weariness came over me with redoubled violence from the mere circumstance of witnessing from my window, on the second morning of my stay, the streams of people all hurrying by, in one direction, on foot, on horseback, rushing to the Porta Vescovo, which leads out into the Val Pantana. Whither were these people hurrying? Not to any festival or fair certainly, for all were clad in sober garments and every countenance wore a grave and solemn expression. "They are evidently not on pleasure bent," thought I; "they must be flying from something in Verona." First the panic of revolution, so common to English travellers on the Continent, then the panic of contagion, seized upon me, and I descended to the street to make enquiries. The water-carrier, to whom I addressed myself, pitied me from the bottom of his soul; nay, he almost shed tears to think that any human being

should be so utterly devoid of education, of religion, of general knowledge as not to be aware that it is by the Porte Vescovo that people get into the Val Pantana, and by the Val Pantana to the holy village of Lugo, and that the holy village of Lugo is on the road to the still holier village of Erbrezzo, where the most wondrous miracles are being performed, and the most heavenly blessings vouchsafed to certain favoured individuals, by the Holy Virgin, who dispenses them, not through the intervention of Pope or priest, but in her own proper person.

Not a moment did I hesitate to take advantage of the information thus obtained, and immediately set about procuring a place in one of the numerous public conveyances at that moment leaving Verona every ten minutes, eager to behold with my own eyes what I had hitherto beheld through the visual organs of other people.

The vehicle was crowded. I was fortunate enough to be seated between two priests from Vendri, both of them men of education, but each one educated in a different school. Their opinions on the miracle of Erbrezzo differed entirely, and their arguments being enforced by Italian gesticulation, conveyed every sentiment but that of confidence and security to the listener. Opposite to me was seated a lady clad in the deepest habiliments of woe, who never ceased turning over between her fingers a rosary of huge box-wood beads, which rattled beneath her touch with sharp and sudden sound like that of cracking walnuts. Young maidens, too, were there, with eager, inquisitive eyes, and little girls, to whom the most important part is assigned at Erbrezzo, as the Holy Virgin had evinced from the commencement a decided preference for female children.

The more enlightened of the two priests, who had studied at Milan, discoursed lengthily on the classic souvenirs of the various places we passed through. He told us the antique origin of the crypt at Santa Maria delle Stelle, formerly dedicated to the "nervous goddess," as he delicately put it, wherein the priests and pythoneses performed the rites that induced the statue there enshrined to give answers to timid believers and exact offerings from them. "Idols," said he, "precious both in matter and form, have been found in many places in the neighbourhood; and every relic of antiquity tends to show that, although the

goddess had fled, it was not before she had developed in this part of the country a faith vivid enough to retain impressions of the superstitions of the dark ages, and carry it into the holy beliefs of our own true faith." The priest who had studied at Verona grew alarmed at the hint of doubt and incredulity in the miracle of Erbrezzo conveyed in this speech, and in his turn ventured upon establishing his own doctrine by side-winded hints in its favour, and, as we were drawing near to Lugo, took the opportunity of strengthening our minds for Erbrezzo by endeavouring to inspire belief from the example of Lugo. A most miserable place, by the way, is this said Lugo, lying in a deep and narrow valley, over which the sun at this season only passes hastily, never even in summer granting more than an hour or two of heat. The population are sallow-faced, dirty, and bigoted, with the enjoyment of a goodly tribe of crétins. The vine is stunted and dried up; rarely does its fruit ripen at Lugo. The harvest is meagre and insufficient for the wants of the inhabitants, who have no means of existence but that supplied by the sale of firewood, brought down from the hills, for the lime-burners.

By-and-by we drew near to Erbrezzo, and all were preparing by the emotion expectant for that about to be realised. The situation of Erbrezzo itself is peculiar, and well fitted to be the scene of supernatural visions. It lies in the Lessini hills, upon a perpendicular rock, and closes the Val Pantana towards the north. It is a village composed entirely of shepherds' huts. It possesses, however, the inestimable blessing of a mayor and other officials. It is surrounded by uncultivated meadows as far as eye can reach, and differs from the rest of this part of Italy in displaying neither vineyards, nor olive groves, nor mulberry plantations, nor corn-fields.

On arriving at about a mile distant from Lugo our vehicle stopped, and we were told that neither horse nor carriage could proceed further, and that the remainder of the journey must be performed either on mules or on foot. A terrible footpath alone leads up the rock. On the left is the bridge of Veja, and the celebrated grotto produced by the falling in of the lower rocks. To the west of Erbrezzo the extent of meadow-land seems boundless—dull brown withered grass parched dry, not by the sun but by the cruel mountain wind. All around is desolation; the land is marked out by heaps of stones embedded in the soil,

standing never less than a yard high. A few chestnut-trees, oaks, and beeches, may be seen scattered here and there, but whole groups of them never bear leaves. Two hamlets, Stafor and Regazzani, are just visible in the distance.

On one side is a very rapid elevation of soil. Its form is that of a semicircle. At its foot is the dried bed of a stream, and towards the top a slab of rock about a yard and a half in width overhangs a deep rent, not more than ten inches wide, but of immeasurable depth. It was in front of this—the miraculous rock—that there first burst upon our view the mighty concourse of people assembled to behold the Virgin Mary appear for a moment, then move away and float out into space. Thousands upon thousands believe that others see the vision, while themselves can only testify to beholding the snow, the rocks, the multitude, and the barren heath all around. For myself I must confess to an ardent desire of belief, and as I stood in the midst of the poor people murmuring their prayers while shivering with cold, I found no heart to laugh or scoff at the humble faith which had brought them thither.

The scene was indeed marvellous. An immense multitude bareheaded, kneeling on the frozen snow; the monotonous chant of the hymns; the wailing cries of supplication; the white peaks of the mountains, and in the distance the evergreen oaks of Chiesamonte throwing their sombre shadows over the snow; a pale but spotless azure sky; a splendid heatless sun; a biting bitter wind; and alas! the sharp pangs of hunger which it stirred, all combined to inspire a mixture of feelings which I could well imagine might in most cases turn to passionate devotion and entire belief in the miracle. By the rock had been built a shelter constructed of newly-cut logs. This is set aside for "the seers," and round it stand the mountain-priests, a strange set of men, who merit a description—with their threadbare cassocks and their goat-skin capes, their shining leather skull-caps, their shaggy locks falling low down over their shoulders, their perpetual anuff-taking, their greasiness and dirt. Presently one or other of these priests, turning to the multitude kneeling on the ice, shouts forth an exhortation to pray in honour of Mary, and instantly there bursts forth in an indescribably high pitch—a miracle in itself—a strange wild psalmody, without rhythm or measure or melody, but which from this very cause

seizes on the nervous system with an intensity of power indescribable. Here then will no doubt be discovered the secret of the music of the future. Every now and then the discord receives new impulse, becomes full of the shock of unexpected clamour. This is produced by the mingled voices of the thousands clambering up or sliding down the slope; and the women with red kerchiefs on their heads, men with their dark blue caps of the most singular shape, boys and youths bare-headed, and girls with plaited hair bound with coloured ribbons, form the wildest and most picturesque groups ever dreamed of in the most inspired visions of the painter. All sing the *Stabat Mater*, the *Ave Maria* *Salve Regina*, but each singer, male or female, in a different key. Now and then however the old "*Viva Maria e chi la creo*" would rise in shrill treble tones above the whole. All these hymns are supposed to be pleasant to the Madonna—the strains she invariably calls for.

I saw several thousand persons assembled on an inclined portion of the rock, difficult to climb at all seasons, but particularly dangerous now that the ice is incrustated on its sides. But faith permits all to walk easily across it, and very few fall. Only one poor Christian believer broke his skull in attempting to seize the Madonna by her cloak as she floated from peak to peak. Needless to say he seized nothing. However, people affirm that whilst kneeling in expectation of the appearance of the apparition they feel neither hunger nor cold, and that the frozen earth appears soft as down. The mountain-priests do not object to people standing, but as soon as one of them intones a chant all hats and caps must be laid aside. Some of the very old men are allowed to replace the hat by the grotesque parti-coloured kerchief. It seems to strike no one, however, that this must be a manifest sign that some amongst them must really feel the bitter cold. The multitudes from all parts of Italy, of various feelings, emotions, and souvenirs, fall all together upon their knees, and pray with a unity of purpose perfectly astonishing. I saw the pious believer imploring help as a reward for his faith, while the sinner at his side was crying out for pardon and mercy. I saw the stupid face upturned beside the intelligent physiognomy of its neighbour; the innocent child bending low beside the lately yielding convert to righteousness; the fresh young maiden and the toil-worn matron; the

half naked beggar, and the rich, warmly clad farmer; the critic too, whose incredulous smile dies away half-formed upon his lips, as he witnesses such a miserable exhibition of religious fanaticism and hysterical convulsion.

Whilst all eyes are thus directed towards the Holy Rock, suddenly a young girl is heard to exclaim in a shrill voice and with an accent that is really electrifying: "Here — here — is the Madonna!" and, breaking through the dense crowd, runs down the slope. Precipitating herself under the shed, her eyes staring wildly, she raises her trembling hands above her head, crying out, "Glory to Mary!" and the people answer devoutly, "Glory to Mary!" The priests standing round the shed now bid the seer to question the Madonna. This is done in a whisper and the girl tells the priest the answer, which she alone hears and understands, although it is given only by a sign of the head on the part of the apparition. Sometimes the seer communicates the answer in a loud tone to the multitude. Often has the cry, "I behold the Madonna!" burst forth simultaneously from five or six different tongues, and the seers have hurriedly crowded together to the shed where they related the request made by the vision to each one in particular. Now, the Madonna is said to demand an Ave Maria; anon the third part of a Rosary or any other prayer; and they instantly begin to sing it aloud. Meanwhile, the priests busy themselves in taking down the names of the happy mortals considered worthy of so great a miracle, and in preparing proofs of its authenticity. The more devout shed tears while they sing, and I own to having been almost won over to the tearful majority. Emotion is contagious, and the sight of big, hot tears rolling down the bronzed and careworn visage of a hard-working peasant, must always produce a gush of feeling difficult to repress.

Sometimes men and women of a certain age are deemed worthy of a manifestation; but generally the seers are girls under twelve years of age. At all events, those who see nothing are comforted with these words of the Madonna transmitted by the seer, "Happy are they who yet have faith although they see not."

The greatest favourite of the Madonna is a lame woman of Erbrezzo. She is twenty-four years of age; she sees daily. She has taken up her abode in the shed, and indicates to her companions the movements they are to make; she is, however, re-

garded as an exceptional being, and is looked upon as destined to fulfil a great mission.

All the time that I stood there gazing on the vast multitude, insensible to all things save the fancied presence of the Madonna, the endless stream of sinners and believers kept pouring in from Verona, from Prento, and even from progressive Milan, to implore grace and mercy. The roads resounded with an interminable litany, and the waste of time, money, and health can never have found a parallel save in the mad days of the Crusaders.

Although the season was not favourable for travelling in those regions, I could not resist the temptation of paying a visit to Chiesanuova, which lies at a short distance from Erbrezzo. Although still higher up in the mountains, the site is so beautiful and picturesque, that speculation has lately discovered it and has established several good inns in the place, one of which is conducted on the plan of the great Swiss hotels. Much prosperity is anticipated, as Chiesanuova has at last been noticed by a party of travelling English artists, and, its fame having been carried to Rome and Milan, a golden harvest is expected. The philosopher, as well as the artist, might find some interest at Chiesanuova, for the place resists all progress in idea, and still preserves in the church the inscriptions graven on marble in honour of its late foreign masters, with the addition of new ones in contempt of the National Government, which latter include the one from His Holiness, "Perduellione abupuit provincinus."

Here, as a matter of course, I was favoured with new details concerning the miracle, and learned, what none could tell me at the Rock itself, the history of its origin, from these poor mountaineers, who daily defy the elements to climb the rugged heights, to adore what they do not see and what they can realise better by the sculptured column of their own piazza. Their information bade me believe that about the year 1850 two small children were gathering wild berries on the very spot of the present apparition, and, choosing the most unripe from a wild plum tree, were enjoying the feast to their hearts' content, when suddenly a fine and beautiful lady passing by enjoined them, with motherly solicitude, to abstain from eating the acid fruit. The poor babes would not listen to the friendly words, but continued to swallow the unwholesome treat. No sooner had they

returned home than they both fell ill, and died during the night! But the Holy Virgin comforted their parents with the promise of taking them both with her into Paradise.

From that hour, until the year 1860, the Madonna appeared not again. The parents, who had heard the sweet promise, had told the secret to no one. But when the Holy Virgin returned from time to time to earth, sometimes with two lovely children at her side, the memory of this adventure was raked up and added a new charm to her visitations; for did not these two poor children belong to Erbrezzo, and are they not buried there?

Those who declare themselves seers do not number more than a hundred, and are mostly young children. The hysterical lame girl is the greatest seer of all, and is for ever addressing and saluting her advocate in heaven. It must also be observed that many are the methods of "seeing." Some behold the Madonna quite small, with a "bambino" which seems falling from her arms. Some behold her of matronly appearance, but all describe her dress as that of the Madonna in their own village church. The apparition usually stands upon the split rock, but does not disdain to walk about or float through the air. The Virgin does not speak, but nods or shakes her head in affirmation or denial. Many people have seen an altar brilliantly illuminated with tapers, others have perceived myriads of white doves, supposed to be angels, flying about, and these doves sometimes alight for the seers to take them up. They are tamer than earthly birds, and suffer themselves to be handled by the most devout amongst the spectators. But when the pious souls believe they have caught an angel they find they have only got a handful of moss, while the seers affirm that the doves have flown back to the Madonna. "The priests have seen nothing, nor ever will they be permitted to see," says the lame girl, "because they have no faith;" and this accusation was vociferated from the rock more than once during my visit. The fact is undeniable—the priests merely perform the task of suggesting questions to the privileged children. Being asked whether epidemic, famine, or war would occur shortly, the apparition signalled a negative to the two first enquiries, and a decided affirmative to the last.

It would be too long a task to detail all the researches which have been made, and all the pains and trouble which have been expended to trace the authors of the pre-

sent excitement; but we get a clue to the aim of all this turmoil from the fact that what the Madonna desires most is to have a church built at Erbrezzo, with a foundation of three masses a day, to be celebrated by three priests salaried from the money deposited by the pilgrims.

A few of the answers to the seers I have been able to collect; they are interesting from their appropriate application to the feelings of many of the agitators who are now busily spreading their propaganda throughout Italy. "Next Easter will see the re-establishment of the temporal power of the Pope. All Protestants will be converted, and will become the most ardent champions of the Church of Rome. However, all reprobates and unbelievers will not be destroyed; indeed they will even outnumber the saved among the just. At the present moment the just are so few that, even were they all to die, their loss would not be felt in the population of the world." Thousands of stories, more marvellous one than another, are related of the miraculous Virgin and the seers of Erbrezzo—and, as usual, no one dares to breathe a word against all this ignorance and superstition. The man who should dare to utter an ill-timed jest upon the subject would do so in peril of his life.

Is it hallucination? Is it fraud? Given the point that there is no apparition on the rock, one of these two deceptions must exist. Hallucination has often existed in past times—while the Archangel Gabriel appearing to the peasant Martin with a message for Louis Dixhuit, the Madonna at Rimini, and the Virgin of La Salette, are all of recent date. The "convulsionnaires" of St. Médard, who could submit to crucifixion without feeling pain, must have presented the same form of mental disturbance as that shown by the multitude gathered at Erbrezzo, barefooted and bareheaded amid the frozen snow.

The Government does not interfere with the manifestations, but it is feared that it will soon be necessary to punish what might have been prevented: the provocation to quarrel excited at Verona by refusal to bow the head or bend the knee at mention of the miracle might prove fatal at any moment. The Bishop of Verona, a wise and learned man, has used his most strenuous efforts to arrest the evil. He has lately issued a pastoral letter to the clergy of his diocese, commanding them to silence on the subject

of the apparition at Erbrezzo, but it is doubtful whether even this tacit denial of its reality will have any effect on the stolid and ignorant devotees who gather on the Holy Rock at Erbrezzo.

STUDIES OF OVER THE WAY.

A HOUSE IN THE EUSTON ROAD. IN THREE PARTS. PART III.

"As soon as I was out of Sinclair's presence I knew there was not a moment to be lost. I felt I must see my brother at once. I determined to trust unreservedly to his counsels. Jack had detected Sinclair's influence over me before I had any suspicion of it myself, and now I began to hope that his strong common sense might devise for me a way of deliverance from the peril which yet threatened me. I found Jack in my lodgings, and at once told him everything. As soon as I had spoken my last word we set out for the Abbey, for it was plain that we must take Kate into our counsels at once. We met her in the garden, and we went all of us into a summer-house on the lawn, and then I told her the whole of my strange story.

"Kate was shocked, terribly shocked, when she knew all. Of course no suspicion of my guilt had ever crossed her mind. She knew not who the murderer might be. She was only sure that he was not her lover. After she had heard my story she was just as sure that he was the man who had all her life stood to her in the place of a father. Often, in the past, doubts as to Sinclair's character had arisen in her mind, but he had guarded his private life too closely to let them grow into anything more definite than doubts. Now Kate's eyes were opened. She had lived long enough with Sinclair to learn that he was a man of violent temper and ungovernable passions, and what I had just told her confirmed all her former suspicions and made it clear to her that he was unscrupulous enough to let no consideration of right or wrong, of life or death, stand between him and the accomplishment of his aims.

"The first definite proposal came from Jack. 'I don't much like the idea of amateur burglary, but you and I, Bob, must have an hour or so to ourselves in the library, just to see what those letters in that secret drawer are about.'

"'There will be no difficulty as to that,' said Kate. 'I will come down at one o'clock to-morrow morning and let you in

at the side door. It is no time for petty scruples. It is a game of life and death that we are playing.' This she said, pale and trembling, keeping back her tears with a brave effort.

"So it was decided. At one my brother and I stood by the little side door at the Abbey. I turned the handle, the door yielded, and there was Kate with a shaded candle in her hand. We followed her noiselessly into the library, and there she left us.

"The library was a strange old room, irregular in shape, full of angles and recesses. The ceiling was richly embossed in plaster, and divided into compartments by huge beams of oak, now warped and black with age. I went at once to the cabinet containing the secret drawer, and easily opened the spring by pressing the carved head. The drawer was half full of papers and other things. I handed it to Jack, and he, having emptied the contents into a basket, bore them to the farther end of the room, and proceeded to arrange them on the table.

"'Jack,' said I, 'you surely do not think of remaining. Put that drawer back into its place and let us be gone as quickly as we can. We run a very great riak by staying here. Why not examine the papers at home!'

"'Just for this reason,' answered Jack: 'if we take the papers away, we are common thieves and nothing else. We are at least housebreakers at present.'

"'But Jack,' I whispered, 'think what the consequences to Kate would be in case we should be discovered.'

"'Well, yes, it's only natural you should think about Kate, and we'll take care we are not discovered. You lock and fasten the door there, and I will undo this window. It opens down to the ground, so we can bolt easily in case we hear anything.'

"I saw at once that this proposal of Jack's diminished greatly the chances of surprise. After I had fastened the door; I replaced in its recess the secret drawer and closed the panel. Just as I did so I fancied I heard a faint sound overhead, and I paused in breathless anxiety to listen. All was still, however, still as the grave; and I rejoined Jack, who was by this time busy reading a letter which he had drawn at a venture from the basket. I took out another and was soon deep in its contents. The stillness of the place was intense, broken only by the ticking of the clock on the chimney-piece. The little circle of light in which

we sat, made the gloom of the deep recesses and distant corners all the more sombre and mysterious. We had not been reading many minutes when the sound of a light tap at the door and Kate's voice outside made us fly to open it. She came in and, with her face all terror-stricken, bade us go at once, as she had heard sounds in Sinclair's room as if he had been disturbed. Without a word we gathered up the papers and stole out into the garden. Kate silently made fast the casement, and when we looked back at the house from the other end of the drive, all signs of light had disappeared from the windows. There was neither sight nor sound to make us fear that our presence had been detected, so we made our way back to our lodgings as fast as we could.

"We read every word of the letters before we went to our beds. All apparently had been written by the same person, a man signing himself 'Bernard La Forge.' The earliest was dated some five years back and the last not more than five days. Read consecutively they told a story—a story sad enough, but all too common. They told us that the letter which Sinclair had dictated to me, which he had as he believed now in his safe keeping, described his own case to the life. There was a shameful secret which the writer of these letters had mastered, a secret which had become the bane and torment of Sinclair's existence. In the last letter the writer commanded Sinclair to meet him, the very night when the murder was done, under the great oak in the Park. In every letter there were demands for money, and threats of exposure in case of non-compliance on Sinclair's part. The tone of the letters written most recently was truculent and insulting, and must have tried severely the patience of a violent and quick-tempered man. It was all plain enough now. Driven to despair by the persecution of his tormentor, he had determined, cost what it might, to rid himself of his plague; and the discovery of his mesmeric influence over myself pointed out to him a method by which he might carry out his purpose with comparative impunity. 'We have not come to the end of the business yet,' said my brother as we sat over a late breakfast the next morning. 'We have convinced ourselves of Sinclair's guilt; but we have still to dispel the suspicions which hang around you. You had better keep altogether in the background, Bob. I must go and see the police authorities at once.'

"Jack rose to leave the room; but just at that moment Kate was ushered in by the landlady. We told her, in a few words, the result of our night's work. 'It must have been some imaginary noise which frightened me last night,' said Kate. 'After you went away the house was as still as the grave, and before I left the library I searched that part of the room where you had been sitting to make sure you had left nothing behind you in your hurry. Under the table I found this.'

"Kate drew from her pocket a small sheath covered with green leather, curiously figured and embossed. There was a sort of Arabesque tracery engraved on the brass rim round the top of it; but this pattern was abruptly broken off at the edge of the mounting.

"'I never saw this before,' said Kate, 'though I thought I knew all the curiosities and things of this sort in the house. It must have fallen out of the secret drawer unnoticed.'

"Jack took up the sheath and examined it carefully. 'It must be as Kate says,' he added. 'I do remember now that I heard something rattle when I emptied the drawer, and no doubt it was this. We overlooked it in our haste, but we must take care of it now. We should have been helpless altogether in this matter, Kate, without your assistance. Cheer up, Bob. I think the worst is over.'

"I was utterly worn out by the strain my nerves had undergone. I laid down and slept till late in the afternoon. The weather was terribly hot; but, when I woke, there was a cool breeze coming off the sea, and the fresh air tempted me out to walk a little along the beach. I walked a few hundred yards, but I found no relief for my heavy limbs and aching head. I felt sick and faint, and a sharp pain which shot suddenly through my side frightened me somewhat, and I resolved to see a doctor at once. I made my way with difficulty to the house of the principal practitioner in the place. I rang, and the servant who admitted me told me his master was not in for the moment, but that he would certainly be back very soon. He had been summoned suddenly about an hour ago to the Abbey, and had not yet returned.

"'To the Abbey!' I cried. 'Who is ill there? Tell me, did you hear to whom the doctor was called?'

"'The messenger mentioned no name, sir, when he came; but I heard soon after that it was for Mr. Sinclair, sir, who had

met with some accident. They say as how, air, that he has tried to make away with himself; but I don't know how true it is.'

"I rushed away from the door back to my own rooms. The terrible news had taken away all sense of my own illness, of which I was so painfully conscious five minutes ago. As I reached the gate I saw Jack coming along the road, and I read at once upon his face the confirmation of the worst of what I had just heard.

"There is not much more to tell, and what there is I will set down in my brother's words as near as may be. 'I went at once to the superintendent of police,' said Jack, 'who was in consultation with a gentleman, apparently an official from Scotland Yard. I told them I had some information to give them with regard to the murder, upon which they both of them assumed an air of the most intense wisdom, as if to assure me that I was indeed presumptuous to attempt to enlighten them. They took out their pocket-books and sat with their pencils ready to jot down my statement; but I told them at once that, before I said a word, I wanted to see the knife with which the murder had been committed, and that I would also like to know the name of the murdered man, if they had made out what it was.

"They hummed and hesitated for some minutes, and wanted to know the reason of this request of mine, but finding me immovable, they gave way. The name of the victim was Bernard La Forge, and the knife did fit exactly the sheath Kate brought to us this morning. There could be no doubt about the correspondence between the two. When I thrust the dagger into the sheath a hidden spring closed upon it, and I had some trouble to get it out again. The Arabesque pattern traced upon the brazen rim of the sheath runs on to the hilt of the dagger, so that it seemed to be all one when the dagger was in its place. I left the sheath with the police, and told them I would return later in the evening, when I might be able to lay before them evidence connecting the antecedents of Bernard La Forge with some one in the neighbourhood they probably did not suspect, for I resolved I would take no further step till I had once more seen Sinclair. I found him in his library, and, difficult as it was, I felt I had better plunge at once into the matter. I always thought Sinclair did not like me, and now I fancied I could detect a look of malevolent triumph in his eye when I

began to talk about the purport of my visit.

"'Of course I see,' he began, 'how painful this must be to you, these reports connecting your brother with this miserable business. We cannot tell what turn affairs may take, but at present they look dark, very dark indeed.'

"'Oh, I am not come to apologise for my brother,' said I; 'I am—'

"'Ah, well. I see you decline to accept the situation, and of course I admire your loyalty; but now I will be frank with you. I dare say I ought to have told you before, but I have not known it long myself—Bob is very deep in the mire indeed. Certainly if I had known of it I should not have allowed him to pay his addresses to Kate. The fact of it is, this man who has been killed by somebody or other had some terrible hold over him. Men who are driven to the last extremity of despair do not, as a rule, neglect any opportunity of deliverance which chance throws in their way; and so I fear it has been with poor Bob.'

"'I could hardly contain myself while he was saying this. I was just about to interrupt him when he continued, "I suppose I may as well show you something now which will have to see the light before long." Here he unlocked an iron safe, and, taking out a letter, he was about to hand it to me when he checked himself, and drew the enclosure out of the envelope. As his eye fell upon it, the mocking leer faded from his face, giving place to a look of confused terror. As the sheet of paper fell from his hand to the ground I saw that it was blank. It was the one you put into the envelope, Bob, the day when he thought he had got your self-accusation safe under your own seal.

"'Sinclair recovered himself quickly; but his eyes flashed with the alarm he was trying to conquer and conceal. Then, as if suddenly recollecting himself, he said: "Ah, that is not the letter, I must have mislaid it, or perhaps it is here." He went into the recess where the cabinet containing the secret drawer was standing. I could not see him, but I could hear him press the spring, and let down the panel.

"'There was a confused noise, something heavy fell to the floor, and then a wild cry burst from his lips as he rushed back towards where I was sitting. "Gone!" he shouted; "and you know something of the theft, I see it in your looks. There were thieves then in the house last night when I heard that noise, and you were one of them. Now I see why you are so confident

about your brother's innocence ; but I'll be even with you yet."

"He moved towards me in a threatening manner. I rose from my seat and, keeping my eye firmly fixed upon him, I said, "I have very little to say to you, Sinclair. First, my brother, as you know well enough, is innocent. There is no need for me to tell you who the murderer is. Second, the police have in their possession a knife-case found in your library, which fits exactly the knife with which the murder was done, and it rests with me whether they will or will not know before night what reasons you may have had for wishing to get rid of Bernard La Forge."

"When he had heard this name, his face became yet more livid and terror-stricken ; his hand moved rapidly towards something on a side table. The next moment I saw it was a pistol. I had not a second to lose, I had just time to clutch his arm before he fired. The bullet passed close to my head and buried itself in the window-frame. The next minute Kate, followed by two servants, burst into the room ; and Sinclair, breaking from me, rushed through the open window into the garden.

"I was so much shocked by my narrow escape, that for a moment I hardly knew what was happening ; but the report of a pistol in the shrubbery recalled me to myself. I knew at once what it meant. I followed as quickly as I could, and as I crossed the lawn I saw one of the servants hurrying poor Kate, who seemed to be half fainting, into the house, and some others moving about amongst some laurels that fringed the flower garden. There Sinclair lay, shot through the head. Life was extinct when I reached the place, but of course I sent off for a doctor at once.

"This is all, Bob. You have escaped a terrible danger, but at a terrible price."

"My brother no doubt spoke in good earnest when he spoke of the terrible price. What would he have said if he had known the whole truth ? This, however, I felt I could never reveal, and as the days went by the burthen of my secret became intolerable. Every moment I found myself face to face with the frightful contingency that I might be a murderer in deed though not in will. I used to sit by the hour together gazing at my right hand in search of the 'damned spot,' till one day it broke out terribly true before my agonised eyesight. See, sir, and judge for yourself whether I am the subject of a delusion."

The young man held out before him his right hand.

"See, there it is !" he went on, pointing with his finger to the middle of the palm, "there is the evidence of my woe !"

To my eyes the young man's hand was as spotless as my own ; but I could tell from the look of strained anxiety in his eyes as he sat gazing at it, that the spot of blood had a terrible reality for him. I rose from my seat, and thanking him for the confidence he had shown by putting me in possession of his strange history, I left the room.

Never again did I see his pale face at the window over the way, and a few days afterwards a card in a window proclaimed the fact that the rooms were to let.

VICTIMS.

By THEO GIFT.

Author of "*Lil Lorimer*," "*An Alibi and its Price*,"
Etc., Etc.

CHAPTER XIII.—MARSTLAND WRITES A LONG LETTER.

It was evening just a week later, and Leah was sitting alone in the drawing-room at home ; sitting doing nothing too, which, with her, was a very rare occurrence. Downstairs in his study the Professor was giving a lesson in practical chemistry to a private pupil, while Mrs. Josephs was occupying herself with poulticing little David, who, having come home from school that afternoon with a sore throat, had been despatched to bed early to be doctored.

In the drawing-room the lamp was lit, and the French windows stood open, letting in a cool breeze from the little garden at the back, where, in the daytime, tall hollyhocks, both red and white, gold-disked sunflowers, and homely marigolds and nasturtiums made a bright look-out even in these waning summer days. Only a few evenings ago, George Marstland and Vera had paced those narrow garden-paths with lingering happy steps, pausing now and then to throw a merry word at Leah, who, having given them her companionship as an excuse for coming out, took pains to prevent its being burdensome to them by devoting herself immediately to a war which she declared it was necessary to wage, day after day, with those enemies of her sunflowers, the slugs.

Now, however, the lovers were gone and the slugs allowed to feast on the sunflowers at their will, while Leah sat alone beside a little table covered with a half-written and

much-blotted score of music, not doing anything, only thinking.

Thinking! But with a face so much sadder and graver than that of the brilliant girl who had sat on the sea-shore in Brittany only two months ago, that two, if not five, years might have passed over her head since then.

Yet had anything happened to her in the interim? Nothing at all to speak of; nothing, except that the friend with whom she was then staying had since come to stay with her; and that another friend, one as to whom she had been wont in days past to wax indignant if frivolous folks spoke of him as her lover or admirer, had effectually saved her from the need of such indignation in the future by proclaiming himself the admirer and lover of the other girl. "Vera's lover!" Even now Leah could hardly comprehend it; hardly bring her mind to realise her little Bretonne friend in the character of "Marstland's wife." And yet if the old St. Laurents could be brought to consent, that was what Vera would be, perhaps the very next time she saw her, and what Marstland, after knowing her one short fortnight, declared that he desired nothing so ardently as to make her.

A fortnight! Only that; and he had known Leah herself intimately for over eight years. Her own brothers were not better understood by her than he; while, as for his sister, Lady Hesse, she had never read with him, felt with him, worked with and for him in London slums and thrown herself into his aims and affairs generally as Leah had done; ay, done ever since she was an enthusiastic girl of seventeen, and he an energetic youth with unusually high aims and philanthropic purposes, a year older.

Perhaps it was because of the very length of that intimacy, that familiar fraternal bond, that the idea of any nearer or dearer one had never come into his mind; but then no one else had aroused it either. He had never even seemed to care enough for any other girl to teach Leah by the tiniest twinge of jealousy how deep her feeling for him really went; and now that Vera—poor little childish Vera, aimless and idealless as the daisies in her father's orchards—should be the one to win him, seemed to her a thing as impossible to realise as that of which the poet once sang in bitter wonder:

Having known me to decline
On a range of lower feelings and a narrower heart
than mine.

Yet, even as the quotation forced itself into Leah's mind, she felt that she was blushing furiously for very shame of the pride which prompted it. Who was she, she asked herself, to decide that poor Vera's heart was narrower, because her feelings found their expression on a lower grade than her own? Had not she herself found the Bretonne girl both lovable and loving in an eminent degree? Was she not kind, gentle, docile—all that men most love in their wives, a creature born

Her babes to worship and her lord to praise.

And could Leah say as much for herself? Her "lord" would assuredly get as much blame as praise if he deserved it; while as for baby worship, she had had too much to do in a practical way for the little beings about her—from her own younger brothers to Naomi's children and those of several poor Jewish mothers in her neighbourhood—too many little jackets to mend and socks to darn; too many nights made sleepless by the fretful wails which, because they arose from sickness, she could only soothe by patience and tenderness; to have room for looking on children as mere angels of poetry and light, brought into the world to be praised and worshipped, told stories to, and fed on sugar-plums.

"Vera's children will be well spoilt if they are not well cared for," Leah thought grimly, for with the recollection of her friend's devotion to Naomi's babes, there came to her a sudden unkindly one of the girl's helplessness in the event of anything being amiss with them, and of her once putting back the baby in its cradle because it screamed violently while she was dandling it, and leaving it alone there, fairly running away, instead of looking to see what ailed the little creature, and if she could remedy it. Leah also called to mind the readiness with which Vera had left her father and mother during the former's dangerous illness; though Leah had previously looked on her as a pattern of filial duty, as regarded the mother at any rate. "But then, George Marstland thought her love for me more beautiful than anything that women in general feel for one another," the Jewish girl went on with a faint, bitter smile, "and so did I too; yet that love never once, I think, suggested to her that it might possibly be a little painful to me to find myself suddenly playing second fiddle where I had before played first, even in her affections, let alone his; never once led her to spare me a confidence as to his sayings and feelings when he was absent

or to feign a momentary preference for my company in his presence. Is her love for him of a more active nature, I wonder? Will it make her as curiously obtuse to his feelings, as helpless in his troubles, as ready to leave him at the least temptation? Will she ever satisfy him, and not make him feel he has thrown himself away in——”

But Leah's wonderings got no further. With a sudden revulsion of feeling she stopped short and stood up, her colour changing rapidly, her full, flexible lips eloquent of a noble scorn.

“Oh!” she said aloud, and with an almost despairing gesture, “what am I thinking? What am I coming to? Isn't it bad enough to— to care for a man who doesn't care for me, bad enough to envy my own friend the good fortune Heaven has been pleased to send her, but I must become so mean, so abominably mean and despicable, as to begin to pick holes in her immediately, to underrate her good qualities and try to find bad ones? A fine contrast I am to her, indeed, that I should think it necessary to pity him for having left me and 'thrown himself away on' her! Oh, what miserably petty creatures we women are! A man is always 'thrown away' when he cares for some other woman instead of our precious selves; and, after all, what is George Marstland himself, that I must needs trouble myself so immensely about his choice of a wife? Isn't a pure-minded, gentle, innocent girl like Vera, good enough for any man, him included; or is he so wonderfully better than the rest of the world that he must needs——? No, no, though,” checking herself again with a hotter blush and a little stamp, “that's humbug, and I won't try it even with myself. Whether he's better or not than others in reality, he is better to me, better than any other I have ever met or shall meet; and I know it—I'll be honest whatever else I am—know it as well as I know I used to think I was better to him than other girls! Well, that was my mistake,” and here the tears welled slowly up into her dark eyes and softened all her face, “and a mistake like that is a misfortune; but it needn't be a shame and degradation too, unless I choose to make it so. It needn't unfit me to be her friend still, and his, as it would if I were to give way to these vile thoughts of spite and envy. That friendship with him has always been one of the best things in my life. Why can't I let it be so still, and rest contented with it? I may, unless

I let myself sink as low as I have done to-night; and that I'll never do again, though she were to absorb him so that he ceased to care for me altogether.”

Nor did she look like it as she stood there with her hands clasped, her head erect, and her eyes shining. The battle had been fought and won—a hard battle and a bitter one; for she did love this man, and that he should love, not her, but her friend, cut her to the heart. But, however she might accuse herself, there was nothing either low or mean in Leah Josephs' nature; and the same clear-eyed honesty which made her confess her own weakness, showed her also that there was nothing but common maidenliness and resolution, nothing either heroic or self-sacrificing in the effort needful for crushing it. Perhaps, had it been otherwise, the effort might have been easier; magnanimity and generosity being such far finer and more comfortable virtues when we feel ourselves, and know others are feeling, that we have been so hardly used as to make the exercise of them specially grand and noble. Nay, it had been much more easy for Leah to put herself on one side, and only stand forward as the warm and enthusiastic champion of the lovers at Rose Villa—where Naomi (who had quite made up her mind that Marstland was to be her brother-in-law, and in that capacity to sip the sacred wine, and bow his head to the congratulatory “Mozeltoff!”* at Leah's side) was disposed to be snappish and unsympathetic with the non-fulfilment of her expectations. Here, at home, all the interest and sympathy were reserved for the betrothed couple, and Leah was not only expected to feel even more pleasurable excitement than the rest in the fulfilment of their hopes, but to be able to keep up the family spirits generally in the natural flatness and monotony following on their joint departure.

To her, however, the flatness had seemed worse than to the others. She had been just long enough from home to have got a little “out of” the routine there. She had been just long enough mixed up with other and foreign interests to be unable to realise that her part in them was only that of a temporary onlooker; while, on the other hand, the old routine was so identified with the constant presence or proximity of Marstland, and with their mutual plans,

* “May it turn out happily!” spoken by the witnesses at a Jewish wedding.

sympathies, and labours, that the first awakening to the fact that she must regulate her own life now apart from these, had seemed for a time to take all the savour of it from her.

For a time only! At worst the "black dog" had crouched upon her shoulders for five days. Now at last she had found courage to face, wrestle with, and fling it off; and as if to signalise or test her little victory, there came, almost in the same moment, a sound for which she had been watching—the postman's knock and the rustle of something thick being squeezed into the little letter-box. In an instant Leah was in the hall and back again, holding in her hand two letters, both for her, and both bearing the stamp of the French Republic; but at one she hardly looked. That could wait. It was only in Madame St. Laurent's feeble pin-pointed handwriting. The other—a portentously bulky one—was from Maratland, and with the heartfelt exclamation, "Oh, I hope it is all settled, and that they are to be made happy!" she tore it open.

It was headed, "Hôtel des Etrangers, Quimper," and was as follows:

"MY DEAR LEAH,—I shall be in London soon after you get this; but as some stories are less pleasant to tell than write, I may as well let you know the upshot of my journey by letter, especially as, despite all your friendship for Vera, I think it doubtful, as things are, whether she may even be allowed to write to you.

"I had a quick voyage to St. Malo, and landed in France twenty-four hours after our poor little darling, being determined not to leave her longer than I could help to the task of smoothing down her unpleasant old parents single-handed. Indeed, I had calculated for her beforehand the time of my probable arrival both at St. Malo and Pont l'Abbé, so that, though I could not telegraph to her, 'I am here,' she might feel sure of the fact and happier for the assurance. Perhaps you'll call this abominably conceited; but why should I pretend not to know that Vera loves me, because I wonder just as much as you at her goodness in doing so? One may be certain even of the most wonderful things in creation, yet the certainty need not lessen the wonder—rather, I think, it increases it.

"It was evening before I got to Pont l'Abbé, and having had no food since an early breakfast, I was ravenous enough to eat mine host of the inn where, at your

recommendation, I put up; but the knowledge that there were only five miles between me and the lady of my heart drove out every other thought but her for the time being; and before doing anything else I wrote a note to M. St. Laurent, soliciting the honour of an interview with him on the morrow, and despatched it to Les Châtaigniers by a messenger, who assured me in barbarously unintelligible Breton-French that he would be there and back in the crack of a whip. It must have been a long whip to crack, for he was not back under three good hours at least, time enough for me to have dined and rested, and even enjoyed a twilight ramble through the quaint dead-alive little town, which brought pleasant thoughts of you and your sketches at every turn; but he came at last, and when I saw the note in his hand I forgave him.

"It was from monsieur, very short, and wearing the air of having been written in a rage; for he began by deprecating indignantly my persistence in having come over to Brittany at all after the definite answer he had already given to my proposals; but went on to say that as I had done so he would not be discourteous enough to absolutely refuse me an interview, provided that I had the folly to insist on what could only result in a repetition of his previous reply; and he named eleven in the morning. That was enough for me, however. I was outside the gates of Les Châtaigniers by ten, and for an hour I paced to and fro along the very dustiest road imaginable, keeping my eyes fixed on the house which held my treasure like a miser on his money casket, till the moment when I might go up and put forward my claims to it.

"Well, I put it forward, and without success. It wasn't a pleasant interview. Monsieur received me alone, and a more beetle-browed, bilious-eyed specimen of a French gentleman I never saw. Perhaps he had not yet recovered from his late illness; at any rate, if I had not wanted to marry Vera before, I think I should do so now if only to rescue her from such a father. At first he didn't want to hear me at all, but simply to renew his refusal, and dismiss me; but I had determined on two things—that he should listen, and I would keep my temper. And when he found that I persisted first of all in showing him that, as an Englishman, I had only acted according to English customs in speaking to the young lady first, and had

not lost a moment afterwards in writing to him for his consent, he was obliged to modify his bearing a little and withdraw that word 'lâche,' which had been rankling in me ever since it was uttered. All the same, his answer was 'No.' And when I asked for some reason, trotted out my family tree, and enquired somewhat haughtily if he considered my position in any way inferior to his own—we Marstlands are rather proud of that same tree, you must know—the old man shrugged his shoulders, and observed icily that he had nothing to say to that. Doubtless monsieur was of a family excellently respectable, although it was nevertheless true that, all things else being equal, his highest ambition had not perhaps centred in seeing his daughter the wife of 'un petit médecin.'

"I swallowed even that affront, and asked if he objected to my profession, for if so, I was ready to give it up. . . . Leah, don't despise me. I'm glad he didn't take me at my word, but at that moment I'd have given up everything for Vera. . . . And looking round the shabbily furnished room and mildewed walls, I mentioned the amount of my private income, and that I was prepared to settle it all on his daughter and ask no 'dot' with her; adding that I believed I could give her a home with which she, at any rate, would be fully content. This, however, only seemed to exasperate M. St. Laurent still more. He begged that I would not affront him by alluding to the momentary and deplorable folly of which the young lady in question had been guilty in listening to my pretensions, and craved my pardon for informing me that, whatever opinion I might have of them, he, as her father and the legal disposer of her hand, had entirely different views for her, views which were by no means of recent arrangement, and which were not likely to be altered by any fresh proposals, no matter from whom proceeding.

"This was startling, and I asked, perhaps too abruptly, what the 'views' he alluded to were. Monsieur bowed with more politeness than before, and begged, 'with all humility,' that I would excuse him for declining to discuss family matters of a private nature with a stranger.

"Might I at least enquire if his daughter knew of the views in question?

"She did.

"And did she concur in them?

"The question, he said, was, with all

due deference to me, an impertinence, seeing that a French demoiselle of good breeding and family always concurred in the views of her parents. Mdlle. St. Laurent might have been temporarily misled by the intrigues of an ungrateful protégée, but was no exception to the rule. This rasped me, and I told him bluntly that if he alluded to the young lady with whom his daughter had been staying of late, her friendship was as much an honour to Mdlle. St. Laurent as the latter's was to her; further, that, as I knew of my own knowledge that Vera was neither aware of, nor consenting to, the arrangements he had mentioned when I last saw her, three days previously, I absolutely declined to believe that she had adopted them in the interim, unless I was informed of the fact from her own lips.

"This led to a regular battle, he having made up his mind not to allow a meeting between us, and it was only when he found that I was absolutely not to be got rid of on any other terms that he gave in, and muttering that I would only have the mortification of hearing my dismissal from the young lady herself, left the room. He returned in about five minutes—I believe it was only that, but it seemed an hour to me—followed by a female in black silk, whom at the first glance I took to be the maid I saw at your house, but who turned out to be Madame St. Laurent herself, and with her, Vera, clinging to her arm and looking—poor child! it makes my blood boil now to think of it—so crushed, pale, and swollen-eyed, that I think even you would scarcely have recognised her. At the sight of me standing there, however, the colour rushed into her face, she dropped her mother's arm and made a start forward with a kind of inarticulate exclamation; but in the same moment her father came between us, and addressing her in an even harsher voice than he had used to me, said that he was sorry to expose her to a mortification which was no doubt painful, but that it was not of his choosing. She must for it blame the man who had too little delicacy to spare her the shame of avowing before him her regret for the folly which had induced her to forget both propriety and her duty as a daughter, and to listen to his addresses for a moment. Poor little Vera's colour changed from crimson to white half a dozen times during this speech, as you may well imagine, and she shrank back against her mother, looking so utterly ashamed and miserable that I could not

bear it, and coming forward exclaimed in English—hitherto the whole talk had been in French :

“No, Vera, that is not the truth. I came here to-day to ask your father for your hand, as we agreed I should. He has refused it to me, telling me that he has other views for you, of which you are aware, and for which you are willing to give me up ; and what I answer him is that I will not believe it unless you tell me so with your own lips. I don't believe it. I have not known you long, love, it is true, but I think I know you too well to believe that you have ceased to love me so soon, unless indeed you were mistaken in thinking you loved me at all. If you can tell me so—”

“Tell him then, ma fille,” broke in the old man angrily, ‘tell him that you were mistaken ; that you were led away by the designing friends who took advantage of your youth and inexperience ; and that now you are back in your own home and under the protection of your father and mother you are deeply sorry for the weakness into which you were betrayed.’ And thus prompted, Vera, who had grown paler with every word he uttered, looked piteously at me and stammered out :

“I—am sorry. I—I did not mean—did not know. Please forgive me. I—” And with that she broke down into sudden helpless weeping, and before I could even get to her, touch her hand, or utter more than her name, her mother, who had stood with one arm round her all the time, whipped her quickly out of the room near which they had remained ; and Monsieur, throwing open the other, said to me :

“There, sir ; you have humiliated us enough ! You have had your answer, and you have witnessed the shame and distress which the mere sight of you occasions in the breast of the young lady upon whom you would have forced your unauthorised pretensions. I—her father—have permitted this most unwillingly, in order to satisfy you ; and I now desire that you will leave my house and make no further attempt to intrude yourself on any member of it.” He rang the bell as he spoke, and bowing very slightly, left the room without even waiting for me to answer. Perhaps it was as well. I had been very near knocking him down more than once, and I don't know that that would have helped matters. As it was, I had no resource but to leave, and I did so.

“I returned to Pont l'Abbé, paid my

bill at the hotel, told the landlord I had finished my business, and was going back to England forthwith, and departed by the next train. I did this because I saw plainly that any attempt to see Vera again, or communicate with her openly, would not be permitted by her parents, while, as it was utterly impossible for me on the other hand to leave Brittany without at least coming to an understanding as to her real feelings in the matter, and our position towards one another, I did not wish to give M. St. Laurent an opening for frustrating my intentions by allowing him to suspect that I was still lingering in the neighbourhood. That is why I have come here, but now that I am here, I see no more clearly than before how I am to communicate with my poor little sweetheart, whose miserable face seems to pursue me everywhere, and tell me what I am convinced only fear kept her lips from repeating, that she cares for me as much now as in those blissful hours which seem so far away, though the thought of them will ever make your pleasant parlour and garden seem like sacred places to me. If she does, be sure nothing under heaven will ever induce me to give her up. It will then be simply a case of waiting till she is of age to be her own mistress and choose for herself ; but I must ascertain this, and I have only two days to do it in, as I promised Dr. Hunter to be back at my duties on Friday at latest. In the meantime my one hope is that Vera may have written to you, in which case I am sure you will telegraph to me at once. That is why I am writing to you now, and if I have bored you unutterably—which I don't believe, for I know the extent of your patience and sympathy where those whom you allow to call themselves your friends are concerned—I expect you to forgive me nevertheless, for the reason that I owe the knowledge of my love to you, and that I verily believe her love for you is no whit less true and deep than it is for

“Your sincere and grateful Friend,

“GEORGE MARSTLAND.

“P.S.—Pray telegraph at once if you have heard. At present I don't know what to do, and am as miserable, restless, and impatient as it is possible to be.”

“So it would appear,” said the Professor drily. He had come into the room while Leah was absorbed in her letter, and, taking up the page she had finished with a word of enquiry, had sat down in the

arm-chair she vacated for him, and proceeded to read it from beginning to end, keeping one hand on his daughter's shoulder the while; but making no comments till he had finished.

"And what is the other letter?" he asked then. "The fair Dulcinea's, I suppose, as I see it hails from France also, and looks portentously thick. My poor Leah!"

"No, it is from Madame," said Leah quickly, but without lifting her face, which various causes had helped to flush a deeper crimson than she cared to make apparent during the reading of Marstland's letter; but the crimson became still more vivid as she opened this second epistle, and saw that the first thing to drop out was one from herself to Vera unopened, and that this was accompanied by a brief discourteous note from M^{de}. St. Laurent, saying that, as she did not intend to permit any further acquaintance between her daughter and the young person who had so treacherously abused the trust reposed in her, she returned the letter addressed by the latter to M^{lle}. St. Laurent, and begged that with it all correspondence with Les Châtaigniers would come to an end. Further, she enclosed a cheque for twelve pounds, for M^{lle}. St. Laurent's board and lodging for six weeks.

"Oh, father!" cried Leah indignantly, and with a quick movement of her hand, as if to crumple the paper. The old botanist smiled.

"Give it to me, my dear," he said; and tearing the cheque very neatly into four pieces, he wrote on a sheet of paper: "With Prof. Joseph's compliments," and enclosed it, with the fragments, in an envelope addressed to Madame St. Laurent, adding, as he fastened it up:

"And so closes a rather unpleasant page in your youthful adventures, Leah, child. For the future we'll not let you run about to foreign parts in search of friends, but keep to home-brewed ones."

"It—it wasn't in search of friends, father," said Leah, very low. Mortification and a mingling of other feelings had brimmed her eyes too full to risk lifting them.

"No, it was to give your old dad a trip to the British Association, and now he wishes he had never gone."

"Ah, father, no! don't say that!" cried Leah, flashing a reproachful look at him. "As if that woman's impertinence mattered to that extent! It can't hurt us, and I shall certainly not desert Vera for a poor girl!"

"Unfortunately that isn't for you to choose, my dear. Her parents have the right to decide who her acquaintances shall or shall not be, and have done so by putting you out of the list. You have no option in the matter."

"But, father, poor little Vera! And when you see what George Marstland says of her broken-hearted look! And I promised him—I promised them both—"

"My dear, George Marstland is an impetuous young fellow with a bad attack of love sickness, which he will work off all the better for not being too much coddled in it. I am glad he has got to work at his profession. Fancy talking of giving it up for a little girl he has barely known for three weeks! Why, upon my word, if he were a son of mine I'd have taken my stick to him for even uttering such folly. Just look at all this waste of good paper, too! How many sheets are there? Seven! Good Lord! But, there, 'tis a sort of fever that all boys go through now and again, and we'll excuse it this once. I shall tell him when he comes back, however, that he must just put all his sentimentality in his pocket till he has got a wife to expend it on, or work it off as a man should. I'm a selfish old father myself, and I value my women-folks' bright faces too highly to let them be turned into rain-clouds because another selfish old father chooses to keep his women-folk to himself. Sensible man too! I'd like young Marstland to see the sort of face I'd welcome any young fellow with who wanted to carry you off just now, when I've got a nice hour's leisure for listening to that article of Grant Abbot, and mounting some microscopical slides. Come down to the den, child, and get Brittany out of your head."

And Leah made haste to obey, assuming indeed rather extra cheerfulness as she did so. Something—some indefinable tone of half-wistful tenderness in her father's words had startled her with the fear that he had guessed her secret; and she dared not make any further plea for Marstland to Vera just then.

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MAY

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THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM
YEAR TO YEAR.

All the Year Round
a
Weekly Journal

CONDUCTED BY

CHARLES DICKENS.

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CONTENTS OF PART 210.

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PAGE

PAGE

A Stern Chase. Chapter XII. A Stern Chase is a Long Chase.....	241
Chronicles of Scottish Counties.—The Border Counties, Part II.....	248
Claudia. A Story in Four Chapters. Chapter I.....	253
Literary Survival.....	256
Victims. Chapter XIV. Bénéite, the Blanchisseuse	259
No. 910.	
Alexia. Chapter I.....	265
Some Famous Plays. I. John Gay's "Beggar's Opera".....	268
Father Chrystal's Elixir. A Story.....	274
My Lady's Picture. A Poem.....	278
Claudia. A Story in Four Chapters. Chaps. II., III.	279
Victims. Chapter XV. The Count Moves.....	282
No. 911.	
Alexia. Chapter II.....	289
Chronicles of Scottish Counties.—The Border Counties, Part III.....	292

Claudia. A Story in Four Chapters. Chapter IV. ...	299
Belzoni.....	302
Victims. Chapter XVI. "On all Sides Sore Beset"....	306
No. 912.	
Alexia. Chapters III., IV.....	313
Knocks and Knockers.....	318
A Lawn-Tennis Tournament. A Complete Story.....	322
Some Famous Plays. II. Goldsmith's "She Stoops to Conquer." In Two Parts. Part I.....	326
Victims. Chapter XVII. The Professor Lectures on Ghosts.....	331
No. 913.	
Alexia. Chapter V.....	337
Chronicles of Scottish Counties.—The Border Counties, Part IV.....	340
The Iron Press of Louis the Sixteenth.....	346
Rondel. Poetry.....	349
Some Famous Plays. III. Goldsmith's "She Stoops to Conquer." In Two Parts. Part II.....	349
Victims. Chapter XVIII. Catherine.....	354

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C O C C O A

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

A Weekly Journal

CONDUCTED BY

CHARLES DICKENS

No. 909. NEW SERIES.

SATURDAY, MAY 1, 1886.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

A STERN CHASE.

A STORY IN THREE PARTS.

BY MRS. CASHEL HOEY.

THE THIRD PART.

CHAPTER XII. "A STERN CHASE IS A LONG CHASE."

"BUSINESS! and so soon?" said Dolores. "Before we have had a day to ourselves in Paris. It is too bad! But I hope this horrid person won't detain you long, Julian."

"I will take care he shan't," answered Julian gaily; "but it is just as well to see him and get it over. Besides, you must rest, you know. A drive in the Bois before dinner will be enough for to-day. We shall begin to do our Paris to-morrow."

"Must I go away this very minute?"

She was standing by the side of his chair, looking down upon him as he bent over a card lying on the table. The name on the card was

MR. WYNDHAM.

Under it was written in pencil—No. 42.

She passed her arm round his neck; the beautiful plump hand, with the wedding-ring upon it, played with a button of his coat, and as she, too, leaned forward to look at the card, her rounded cheek touched his dark, handsome head.

"Mr. Wyndham. Ah, I don't know him!" she said, answering her own question by her lingering. "No. 42 is close to our rooms, on the other side of the passage. He's staying here, then?"

"Oh, yes; he's staying here, and takes advantage of the opportunity of seeing me," said Julian.

"That queer-looking man we saw on the Rhine steamer, and at the station at Cologne when we sent poor Mary home to her mother, is staying here too. I saw

him last night, and again this morning, in the corridor."

"What! the yellow-faced man with the parson's hat and the blue glasses?"

She nodded, without changing her attitude.

"Apropos of Mary, do you like these rooms, dear?"

"Very much indeed."

"Then we'll stay here. And now, if you will go and rest while I'm busy, I will come and help with your unpacking when I have done with Mr. Wyndham."

"Oh, thank you; that will be so nice! I'm sure I shan't want a new maid so long as you don't get tired of replacing Mary. I have only my small things up, you know."

"I will tell them to send up the trunks in a couple of hours," said Julian. "And now you really must go, for I can't keep this man waiting."

He kissed the hand that hung on his breast, and she drew her arm away as he rose. She made one step towards the door, then turned, and held up her sweet lips to him like a child.

"It's the very first 'business,' and I don't like it. Say 'Good-bye, darling Dolores,' even though it's only for two hours."

He was not all bad, and her words sent a pang of shame and remorse through him. If she only knew the nature of that "first business" he was about to do! He kissed her once, twice, thrice, and said the words she asked for: "Good-bye, darling Dolores."

With a smile like a sunbeam she left him.

Julian gave the order about the boxes, and sent a message to No. 42; then stood with folded arms and bent brows awaiting the interview which, although it was to end in his freedom, he dreaded.

The apartment at the Grand Hôtel Universel occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Courtland was situated at one end of an extensive corridor, and commanded, like all those on the same side, a view of the garden of the Tuileries. Between the sitting-room and Dolores's bed-room, and communicating with both, there was a dressing-room, which had also a door opening into the passage. Access to the salon from the bed-room, without passing along the corridor, was to be had only through this dressing-room, and Dolores had gone that way.

"It would never do," said Julian to himself, remembering how Dolores had been reminded by Mr. Wyndham of James Willedden, "if she were to take it into her head to have a look at us."

He softly shot the bolt of the door of communication with the bed-room, and had just done so when Mr. Wyndham was ushered into the salon.

They met with the usual exchange of courtesies, but Mr. Wyndham was aware of Julian's effort to suppress a consciousness of triumph, and Julian detected in Mr. Wyndham a sense of amusement which irritated him, because if there was anything to be amused at in the situation, the laugh was not on Mr. Wyndham's side: he was, at all events, losing his victim.

They lost very little time in preliminaries, but proceeded to a settlement of accounts. Dolores had not received any large sum of money "down" on her marriage, and therefore Julian was not in a position to hand over to Mr. Wyndham crisp bank-notes or tinkling sovereigns, but his name had acquired value which fully satisfied that gentleman, and he was shortly in possession of the solvent signature of Julian Courtland for the large sum he claimed, with dates of payment arranged, and all "comfortable," according to one party to the transaction.

Mr. Wyndham's cheerfulness increased from minute to minute during the progress of this business, and when, at length, he placed in his pocket-book the long slips of blue paper that represented so much more than the money against which they were to be exchanged, he was in positively high spirits, and as much disposed to be sociable and communicative as his companion was to be moody and reserved.

"That's well!" said he, replacing the book in a secure inner pocket, "and now, my dear Courtland, business relations between you and me having ceased and determined, the way is cleared for our purely

friendly ones. Come, tell me all about yourself. How's Dolly?"

"Sir?"

"Hang it, man, can't I call my step-daughter by the name I gave her as a baby?"

Mr. Wyndham's tone of bantering indignation was perfect. A whole homily could not have explained the position more clearly to Julian, or made him better aware that he had been a fool to imagine that he could get rid of Mr. Wyndham if Mr. Wyndham chose to hold on to him. He had never thought of the man's relation to Dolores; he had not realised it even when she was reminded of Willedden by seeing Mr. Wyndham at the Royal Academy. As the man who had made a good thing—no one ever knew how good—out of the death of his deserted wife, by acting on the sensibilities of Miss Merivale, Julian had rather admired his dangerous acquaintance; but that he would brave identification and claim any sort of right as regarded Dolores had never occurred to him. The blood rushed into his face; he felt as though he were caught in a trap.

"You astonish me," he said. "You made no claim of this kind before."

"Of course I didn't. Before was not the right time, after is. But what claim am I making now? I only ask how is Dolly?"

"You know very well," said Julian with the boldness of despair, "that I did not, that I don't intend her to know you, that I don't intend to know you myself—"

Mr. Wyndham laughed. His laughter was soft, low, full-toned—the exact expression of enjoyment of an excellent joke.

"Go on, pray go on. It is so funny. You were to pay me off and bow me out, eh? Or to kick me out, perhaps? You look like it. You do look so very like it! But you are wrong, my dear Courtland," continued Mr. Wyndham, recovering his gravity and assuming a serious demeanour, "you should never throw down the ladder, until you are quite safe on the other side of the wall."

Julian, thinking ruefully how safe he had supposed himself on the other side of the wall, answered angrily:

"I don't know what you mean. I have kept my word; you will get your money. I don't see what good it can do you to molest me and my wife—to force yourself on us. I tell you plainly, since you make me do it, that I wish all acquaintance between us to cease from this time. I should not have thought you wanted to be

known to my wife and her friends as Willesden."

"You can't see, and you don't know! But I can, and do. Sit down, Courtland, listen to me, and speak when I have done."

Julian glanced at him, and obeyed him. There was an extraordinary menace in his tone.

"You are a lucky young man on the whole. You have got a pretty young wife, with a good fortune, in the nick of time, and a remarkably pleasant future before you. It will, however, surprise you to hear that you hold the good fortune and the pleasant future at my will and pleasure; the pretty young wife is yours for better or worse, but it will be your own fault if there is any worse."

"What—what do you mean?"

"I mean that you and I don't part upon your plan. Where is your wife?"

"In her room."

"Is there any danger of her overhearing us, or coming in?"

"None."

"That's right. Then I will tell you what I mean, and convince you easily that you and I must sink or swim together."

Mr. Wyndham had taken out a small letter-case while he uttered those ominous words, and he now produced some papers from it, placed them on the table, and continued, keeping his hand on them.

"You remember the day I went to Lisle, in the character of Mrs. Willesden's husband, and claimed the child?"

"I remember it well."

"You know how I afterwards accounted for that claim?"

"I do not; I never heard."

"Simply enough. I merely said that the child was quite an infant when I married her mother, and had always been called by my name, and accustomed to look upon me as her father. I need not trouble you with the details of the narrative I gave Miss Merivale; indeed I don't remember them. I omitted to tell her that although the people at Lisle found no papers belonging to my wife, I had been more fortunate. She was known to have written something on the day of her death; it is of no moment how that which she did write reached my hands; I took care it should never reach those for whom it was meant. It was a letter addressed to a nun in a convent at Santiago, and when you have read it, you will understand why I could not explain the reason for my wife's

not having applied to Dr. Rosslyn on behalf of her child before she married me, and why I did not make her do so afterwards, or do it for her. You will also see the truth of what I have told you, that you hold your fortune and your future at my good will and pleasure."

With this he handed to Julian the unfinished letter of Ines to Sister Santa Gertrudis, and leaned back in his chair, narrowly watching the young man as he deciphered it with difficulty.

So absorbed was Julian in the perusal of the letter, and Mr. Wyndham in that of Julian's pale and terror-stricken countenance, that neither heard a knock at the door until it had been repeated three times, and the applicant in despair entered the room.

"Yes. What is it?" said Mr. Wyndham to a waiter, who made him no answer, but handed to Julian a card with a pencilled line on it:

"Mr. Rodney begs that Mr. Courtland will see him at once and alone on urgent business."

"I am engaged. Ask the gentleman to wait a few minutes."

"What brings that fellow here?" said Mr. Wyndham, almost in a whisper, when the waiter had shut the door.

"No good." Julian's face was ashy pale, and his voice was hoarse. "Good Heavens! can it be this affair! He comes from Southampton."

He held out the letter of Fair Ines, which shook in his hand.

Again there was a knock, and Julian crammed the paper into his breast-pocket, and pointed to the open door of the dressing-room.

"Go in there," he whispered. "You will hear all."

With wonderful celerity and noiselessness Mr. Wyndham obeyed him, and Julian opened the outer door, to find that it was Rodney who had knocked.

"I beg your pardon for my impertinence," said Rodney, gravely, as he entered the room, "but my business with you is pressing."

"Is any one dead?"

"No one is dead. Where is your wife?"

"In her room."

"Is there any danger of her overhearing us, or coming in?"

"None."

"Then I will tell you at once what has brought me here. No pleasant errand;

on the contrary, a painful one, which must alter your position materially. A discovery which has occasioned Miss Merivale the greatest pain, has been made—let me say at once by me. It is that Dolores is not the child of Hugh Rosslyn !”

“Not the child of Hugh Rosslyn ? Then whose child is she ? Absurd, Mr. Rodney.”

“Take care what you say, Courtland.” Rodney raised his right hand quickly, as though to stop his further speech. “I am bound to tell you that there is grave suspicion against yourself of having knowledge of the fraud. Stay ! Don’t protest. You had better hear me patiently, and say anything you like after. I come to you in no unfriendly spirit, be assured. I have been, as you are aware, at my place near Southampton, ever since your marriage, and it occurred to me one day last week that Miss Merivale would like to know whether any of the people who were mentioned in the story told by Willesden, when he sold Dolores to her, were still living. Miss Merivale had drawn up an exact record of his statement, and at my request she sent the document to me. It was easy to find the chemist’s shop nearest to the harbour, and I saw at once that it was an old-established place, but the name on the door was not Jones, or “late Jones,” and I made inquiry with little hope of success. The chemist, Mr. Fisher, was a man of about sixty, who had lived there and kept that shop for nearly forty years. There never had been a Jones, but he and his wife distinctly remembered the beautiful young Spanish lady, Mrs. Robinson, whose husband was lost at sea, and who lodged in their house until her baby was six months old.

“They also remembered the young man who was then assistant to Fisher, and had left them some time before Mrs. Robinson went away. Now comes the strange part of the story. Mrs. Robinson left the place, telling Mrs. Fisher she was going to friends, and promising to write to her. Mrs. Fisher had no children, and had been very kind to the baby. Mrs. Robinson did write, but only once, six months afterwards, and then it was to tell of her child’s death. Mrs. Fisher had preserved the letter all these years ; she gave it to me, and it is now in Mr. Dexter’s hands.

“There were full details of the illness and death of the child, and of its burial in the cemetery at Kensal Green. There were many expressions of gratitude to Mrs. Fisher, but no information was given about

the writer herself, and the letter was dated from a small street in Paddington, without any number.

“Mrs. Fisher never again heard from Mrs. Robinson, but a year later a servant girl who had lived with her while Mrs. Robinson lodged in the house, coming back to Southampton from London, told Mrs. Fisher that she had seen Mrs. Robinson—‘the foreigner’ she called her—with Willesden, and that she had traced her to a house in Camden Town, but had not spoken to her. The girl had learned from the neighbours that ‘the foreigner’ was Willesden’s wife, and that she had a girl baby then a few months old. Dolores is that child.”

Julian had not interrupted Rodney once. He sat with his elbows on the table and his head in his hands, in silent despair.

Not a sound, not the faintest stir, came from the dressing-room. What wonderful self-control, Julian thought, the man must have, who could listen to the announcement of his own ruin in such stillness as that ! As for himself, his heart was sick, his head was dizzy, his whole body was icy cold ; he did not even want to speak.

“It was my duty, and a painful one, to inform Colonel Courtland and Miss Merivale of these facts,” continued Rodney with still deeper gravity, “and Mr. Dexter was at once apprised of them. It was in the course of the inquiries instantly instituted by him that, I am very sorry to say, an impression unfavourable to you was given. This caused so much pain to Colonel Courtland that he was unequal to coming to Paris with me, and I undertook to lay the matter before you. I need hardly assure you of the suspense and misery in which all at Lisle must be, until this part of the story is cleared up. It seems that Willesden was easily identified by the police with a man of the name of Wyndham, a money-lender, with whom you are known to associate, and the inference, as you will at once perceive, was of a serious kind. Miss Merivale has to bear the knowledge that she was grossly deceived and cheated in the matter nearest to her heart, though Dolores can never be less dear to her. I speak with authority, for Miss Merivale will soon be my wife. But your uncle and Miss Merivale are both forced to suspect you of being a party to this fraud—long after the fact of course—for they have proof that you are heavily in this man’s debt, and they cannot resist the belief that it was your knowledge of his secret that

induced him to let you have the money. I speak plainly, Courtland, but the case compels me."

"What are they going to do about him? Where is he?" Julian managed to say; but his dry lips and clicking throat could hardly form the words.

"He is said to be abroad, but is expected at his rooms in a few days, when he will be arrested. Your uncle and Mr. Dexter would not hear of his being allowed to escape punishment. Miss Merivale would have let him go scot-free, because he is Dolores's father, and also—pray mark this, and let it induce you to tell us the truth—because she would screen you if you really are involved, also for Dolores's sake. You have gone near to break the heart of your best friend, Courtland, but she would save you yet, for the sake of her whom you have deceived more cruelly than you have deceived Miss Merivale."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that Miss Denzil is at Florence with Madame Isambard, from whom Mrs. Courtland has heard the whole story of your conduct. She concealed her knowledge until this discovery was made. You must see how the facts strengthen the suspicion against you; you must know that you were even more cruel to the girl you married than to the girl you forsook."

"I knew nothing; I swear I knew nothing. Give me a few minutes alone to recover myself, and I will tell you all."

Julian went into the dressing-room and closed the door. Mr. Wyndham was behind it, leaning against the wall, where he could hear all. Their eyes met, but not a word was spoken. Julian softly opened the door which gave on the passage, and looked out. A waiter half way down the corridor was the only person in sight. At a sign from Julian, Mr. Wyndham crossed the room as noiselessly as a shadow, laying the bundle of slips of blue stamped paper on the table as he passed, with an expressive shrug of the shoulders. In that action there was entire conviction that the game was up. His own daughter's husband would meet no obligations to him with Dr. Rosalyn's money. He would have to begin again! In a moment he had disappeared.

Julian returned to the salon. Rodney was standing up, with papers in his hand.

"How come these things here?" he asked Julian sternly, "I found them under the table."

"What are they? I never saw them."

But he recognised them for the papers that had remained when Wyndham took up the last letter written by Ines; the letter that was in Julian's pocket now.

"They are the certificates of the burial of Hugh Rosalyn's daughter, and of the baptism of Dolores Willeaden, at the Catholic Church of St. Edward in the Horseferry Road. How came these papers here?"

"I will tell you, Mr. Rodney. In this matter, at least, I am not guilty."

"Two hours," said Dolores to herself. "Now, what shall I do with myself for two hours? I would write to Aunt Lillias only that I have not got out my letter-case. I know what to do. I will settle myself in this delightful window and look out, and think, and rest. But first I'll take my gown off."

She did so, substituting a soft, white morning dress with some fine lace about it, and then she nestled cozily into a blue satin chair of marvellous construction, and began to watch, with a delightful sense of idleness, the busy life of the Rue de Rivoli. She began to enjoy being alone—but with Julian so near her—and having a little time to think. And so she thought beautiful, innocent, happy thoughts about Lillias, her home, her childhood, her girlhood, and Julian, always Julian, ever since she was a little child, ever and always Julian; about her wedding and the recent happy days, about the happy years to come, and the serious life in which she would try to be like Lillias, and to make Julian always happy. She thought about her father too, and her mother, and wondered whether they could see her (how she hoped they could!); whether they knew how exquisitely happy she was and how much Julian loved her. They who had loved so well would certainly be glad, more glad even in heaven, to know that. And then she took her rosary of coral and gold from her neck, and laid it across her lap on the white that showed off its colours. She was so glad Mr. Rodney had told her about her father and the "royal rosary," and also about the "Fair Ines" of the poem. Was "that gallant cavalier" like Julian in the poet's mind? Ah, how Julian loved her, and how exquisitely happy she was! Might not she say of her own life also, as the poet said of "Fair Ines":

It would have been a beauteous dream,
If it had been no more!

There was a gentle knock at the door.

"Come in," she answered: and a waiter.

carrying a glass of red wine and a biscuit on a little tray, entered the room.

"I did not order anything," said Dolores with a smile.

"No; but Monsieur did. Monsieur is much engaged, but requests that Madame will take the wine he sends."

She put her hand out to the tray, and saw that the waiter's attention had been caught by her rosary. He was a very correct waiter, however, and he discreetly withdrew his eyes from the coral and gold, and cast them meekly down. In that moment Dolores had recognised him, and, remembering how she and Julian had speculated about the yellow-faced man with the clerical hat and the blue glasses, she smiled at the discovery that the object of their curiosity had been only a waiter on a holiday trip after all.

"Thank you," she said, "I shall certainly take the wine."

She had the glass in her hand, intending to put it down and sip the contents leisurely; but the man stood there holding out the tray, and, to get rid of him, she drank the wine off at once. It was not very nice, she thought, but then she hated wine. She replaced the glass, took the biscuit, let it drop, and put her hand to her heart as she fell back in her chair. The man looked steadily into her face, noted a fluttering of the eyelids and a click in the throat. There was, too, a quiver of her whole frame, and the royal rosary slipped off her lap and lay on the floor. The waiter turned his dark glance once more upon the costly object; but if he were tempted to possess himself of it, prudence prevailed. He only picked up the biscuit which Dolores had let fall, and left the room as composed and correct of aspect and demeanour as before. He crossed the corridor and entered No. 50, while the interview between Julian Courtland and Mr. Wyndham was still in progress.

The waiter locked the door of No. 50 on the inside, and proceeded without any hurry or nervousness to change his clothes for the ordinary travelling suit in which he had arrived at the Grand Hôtel Universel. He packed up the waiter's costume with the tray, the glass, and the biscuit, in a portmanteau, which bore many passenger labels, one from Madrid, touched the electric button in his room, ordered his luggage to be taken down, descended to the bureau, paid his bill, and took his departure for the Lyons Railway station with unruffled composure. The business of the great hotel went

on, and the temporary occupant of No. 50 had several successors at the bureau. Among these, was the temporary occupant of No. 42, who also paid his bill and took his departure; but he looked as though his short sojourn in Paris had disagreed with him.

Two hours! In all his life, let its course be what it may, let him seek a place for repentance and find it or not find it, whether those two hours mark his plunge into deepest ruin, or his painful return to the narrow way of rectitude, with hope glimmering in the distance, Julian Courtland will never forget those two hours. The gay yet pathetic words of his young bride, the lingering pressure of her soft carnation-tinted cheek against his forehead, her parting kiss, the coming of his evil genius, the revelation of the letter, the arrival of Rodney, the exposure of the fraud, the expiration of the two hours, and the interruption of the interview, will lurk for all the future in the dark recesses of his memory, darting out upon him, at once the phantom and the punishment of the past.

Two hours! Julian has told Rodney the truth, with the exception that he has not admitted the fact of his having seen Wyndham, but professes to have heard from him by letter enclosing the documents. And Rodney believes Julian's story in all but that one particular. He is sure Wyndham has made the communication in person, and is within reach; but he is content to pass over this incident, for he knows that to punish the miscreant who is the father of Dolores, would be to distress Liliás, and he is above all things solicitous for her. He has been charged by Liliás with many loving messages to Dolores, and especially to assure her that as the discovery leaves her position with regard to her mother's relatives actually unchanged, so it leaves her position with regard to Miss Merivale virtually the same.

Rodney was saying: "I am to tell her that although she is not Dr. Rosalyn's granddaughter, she is none the less Miss Merivale's adopted child," and Julian was thinking: "That is all very fine, but the settlements are waste parchment, and Miss Merivale is going to marry you," when a noise in the corridor attracted the attention of both.

"They're bringing up the luggage," said Julian, glancing at the timepiece on the mantelshelf, "and Dolores will expect me to go to her. If I don't, she will come in

here, and perhaps I had better prepare her for seeing you."

On Rodney's assenting, Julian went through the dressing-room, and had his hand on the bolt of the door of communication, when a woman's shriek rent the air. He rushed into Dolores's room, followed in an instant by Rodney, and they found themselves in the presence of a group consisting of two of the hotel porters and a chambermaid. The latter was clinging to the rail of the bed with one hand in helpless terror, while she pointed with the other to a white figure in a chair by the window.

Dolores had been lying white and beautiful upon her bed for several hours, before Julian, for whose reason Rodney was seriously alarmed, uttered an articulate sentence. But when Rodney, to rouse him from his dumb torpor, half-led, half-supported him into the room, showed him how kindly women had made it fair and fragrant with flowers, and Rodney himself had placed the royal rosary upon the quiet breast to be removed no more, and folded over it the beautiful hands, Julian fell upon his knees, and cried with an exceeding bitter cry:

"My punishment is greater than I can bear!"

"The doctor of the dead" was perfectly satisfied with Rodney's explanation of the sad event; that indurated functionary was indeed almost affected by the sight of the bride, dead in her honeymoon, and the young husband dumb and dazed by his despair. It was a curious instance of heredity, the young lady's mother having died at twenty-four years old, under almost identical circumstances, quite suddenly, when up and dressed, reclining in a chair, and alone.

"You will not be able to think of it with any such alleviation, for a long time, my dear love," Rodney wrote to Lillias that night, "but in the future there will be comfort in the remembrance of what a perfectly happy creature she was, and how well she knew it. Her last words to you were an assurance of this, and they say here that it was not only her beauty but her 'charming gaiety of heart' which caused her to be remarked by all who saw her on her arrival and in the morning. For us is the heartache, for us is the dreariness; but, knowing what we know, how long could we have hoped to see her

Without a sorrow in her song,
Or a winter in her year?"

They laid her in a grave beside her mother's, and placed a white marble cross at its head. The inscription consisted only of her name and the date of her death, and below these:

"GOOD-BYE, DARLING DOLORES."

Norberto de Rodas expressed himself with propriety when, upon his return from his satisfactory business-visit to Spain, he found Doña Mercedes deeply affected by the intelligence of the death of Dolores. He was however unpleasantly impressed by her remarkable reticence on the subject. She told him merely the bare facts.

It was Rodney who had written to her; and he enclosed in his narrative of events the unfinished letter of Ines to Sister Santa Gertrudis, with a request that Doña Mercedes would forward it to its rightful owner, in case she was still living. Doña Mercedes took the letter to the Convent of Las Anonciades the next day, and the two women read it together. Then were the secrets of the past revealed; then was the wickedness of Norberto de Rodas laid bare; for Fair Ines confessed in those last words of hers, that she had left her father's home with Hugh Rosslyn, to save her lover's life, threatened by Norberto; that she had hidden herself from Hugh's father, lest Norberto should find her out by her dead husband's name, and wreak his promised vengeance on the child; that she had been driven by the same motive, in her dire poverty, to a disastrous marriage, which was speedily followed by the death of Hugh Rosslyn's child. The object of her letter was to entreat her good friend to send for her father, reveal the truth to him—speaking for her who should be in her grave when that truth was made known to him—and implore him to befriend the deserted little daughter whom she was leaving. Norberto's letter, which had driven Ines from Southampton, was attached to the sheet.

It was all over; they were all gone. No reparation was possible. For ever and ever Doña Mercedes's debt must remain unpaid, her remorse must be unavailing. Her sin had found her out, and her accomplice, who had gone so far beyond her, was the object of her deepest abhorrence. Of his greatest crime she did not suspect him; a doubt that the death of Dolores was other than natural never occurred to anybody. Don Norberto is perfectly secure on that point. He might as well have left the deed undone, however, at least on the score of

interest; for it has brought him nothing but barren revenge. He persecuted Ines to worse than death, and he killed her child; but Hugh Rosslyn won! Doña Mercedes, who has refused to see him, and has gone to reside at Havana, has also deprived him of any prospective advantage in her death by making it known that only the poor will profit by that event.

So the long chase is ended; but the prize has gone down close to the shore.

THE END.

CHRONICLES OF SCOTTISH COUNTIES.

THE BORDER COUNTIES. PART II.

LIKE its sister counties, Roxburgh follows the conformation of its dales; in this case, the valleys of the Tweed, the Teviot, and of Liddelwater, the latter river running close to the English Border line, and for some distance forming the actual boundary between the two countries.

Entering the county by the high road from Berwick to Kelso, we are at once reminded that we are in the land of the poets. For here is the village of Ednam, close to the boundary of the counties, the birth-place of Thomson, the poet of "The Seasons." There is little indeed in Thomson's verses to remind us of his nationality. Our notions of the Border minstrel, with his vigorous martial strains and intensity of feeling both in love and war, have nothing to justify them in the writings and career of Thomson, who is to us more the poet of Richmond or suburban Kew, than one of the singers from the land of the mountain and the flood. And yet individually Thomson was a thorough Borderer, tall, burly, stout, and lazy—for the Castle of Indolence is perhaps more likely to be found by sylvan Jed or Yarrow's sweet waters, than by the winding shore of Thames; and Scott himself records, as a family feature, "the determined indolence that marked us all."

But Thomson to the last retained his northern burr, and spoke, if he did not write, like a true Scot. He was born in the manse of Ednam, acquired his rudiments in the grammar school, formerly held in the old Abbey of Jedburgh, and studied at the University of Edinburgh; and thus soon exchanged, in written compositions, the nervous idiomatic language of his country for the smooth classic style of English then in vogue. When the poet left his native land for London

in 1725, being then just as old as the century, it was a final abandonment that left no room for regret. His hopes of a favourable introduction to the world of letters were originally fixed upon his countrywoman, Lady Grizel Baillie, of Polwarth fame, who, according to the opinion of the Borderer, was a shining light in that particular hemisphere. But the young poet soon found that the appreciation of his brother littérateurs afforded a more hopeful opening for his powers, and from this time till his death, in 1748, the Borders knew him no more, and we are not, therefore, further concerned with his history.

But we are here on the track of a mightier spirit than Thomson's, for close by is Smallholm Tower, and near Smallholm, was the farmhouse of Robert Scott, of Sandyknowe, an active and intelligent farmer and drover, who had, in excursions over the Border and among the great cattle markets, brought home more good English siller than his ancestors could have dreamt of possessing after the most successful foray. There was enough siller anyhow to bring up a son to the law, and that son became in due time a writer to the signet in Edinburgh, and the father of the great Walter Scott. It was in the infancy of the latter, who was born under his father's roof in Edinburgh, that some accident, or perhaps the development of some congenital defect, brought on a lameness, from which the great novelist suffered more or less all his life. For the sake of curing this weakness of the limb, Scott was sent away from home to the care of his Aunt Janet, under Grandfather Robert's hospitable roof. Here he spent the best days of his childhood under the influence of a clever and sympathetic woman, and here his fancy was fed with all the old tales and songs and legends of the Border which were still everywhere rife.

Not far from the scenes of Walter Scott's childhood is Dryburgh Abbey—his final resting-place—the fittest sepulchre that could be imagined for the remains of the great enchanter.

The shattered ruins of Dryburgh lie among the loveliest part of the Vale of Tweed—in Berwickshire locally—one of the thick cluster of religious houses that owe their origin to the early propaganda of the Church of Ireland and Iona, before there was yet any England or Scotland, properly speaking, or any Borders between the two. In their turn these Abbeys

served as missionary centres, to spread the faith through the rest of the Northumbrian Land—and they may claim even to be the mother churches of holy Lindisfarne, of proud Durham, and of Lichfield even, far to the south.

Melrose Abbey Scott has made his own, and all the world goes to visit it by the pale moonlight, and thinks more of William of Deloraine, and the wizard, Michael Scott, than of the lonely anchorite, or ascetic disciple of St. Columba, who first raised the walls of a Christian temple in these lonely places.

A curious and antique village, in the form of a triangle, with the old cross in the middle—one of the few survivals of the village crosses of Scotland—was Melrose itself; the Eildon Hills lying close by with their three peaks, cleft thus by the cut of Michael Scott, the trysting-place of fairies time out of mind, and the site of the Eildon Tree where Thomas the Rymer descended into fairyland.

The neighbourhood still recalls the last departure of the fairies; for at Gattonside, on the opposite bank of the river, they were heard to pass through the village, a great company of them, laughing and talking after their fashion, but all invisible, and after that they were no more seen.

Three miles westward lies Abbotsford, erected by Scott, who transformed a barren farm, known as Cartly Hole, into a sort of baronial demesne. But Abbotsford has but a painful interest after all for the true lover of Scott, for it may be said to have destroyed its creator.

Lower down the Tweed is Kelso, described by Scott as the most beautiful, if not the most romantic, village in Scotland. Here, too, are the ruins of one of the Border abbeys; while some ancient trait of the inhabitants of the village is preserved in the traditional expression of a "Kelso convoy"—such scant politeness on the part of a host that a guest may find himself rapidly shown to the door, but no further.

Close by Kelso is Fleurs Castle, a Border stronghold transformed by Vanbrugh into an imposing mansion. The "policy," answering to the English demesne, of Fleurs Castle stretches down to the river Tweed. Here is seen, on the opposite bank, a wooded height crowned by the fragmentary ruins of Roxburgh Castle, a famous English stronghold, at once a defiance and an insult to the Scottish power. The Scots were prudent enough to keep up no great

castles of their own on the Border, the English being much more skilled than they in the defence and attack of fortified places, as well as possessing a more complete matériel of war. But when the English began to build and fortify castles within the Border it was a matter touching national honour and safety to ding them down.

The Castle of Roxburgh stands on a narrow isthmus not far above the junction of the Tweed and Teviot, and had been strengthened by the English engineers, who had raised a strong weir on the latter river, so that its waters flowed all round the castle, and guarded it against surprise. And when James the Second—on this side of the Border it is not necessary to add of Scotland—came against the castle with a large but motley army, drawn from all parts of the kingdom, he felt that the ordinary devices by which castles might be won in those days without a siege were all hopeless. The hay-cart full of armed men that should stick fast under the portcullis; the drove of cattle, where the drovers wore armour of proof under their soiled gaberdines; the half-dozen of stock surprises that were the common property of the skilful captains of those days—these would have been laughed to scorn by the wary and seasoned English men-at-arms. Hence the King, with the help of his French engineers, planned a regular attack upon the fortress, and threw up a battery on the northern bank of the Tweed to hammer the walls of the stronghold. His cannon were built up somewhat after the modern fashion of wrought-iron rings welded over an inner tube, but the steam hammer was wanting to bring the whole into a coherent mass. And thus, in firing a salvo one day against the castle, a great gun burst, and a fragment killed the King, who was standing near.

In 1818, when the zeal for national antiquities was in its warmest stage, a cedar was planted with some ceremony on the spot where the King fell, of which tradition had preserved the memory. Perhaps the cedar failed to flourish. Anyhow, the site is now said to be marked by an aged thorn.

The ancient stronghold is Roxburgh itself; there is nothing else to be discovered in the way of a town thereabouts. And, indeed, the most important place in this part of the county is Yetholm, which is but an insignificant place after all, but noted as being the ancient seat of the gipsy

monarchy, the Faas of Kirk Yetholm having long held the nominal sovereignty of the tribe. The place was also the headquarters of smuggling, and the last of the celebrated gipsy chiefs, William Faa, was a great performer in that line at about the commencement of the present century. He had carts and horses of his own, and smuggled Hollands gin, which was landed at Boomer from foreign vessels. Faa was a great pugilist, till his hits from the shoulder were spoiled by a slash from an exciseman's sword. He was also a famous angler, his pursuit of the gentle craft seeming hardly to harmonise with his other endowments.

All about here the familiar Northumbrian traditions are still in existence. There is Wormiston Hill, once the home of a worm or dragon, which in this case was killed by one of the Somervilles, who acquired great possessions as his guerdon. Coming to Linton Church, on a knoll in the midst of trees, we are in the presence of an ancient site, revered from primeval times, and the subject of numerous legends. The peculiarity of the church knoll is that it is formed of finely-sifted sand free from pebbles, in a district of heavy clay-land full of stones. The mystery is accounted for by Border tradition, in which two sisters are always employed, although the story varies as to their motives. In one case a Border knight is condemned to death, and his two sisters obtain a promise of his pardon on condition of their raising such a mound with riddled earth. In another story, the sisters are two beautiful maidens, but scornful and ill-natured, who set their rival suitors by the ears, the end being a general free fight among the youth of the neighbourhood, of whom the greater number perished. The Pope himself is here introduced, who imposes, as a fitting penance, the task of sifting the sand of the church hill. The connection of the young women with sieves will, no doubt, suggest the Danaides, and the myths have probably a common origin.

Famed among Border towns is Jedburgh, on the Jed, with its steep High Street running up the hill to the castle, like Edinburgh on a small scale, and with the vast roof-ridge of its abbey-church rising above the houses like the bones of a mammoth among the pigmies of to-day. Jedburgh has always had a character of its own, and was probably the head-quarters of some independent tribe—Godeni, perhaps, or possibly even Jutes—who gave their name to river and town.

The town had its own war-cry, "Jetharts here"—its own favourite weapon, the Jethart staff, or the Jethart axe; its own jurisdiction, for Jethart justice is probably older than the Border court, which was quicker at hanging than trying. The town may still boast of its old municipal constitution, its provost, its four bailies, its sixteen councillors, with the mediæval accompaniment of a dean of guild, a treasurer, and a convener of trades.

Fierce and full of fight, the Jedburgh men turned the fortune of war on more than one well-fought Border battle. Their town was often burnt, the castle often stormed by the English. The last of these neighbourly visits was in 1523, when Lord Dacre's force entered Scotland, stormed Jedburgh, and plundered the Abbey. But never were such strange and eerie sights as those seen by the victorious host. Six times in one night were there alarms of visitations by evil spirits and fearful sights. The powers of darkness were abroad, and the fear and horror of the night were not confined to human beings. Eight hundred horses belonging to the force broke loose from their fastenings, and stampeded over the plain.

In after days, the Jethart men were as stubborn for Kirk and Covenant as they had been for their Border chieftains. After the escape of Queen Mary from Loch Leven, when the country was divided into hostile camps, the Jedburgh men took up arms against Queen Mary, while the chief man of the neighbouring county, Kerr of Fernihurst Castle, was a warm supporter of the Queen. By Kerr's instigation a royal pursuivant-at-arms rode one market-day into Jedburgh and, dismounting at the market-cross, read out to the astonished market people the Queen's proclamation annulling all acts which had been done against her authority. The provost was soon upon the spot, and, seizing the herald, compelled him to swallow bit by bit the proclamation which the indignant magistrate had torn to pieces before his eyes. And then, with the bridle of his own horse, the pursuivant was ignominiously scourged and driven out of the town. In revenge, Kerr seized and hanged ten citizens of Jedburgh.

The River Jed that flows past the town and brightens up the otherwise sombre scene, is, in its passage from the Carter Fells among the Cheviots, where it takes its rise, rich with charming woodland scenes, and abounds in beautiful nooks—

Eden scenes on crystal Jed.

Above the Carter Fell rise the wildest and most rugged heights of the Cheviot range, on one of the edges of which is Reidswire, noted as being the scene of one of the last of the Border fights. The Scottish clans of the Middle Marches, with Sir John Carmichael at their head, there met the English Borderers of Tynedale and Redesdale in friendship, first of all, to settle scores for depredations and injuries on either side, of which there was a rough tariff, generally acknowledged as Border law. The meeting began in mirth and good fellowship. Booths were erected, drink was sold, an impromptu fair sprang up among the wild hills. But while all went on merrily, the two wardens quarrelled. The English warden took umbrage at the pretensions of the Scot, and, rising in his stirrups, gave a signal to his men of Tynedale, who forthwith discharged a flight of arrows into the air.

Then both sides set to work with jack, and spear, and bended bow, and a fair stand-up fight ensued, which was decided at last in favour of the Scots, by the prowess of the men of Jedburgh. Great was the anger of Queen Elizabeth when she heard how her men had been chased across the Border, and the Regent, Morton, to appease her, sent the Scotch warden a prisoner to England. But the English Queen was too magnanimous to take vengeance on a helpless foeman.

Another battle-field lies between Jedburgh and Selkirk, where the Scottish force under Douglas, Earl of Angus, inflicted a stinging defeat on the English, who had been spoiling the Borders, burning towns and monasteries, and, worst of all in the eyes of Angus, defacing the monuments of the Douglas family at Melrose. The battle was begun on a low piece of marshy ground known as Peniel Haugh, from which, at the moment of encounter, a heron rose into the air, the sight of which made the Douglas exclaim: "Oh, for my white goshawk, that we might all fall to together!" Tradition says, as Scot relates, that a young maiden, named Lilliard, followed her lover from the little village of Manton, and, when she saw him fall in battle, rushed herself into the heat of the fight and was killed, after slaying several of the English. In memory of this maiden a neighbouring hillock bears the name Lilliard's Edge, and a rude stone monument has an inscription to her honour—

Fair Maiden Lillyard lies under this stane—
Little was her stature, but great was her fame—

and recounts how, like Benbow, when her legs were cut off she fought upon the stumps.

The road from Jedburgh to Hawick crosses the vale of the Rule:

Where Turnbolls once, a race no power could awe,
Lined the rough skirts of stormy Raberlaw.

The clan of Turnbolls, however, were surprised and massacred by their own King James the Fourth in 1510; and although there have since been individuals of the name conspicuous for strength and courage on the Borders, yet, as a clan, from that time they ceased to be formidable.

Upon the way lies Denholm, the birth-place of John Leyden, who, above even Scott, may claim to be the minstrel of the Borders. Scott comes, perhaps, with too great a pomp and clatter, with too much waving of plumes and clashing of armour, upon these quiet Border scenes. We miss the pathos and the melancholy minor key of the true native Muse, found here and there in fragments of melody such as *Burd Helen*.

I wish I were where Helen lies,
Night and day on me she cries,
Oh, that I were where Helen lies—
On fair Kirkconnel Lee!

This delicate, tender strain of the Border Muse often rings in the verses of John Leyden, who was indeed to the manner born, the son of a humble but high-minded peasant; born and bred in his father's lonely cottage, where he drank in from earliest years the eerie atmosphere of the lonely fells;

Heard in the breeze the wandering spirits sigh,
Or airy skirts unseen that rustled by.

And thus the rude traditionary ballads and tales of the Borders, interwoven with his early impressions, gave his mind an eccentric and romantic texture, such as the poet himself describes:

The woodland's sombre shade that peasants fear,
The haunted mountain-stream that murmurs near,
The antique tomb-stone and the churchyard green,
Seem'd to unite me with the world unseen.

The elements of a sound, if limited, education were ready to the hands of any peasant's son in Scotland, from her excellent system of parish schools, and Leyden having mastered his rudiments at Kirktown school, repaired as a poor scholar to Edinburgh University, in accordance with his father's ambition that he should "wag his pow" in a pulpit. Here his rustic yet undaunted manner and his humble dress, combined with the harsh tones of Teviotdale, routed the gravity of professors and students.

It is impossible to avoid the thought that Scott had some of his friend Leyden's characteristics in his mind when he drew the inimitable Dominie Sampson. Like the Dominie, Leyden was a failure in the pulpit, and his appearance—a wild-looking Roxburghshire man, with sandy hair, a screeching voice, and staring eyes—must have dwelt in the author's mind, and, unconsciously, perhaps, inspired his story. Like the Dominie, too, Leyden became a private tutor; but here the resemblance ceases, for the real man was full of varied talent and ambition, with a courage that no obstacles could daunt.

Leyden soon plunged into literature, but here his versatility of talent diverted him from the path of poetry. He became full of travels, of discoveries, and wrote a history of African discovery, which in some way offended the friends of Mungo Park. It is said that the Roxburghshire yeomanry being then quartered at Hawick, some of the troopers threatened the author with personal vengeance, who thereupon marched into Hawick market-place and held the crown of the causeway, murmuring the fragment of some Border song, likely enough—

My name is little Jock Elliot,
And wha daur meddle wi' me?

A few years later Leyden was one of the acknowledged literary lights of the Modern Athens; the editor of a magazine, and a zealous coadjutor with Scott in hunting up Border ballads and Border traditions for the "Minstrelsy" and "Antiquities" which Scott was then compiling. But long before his friend had reached the summit of his fame, Leyden had been laid to rest in a foreign land. The literary profession was then a stepping-stone to other preferment, and Leyden obtained a medical appointment in India, obtaining his medical degree for the purpose with marvellous celerity.

Friends in Edinburgh looked forward to his return well loaded with rupees, and charged with all kinds of marvellous stories. "What cannibals he will have eaten, what tigers he will have torn to pieces!" said his brother poet, Tom Campbell.

The brother poet was not far wrong. Leyden's letters tell us of a broad river crossed in a copper kettle—of being pursued by a tiger for three miles. But alas! the record soon comes to an end. Leyden took part in an expedition to Java, and, seized with fever on the way, died among

the Javanese swamps, his wandering thoughts reverting to his native streams—

Is that dull sound the hum of Teviot's stream?
Is that blue light the moon's, or tomb-fire's gleam?

And thus perished a true poet and a good sound Borderer; while his father, the old shepherd, still lived, and tended his sheep among the hills.

Coming to Hawick we are among the old, half-fortified houses of the days of Border warfare, of which an example may be found here and there, built of hard whinstones, the walls very thick, and with no door to the street, but entered through a long entry which gives access to an inner courtyard, from which an outside stair leads to the second flat—anglicé, the first floor, while the third storey was reached like a hayloft, by a ladder and a hole in the ceiling. Part of the existing inn shows the remains of a house once occupied by the Duchess of Buccleuch and Monmouth, the widow of the unhappy Duke of Monmouth, who never bated her claim to the gloomy state of a royal princess.

It is this Duchess, by-the-way, who entertains the ancient minstrel in Scott's poem; and Branksome itself is a little higher up the Teviot on the opposite bank, and not noted only in the "Lay," but in a Border ballad, which records how a noble and gallant young soldier wins and woos the bonnie lass of Branksome.

As I came in by Teviotside
And by the braes o' Branksome,
There first I saw my blooming bride,
Young, smiling, sweet, and handsome.

And now we are at the mouth of rugged Liddisdale, known perhaps all over the world through the fame of Dandie Dinmont, a dale which can still show its stout farmers, as joyous and hospitable, as if more refined than, their great prototype.

The great feature of the dale is its ill-omened stronghold of Hermitage Castle, a square massive ruin in an extensive waste—a place deserted and abhorred, and the subject of some of the darkest legends of the Borderside.

Before the days of Bruce it belonged to the English Lords Soulis, an evil race, of whom the last was the most wicked, who used his tenants as the beasts of the field, yoking them to sledges, and even boring holes in their shoulders to harness them the better. Ceaseless complaints of the evil deeds of Lord Soulis wearied the ears of good King Robert, till one day, in a rage, he exclaimed, "Fient! nor he were sodden and suppit in brose!"

The men of Liddisdale wanted no further warrant.

They roll'd him up in a sheet of lead,
A sheet of lead for a funeral pall,
They plunged him in the cauldron red
And melted him—lead and bones and all.

The very cauldron is said to be still in existence.

At the Skelfhill the cauldron still
The men of Liddisdale can show.

Another story of more uncertain date relates how the Cout of Keildar, supposed to be a Norwegian brave, fording the river, was set upon by the men of Lord Soulis, who unable to pierce his armour of proof, held him down with their lances under the water till he was drowned.

A treasure lies deep beneath the dungeons of Hermitage; all the wealth of the wicked Lord Soulis, who, as he was being dragged away to his doom, threw the keys of the castle over his left shoulder, thus confiding them to the care of the Evil One, who still retains their custody.

From the wild desolation of Hermitage the transition is pleasant to the luxuriant woods and charming scenery, among which lies Castleton. Lower down the water is Mangerton Tower, the chief seat of the Armstrongs, of which only a small fragment remains. But while the Laird of Mangerton was always acknowledged the chief of the clan, other branches have risen to greater fame, such as Johnnie Armstrong, whose roofless tower of Gilnochie lies between Langholm and Canobie. Johnnie, summoned to meet the King, James the Fifth, in his visit to the Borders, appeared at the head of thirty horsemen to do his obeisance; the King ordered him to be hanged with all his men, and hence Johnnie Armstrong's lament.

But had I kenn'd ere I came frae hame
How thou unkind wadst be to me,
I wad have keepit the Border side,
In spite of all thy force and thee.

But hanged he was with all his men, on the trees by Carlenrig Chapel, some ten miles up the Teviot from Hawick. And the King replaced his good Borderers by more profitable flocks of sheep.

CLAUDIA.

A STORY IN FOUR CHAPTERS. CHAPTER I.

THE gray wintry day was drawing early to its sullen close, and the thick, low-lying cloud of heavy smoke seemed to drop a dingy veil between the great, ugly, dirty city, with its yellow lights, and the free

space of heaven, where the clear blue points of the celestial lamps shone cold and bright above the open face of the country. It was a very prosaic and hideous world which Louis Dumaresq left behind him in the Bloomsbury street as he opened the door of the great dingy house with his latch-key, and made his way slowly up the broad staircase to the second storey, where his rooms were. Mr. Dumaresq was no longer young. Fifty years of care and struggle, many a privation, and many a trouble, had turned his hair white, and his face was lined, thin, and sallow, though his large dark eyes had kept some of the fire and some of the dreaminess of youth in spite of the sunken spaces round them, and the fine crow's-feet in the corners. No one in London led a more commonplace, toilsome, and monotonous existence to outward seeming than he did. For twenty-five years he had worked at a desk in an office, rising from clerk to secretary, earning a small weekly stipend, punctually paid and fairly gained by hard and conscientious work and uncomplaining regularity of attendance. Year after year the silent, reserved, courteous man had taken his seat in the office, as little known and caring as little to give or take confidence as if he were a mere writing automaton, wound up to go from ten till five from Monday morning till Saturday night. The heads of the office, the fellow clerks amongst whom he sat, and with whom he exchanged the necessary greetings and remarks which civility and business demanded, knew absolutely nothing of him except that he lived in—Street, Bloomsbury, and was an intelligent, exact, and conscientious worker.

But he had his other world, like the rest; his romance, his relaxations, his passions and desires, though most of these had failed and died, and the dull level of a thorny path left few glimpses of brightness as he trod it with patience to the appointed end. There had been a time when his heart had leapt as his hand closed on the latch which would open and give him his vision of home, when home meant a smiling, dark-eyed wife eager to welcome him, when the chatter of the curly-headed boy on the hearth with his toys had music in it for the man who was tired of the weary routine of the long dull day, and when Louis Dumaresq envied no one his palace in that room where his household gods were. The dark, kind eyes had been many a year put away into silence; he could hardly make his ear exactly repeat

the tones of the sweet Italian voice, whose broken English had been so delicious to him. Gemma had been too dear for his possessing long. She left him two legacies: the one was the curly-headed boy, a troublesome possession enough, which he often felt had brought him as much pain as pleasure; the other a picture that hung above the mantelpiece, and which always greeted his eyes as he entered the room with a serene smile of welcome, a little piece of sunshine, a bit of ideal beauty in the dingy surroundings of the prosaic London life, delicious to the beauty-loving, imaginative nature which it was the business of the rest of the day to repress. It was a little Claude, the one valuable possession poor Gemma had brought into her husband's home, an heirloom from an artistic family.

When Louis Dumaresq was one-and-twenty, the son of a rich banker, brought up to enjoy life and gratify every whim, he had taken a fancy to go to Rome for six months and study art. It was merely a whim, he had no intention of becoming an artist, he had no necessity to be that or anything else; but he had a considerable turn for a dilettante, and might have done a good deal if he had been poor, and if the world were less overstocked with talent. He painted in the studio of an Italian artist, who was as poor as an artist can be except for two priceless treasures. The one was the Claude, the other his daughter Gemma, who was the prettiest model any father could have, and who, consequently, appeared in every one of Signor Riccardi's pictures under one name or another, and who was just eighteen, and at her prettiest, when young Dumaresq painted at her father's studio. Of course he fell in love with her, and she with him. The father encouraged it with a sort of innocent craftiness, the young Englishman being rich and Gemma having no portion and nothing but blank poverty to look to—no portion, that is to say, but the Claude, which was promised to her. Louis Dumaresq came back next year, and the two were betrothed. They were married when he was twenty-three, and he took her home in triumph to introduce her to his father, a sleek, prosperous banker, who was apparently as safe a man as the City of London knew. They began life as gaily as possible, with visions of unlimited bliss before them. The Claude was sent over to Gemma when her father died, the year after her marriage, when the brown-eyed baby, who was so exactly like her, was born.

Then came the storm of troubles which after that beat on the poor young things, and destroyed all the fair prospects before them. Mr. Dumaresq, the banker, absconded, and the bank collapsed with a fall that brought ruin on hundreds of homes, and, amongst others, on his son's. From living in careless ease and luxury they had to come to a couple of rooms, and he was thankful for hard work and a meagre clerk's salary. They were not miserable. Gemma was a bright-natured girl, and used to the economies and plans of poverty. Dumaresq got on by slow degrees, and was respected and trusted. It was not long before they changed the two rooms for the floor in the great old Bloomsbury house, which in its palmy days had been a fashionable gentleman's, and still had its relics of dingy grandeur in carved mantelpieces, broad solid staircase, and wrought-iron railings; and the Claude decorated the wall above the fireplace, and made its own little centre of peaceful sunshine and beauty, which was a joy and rest to the clerk when he came in out of the roar and the mud of the streets, keeping alive the lamp of artistic beauty which at one time had seemed to him the load-star of his destiny. He might have made a small fortune out of the exquisite picture, which was declared to be an absolutely perfect specimen of the master; but he could almost as well have parted with the boy, whom he used to hold up to see the sparkling waters and the sunny sky before he could speak plain, but not before he could scribble with a slate pencil with a certain aim in his scribbings unusual at such a period of life. Gemma's boy was a born artist, he had inherited it from both sides, and she was proud to declare that he would be just like her father some day. Dumaresq shook his head a little doubtfully at her prophecies, and would declare that Clement would never do anything in life till he learnt perseverance. The hard taskmaster, poverty, had taught it to him, and his strong will was now past even the power of misfortune to defeat. Clement adored his mother, and she stood between him and his father when there was anything wrong, as there often was. She was so sunny and hopeful that she could never see much harm in his constant bits of naughtiness; and he was always affectionate, and as easy to melt into passionate repentance as to rouse into rages or fits of childish mischief. She was a determined optimist—a bit of Italian blue sky and

sunshine, like her picture. Her husband had an odd association of ideas with the two. She brightened the dull places of his life with her blithe hopefulness, as the landscape — which seemed to have been dipped in southern warmth and sunlight — lit up the dingy room and the foggy atmosphere, and collected in itself a point of beauty and radiance. She rested his soul as the Claude rested his eyes, tired of the ugly monotony of the long business day. But the inanimate had a durability which the animate lacked. London could not dim Gemma's merry heart, but it could steal her strength and health; and, while she declared every day that she was better and going to be quite well soon — unconsciously deceiving him and herself — death was too strong for her, and there came a black nightmare of a day which remained for the rest of Louis Dumaresq's life a shuddering memory of unendurable pain — a day on which Gemma's large, bright, feverish eyes closed on her little world of love, and over which where there had been joy, and warmth, and hope, despair brooded.

He went on to all appearance much the same; the office did not see any great difference, for none counted his gray hairs or noticed the lines that had come on his sallow forehead; he went and came as when Gemma had welcomed him; he had to satisfy his hungry soul as well as he could with what she had left him — the boy, and the picture that always reminded him of her and the sun of his Italian days. He sent Clement to school. The boy was lovable, with a hundred faults, and had sparks in him of a real but wayward genius — a very uneasy and doubtful possession which often means worse than failure. He painted and designed "wonderfully" for twelve years old, as everybody said, only he never had the patience to make a correct copy of anything. He played by ear, and sang like a seraph. His father gave him, the first time he had anything like a good report at school, a little violin, on which he soon learnt to play with extraordinary facility, and to compose little wild, quaint melodies of his own. He was very handsome, and when he was "good," which was a rare occurrence, his father delighted in him. On such evenings, sitting in his old easy-chair, smoking, with the boy opposite him, by turns chattering and making strange wandering music out of his little violin, something like contentment came over the tired, despondent, reserved soul of

Louis Dumaresq; his severe looks relaxed, and a trace of the old smile which he had given his wife returned as he looked at and listened to the eager, clever, dark-eyed boy. He had not much faith in the lastingness of the peace and repose he felt. A deep distrust of the future and a certain suspiciousness of nature, which haunted even his love for the boy, was always underlying the smoothness of the surface; but for the moment he was half consoled, and his heart rested for a space from its eternal disquiet.

Such an evening he remembered always in after years as standing out bright from a sombre background of disappointment and weary monotony of days. He came home rather early, and found Clement in one of his bright, affectionate moods, which came and went like sunshine on an April day. He greeted his father with a boyish hug; he had much to tell of his day at school, and chattered all dinner-time — they had a frugal dinner together late — with bursts of laughter in between his sentences which were infectious, and made Dumaresq's thin, worn face light up into something of the gaiety of youth. In the evening Clement announced himself in a "playing fit" — sometimes he could not produce a note, and would not touch his violin; sometimes he had a craze for art, and would not lay down his pencil.

To-night, as he perched on a high stool opposite his father, with his legs tucked under him and his violin on his shoulder, he glanced with his great bright dark eyes first up at the landscape overhead, then at his father, with his bow poised in his hand ready to begin.

"You are awfully fond of that picture, dad," he said, still gazing at it.

"Yes, if you put it so," Dumaresq answered, smiling, as he watched the rather elfin-looking figure through the smoke of his pipe; "it is more than a picture to me."

"Yes, I know. I remember when you used to hold me up, and tell me stories about it and about Italy. I shall go to Italy some day and paint. It is more than a picture to me too; it has told me something. Listen, dad, I'll show you what it has told me."

And dashing the bow across the strings Clement struck into an air; his father listened with more than his ears, the strange, fresh, sweet little melody went to his heart. The boy broke off suddenly.

"That's the picture, father, doesn't it make you see it? The sun on the river, and the

pine-trees, and the girls dancing—it all dances together, the water and the sunshine and the girls.”

“Play it again, boy,” the father said briefly.

He could not have praised, or expressed any of the painful pleasure which was swelling in his heart; it was impossible for him—a habit of chill reserve and repression had grown upon him like ice over a lake. Years of grinding work, of loss and failure, had made him what he was, the worst companion for the ardent, impulsive, hot-headed boy that Gemma had left behind her. Yet Louis Dumaresq loved him, and would have died for his good any moment.

Clement played it again.

“Do you like it?” he asked impatiently, when the last note ceased to vibrate and his father still said nothing.

“It is pretty; how did it come to you, Clem?”

“Before you came in. I was drawing. Look here, see what I did.”

He suddenly produced a sepia sketch and put it on his father's knee. It was an enlarged copy of the only likeness Dumaresq had of his wife; a very poor photograph, taken in those days before photography was one of the fine arts. There was incorrectness of drawing, but Clement had made a spirited likeness of the pretty Italian head, with its soft thickness of dark cloudy hair standing round the thin, oval face; the great, deep eyes; and the sweet, half-open, smiling, pathetic mouth.

His father drew a long breath; he sat and gazed at it, and his heart beat so fast that he could not speak.

The boy went on: “I was trying to make it like to give you, and thinking about her, and then I looked up suddenly, and I remembered your saying once that she and the picture made a sunshine in the room when there was none outside, and, as I looked at it, somehow I seemed to hear the tune. I stared and stared till I believed I saw it all move, and the man there in the corner play on the guitar, and the girls begin to dance and sing, then I took up the violin and it came. I played it over and over again. Do you like the drawing, dad?”

He was always eager for praise and approval, but, if his father could have spoken out his thoughts, they would have surprised Clement by what would have seemed an extravagance and flattery. As it was, the boy thought his father undervalued him. Instead of putting into words what was in

his mind, which was that this child of theirs was a genius, and that, at that moment, his father loved him passionately, he only said, and it was with an effort that he made even this sound at all warm: “Yes, Clem; yes, I like it very much, and the tune too. You are a good boy; it has pleased me.”

It was but meagre, but he had seldom said so much; and the eager boy was satisfied, for he was not used to praise, nor often felt he deserved it.

In the long silent night Dumaresq lay and thought over the curious, dainty little melody, till he knew every note by heart.

“He is a genius—a genius,” he repeated with a warmth that made him feel almost happy, “and he has a power of loving too. How Gemma would have delighted in it!”

LITERARY SURVIVAL.

OF late much discussion has taken place with regard to the choice of books. Carlyle and many other authors more or less famous have given to the world their opinions on the subject; each author, of course, consulting his own taste. The reluctance with which the average man or woman takes advice, in any form, is proverbial, and we see no reason to doubt that any exception will be made in the present instance. Allowance must be made in this case, as in many others, for difference of taste. Because Brown, for instance, is fond of reading French novels, it does not necessarily follow that Jones is so easily suited. This is self-evident; and yet many people seem to lose sight of the fact. Byron preferred Pope's translation of the *Iliad* to the original, and spoke very alightingly of Shakespeare and Wordsworth. Charles Lamb considered Marlowe's “*Faustus*” superior to Goethe's immortal “*Faust*,” and, not to multiply examples, Johnson could see no genius in Fielding. “Sir,” he said, “there is more knowledge of the heart in one letter of Richardson's than in all ‘*Tom Jones*.’” It is certain, then, that one should not be guided by individual opinions in his choice of reading.

The question is sometimes asked, of the many works in existence now, how many are likely to survive? This is very difficult to answer. A glance at any old volume of a literary review will show praises of writers who have long since dropped into oblivion, while many who have been scathingly condemned still have a place on our bookshelves. Denham's “*Cooper's Hill*”

was described as a "poem which, for the majesty of the style, is, and ever will be, the exact standard of good writing." "Pamela," says a critic, "next to the Bible, ought to be preserved." Home, because he wrote "Douglas," was dubbed the "Scottish Shakespeare," and the critics of the time seem to have considered him superior to the great bard. How many writers included in Johnson's "Lives of the Poets" do we read to-day? On the other hand, taking a few instances at random, the critics could see no genius in Lytton; Tennyson's first volume of poems was ridiculed by one of the reviews; and Lord Beaconsfield's early attempts were regarded as "indications of literary lunacy." The fate of Keats is almost too hackneyed to quote. Referring to him, Byron wrote:

'Tis strange the mind, that fiery particle,
Should let itself be snuffed out by an article.

Byron's mind was evidently not "snuffed out" by the slashing review his first volume of poems received.

An American professor makes a curious assertion with respect to many of our classics. "By some kind of spell," he says, "all the old books, whose names have been rattled off for generations in essays, speeches, and in table-talk, pass as embodiments of merit, while the real truth is that those names won their popularity in a vulgar age, and have now outlived their merits." This may be true in some instances. The number of people who think for themselves is, we know, very small; but it is idle to say that we are all like the pious Brahmin. We dare say "Pamela" created as much talk on its publication as "Tom Jones," yet who reads Richardson's novel now? "Pamela," however, is by no means the only book of which much was prophesied. Numerous instances will be familiar to our readers.

Many of our old books are, as Mr. Henry Morley says, "more quoted than read." Butler's "Analogy," Paley's "Evidences," Hooker's "Ecclesiastical Polity," Hobbes's "Leviathan," Locke's "Essays on Civil Government," these are books which, although well known, are by no means widely understood. Charles Lamb, who thanked God that he had a catholic taste for 'reading, classed among the "books which are not books" the works of Hume, Gibbon, Robinson, Beattie, Soame Jenyns, and the histories of Josephus—a list to which many additions might be made. Of those old authors whom we do read few are represented

by more than one book. Take Defoe, for example. What schoolboy has not read "Robinson Crusoe"? The "general reader," however, can scarcely be said to have more than a superficial knowledge of "The Journal of the Plague Year," or of "Colonel Jack;" and very few are acquainted with the many political and historical works which Defoe wrote. Fielding is generally known by "Tom Jones;" Swift, by "Gulliver's Travels;" Smollett, by his "History of England;" Johnson, by his Dictionary; Lamb, by his Essays; and so on.

Speaking of reading, Professor Blackie says: "We are running too much to books. The people don't come together any more. There are no more grand public reunions of the masses. A man buys a book or a paper, and, hurrying home, shuts the door and reads. Everybody reads. Enter a family circle nowadays, and every man, woman, and child has his, her, or its nose poked down between printed pages. It's read, read, read. Absolute silence reigns throughout the house. . . . These human reading machines are stuffed full of the sausage meat of literature. When the world was the wisest it read no books. Its teachers taught from nature." Owing to increased facilities, it is certain that of late the love of reading has greatly increased. Whether we read too much is, however, another question. This is, no doubt, an age of cram and hurried reading, and if one is to follow Mr. Matthew Arnold's advice to young journalists, viz., read all books and all newspapers, it can scarcely be otherwise.

Having regard to difference of opinion, we scarcely see the necessity of drawing up a list of the best hundred books. Sir John Lubbock must have very peculiar ideas of the requirements of working men when he recommends the works of Marcus Aurelius, Cicero, Æschylus, St. Augustine (not to mention many others), as likely to meet their requirements. The real point is, not which books we shall read, but which we shall buy. Every large town has now its free reference library, at which any well-known work may be consulted or read. What the working man wants is a small library of his own, and, his means being necessarily limited, he does not wish to encumber himself with a lot of worthless rubbish, or with books which he may not consult more than once a year. If he be making a study of one particular subject, he will soon discover the most useful books on that subject. It is certain, therefore, that

no working man should keep files of any newspapers, or trouble himself about books of merely ephemeral interest, such as "Dame Europa's School," which was abnormally successful for a short time after its publication, and of which nearly 200,000 copies were sold. Emerson advised everybody to wait a year after a book appeared before reading it, and then to depend upon the verdict of those who had read it whether it was worth reading or not. The peculiar Irish flavour of this "bull" consists in the fact that if everybody should follow his advice, there would be no general opinion to depend upon. What that peculiar personage, the "general reader," devours is literature which is neither very old nor very new. He clings to most of our famous nineteenth-century novelists, and prefers to test most of his stories through the columns of the local paper before he purchases them.

Judging by an account of an interview with Mr. Routledge, which "The Pall Mall Gazette" published, most of our favourites hold their own. Of the poets, Longfellow—according to the editions which Mr. Routledge publishes—is most generally read: 6,000 volumes of his poems are sold yearly. Scott comes next, with 3,170 copies; Shakespeare, with 2,700 copies; Byron, with 2,380. Rogers (whose name was great in our grandfathers' days) is the lowest on the list, with only 32 copies. Of novelists, Dickens is most generally read and widely appreciated. In England alone, we believe, nearly 5,000,000 copies of his works have been sold since his death. This number does not include unauthorised editions. A short time ago the street boys were selling an illustrated "Nicholas Nickleby" for a penny, and many other cheap editions of "The Master's" novels have also been published. "Fifty years ago," says Mr. Routledge, "an edition of 500 was considered large, and one of 2,000 enormous." These figures seem small indeed when compared with, say, the large editions of the "Pickwick Papers."

A writer's chance of being widely read depends greatly on his style; and it seems to us a piece of literary affectation for any author to write in florid or obscure language. No man who writes for posterity, as the "Times" says, can afford to neglect the art of composition. Dr. Johnson's verbosity was a standing joke amongst many of his contemporaries. Of him Macaulay said that he wrote in a style in which no

one ever made love, quarrelled, drove bargains, or even thought. When he wrote to his friends he wrote good English; but when he wrote for publication he "did his sentences into Johnsonese." "He has had his reward," says a writer. "His 'Rambler' lies unread on our bookshelves; his talk, as recorded by Boswell, will be perused by thousands of delighted students." Carlyle's extraordinary style undoubtedly militates against his being more extensively read. The feelings of the ordinary reader after having read "Sartor Resartus" are similar to those experienced by Jerrold on a memorable occasion. "On the author of 'Mrs. Caudle's Curtain Lectures' recovering from a severe illness, Browning's 'Sordello' was put into his hands. Line after line, page after page, he read; but no consecutive idea could he get from the mystic production. Mrs. Jerrold was out, and he had no one to whom to appeal. The thought struck him that he had lost his reason during his illness, and that he was so imbecile that he did not know it. A perspiration burst from his brow, and he sat silent and thoughtful. As soon as his wife returned he thrust the mysterious volume into her hands, crying out, 'Read this, my dear.' After several attempts to make any sense out of the first page or so, she gave back the book, saying, 'Bother the gibberish! I don't understand a word of it!' 'Thank Heaven!' cried Jerrold, 'then I am not an idiot!'"

Both Macaulay and Cobbett had good styles, although they were by no means alike. Macaulay's style was that of the university scholar; Cobbett's, that of the self-taught man. Macaulay took great pains over his compositions, and thought nothing of rewriting a sentence or even a page; Cobbett did not believe in patching, and did not trouble himself about rounding off a period. Yet, like Macaulay, he never wrote an obscure sentence. Although many of Cobbett's writings—those of ephemeral interest—are forgotten, his grammar, which is used in many schools in France, and which is as interesting as a novel, will survive. Turning to Macaulay, we can easily understand the popularity of his writings. His "Critical Essays" are, to use a paradoxical phrase, not critical; nor can many of his sweeping historical statements be swallowed without a grain of salt. He himself confessed that he was "not successful in analysing the works of genius," and he also said that he had never written a page of criticism on poetry or the

fine arts which he would not burn if he had the power. We, therefore, conclude that much of his popularity is due to his clear, attractive style and his clever word-painting.

Books increase so rapidly that by-and-by an author who writes pithily will have far more chance of being read than one who is verbose. Be a book ever so clever, it will be heavily handicapped by being written in a heavy style or in the ordinary florid newspaper language.

VICTIMS.

By THEO. GIFT.

Author of "*Lil Lorimer*," "*An Alibi and its Price*,"
Etc., Etc.

CHAPTER XIV. BÉNOÎTE, THE BLANCHISSEUSE.

AFTER finishing his letter to Leah, Marstland went out to post it himself. Writing it had distracted his mind for the time being from the immediate trouble of what to do about Vera, and had done so the more pleasantly because, with that happy confidence in the honesty and goodwill of others which is inherent in some people, he never for a moment doubted that Leah's heartiest sympathy and interest would go with every word he wrote. He was not a vain man. It had never occurred to him for a moment that the Jewish girl's feeling for him, any more than his for her, had any tenderer element than friendship in it. As he had told Vera that evening on the water their different creeds seemed a sufficient bar against all ideas of love or marriage between them; but then, on the other hand, that very fact made their friendship all the stronger and sweeter by taking any elements of foolish flirtation from it, and enabling them to show frankly their appreciation of each other's character, and preference for each other's society, without risk of comment or misunderstanding. Whether he was right, and whether any guarantees of friendship are strong enough to do away with such risk in a cynical and un-utopian age is another question; as also whether if Leah had shown equal appreciation of a preference for anyone else, Marstland might not have been reminded that "friendship is only love in muff," by the pangs of un-platonic jealousy. The plain facts were that Leah never had given him a loophole for such jealousy; while he himself was eminently 'utopian in all his ideas, and never so easily moved to wrath as by the

sneering and cynical tone so common in the present day.

"By the time they have given up believing in God and Heaven they will already have ceased to believe in one another," he would say bitterly, "as while preaching their new Gospel of Humanity they are even now practising that of devildom." And there was truth in his words as there was in a good many of the young man's thoughts and sayings. Fortunately for him perhaps, his actions were not always as flawless as his theories, and therefore he had not as yet made many enemies. It is not easy for any of us to love heartily a faultless man; the desire to pick holes in him is too great; but Marstland had lots of faults, all on the outside too, and withal was eminently loveable. The fact was he had hitherto been exceptionally fortunate. He had good looks, perfect health and strength, enough money, and energy enough for three. He had been a spoilt child all his life, and yet spoiling had never made him selfish or conceited; while his natural generosity and kind-heartedness made him use his many advantages so freely for the benefit of his fellow-men, that they could almost afford to forgive him for them. At the same time he was hot-headed, masterful, and obstinate, with an almost feminine repugnance to coarseness, and an imprudent tendency to take up other people's quarrels or injuries which had got him into various troubles already, and was perhaps the cause of his being less popular with his own family than with outsiders, and more so with women than men: the fashionably fast set among the former only excluded.

Certainly no woman had ever yet owed her ruin to him, though more than one wretched girl might have dated her first step in an upward path from the day when, brought by sickness under the hands of the clever young hospital surgeon, she experienced for the first time that mingling of sympathetic kindness and respect which a man who looked on such as she simply and solely in the light of victims to the brutality of his own sex, could not help showing to the poorest and lowest of the weaker one. There were rumours, too, of his having more than once risked his life or limbs by the outrageous folly of turning aside from his professional duties in some city slum to step between a shrieking, half-murdered creature, and the brute who was exercising the "sacred rights" of conjugality by battering her to death; but

whether this was true or not, the fact that such things were said testified to a quixotic sort of chivalry which is neither common nor fashionable among a large class of young gentlemen and ladies of the day, and caused them to regard the person inculpated with a certain amount of shyness, not to say suspicion. Marstland was spoken of as "a good fellow enough, but odd, you know—cornery"; "got hold of morbid notions on the subject of women"; and though his immense physical strength and the absence of anything effeminate or lamb-like in his disposition preserved him from contempt, he had fewer intimate friends than acquaintances among young men of his own age and degree.

That such a man, therefore, should have been attracted to Vera St. Laurent was just the event most likely to come to pass. To be soft, weak, and gentle, to have appealing eyes and a plaintive voice was the very way to be attractive to this big-limbed, warm-hearted fellow, with his fund of unexpended energy and unsatiated tenderness. He delighted, indeed, in the companionship of women like Leah, though his relations to them were purely fraternal, and, but for the extra deference extorted by their womanhood, more like those between one intelligent young man and another. But the little child that nestled in his arms, or the timid maiden creeping to his side for protection from the roughness or freedom of other men, awoke a much deeper feeling in him, and one which had made his sister, Lady Hessey, more than once whisper in strictest confidence to a friend that she lived in daily anguish lest George should arrive at the Hall one day and present to her one of his repentant Magdalens as a sister-in-law.

In Vera, however, Marstland had found the union of delicious weakness and perfect innocence, trembling docility and exquisite tenderness, which seemed to him the very perfection of dawning womanhood, and thrilled him through and through with such a passion of protecting love and worship that he had not been able to master the desire to fold her in his arms and shield, appropriate, and defend her from that day forward.

The mere thought of her stretching out her hands to him, with that look of helpless, pitiful appeal, forced burning tears into his eyes and brought a cloud over even the sunny brightness of this pleasant September day, never pleasanter than in that sunniest and brightest of Breton

towns, Quimper, with the brown swift waters of the Odet flashing at its feet, and the twin spires of its glorious cathedral—over whose porch the stone statue of King Gradlon, of mythical renown, still prances on horseback, as in the days when on a certain feast it used to be presented with a cup of wine by a chorister in cassock and stole—dominating the entire town and towering into the sunlit air at the end of every street.

It was market-day, and at any other time Marstland would have been enchanted with the aspect of the place, the crowds of people gathered together from every neighbouring district and commune, in every variety of picturesque costume, yet all combining certain salient features—the short jackets, enormous black felt hats, and baggy "bragou-bras," or breeches, of the swarthy, long-haired men; the gorgeous caps, embroidered bodices, and big blue or bright-coloured aprons of the brown-cheeked, large-eyed women; and the straight long gowns, and quaint closely-fitting skull caps of the tiny children, making them look like animated pictures from the Middle Ages—and blending deliciously with the brown colour of the houses, the blue sky, and golden sunshine, the huge madder-red sails of the market boats crowding the bright river, and the high, tree-mantled hill on the other side.

In the "place" where the market was held it was quite difficult to get along, owing to the influx of peasantry, farmers, and artisans from the surrounding villages, and the number of visitors, French and English, with whom Quimper market is such a well-known and popular sight in the watering-place season. The noise of voices, ranging from the high-pitched French accents to the Anglo-Saxon gutturals, and in which the oddities of the Breton tongue mingled quaintly with the nasalities of the Yankee, almost deafened him, and he had to pick his way among green avenues of cabbages, stacked high above his head; mountains of potatoes, smelling pleasantly of the rich, moist soil from which they had just been dug; big round baskets of fowls, crimson-wattled and bronze-plumed, making such a screaming and cackling as drowned all else in their vicinity; rolls on rolls of the sweet cowslip-coloured Brittany butter; heaps of rosy carrots and snow-white onions; hundreds of new-made sabots; trucks of fish, glittering blue, pink, and silver-hued in the sunshine; trays of "crêpes" and "galettes," all hot and fresh

from the pan; stalls laden with cheap jewellery, medals, and crosses for the "pardons," brodered skull-caps, belts, bodices, and ribbons of every colour under the sun; baskets of flowers, grapes, peaches, melons, and plums, all heaped together in a lovely, harmonious confusion, and forming, with the gay costumes of the vendors, the grand Cathedral, piercing the blue sky above, and the waving trees, casting their chequered shadows on the circling groups, a picture which it would have required a very love-sick man not to find leisure to admire.

Unfortunately for Marstrand, however, it brought before him still more vividly the contrast with that dismal, sunless room at Les Châtaigniers and the wan, tear-stained visage of the young girl who had once described to him this very scene and urged him to come and see it; till, in thinking of her, he forgot even where he was, and was standing motionless before a stall, at which he had not so much as looked, when, startled by its owner's voice, asking in better French than that spoken by the peasants usually:

"Is it then that Monsieur would please himself by taking home a Bretonne cap as a souvenir to the dear demoiselle, his sister?"

Marstrand looked up at the speaker with a start of surprise. She was a tall, comely young woman, with more intelligence than usual shining in her long black eyes, and wearing on her head the quaint, square-shaped white cap, tied under the chin, and surmounting an embroidered, skull-shaped one beneath, which he had already noticed to be peculiar to the women of Pont l'Abbé and Sta. Tryphine-par-Mer. Her wares, a quantity of caps and collars in fine muslin, elaborately fluted and frilled, were set out on a very primitive table, consisting of a board supported on two little barrels, and she leant across this with so pleasant and friendly a smile that Marstrand, always genial towards women of the working classes, could not help smiling in friendly fashion also.

"Why not for my wife?" he asked pleasantly. "To be sure I haven't got one, and I have a sister; but how you know that I can't imagine."

"Ah! assurément, Mademoiselle would not have thought of mentioning Bénoite and her sister Catherine, good as she was in their regard while staying with the famille St. Laurent. And for Monsieur, he naturally was too preoccupied to notice

their little cottage by the roadside as he walked up and down outside the great gates yesterday."

"Yesterday!" repeated Marstrand, colouring vividly, as he recalled his lengthy promenade to and fro the spot mentioned fixed on by M. St. Laurent. "Oh, you saw me, then, did you? You live in one of those cottages near the château?"

"Mais oui, certainly I saw Monsieur, and, for that matter, Catherine—it is she who is bedridden and who makes these,"—gliding her finger lightly over the well-starched headgear—"she said an Ave Maria for Monsieur as well. 'It is not much in effect, an Ave Maria,' Catherine said; 'but while every day I feel the good of the soft pillow which cette chère Mdlle. Josephs gave me, it would be ungrateful not to do something for Monsieur her brother when he comes to make court for the hand of our little mademoiselle here.' Ah, ça, that was right enough. Nevertheless, one must avow that when I took the linen up to the house later—I am 'blanchisseuse' to the famille St. Laurent, as Monsieur may know—and heard the poor little demoiselle weeping, oh, so bitterly! in her room, I said to Catherine, 'Apparently thy Ave Maria was of no effect. Va, ma fille! thou shouldst have said three.'"

Marstrand had started and changed colour more than once during this speech. His first feeling indeed was the natural British one of annoyance that his private affairs should already have become the theme for talk and comment among the dependents at Les Châtaigniers; but the quick pain evoked by the last words drove out that first feeling, even if there had not been something in Bénoite's manner, sympathetic with no shadow of disrespect, which would have disarmed offence in a more touchy man.

"So you know all about me, I see," he said, leaning forward over the blanchissense's stall, at the imminent risk of crumpling her fragile wares; "and though you make a mistake in one thing—for I am not Mdlle. Josephs's brother, only an intimate friend—I am not the less grateful for your friendly feeling for her and me."

"Not the brother of Mademoiselle! Dame! but I ask Monsieur's pardon for my 'bêtise'; notwithstanding, however, that Our Lady and the saints know that it would be an honour to any one to be connected with that dear young lady," Bénoite exclaimed volubly. "Va, donc! it is like that 'mauvaise langue,' Joanne,

to call her an adventuress at present, and pretend that she has not treated Mdlle. Vera well! For me, I believe, Monsieur here could tell a very different tale, and could explain why the parents of Mdlle. Vera have not had a smile for her since her return to them, while she herself sits and weeps incessantly."

"Is Mdlle. Vera so unhappy?" cried Marstland passionately. "My good girl; it is you who can tell me things, and perhaps help your poor young lady by doing so. You will, will you not, my pretty Bénéoite?—for you are pretty, and you have a kind heart, too, I can see; and it is quite true what you have guessed, that I have come all the way to France to propose for the hand of Mademoiselle, which her father will not give me. He has even refused to let me see her, so that I cannot find out her real sentiments. But you go to the house often, Bénéoite. You can see her when you will; and if——"

"Chut, donc! Not so loud," interrupted the blanchisseuse, waving one of her smartest caps in front of the young doctor's eyes, and making a great parade of pinching out and arranging its embroidered streamers. "How does Monsieur know that there are not others of the tenants of M. St. Laurent here? If it were supposed that I was indiscreet enough to be conversing with Monsieur about our young lady, I who earn my living and that of Catherine at Les Chât——"

"But, my good friend——"

"But, Monsieur, I implore you! See there, Jean Baptiste, the factor from Les Châtaigniers, looking to the unloading of those fruit-baskets. M. St. Laurent confides in him unalterably; and if he were to see—— but I shall be going back this afternoon by the potato-boat of Antoine Béloc. It leaves at six o'clock from the quay just below the last town bridge. Monsieur has only to ask there for the boat of Béloc; and meanwhile, if—to give an air of business to our conversation—he would choose a cap——?"

Marstland bought the one in her hand instantly, paying double the price asked for it in order to secure the vendor's goodwill; and, having promised to be at the place of appointment, went obediently on his way. He could see that the woman was in earnest in her fear of being compromised by his longer presence; and now that he had a hope of communicating with Vera through her, he could better afford to be patient. In far brighter mood than

before, therefore, he wandered about the market and town, seeing all that there was to be seen; and then went back to his hotel and wrote a letter to his sweetheart. Not a long one, like that to Leah, for it only covered part of a sheet of note-paper; but in it he told her that the sight of her in tears and trouble had nearly broken his heart; that he had done and urged all he could to win her father's consent to their marriage and had failed, without even receiving a reason for his rejection; that the question, therefore, now lay between them two. If she also had decided against him, if it were even true that she regretted having permitted him to love her, or wished the bond between them to be broken, he would leave Brittany at once, and, loving her just as well, blaming her not at all, would never try to see or trouble her again. But if, on the other hand, she had only been coerced into giving him up; if she still loved him and was willing to be his wife; no one and nothing on earth should separate them. They would wait, that was all—wait till she was of age, and, if her parents would not give their consent then, marry without it. Meanwhile, she would at least know that he was loving her only, working for her only, thinking of her only every day of his life; and, if she loved him too, that knowledge would suffice to comfort them during the time of their separation.

He took the letter down to the quay at the time named. The sun was now low, and the river looked a bright orange colour in the waning light, in which the reflections of the steep, wooded hill on the opposite bank, of the bridges spanning the stream, and of the slender masts and big brown sails of the boats jumbled together under the quay, were paired in strong dark shadow. The market people were crowding down to the water's edge, either with a view to embarkation or to take leave of friends there. Funny little children in stiff long gowns and wonderful melon-shaped caps of pink, blue, and yellow satins, the segments divided by lines of gold braid, were trotting about and showing one another the handfuls of damaged fruit or cheap toys which had been bestowed on them during the day. Above, the cathedral bells and those of a convent hidden among the trees, were making a sweet, musical jingling in the pure, warm air. It was easy for Marstland amid all this pleasant stir and clatter to finish his conversation with Bénéoite unperceived, as

soon as he had found out which of the many boats was that of Maitre Beloc; though not quite so much so as to get her to agree to what he desired.

"A letter! Grand Ciel! but no, that is impossible," she exclaimed at first, retreating and throwing up wide-spread hands at the sight of the missive; but when, after a little coaxing, he had persuaded her into agreeing to deliver it, it was the blanchisseuse, not he, who suggested all the details of the manoeuvre, and even arranged that, in place of remaining at Quimper he should go on to Loctudy, the little port at the mouth of the Pont l'Abbé river, which, being so much nearer to Les Châtaigniers, would be handier for getting an answer to him from the latter place should Made-moiselle think it desirable to send one.

Marstland agreed to everything she proposed. His depression and downheartedness had given place to almost wild spirits at this sudden revival of his hopes. He could have blessed Quimper Market for the unexpected friend he had found there, and rewarded the latter with a lavish liberality which almost bewildered her. Finally, when he got to Loctudy, he was too excited to rest, and spent half the night wandering along the shore and looking at the little army of fishing-boats riding at anchor in the estuary, and the island of Tudy, as it rose up in the moonlight exactly opposite to him like a lump of ebony out of a silver setting.

Late on the following day he was sitting in the little inn from which, as his expectation grew keener, he had not been willing to budge, when a little boy came up to him, and, after staring hard at him for a minute or so, said, in atrocious Breton-French, and handing him a letter:

"I am P'tit Jean. Bénoite la blanchisseuse told me to bring this letter to the English Monsieur."

Vera's letter! Well, it was but a little blotted scrap of paper after all; but few as were the words it contained, and feeble and incoherent as they might have seemed to anyone else, to Marstland they were more eloquent than all the epistles ever penned by Mesdames de Staal or de Sévigny in the course of their two lives.

"You are very good to me," Vera wrote. "Somehow I hoped at first you would understand, and be strong for both of us, but afterwards it seemed all over. Forgive me. I could not help it, and I do love you. I will wait all my life if you like, and if they will let me alone. Only I am not

brave, and it is so lonely and wretched when everyone is angry with you; but how could I guess it would make them so?—and I cannot help it now.

"Good-bye. Your affectionate,
"VERA."

And then there came a little postscript: "Please talk of me sometimes with Leah, and give her my dear love. I may not write even to her now."

Vera was feeling better now that her letter was gone. The poor child had remained in a state of half-dazed misery from the moment of her leaving London till that when she had seen her mother waiting for her inside her own door. Then indeed a rush of filial yearning and affection had swept over her, and she would have thrown her arms round the parent from whom she had been parted for the first time in her life, and clung fondly to her, but that she was chilled and frightened by Madame St. Laurent's air of severity and displeasure. The mother had scarcely permitted the tired nervous girl to touch her cheek with her lips, and had not been five minutes alone with her before she burst out reproachfully:

"Oh, Vera! who'd have thought this of you! You've disappointed your papa and me more than words can say. Indeed he was all for sending you off to some severe convent school when he first heard of your conduct; and if you want to be let stay here even now you will have to be very good, and promise never to give a thought to that—that young man again."

"But, mamma, how can I?" cried Vera piteously. "I must think of him when—when—and he is coming here, all the way from England, to see papa. You will see for yourself how good and nice he is. And how could I guess you would be angry! You had never told me——"

"Vera!" her mother interrupted severely. "When I warned you so strictly that you were not to get flirting or allowing young men to become at all particular towards you!"

"But mamma," Vera spoke in all sincerity, "you spoke of Jewish young men; and indeed I never flirted with Dr. Marstland. I——"

"My dear, that is sheer prevarication, and I am shocked at your demeaning yourself to it. What is flirting but allowing a man you know nothing about to go talking of love and marriage to a child like you, when you were quite aware that

if your parents knew of it they wouldn't allow it for a moment."

"Mamma, I didn't know it," Vera said with timid persistence. Madame threw up her hands.

"You didn't! Then you should have known, and you are putting the blame on me by saying you didn't. But there! your father is waiting to see you, and if you take that tone to him I don't know what he will do. All I can say is, that if you drive him to send you into one of those Popish nunneries it will break my heart. But I suppose you don't care for that. Girls never care!"

Madame Laurent's cold eyes were wet and her voice husky. What was Vera to do? She could only kiss her mother with the tears running down her own cheeks, and follow her into the study, where her second reception was even less encouraging than the first. Her father did not even allow her to embrace him, but put out a hand to keep her off, looking at her under his frowning brows as he said:

"So, Mademoiselle, you have returned, and just in time, as it seems, to prevent you from disgracing yourself and your family. In truth you have done both already, and to a degree which makes me doubtful, even now, what to do with you——"

"St. Laurent, you promised me!" cried the mother appealingly, and trembling so much that Vera, awed beyond measure by this new proof of agitation in one usually so cool and self-contained, and filled with vague terror as to the prospect in store for her, was almost ready on her part to promise anything. This harsh welcome from both her parents, coming after all the love and kindness of the last few weeks, and acting on her tired body and unstrung nerves was too much for her, and she faltered out:

"Papa, forgive me! If I had known you would have been displeased I—I would not have done it; but indeed I did not understand."

"Not understand! A pretty excuse for a demoiselle of good family, if in your case the reason for it were not so near at hand!" and he turned his eyes for a moment on his wife with an ugly sneer, which the poor woman comprehended only too well. "Did you also understand that it was decent and convenient to be amusing yourself with follies and coquetries when your father was lying dangerously ill?"

"But, papa, you were better, you were nearly well; and I never——" But, as usual, she was not allowed to finish.

"Ah, ça, ça! That is enough. The thing is over, and I do not wish to hear or say more about it. There, if you repent, you may embrace me. And now go with your mother, and see that you obey all she tells you, if you would wish to remain in her care."

Vera was dismissed sobbing helplessly, though Madame St. Laurent was kinder now than she had been, and did her best to console the overwrought girl with tea and hot cakes, coupled with the assurance that if she only put "that silliness out of her head," papa would not say any more about it. The words only added to Vera's grief; she felt that her dream was over, that brief, lovely dream which had made the world so different to her; and when her piteous attempts to plead for her lover and the friends who had been so kind to her were abruptly silenced, and she was told that she was no longer to regard the latter even in the light of acquaintances, her unhappiness increased, and she spent the time until Marstrand's arrival in such constant weepings, as had naturally reduced her to the crushed and broken-hearted condition in which he found her.

The mere sight of the young surgeon, however, of his bright, manly face and vigorous bearing, was like a rush of new life and light into her veins; but it receded again before the first sound of her father's voice, and when she was taken from the room she felt as if all hope was over, and gave way to the agony of tears which had moved Bénéite to compassion. That precious little note concealed within the sleeve of a frilled "peignoir," which the blanchisseuse insisted on submitting to her inspection, came to her, therefore, like a re-opening of the gates of Paradise to one just condemned to uttermost darkness, and she had not the slightest scruple about availing herself of the same opportunity for replying to it. It seemed to her that it would have cost her her reason to have done otherwise.

Next week will be Commenced a

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No. 910. NEW SERIES.

SATURDAY, MAY 8, 1886.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

ALEXIA.

BY ELEANOR C. PRICE,
Author of "Gerald."

CHAPTER I.

THE last day of the old year was dark, and short, and gloomy everywhere. A sky covered with thick gray clouds hung low over the fields; all nature was still; the earth was bound up in a hard black frost; the air was biting; the world seemed dead. And Christmas had been so different, so beautiful, with a clear sun and a blue sky, and a soft, spring-like air. The hounds had met at the Old Farm on the 26th of December, and they had found in Briar Coppice, half a mile away, and had had a famous run across country, Alexia Page leading, as her way was, on the little brown mare which her father had trained for her. And then, in the midst of it all, came the end. Lil, the faultless, the sure-footed, had stumbled into a rabbit-hole, and had thrown her rider, and dragged her half across the field. So Alexia was picked up covered with bruises, though no bones were broken; half stunned, but just conscious enough to know who carried her home. When they reached the Farm she could have looked up to thank him, but she would not; partly, perhaps, because she was ashamed of a certain depth of happiness which made the bruises nothing; partly because of a vexatious pride caused by circumstances. She thought her father would thank him quite enough.

But it was a terrible business after all. To lie in bed for several days, suffering the aches and pains which made themselves felt keenly enough now; to see nobody but her father and the servants, and old Dr. Smith, and Mrs. Dodd, the clergyman's wife, who, good woman as she was, did not hide the conviction that it served

her right; to miss hunting days, and now skating days, and last night the ball at the Manor, where Charlie Melville, the squire, would have devoted himself to her in spite of everybody—it was all too hard! But the deepest depth of misery had not been reached till this dark afternoon, the day after the ball, the last day of the old year.

Her father had helped her downstairs to the large sofa by the drawing-room fire. A great fire roared up the old-fashioned chimney, and all day the red light flickered on the low ceiling with its heavy beams, and the walls cumbered with quaint pieces of furniture. Through that long twilight day brass corners went on flashing, and there was a certain vagueness about the corners of the room, and to any one approaching from outside there was a friendly glow from the deep oriel window, adding a look of comfort to the beauty of the house. It was a beautiful old house, with a long red front and two red gables, and a porch projecting in the middle, and a fine gravel sweep approaching it from the high road; the yards, and farm-buildings, and hay-stacks lying snugly away behind, and being entered by a different road altogether.

There lay Alexia in a warm, quiet dream, staring at the fire, protected by a screen from the outer world. She was very stiff, and could hardly stand or walk; she was an ill-used girl, and could not understand why this Christmas, *the* Christmas of her life, should have been so utterly spoiled for her. And yet she was a most unreasonable little soul, for Charlie Melville had been to the house every day to enquire for her, and deep down in her heart she knew that he cared for her. But deeper still there was a little bitter something that said: "No, it won't do. It was all very well three years ago,

and longer ago still, when Charlie was a younger son, a mere sailor-boy; but now that his brother is dead, and he is the squire, and the manor and the farm belong to him, is it likely that he will be able to keep absurd old promises—childish promises?—Why, you little fool! he has forgotten them already, though, of course, he can't help thinking you the prettiest girl in the country. A tenant's daughter, a farmer's daughter, who is she? even though her mother was the Rector's only child, and her father has been to college, and her people have lived at the Old Farm two hundred years, as long as the Melvilles at the Manor." Then Alexia answered that biting voice, and said in her heart: "Still Charlie loves me—though, of course, not half or a quarter as much—but he carried me home, and I know."

But the argument was unsatisfactory, as most things are when one is aching all over; and Alexia was glad to see Mrs. Dodd, who came tramping in full of health and virtue, dressed in a plain serge gown, a large cloth jacket, and round black hat: the very picture of a country rector's wife visiting her sick parishioners.

Alexia lifted herself up on the sofa; her pale delicate face, and soft dark curly head seemed to look wistfully out of the background of some old picture. She held out a thin little hand, as hot as fire, to be clasped in Mrs. Dodd's knitted glove.

"How kind of you to come out on such a cold day!" said Alexia. "If you wouldn't mind pushing my table one inch away, that little chair will just fit in between it and me."

"Thank you," said Mrs. Dodd. She looked doubtfully at the table, which had flowers on it, and scent, and a basket of bonbons, and two or three books and Christmas numbers, whose character she suspected. "Thank you, I won't come so near the fire. This room is very hot, do you know, Alice. Have you had the window open to-day?"

"Before I came down. Dr. Smith says I must be careful about chills," said Alexia, and her visitor sat down where she pleased, which was a long way off.

The attitude of Mrs. Dodd's mind towards Alexia Page was one of disapproval. She could not despise the girl, whom everybody respected; she could not dislike anyone so pretty, with so much tact and such nice manners; she was not small-minded enough to envy the height of popularity to which Alexia's generosity, justice, and

pleasant ways had lifted her among the poor. Yet certainly she did not like her. Alexia held a sort of position in the place which was entirely her own, and Mrs. Dodd failed to see any reason for it. She was the old Rector's granddaughter—the old Rector had been a gentleman and a scholar, neither of which was Mr. Dodd—but what did that matter, when her mother had chosen to lower herself by marrying William Page? Mrs. Page had been a very foolish, wrong-minded woman, in Mrs. Dodd's opinion. She had known nothing of the management of a farm, and had rather gloried in her ignorance. She had all sorts of ridiculous, fine-lady ways, such as dining at seven o'clock. Latterly she had set up for being an invalid, and had seldom come down before the middle of the day. Mr. Page, poor man, was fond of books and fond of horses. He was extravagant; he was a careless, refined sort of man; it was quite impossible, according to Mrs. Dodd, that he could make his farm pay. Yet somehow these two got on very comfortably; they were in love with each other to the last; they had a singular faculty of winning the devotion of their servants, both in and out of doors; and Alexia, at a very early age, ruled them, the servants, the horses, the dogs, the farm, with an authority founded on reason and independence of character. Poor Alexia! She was much prettier than her mother, and cleverer than her father, even in his own lines of horses and books; her inborn taste was excellent, and she had all the practical good sense on which her ancestors had prospered, with a tolerably strong love of the vanities of life as well.

Her mother died when Alexia was fourteen, and Mrs. Dodd then tried to take the management of the girl, but failed. She could only comfort herself by calling her Alice, instead of the foolish, fanciful name which her mother had given her. She kept up this custom carefully, and thus by a small daily provocation missed any chance she might ever have had of making friends with the girl.

Alexia's constant companionship with Charlie Melville, when he was at home, had always been an offence and an anxiety to Mrs. Dodd. She used to wonder that Mrs. Melville did not interfere; but in those days Mrs. Melville could think of nothing but the looks, the manners, the debts, the scrapes of her eldest son George, who had given her every possible trouble that a son could give his mother. He had

ended by marrying a third-rate actress, and three years ago had died, fortunately leaving no children. Since then his widow had married again.

For a long time Mrs. Melville stayed away from the Manor, but at last she came back, bringing Charlie with her. He had left the navy, and everyone said he was a good fellow. He was not very bright, and easily influenced, like his brother; but his natural tendency was good instead of bad. He was affectionate and generous, and, for a young man, unselfish. His mother took a great deal of interest in him now, but she did not love him as she had loved George, who had done his best to break her heart. There was something a little simple, a little stupid, about Charlie; he was a bear, his mother said, and she was very often angry with him. One thing she was resolved upon: that he should marry well; and the idea of Alexia Page as a daughter-in-law had not, of course, ever crossed her mind. The ball might have opened her eyes; but Alexia was not at the ball.

"How did it go off? Please tell me all about it," said Alexia to Mrs. Dodd, who had been there.

"Oh, very well indeed!" said Mrs. Dodd. "Everybody was there, and the rooms looked very handsome. I believe Mrs. Melville was quite satisfied; in fact she said so. Of course we came away early, for I don't like late hours, and I would not have gone to a ball anywhere else."

"Were there any pretty dresses?" said Alexia, gazing at her with eyes full of sad imagination.

"No doubt you would have thought them all pretty," said Mrs. Dodd. "I don't know. I am not clever at describing that sort of thing."

"And everybody was there?" repeated Alexia, rather vaguely.

Mrs. Dodd exerted herself, and gave a long list of names and families: her bare outline was enough for Alexia to make pictures from. She knew them all, at least by sight and by name; she knew who Charlie would dance with, and how bored he would be, and how little he would have to say to most of them; she had a little triumphant suspicion that the evening had been spoilt for him, as well as for her. At last, among the various groups, she thought of some people who had always been friends of the Melvilles, and whose daughter, a plain girl with a good deal of money, had been long ago intended by the respective parents to marry George.

"Were not the Martin Radcliffes there, Mrs. Dodd?" said she.

"Of course. Didn't I mention them?" said Mrs. Dodd. "That was funny, because they were much more conspicuous than anybody else. I quite expect—in fact Mrs. Melville hinted as much—but I won't gossip. It is better not to talk about things before they come to pass."

Mrs. Dodd, at the same time, did not mean to stick to this excellent principle.

"A fine lesson for Alice Page," she thought. "It is a pity she was not there to see for herself."

Alexia herself did not affect any blindness or stupidity on the subject. A slight shiver crept over her, and she turned a little pale, but Mrs. Dodd could not see that in the twilight.

"And did Mr. Melville dance with Miss Radcliffe a great deal?" she asked quietly.

Mrs. Dodd was rather glad to have this opportunity of telling the worst. The girl had brought it on herself; she had actually asked for it; she deserved it—for what business had she to enquire with whom the Squire did or did not dance!

"That is what I meant, of course," said she. "Everybody was talking about it. He danced with her over and over again, and hardly spoke to anybody else all the evening. I thought it was hardly the thing to be so entirely devoted to one girl, but of course, as Mrs. Williams said to me, it would be such a good thing, such a desirable thing, such a comfort to Mrs. Melville, such a blessing to the neighbourhood—because, you know, besides other considerations, poor George spent such fabulous sums, and Miss Radcliffe will have an immense fortune, and everybody speaks well of her."

"How did she look?" said Alexia meekly, after a moment's pause; and that was the only dart of feminine spite she allowed herself. It fell short, too.

"Very well," answered Mrs. Dodd, with emphasis. "She was most handsomely dressed in yellow, with large wreaths of brown leaves. Her figure is improved, she is certainly slighter than she was, and holds herself better. If she had a clearer complexion, and better teeth, and rather more hair of a more decided colour, and a differently shaped nose, I really think she would be a good-looking girl. Many people said so last night."

Alexia gave a little laugh. How well she remembered Charlie saying to her, a

long time ago, what an awful fright Miss Radcliffe was! And then she scolded him, and then he began to talk nonsense, as usual. But a younger son, a midshipman, could afford to talk nonsense; it was very long ago. Now, perhaps, Charlie took different views of things. Mrs. Dodd no doubt spoke the truth when she described his devotion to Miss Radcliffe; Alexia did not think of disbelieving her. Miss Radcliffe was a stick, as well as a fright; there were other people at the ball of quite as much distinction; he must have had some reason for singling her out in such a pointed way. "And if I had been there, I wonder—" thought Alexia, and she smiled. She felt sore and stiff, somehow, but Mrs. Dodd saw no outward sign of this; she went on talking and asking questions, in a much more lively manner than before, till at last the Rector's wife, very well satisfied with her charitable visit, got up and went away.

Then the soreness and stiffness became unbearable, and Alexia hid her face in the cushion, with set teeth and clenched hands, wishing wild wishes, poor child! wondering how she was to bear the bitter pain with which Mrs. Dodd had so lightly threatened her. She thought now, forgetting former reasonings, that from the bottom of her heart she had believed in Charlie, and that he was going to be false to her. In the darkening afternoon the corners grew more indistinct, and the fire flamed up brighter. Alexia lay fighting with herself, pitying and yet half hating herself, for she had as much pride and fine instinct as any Miss Radcliffe in the world.

Then the door opened, the maid announced somebody, and Charlie Melville came into the room.

SOME FAMOUS PLAYS.

I.

JOHN GAY'S "BEGGAR'S OPERA."

ON the afternoon of the twelfth day of June, in the year of grace 1727, Sir Robert Walpole, then prime minister of England, rode in hot haste to Richmond in order to inform the Prince of Wales that his father, George the First, had died suddenly at Osnaburg. History narrates that, roused from the customary nap which an early and over-hearty dinner was wont to induce, the new monarch tumbled out of bed, and rushed into the antechamber breeches in hand, where he found the great minister

on his knees waiting to hail him king. Next day the silent and expectant multitudes thronging the streets of London town were duly informed that, by the grace of God, George Augustus Guelph had succeeded to the throne of Great Britain and Ireland as George the Second.

The sudden death of the late king, and the proclamation of the new, caused a prodigious sensation among statesmen, courtiers, and place-hunters. The favourites of his late majesty were heavy at heart, knowing their day of triumph had passed for ever; the followers of the present monarch were filled with joy, believing their hour of exaltation was at hand. The court end of the town presented a scene of vast excitement. By night and by day the state-rooms of Leicester House, situated in Leicester Square, where the prince and princess had lived since their banishment from St. James's, and to which they now returned from Richmond, were thronged by most loyal crowds anxious to kiss their majesties' hands. The square outside presented an unusually brilliant spectacle which, phantasmagoria-like, changed continually, without loss of colour and with gain of variety; for here were gathered together courtiers, politicians, gossips, soldiers, citizens, players, poets, pamphleteers, coachmen, chairmen, and footmen, all busy with unquiet speculation as to what alteration in the affairs of state this new reign would produce.

Now, amongst those who looked forward with impatient anxiety to a profitable place in the new establishment of their majesties' household, was John Gay the poet. He was a man who in his time had played many parts, and had for upwards of fourteen years posed as a courtier in the drawing rooms of the late Prince and Princess of Wales. Born of an ancient and worthy Derbyshire family, he had been bred a mercer; had served the imperious Duchess of Monmouth as secretary; and had travelled into Holland with my Lord Clarendon in a like capacity. Returning to England with his lordship on the accession of George the First, he had written a poem regarding the new Princess of Wales, describing her to the English ladies before she came over. This effusion, under the guise of loyal homage, shaped itself to a courteous petition for a place; it resulted in procuring him the favour of her he addressed, without gaining him the reward he expected. How-

ever, he became regular in his attendance at court, and subsequently formed one of that gay and gracious assembly of wits, gallants, and beauties which gave a character for brilliancy, politeness, and pleasure to the drawing rooms of Leicester House, such as had been unknown to the English court since the days of the Merry Monarch.

Here the blond and stately princess was surrounded by her fair maids of honour, foremost amongst whom were the piquant Mary Bellenden and the charming Molly Lepel, both possessing a character for winsomeness and beauty. Here too assembled such notable figures as my Lord Chesterfield, wittiest of wits, most courteous of courtiers; my Lord John Hervey, surnamed the "handsome," a superfine gentleman, daintily rouged, elegantly ruffled, and delicately perfumed; the Duchess of Queensberry, eccentric in speech and dress; the mad Duchess of Buckingham, who hatched foolish plots for the return of the exiled Stuarts; Dean Swift, who made sharp speeches to the princess; Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, who engaged the amorous attentions of the prince; and young Colonel Campbell, then secretly married to Mary Bellenden, whom he afterwards raised to be Duchess of Argyll.

Notwithstanding his constant attendance at court, and his loyal homage to the princess, Gay remained unrewarded.

"I have been considering," writes Dean Swift to him, "why poets have such ill success in making their court, since they are allowed to be the greatest and best of all flatterers. The defect is that they flatter only in print or in writing, but not by word of mouth. They will give things under their hand which they make a conscience of speaking. Besides, they are too libertine to haunt antechambers, too poor to bribe porters and footmen, and too proud to cringe to second-hand favourites in a great family."

Gay's attendance at court was actuated by constant expectation of reward; but whilst hope sustained his poetic soul it entirely failed to nourish his corpulent body, or to enable him to dress in "silver loops and garments blue," according to his vain desires.

That he might live he therefore wooed the muses, and wrote poems and plays which had more or less success: more where his poems—the subscription for which realised him one thousand pounds—were concerned: less with regard to his

plays. One of these, *The Wife of Bath*, was damned at its birth; whilst his burlesque farce, *What D'ye Call It*, and his tragedy, *The Captives*, were short-lived, though patronised by royalty.

Some of his friends in office had, however, proved kind, and in 1723 he had been appointed Commissioner of the State Lottery, a post he held for two years, and then lost at the instance of Sir Robert Walpole, who believed him to have written a pamphlet dealing severely with Government measures.

Now the prince and princess had come to the throne, Gay's hopes revived. In order to keep his memory green in the hearts of royalty, he had written a book of very ingenious fables in verse for the amusement and instruction of Prince William, afterwards known to his generation as "Billy the Butcher"; and, in reference to the story of the Hare and Many Friends, the princess told Mrs. Howard, her bed-chamber woman, that she would take up the hare, and bade her put her in mind of Mr. Gay when the household came to be settled. Hearing of this gracious speech, he believed himself on the broad road to certain honour and high reward.

Endowed with the poetic temperament, his moods of hope and dejection followed each other as regularly as light and shadow on April days; and now his expectations were at their meridian. Perhaps it was his sanguine disposition, together with a certain simplicity of character, which enabled him to make his way quickly to the hearts of those with whom he came in contact. Pope, who had "seen too much of his good qualities to be anything less than his friend," described him to Spence as "quite a natural man, wholly without art or design, who spoke just what he thought, and as he thought it"; and Swift, who loved him likewise, gave it as his opinion that Providence never intended the poet "to be above two-and-twenty by his thoughtlessness and gullibility."

The royal household in due time was settled, and Gay, after fourteen long years' attendance at court, "with a large stock of real merit, a modest and agreeable conversation, a hundred promises, and five hundred friends," was offered the post of usher to the Princess Louisa, who had then reached the mature age of ten years. Though this post was worth £200 a year, Gay rejected it with indignation, abandoned St. James's, and forswore courtly servility for evermore. "The queen's family

is at last settled," he writes to Dean Swift, then in Ireland, "and in the list I was appointed Gentleman Usher to the Princess Louisa, the youngest princess; which, upon account that I am so far advanced in life, I have declined accepting. So now all my expectations have vanished, and I have no prospect but in depending wholly upon myself and my own conduct. As I am used to disappointments I can bear them; but as I can have no more hopes, can no more be disappointed, so that I am in a blessed condition." The poor dean had suffered much the same sore vexations at the hands of statesmen and courtiers as Gay now endured; and was quick to sympathise with him. He therefore wrote back he entirely approved of his refusing the appointment, and by way of comforting the poet, hoped he might soon obtain some other situation which "will be better circumstantiated."

Pope likewise sought to soothe Gay's chagrin, and reminded him he had often repeated a ninth beatitude for his benefit: "Blessed is he who expects nothing, for he shall never be disappointed." Instead of feeling regret, he continues, he could find it in his heart to congratulate him on a happy dismissal from all court dependence. "I dare say," he adds, "I shall find you the better and the honestest man for it many years hence; very probable the healthfuller and the cheerfuller into the bargain. You are happily rid of many cursed ceremonies as well as of many ill and vicious habits, of which few or no men escape the infection who are hackneyed or trammelled in the ways of a court. Princes indeed, and peers, the lackies of princes, and ladies, the fools of peers, will smile on you the less, but men of worth and real friends will look on you the better."

Gay's depression did not continue long, for it happened he had at this critical time just finished his *Beggar's Opera*, which was soon destined to create a prodigious sensation throughout the kingdom. Eleven years previously, a hint, which served as the germ for this opera, had been conveyed to him in a letter Swift wrote to Pope. There was a young, ingenious Quaker living in Dublin who penned verses to his mistress, "not very correct, but in a strain purely what a poetical Quaker should do, commending her look and habit." This set Swift thinking a set of Quaker pastorals might succeed, and he asks Pope to hear what their friend Gay says on the subject. "I believe farther,"

he continues, "the pastoral ridicule is not exhausted, and that a porter, footman, or chairman's pastoral might do well. Or what think you of a Newgate pastoral amongst the thieves?" Later on, as we learn from Pope, Swift said to Gay, "What an odd pretty sort of thing a Newgate pastoral might make!"

Gay was inclined to think a comedy having its scenes laid in the famous prison might be better still, and hence the origin of *The Beggar's Opera*. "He began on it," says Pope, "and, when first he mentioned it to Swift, the doctor did not much like the project. As he carried it on he showed what he wrote to both of us; and we now and then gave a correction, or a word or two of advice, but it was wholly of his own writing. When it was done, neither of us thought it would succeed. We showed it to Congreve, who, after reading it over, said, 'It would either take greatly, or be damned confoundedly!'"

Gay attributed his bitter disappointment, on being offered an ushership to a royal baby, not to the Queen, but to Sir Robert Walpole, who had previously ousted him from his commissionership. In this opinion he was strengthened by Swift, who hinted Sir Robert was his keen enemy, whereon the pious dean prayed God to forgive him; "but not," says he, in safe reservation, "until he puts himself in a state to be forgiven." Feeling grievously injured Gay therefore determined to avenge his wrongs on courtiers and ministers in general, and the prime minister in particular. Therefore, though his opera was finished, he skilfully changed it so as to compare, as Swift says, "the common robbers of the public, and their several stratagems of betraying, undermining, and hanging each other, to the several arts of the politicians in times of corruption." Moreover he pointed his dialogue sufficiently to sting the man he considered his enemy; added verses satirising the court; and introduced a scene in which two notorious rascals, Lockit and Peachum, wrangle, in commemoration of a similar occurrence which a little while before had taken place in public between Walpole and Pulteney. Time has of course served to blunt many of the speeches of their original sharpness, but we can well imagine how such sentences as that in which Peachum tells Lockit their employment as go-betweens for thieves "may be reckoned dishonest because, like great statesmen, we encourage those who betray their friends," must have

galled the men for whom they were intended.

When *The Beggar's Opera* was quite finished it was offered to Colley Cibber and his brother managers of Drury Lane, who promptly rejected it; whereon it was carried to John Rich, at this time proprietor of Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre. Rich accepted the play, speedily put it in rehearsal, and on the 29th of January, 1728, printed the following announcement in the "Daily Post":

Never Before Acted

**By the Company of Comedians
At the Theatre Royal in Lincoln's Inn
Fields.**

The present Monday being the 29th day
of January, will be Performed

THE BEGGAR'S OPERA.

Boxes, 5s. ; Pit, 3s. ; Gallery, 2s.

On the first night of its first representation Gay's many friends assembled at the old playhouse in the Fields, being much concerned for the success of his opera, and determined to give it what support they could. Moreover there was a vast crowd of women of quality and men of parts present, whom curiosity or the hope of diversion had drawn to this end of the town. The piece commended itself in the strongest manner to popular taste, inasmuch as rumour set forth it sparkled with wit slightly screening innuendo, and ridiculed morality in the freest manner. On the other hand a ballad opera was a form of entertainment new to the public, and there was no knowing how it might be received. Pope tells us he and Gay's friends were in great uncertainty at its first production, "till," says he, "we were very much encouraged by overhearing the Duke of Argyle, who sat in the next box to us, saying, 'It will do,—it must do; I see it in the eyes of them.' This was a good while before the first act was over, and so gave us ease soon. For the duke, besides his own good taste, has a more particular knack than any one now living in discovering the taste of the public. He was quite right in this as usual; the good-nature of the audience appeared stronger and stronger every act, and ended in a clamour of applause."

The success of the opera was assured before the curtain fell, for the acclamations which rang through the house were said to be "the greatest ever known." The sensation it created elicited a criticism from the *Daily Journal* two days later. a most

rare occurrence and certain sign of distinction in those days. "On Monday," this notice says, "was represented for the first time at the Theatre Royal in Lincoln's Inn Fields, Mr. Gay's English opera, written in a manner wholly new, and very entertaining, there being introduced, instead of Italian airs, above sixty of the most celebrated old English and Scotch tunes. There was present then, as well as last night, a prodigious concourse of nobility and gentry; and no theatrical performance for these many years has met with so much applause."

The excitement it caused throughout the length and breadth of the town was indeed remarkable. The exterior of Lincoln's Inn Fields Playhouse presented a scene of vast confusion nightly. Crowds blocked the doors hours previous to their opening; linkboys, chairmen, and footmen wrangled to make place for their masters and employers; orange-women cried their wares in shrill tones; ballad singers droned and sold songs of the opera; sedans jostled each other amidst the curses of their Hibernian carriers; and the constant and heavy roll of ponderous coaches added to the general noise and bustle. Inside the theatre men of all parties and women of every condition assembled; ministers who were ridiculed came to protest their indifference to satire by laughing with the crowd; and grave clergymen, doffing their bands and gowns, sat disguised in the pit amongst saucy coxcombs.

For sixty-three consecutive nights *The Beggar's Opera* was performed in the season, a rare distinction in times when three nights was the average run of a play. Nor was this all. It drove the Italian opera, which it burlesqued, out of town; its songs were sung in every drawing-room; and its verses printed on the fans of women of quality. Its fame spread from the capital all over the kingdom, it was played in all the larger towns in England, and finally made its way to Scotland, Wales, and Ireland.

"We are as full of it," writes Dean Swift from Dublin to the successful author, "'pro modulo nostro,' as London can be; continually acting, and houses crammed, and the Lord Lieutenant several times there, laughing his heart out. We hear a million of stories about the opera, of the applause of the song when two great ministers were in a box together, and all the world staring at them."

No doubt a part of the success was due

to the vivacious and witty manner in which the characters of the hero and heroine were played by Walker and Lavinia Fenton. At first the part of Captain Macheath was offered by the author to James Quin, who had, as Davies tells us, "so happy an ear for music, and was so famous for singing with ease a common ballad or catch"; but after a short trial at rehearsal Quin gave it up, "from despair of acquitting himself with the dissolute gaiety and bold vigour of deportment necessary to the character." It was then offered to Walker, who though he had but an indifferent voice and could barely sing in tune, acted with so much drollery that he gave entire satisfaction to author and audience alike.

In the character of the heroine, Polly Peachum, Miss Fenton gained both fame and fortune, as will hereafter be narrated. Up to this time she had in no way raised herself above her theatrical contemporaries, and was merely noted as an actress possessing a vivacious spirit and a fascinating beauty, both of which she had exhibited on the stage of Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre, for the sum of fifteen shillings weekly. But the part of Polly Peachum affording full scope for her talents, her innate grace, her winning archness, and seductive ways, vastly delighted the town and caused Rich to double her salary.

The story of her life of twenty summers was calculated to heighten the interest her performance inspired. The daughter of a gay young naval officer, named Beswick, she had come into the world in the year 1708, whilst he was sailing on the seas. Soon after her mother, yearning for congenial companionship, married one Fenton in the Old Bailey; but being "a woman of a popular spirit," she soon set up a coffee-house near Charing Cross. Here her little daughter Lavinia, a vivacious child, became a favourite of the fops, who taught her snatches of such playhouse songs as it was the pleasure of these pretty gentlemen to hum, whilst sipping their coffee or making love to her mamma. To this coffee-house came likewise an actor from the old house, who, hearing her sing, took some interest in giving her instructions in music, and she being apt her progress repaid him for his pains.

In the next chapter of her life we find Miss Fenton at a boarding-school, where she was made love to by a gallant spark from the Inner Temple, who, by bribing the porter, gained admittance to the garden attached to the polite academy for young

ladies. Here he pledged vows of eternal love to his adored Lavinia. This, however, was but a school-girl's romance; indeed but a mere prelude to episodes of the same interesting complexion; for, no sooner had she left the Academy, than she fell in love with a Portuguese nobleman. This lover behaved so liberally to her that he was soon carried to the Fleet; from which scene of duration vile the grateful Lavinia, by the sale of her jewels, was enabled to release him. Soon after, in 1726, she, being now in her eighteenth year, found her way through the stage door of the new theatre in the Haymarket, then under the management of Huddy. Here she made her curtsy to the town, which received her with considerable applause; for having, as a contemporary critic said, "a lively imagination, joined with a good memory, a clear voice, and a graceful mien, she seemed as if nature had designed her for the pleasure of mankind in such performances as are exhibited at our theatre!"

The great triumph of her career was, however, reserved for her appearance in *The Beggar's Opera*, in which she was pronounced inimitable. With her gray eyes sparkling with merriment, her softly-rounded cheeks suffused with blushes, her cherry lips parted in smiles, her graceful form bending to a curtsy, she came forward night after night to receive universal applause. When the enthusiasm had subsided, and she had spoken the first lines of her part declaring a woman knew how to be mercenary, though she had never been in a court or at an assembly, she broke into the song "Virgins are like the fair flow'r in its lustre," and by her piquancy completed the fascination her appearance had begun. Her name was on all men's lips; her pictures were engraved and sold in great numbers; books of letters and verses to her were published, and pamphlets made even of her sayings and jests.

Amongst those who sat nightly in one of the stage boxes at Lincoln's Inn Playhouse, was Charles Powlett, third Duke of Bolton, then in his forty-third year. His grace was a man of pleasure well known to the town, and was moreover, as Swift assures us, "a great booby, who does not make any figure at court, or anywhere else." He had, fifteen years before, married the daughter and sole heiress of the Earl of Carberry, with whom he had never lived; and he now found himself desperately in love with Lavinia

Fenton, who was nothing loth to receive his homage or accept his settlement of £400 a-year during his pleasure, and half that amount upon their separation.

Accordingly when, on the 19th of June, in this year, *The Beggar's Opera* was played for the last time during the season, Mistress Fenton made her farewell bow to the public as an actress. So accomplished and agreeable a companion did the duke find her, so well did her wit, sense, and tact delight him, that she retained his affections during the remainder of his life, a space covering some five-and-twenty years. She bore him three sons, and, on the death of his duchess in 1751, he raised her to the peerage. He survived this act but three years. The duchess lived on for six years more, not wholly uncomforted for his loss; for, being at Tunbridge, as we read in Horace Walpole's Letters, "she picked up an Irish surgeon," to whom, as a memento of their mutual happiness, she bequeathed when dying, the sum of £9,000; to her three sons she left £1,000 each.

By-and-by the *Beggar's Opera* was published, and then, as if to keep its memory fresh, a hot dispute arose regarding its effect on public morals. Swift gave it as his conviction that Gay, "by a turn of humour entirely new, placed vices of all kinds in the strongest and most odious light, and thereby had done eminent service both to religion and morality." The Rev. Thomas Herring, a court chaplain, who afterwards became Archbishop of Canterbury, entirely differed from the dean in his opinion, and even ventured to denounce the opera from the pulpit. Whereon the Irish parson waxed exceeding wroth, and gave vent to his hopes in the third number of *The Intelligencer*, that "no clergyman should be so weak as to imitate a court chaplain who preached against *The Beggar's Opera*, which will probably do more good than a thousand sermons of so stupid, so injudicious, a divine." The argument did not end here; for that worthy justice, Sir John Fielding, declared "many robbers had confessed they had been seduced by *The Beggar's Opera* to begin the commission of those crimes which finally brought them to the gallows."

The great success of the piece inclined John Gay to write another in the same style, a brief mention of which will serve, as an epilogue to *The Beggar's Opera*. Accordingly, next year a second ballad opera entitled *Polly*. a sequel to the first, was

ready for the stage, and great were the expectations it raised throughout the town. But the poet counted without his host; for the ministry, being secretly enraged by the plentiful satire contained in the former entertainment, declined to brook further ridicule from the same pen, and ordered the Lord Chamberlain — his Grace of Grafton — to suppress the new piece. This was regarded by Gay and his admirers as an act of revenge; for the second opera was more decent in its language, and more respectful in its tone to those in high places, than its predecessor. The prohibition was issued without any charge being made against a part or parts of the piece; but later on Gay says he was accused in general terms of having written many disaffected libels, seditious pamphlets, and immoralities, and was informed that his new opera was "filled with slanders and calumnies against particular great persons, and that majesty itself was endeavoured to be brought into ridicule and contempt," of all which dreadful charges he avows himself most innocent in thought, word, and action.

There was yet, however, one card in this game between himself and the Ministry left for him to play. Though the public might not see his opera on the stage there was no law to prevent them reading it in their homes, and accordingly it was sent to press. This was better for Gay, from a pecuniary point of view, than if his piece had been duly produced. For, lacking the wit and humour which his late opera contained, it would probably not have obtained a similar success on the boards, whilst in its published form it was, as the composition of one persecuted by the ministry and neglected by royalty, rapidly subscribed for by a large section of the community then in opposition alike to court and government. Prominent amongst these were the Duchess of Marlborough, who presented him with one hundred pounds for a single copy; Lord and Lady Essex, who gave him many proofs of their interest; and the Duchess of Queensberry, who warmly espoused his cause, liberally subscribed for his work, and carried him to live at the ducal residence in Burlington Gardens. Nay, her grace's enthusiasm on his behalf went still further, for, at one of the drawing rooms at St. James's, she besought the courtiers to subscribe for the opera so obnoxious to royalty. It happened whilst she was engaged in this manner his majesty entered the room, and, noticing how earnestly

she conversed with some officers of the household, enquired the subject of her discourse. Hearing this question her grace answered boldly: "What must be agreeable to anyone so humane as your majesty, for it is an act of charity, and one to which I do not despair of bringing your majesty to contribute."

The king at once understood to what the duchess referred; his face grew crimson with indignation, but he uttered no reply. However, when the drawing room was over one of the vice-chamberlains was despatched to the duchess, with a verbal message from royalty forbidding her presence at court in future. Her grace was a woman of spirit, as was shown by the fact that she no sooner received this command than she sat down, and, "for fear of mistakes," as she said, immediately penned the following epistle, which she bade the vice-chamberlain carry to their majesties without delay:

"The Duchess of Queensberry," wrote she, "is surprised and well pleased that the king hath given her so agreeable a command as to stay from court, where she never came for diversion, but to bestow a great civility on the king and queen; she hopes by such an unprecedented order as this that the king will see as few as he wishes at his court, particularly such as dare to think or speak truth. I dare not do otherwise, nor ought not, nor could have imagined that it would not have been the very highest compliment that I could possibly pay the king to endeavour to support truth and innocence in his house, particularly when the king and queen hath both told me that they had not read Mr. Gay's play. I have certainly done right then to stand by my own word, rather than his Grace of Grafton's, who has neither made use of truth, judgment, nor honour through the whole affair, either for himself or his friends."

Nor did the quarrel end here, for the Duke of Queensberry, much against his majesty's desire, resigned his post as High Admiral of Scotland, and was seen no more at court for many a day. The noise the affair created only served to increase the fame of the new opera and its author. "The inoffensive John Gay," writes Arbuthnot to Swift in a jocular vein, "is now become one of the obstructions to the peace of Europe, the terror of Ministers, the chief author of all the seditious pamphlets which have been published against the government. He

has got several turned out of their places; the greatest ornament of the court banished from it for his sake; another great lady in danger of being *chassée* likewise; about seven or eight duchesses pushing forward, like ancient circumcelliones* in the church, who shall suffer martyrdom upon his account first. He is the darling of the city, and if he should travel about the country he would have hecatombs of roasted oxen sacrificed to him."

The result of all this was that Gay made over twelve hundred pounds by the sale of his opera, and gained the permanent friendship and protection of the Duke and Duchess of Queensberry, with whom he lived for the remainder of his days.

FATHER CRYSTAL'S ELIXIR.

A STORY.

"Do not suppose for a moment that the life of a monk in these days is one whit duller than it used to be. Comedy, ay, and for the matter of that, tragedy also, diversifies our daily routine, as was the case when monasteries would be turned into camps and Abbots into generalissimos. No more now, than then, have monks ceased to be human beings. Active brains are still at work in spite of the tonsured crown, and the spirit of mischief is alert within the monastery walls as in the olden time."

Thus spoke my agreeable friend, Father Bartolomæus, Capucin friar, quartered in the French town at which I was staying. We had become acquainted during one of my sketching rambles near his monastery, and soon became the best comrades imaginable. A man of the world, an agreeable talker, keenly observant, and warm-hearted withal, his society was the greatest possible boon to me on my sketching tour.

With him it was out of the question to feel dull for a moment. As for himself, he was always in the highest spirits, and no wonder! Such dire problems as making a fair income out of one's brains, paying rent and taxes, bringing up a young family, starting one's boys in life, finding suitable partners for one's daughters, and all the rest of it, would never whiten his hair or furrow his brow prematurely. Perpetual immunity from every-day anxieties, an existence as easy as that of a blackbird in a well-filled garden, were surely worth the puny sacrifice made in exchange. To for-

* A sect of African heretics smitten with the desire of being martyrs.

swear domestic happiness, to cut an outlandish figure in the eyes of the world, to feel born at the wrong epoch in human history, what mere bagatelles were these! Anyhow Father Bartolomæus looked and acknowledged himself the happiest fellow under the sun.

"Comedy, to begin with. We will leave tragedy for to-morrow," he went on. "Let me relate a comic incident that happened only a few years ago, and for the truth of which I can vouch. You will then see that if we monks weep more freely than you laymen over mortal weaknesses, at least we can laugh with the merriest of you when moved by wit or folly.

"I am now going to tell you a story of the jolliest company, that ever alternated good cheer with fasting and rollicking talk with midnight vigils. Not a mother's son of this brotherhood but was born a wag, and might have got his living by his wits in the Middle Ages as a King's jester or Court fool; or in these as a comic actor. Perhaps a few years of buffeting with the world might have sobered them; but, as it was, their good humour and pleasantry received no check from the first of January to the last day of December. True it is that occasionally high spirits overstepped the bounds of discretion, and fun was apt to become too ebullient for decorum. However, derelictions which are only amenable to such slight punishments as the mumbler of a few extra Paternosters and fasts so-called, are not very dreadful affairs, and indeed, only served to add zest to the daily routine. But for such occasional fillips, existence might have appeared a little flat and insipid. Like certain luscious wines it would have palled upon the appetite. But when was the tide of human affairs ever permitted an unbrokenly calm and even flow? On a sudden this smooth condition of things was brought to an abrupt end. Like a bomb-shell in the midst of the happy fraternity came a piece of evil news.

"Their Superior, a genial, amiable man of the world, a man who loved, if not jollity and carouse, at least comfort and good-fellowship, was transferred to another house. In his place was sent a taciturn, sour, ascetic theologian, who evidently held, like the hermits of old, that the only justifiable existence is one of self-mortification and voluntarily incurred depression of body and mind.

"What were the poor brothers to do?

"Open rebellion against legitimately im-

posed authority was not for a moment to be thought of. No justly founded complaint could they raise. The new Superior did not in any particular exceed his powers or show himself tyrannical. But he was of a morose disposition—there you have the truth in a nutshell!—and nowhere is a morose disposition more out of place than in a monastery.

"Cheerful looks, sprightly speech, to say nothing of wit and pleasantry, seemed a positive affront to this misguided, but doubtless well-intentioned, man. He was probably a martyr to dyspepsia, or perhaps—let me whisper this in your ear—a prey to secret remorse, some saint recently whitewashed from mortal peccadilloes. A jest was odious to him. A smile he turned away from as if it were loathsome. In fact, do what they would, the unfortunate monks found it impossible in his presence to be grave enough; and, although, fortunately for them, they spent a good deal of time out of his sight, they were yet at their wits' end how to arrive at the necessary staidness of demeanour. Especially on days of Church festival, or ceremonials of their own calendar, was the task grievous and painful in the extreme. Upon these occasions the board would be spread more plentifully than usual, generous wines, and even liqueurs, would be handed round, and the pleasures of the table were apt to be long drawn out.

"If then hard for a company of jovial fellows to behave like mutes at a funeral when faring on potatoe soup and haricot beans, washed down with water from the fountain, was it not outrageous, even irrational, to expect them to be down-cast and monosyllabic when bidden to a sumptuous banquet?

"The Superior might frown and look glumness itself, as he tossed off his final glass of ripe old Burgundy or sparkling champagne. The brothers made piteous attempts to put on a rueful countenance and restrain the too ready tongue. All in vain. Eyes sparkled, lips curled upwards, cheeks glowed, as one good story after another elicited roars of laughter. The Superior at last could bear it no longer. Calling the elders of the fraternity before him he remonstrated briefly and tartly.

"Really, well, really, such a state of things was passing belief. High spirits and uproarious mirth were pardonable among a set of schoolboys on the eve of breaking up, but the case of men vowed to a religious vocation was quite different.

Really—ahem—in fact, the long and the short of the matter is, that unless a decorous sobriety of demeanour is at once striven after and attained, all celebrations that have hitherto taken the shape of a festival must be stopped, and fasts, even sterner mortifications of the flesh, be substituted for such indulgences as the canons of their Order not only sanctioned, but encouraged.'

'The crestfallen delegates were then dismissed, and the monks took counsel together. For the moment they looked miserable enough. The Superior must have been more than satisfied with such a demeanour, could it be looked upon as lasting. Not much seemed forthcoming in the way of comfort or advice, till, when each member of the conclave had said his say, the youngest of them all, Father Chrystal by name, opened his lips.

'This Father Chrystal was quite a genius, in no common way either. He was not only a good botanist, but a skilful herbalist and simpler, cognizant with the medicinal properties and virtues generally of a vast number of plants. Whenever anyone fell ill inside the monastery walls, or met with an accident, Father Chrystal was the physician sent for. His balms, syrups, decoctions, and miscellaneous remedies brought in quite a little revenue to the house, being known throughout that quarter of France.

'Father Chrystal, with twinkling eyes and countenance unabashed, now unfolded his plan. He had long been in the possession, he said, of an interesting, a most valuable secret, a secret that, were he a civilian and able to indulge in commercial speculation, would certainly make his fortune. More than one unworked mine of gold, indeed, was his. There was not a monk or lay-brother in the house who had not told him that a dozen times. His eye-water, for instance! Patented and sold as a medicine, such a remedy must bring in a handsome income. Then his cure for scalds, burns, and bruises—but, pshaw! these were mere bagatelles, trifles not worth thinking about, at least, talking about just then! A matter much more important had come to the fore.

'Then Father Chrystal began to quote Greek, for, as well as being a first-rate naturalist, he was a fair scholar. They must all have read, he continued, of the wonderful nostrums of the ancients, love-philtres, aphrodisiacs, as the classic writers called them, and so forth. But he had struck out a wholly new line for himself. He had invented an elixir such as the world

had never yet heard of, and which yet in so complex a civilisation as that of the nineteenth century, must have extraordinary value. They were all familiar with the wine that maketh glad the heart of man. But would not the wine that sobered men's spirits have its use also?

'At any rate, it nicely meets our own case,' he said. 'This day's night is the festival of our patron saint. It will be my turn to act as steward upon that occasion. Mind and drink everything I offer you. A light effervescing wine I shall hand round pretty freely in the draught especially to be indulged in. Whilst tickling the palate and refreshing the body, its effect on the mind is curious and palpable. The first portion imbibed diffuses pensive gravity; empty your glass, and the muscles of the face take a downward curve; drink deep, and you become apparently a prey to intense dejection and melancholy.'

'The monks hearkened, all attention, and one and all, with the utmost alacrity, promised to obey. True, their ardour concerning Father Chrystal's elixir was somewhat damped by the fact that it induced mental depression. That was surely uncomfortable enough of itself; nevertheless, the solution of a knotty problem was caught at. What harm, moreover, would a temporary fit of low spirits do them? They would, at least, be spared those far more unpleasant alternatives hinted at by the Superior—rigorous abstinence from wine, an increase of fast days, and, perhaps—who could say?—penances savouring of mediæval harshness. A scourge still formed part of the furniture of every cell, and though it was no more used than the ancestral sword hanging over the mantelpiece of an English mansion, well, there it was!

'The important day came duly round, and the presence of visitors, dignitaries from distant houses, lent additional pomp to the celebration.

'It was indeed an inviting, an appetising board that was spread in the long refectory that day. Trout, fresh from the river; melons in the perfection of ripeness; venison from the adjoining forest; pasties for which that especial region of France was famous; cheese creamiest of the creamy; luscious grapes; in fact, the banquet was princely, aldermanic. On the sideboard a goodly array of bottles promised equal delectation in the way of wines and liqueurs. Well might the Superior, as he passed down the refectory with his guests, cast a satisfied

glance to the right, to the left, and before him; everywhere he saw signs of a feast befitting one of the cheeriest, most hospitable Orders that ever wore the cowl. This religious man, it must be admitted, although his gravity in no wise abated whilst he sat at table, was an excellent trencher-man. Doubtless his appetites were so purged by fasting and prayer that no kind of enjoyment was derived from delicate cates or exquisite draughts, nevertheless he could eat and drink with the merriest gourmet going.

"Grace having been chanted the meal began, Father Chrystal having the wine bottles and the lay-brothers in attendance well in hand. It was his business to-day to give out the contents of the cellar and superintend the procedure of the feast generally, so, whilst contriving to keep up with the rest, he yet rose from time to time to see that his instructions were properly carried out, and even took part in the business of serving.

"Rich in expedients and full of devices, the miracle-working distiller had now a twofold object to attain. He must not only take good care that not a drop of any strong drink, save his own elixir, should moisten the throats of his fellow friars, equally important was it that the Superior and his guests should be plied from other sources. Thus, by an ingenious sleight of hand, he managed to exchange precisely similar bottles on the sideboard, pouring into the glasses of the monks his *Elixir de Douleur*, as he pleasantly styled it, into that of their stern monitor and his friends a beverage of directly opposite properties.

"The result was what had been foretold. In grave and decorous silence the twenty and odd Capucin friars sat down to table, and the Superior almost smiled to see—yes, his rebuke had not been made in vain; no roysterous conversation, no unseemly jests were to shock his sense of propriety and disgrace the Order to which he belonged that day. All was as it should be—demure, decorous, and sobriety itself.

"No sooner, however, did Father Chrystal's elixir begin to circulate freely than gravity was succeeded by pensiveness, pensiveness by gloom, gloom by absolute, dire, lachrymose dejection. One by one the poor monks looked the veriest images of woe; they ate, they drank, it is true, but an outsider might have supposed they were all going to be hanged next day.

"And still the Superior almost smiled to see. It was a very difficult thing to make

this man unbend; even under the influence of sparkling, joy-giving champagne, he could maintain the grave demeanour of a judge. Still to-day the duties of a host necessitated exertion and sacrifice on his part; he must at least make a show of urbanity. He was flattered, moreover, that his subjects, as in a certain sense these friars were, should be so amenable to reason and remonstrance. Thus, although no mood could be farther from hilarity than his own, he looked positively exhilarated by comparison with the brothers. As to his guests, they had been informed beforehand of recent occurrences, and took this openly displayed penitence on the part of the offenders as a matter of course.

"All this time of course Father Chrystal abstained alike from his own elixir and the mellow cup beside it, pride of the monastery cellar. He must be master of himself to the end, or all would be ruined. So he plied now the one bottle, now the other, delighted with the success of his little scheme. There they sat, his once jovial comrades, as he had predicted, silent as mutes at a funeral; if they interchanged a word, it was in monosyllables. They looked neither to the right nor to the left, and ate of the dainty cates placed before them automatically, without relish, apparently without appetite, and when the crowning feature of the entertainment appeared in the shape of a chef d'œuvre of the confectioner's skill, the signal on former occasions of a round of applause, one brother, hitherto the jolliest of the crew, drew out his pocket-handkerchief.

"That pocket-handkerchief brought matters to a climax. No sooner was one brother seen wiping away his tears, than another and another felt an imperative call to weep. Grief is even more contagious than joy. At what should have been the merriest part of the banquet, the monks, one and all, sat sobbing over the delicious morsel served out to them, which they nevertheless contrived to eat all the while. Then at last and indeed, a smile, real, visible, and unmistakable, was visible on the face of the ascetic Superior. The whole scene was so incongruous, so ludicrous, so unexpected, that had he not smiled, he must have been more than human. As to his guests, they feigned a tickling in the throat and tittered behind their handkerchiefs, whilst the poor lay brethren in attendance, overcome with merriment, had hurried pell-mell into the buttry in order to avoid a scandal.

"The only person present who was exactly himself, neither one whit merrier nor sadder, was Father Chrystal. A proud and happy man he felt that moment, and well he might. He had vindicated the honour of his Order, he had foiled the intentions of a crusty Superior, he had proved himself as good as his word. As the party broke up—the monks, with tears running down their cheeks, filing off in one direction; the Superior and his guests, now laughing audibly as they passed through the opposite door; the lay brethren, bursting with fun as they peered from the pantry; Father Chrystal surveyed the scene, triumphant. He stood like some successful stage-manager, contemplating the triumph of his own bringing about, no empty vaunter, no vain trumpeter of his own achievements. His *Elixir de Douleur* was, past question, one of the great inventions of the world."

"And what became of it?" I asked of the narrator.

"It has made the fortune, not of Father Chrystal, but of his house," added Father Bartolomau. "How could it be otherwise with such a brew! Its vast applicability must at once occur to you. For instance, it is not vouchsafed to all of us to leave behind a host of heart-broken relations. How appropriate, how decorous, Father Chrystal's elixir at certain funeral feasts, when a semblance of grief is obligatory! Again, in public life, it comes in with great handiness and decency. It will often happen that an unpopular functionary is fêted before his departure, and upon such occasions civilians have recourse to this wine in order to squeeze out a tear or two, or when an obnoxious Superior is about to be removed, we monks drink to him in cups that make us seem to lament rather than unseasonably rejoice. As to actors on the stage, it is invaluable to them. By the help of Father Chrystal's elixir they can weep and show extreme dejection in the most natural manner and without the least effort. The clergy of all churches have recourse to it largely, and judges—at least in France—never go on a circuit without it. As to women! Well, you will say I ought to know nothing about *them*. I may, however, at least tell you what others tell me. They say then that lovers are constantly winning our obdurate mistresses to listen to their suit by help of this precious nostrum. They just imbibe a little, and

their sighs, tears, and melancholy are more than the hearts of the tender sex can resist. Not a daughter of Eve but yields to it. Suppose you make the experiment!"

"You forget," I said, "that I am already a paterfamilias with a host of youngsters all depending on my palette and brush. Fits of dejection come, alas, to me often enough, without needing to resort to artificial means! However, when I am next woe-begone and depressed, I shall think of your story, and I must be very far gone indeed if it does not provoke a smile."

MY LADY'S PICTURE.

In a corner of the castle—where long shadows dim and dusty

Haunt the footsteps of unwary folk, who climb the turret stair,

Where spiders build and wee mice race, through curtains old and dusty—

Hangs on the wall a picture of a lady tall and fair.

Oft at eventide, when round the Hall sad autumn's winds are sighing,

I come and gaze upon her, as she hangs there all alone,

With brilliant eyes that seem to watch the faint pale sunbeams lying

Asleep below the elm trees black, the walls of mildewed stone.

Or yet I came when spring-tide wakes her gay young troop of flowers,

And the climbing rose beside the gate peeps in the casement old,

When each day springs to greet with joy the crown'd and laden hours,

When every minute sparkles bright—a jewel in the gold!

Yet nothing seems to move her, the quiet old-time lady,

Nothing fades the lovely colour on her soft young blushing cheek.

As she shines upon us from this place so desolate, so shady;

Her coral lips just open—as if she yearned to speak.

None can tell me of her childhood; nay, not one word of her history

Has lived to tell us who she was, or what her girlish name.

Her life has vanished quite away—a faint, eventless mystery;

Yet she herself is handed in this picture down to Fame.

And her beauty smiles upon us, from these walls so grim and hoary.

What matters how she lived and died? Death holds her in his arms!

King Death! who puts the fins to the most enchanting story!

Who claims with kisses for his own, the most bewitching charms.

I wonder if you stand here, close beside me, while I'm talking,

If you long and strive to utter just one whisper of the past!

If in the night time all alone, your pretty ghost goes walking

Down the garden, when the moon's beams are o'er the churchyard cast!

Nay, sleep on, my queen, my lady; life at best is brief, is dreary.

You are better living only in this picture old and sweet.

I think you must have found life out—a shadow, sad and weary!

A courtier waiting hat in hand, each new-born soul to greet.

So faded softly from our ken, and left this picture only,

That can never alter in our sight, nor yet wax old and gray.

'Tis best to hang here ever young, e'en though 'tis somewhat lonely,

Than live to pray each day for night—each weary night for day.

'Twas best to leave us early; life slipped gently from your holding,

For the middle-aged grow bitter, and the old are grudging their place.

And though I leave you, with the night's gray shadows round you folding,

I'll find you here next year the same, with just the self-same face.

CLAUDIA.

A STORY IN FOUR CHAPTERS. CHAPTER II.

ALAS! as Clement grew older, there were fewer of such minutes to lighten the gloomy days. He was not rightly managed, but he was perhaps impossible to manage, with his erratic genius; his facility for temptation; his sensuous, impatient, thoughtless nature, swift to love and to hate, swayed here and there by every gust of impulse. He did no good either at the day or boarding school to which he went, he fascinated half the boys, and fought with the rest, and all the masters, while confessing him capable of almost anything, united in declaring him hopeless. When he was fifteen his father yielded to his passionate wish to be trained for an artist, and took him finally from school, but he had not much hope of his keeping even in this mind, though, as his master allowed, few boys began with so decided a talent—one amounting almost to genius. Dumaresq was steadily patient with him, but it was a hopeless kind of patience, and Clement felt that there was no faith in him behind it. He fancied there was no affection either. Here he was wrong, his father loved him, and would love him doggedly through everything, for he had no changing in him. He led exactly the same life, going every day to his office, doing his secretary work with precision, faithfulness, and skill; always unapproachably polite and even kindly in his intercourse with the men he met, but as absolutely a stranger to them all as if he had met them yesterday; returning at his usual hour to dinner, to an evening spent in his

easy chair with his books, his pipe, his silent, musing contemplation of the Claude which he loved, as he had always loved it, if Clement were out—as he very often was, for as he grew up he made friends, and loved society and gaiety as his father hated it—if he were at home, Dumaresq, who was logical and just, and keenly felt the depressing atmosphere of the home which he could not alter, tried hard to make it more interesting for the lad, who was shooting up fast into a thin, handsome, delicate-looking young fellow, with a look of his mother in his Italian eyes. He persuaded him to play, when he was in the mood, or he interested himself in his drawings; he tried not to be severe and repressive when he talked about his amusements—sympathising he could not be, they were so unlike. Clement was dull at home, he stayed chiefly from a compassionate sense of his father's loneliness, and from a certain love which was the lingering relic of childhood; but sometimes, when one of his melancholy and musing fits came upon him, he found the quiet room resting and a refreshment after the thousand sensations and emotions which he crowded into the days. He did not believe that his father loved him, the father had the same profound disbelief in his son's affections—neither could come any nearer. They wanted the uniting touch of Gemma's sanguine faith in both.

As Clement grew up, and as manly tastes and habits drove out the boyish fancies, a sudden change came in the relationship between them. Louis Dumaresq, when scarcely more than a boy, had been saved from all gross sins and temptations, not only by a fastidious taste and pure nature, but also by falling in love with an innocent, confiding girl. He had gradually forgotten even the flavour of temptation, and had hardened into disgust and contempt for the vices of society. He tried to be just, but it was very difficult for him to comprehend the leaning to "pleasant sin"; he had a woman's coldness and purity in these things. Clement had the Southern temperament, the passionate weakness which is sometimes stronger than strength. He had the corresponding virtues which often balance such natures, he was as compassionate and tender with suffering, with little children, and with frail women, as his father seemed hard and cold. Every one of this sort who came across him adored him; every toddling baby wanted him to take it in his arms: if any of his

friends were ill or in trouble he spent himself on them. He had his mother's soft heart, none of his father's stern strength and uprightness; added to this he had the fatal temperament of genius. What could the poor boy do but go wrong? It would have been almost a miracle if he had kept straight.

Louis Dumaresq distrusted him, it was his habit to do so; but he had no proofs to bring against him till he was more than twenty-one. He had his studio now, which he shared with two friends, and was less at home than ever. His father spent scarcely any of his now not inconsiderable salary on himself: it nearly all went to make a painter of Clement. The young fellow still had lessons, or rather painted under his old master, an artist of some genius and a great deal of skill, a man of the world, shrewd, kindly, and practical. One evening this gentleman called to see Mr. Dumaresq. Clement's father felt that there was a storm in the air. His anxious mind forecast calamity, he only waited for what he was sure was coming. After preliminaries of attempted small talk, Mr. Kennedy cleared his throat and looked uncomfortable. Mr. Dumaresq glanced across at him calmly, with an air of philosophical stoicism which helped on the necessary communication.

"You have something to say about Clement, I fancy?"

"Yes. I thought I ought, as you are obliged to be so much away, and are of course often quite unaware of his doings. I take a great interest in him, as you know. He is the cleverest pupil I ever had, one who ought to do something in life; but I am afraid he is going a bit wrong."

"Yes," Dumaresq said coolly, as if he were discussing a stranger; "and in what direction? You will oblige me deeply by being explicit, Mr. Kennedy."

"Well, he is neglecting his work. He has half a score of pictures unfinished, and hardly works half a dozen hours a week. I am afraid he has taken up with a loose set. I fear he takes more stimulant than he can stand, and you must be aware that neither his excitable brain nor his health can do with that; in the evenings I have reason to believe he often plays in a rather objectionable concert-hall, and I fancy—I am not sure, but I have my fears—there is some entanglement with a girl who sings there. I am very sorry, very much concerned, about all this. He has such promise, and I am fond of the lad."

"I am very much indebted to you for your kindness and confidence," the other said in the same level voice. "I am afraid I have not much influence, but what I can do I will. I was fearing there was something wrong."

"You won't be too severe on him," urged the good-natured, easy-going painter, unconsciously taking the tone of a father appealing to a judge. "There is so much good feeling about him, and no one can help liking him."

"That is just the worst of it. Feeling without principle is only another snare. I will do my best, and I thank you."

As he stood up to go, Mr. Kennedy looked long at the Claude. "You are lucky to have such a gem," he said with the enthusiasm of knowledge. "It is by far the most beautiful specimen I have seen of him. If ever you are hard up, and want to sell, let me know. Lord Enderby would give anything almost for it."

"I shall never part with it. When I go it may be for sale," Mr. Dumaresq answered briefly.

"No, Gemma," he said to himself as he stood before the hearth alone, "I shall keep your legacy as long as I live; it may be the only thing left me of my old life with you some day. Your other legacy will give me many a heartache yet."

He went out that very evening in some hope of finding Clement at the studio where he slept occasionally, as he had not come home. He was not there, however; there was nothing but confusion and silence in the great untidy room covered with a litter of artistic properties, uncleaned palettes, unfinished sketches, tobacco pipes, and the lay figure standing in an outrageous attitude, with a soft felt hat cooped rakishly over one of her eyes. The violin-case was gone. This was a significant fact after what Mr. Kennedy had said. Mr. Dumaresq hesitated a few minutes over his next step, and decided suddenly upon it. He went to Mr. Kennedy's house, and sent up a note asking for the name of the concert-hall he had mentioned. On receiving it he took a hansom at once, and went there. He had never entered such a place in his life; but out of the atmosphere of smoke and bright gas and general rowdiness he took away some distinct impressions. One, the first that forced itself upon him, was the individuality of one of the singers; he felt, he knew not why, that this was the girl of whom Mr. Kennedy had spoken. She was small, plump,

and pretty, with a cloudy frizz of golden hair round an almost childish, not at all bad, face. She was not in any way immodest or objectionable; she looked, on the contrary, fresh to it all and half frightened. She had a sweet, clear voice like a lark's, worthy of something better than the silly comic song; which was not, however, worse than silly. She seemed now and then to glance off the stage; there was an air of consciousness about her as if some one were watching her. Dumaresq knew who it was when Clement came from that direction, looking flushed, excited, handsome, with his violin. His father groaned inwardly, and let his head fall on his breast. Gemma's boy here, and like this! He played an odd, wild, eerie sort of tune, getting faster and faster till it finished in a kind of skirl. He was applauded, but not half as much as the pretty girl, whom the people round about called "Tillie."

Mr. Dumaresq wrote on a bit of paper the following words:

"I have heard you play here to-night, and have seen Mr. Kennedy. I must ask you to come to-morrow evening if I do not see you before then.—L. D."

Folding this note, and directing it, he made his way out, and leaving the note with the doorkeeper to give to his son, he went home. He did not put any of his sensations into shape; he took up this new trouble with stern patience, as he had accepted his others, half proud of his power of self-control. He expected nothing but misery in life, he told himself, and nothing now could take him by surprise; but he meant to do what he could for the boy, for his mother's sake. He more than half despised him, but there was, after all, a tenderer thought at the bottom. He tried to foster this by looking at the sepia sketch, which Clement had made years ago to please him, that evening when he played the little air which he had christened the "Claude," after the picture. "There is good in him, there's good in him," the father repeated as he held the sketch before his eyes. "If his mother had lived it might have come to more. I never could get any hold upon him. That is part of the curse that has been upon me since she went."

CHAPTER III.

THE following evening, after a solitary and barely-tasted dinner, Louis Dumaresq sat stern, silent, and immovable, awaiting, with that resolute patience with which he

steered his spirit, the visit he had demanded from his son. The room was but dimly lighted; his face was in deep shadow by the picture above his head, over the sunshine of which a sudden eclipse seemed to have fallen. Nine, ten, eleven o'clock came. Dumaresq had told himself it was no use; Clement meant to keep away; but just as he was putting his watch back in his pocket he heard the door-bell, and then a minute afterwards a stumbling step up the stairs, a rattle at the handle, and the young man came in. He was highly flushed, his eyes had a strange glitter; he seemed to bring in with him an odour of cigars and wine. A keen shiver of repulsion and disgust, a pain like a knife ran through his father's heart as he looked at him steadily with a pale, cold face, as utterly dissimilar to the other as it is possible for father's and son's to be. His voice sounded clear, cutting, and steady as he said:

"Sit down, Clement, I have a good deal to say to you."

"Thanks, I'd rather stand," the other said with a reckless laugh, leaning his elbow on the mantel-piece and looking at Dumaresq with a defiant, sneering face. It was champagne that inspired the recklessness and the sneer. An hour or two hence despondency and self-hatred might take their place.

"I can't stay long; they are waiting for me. We've got a supper party on; but I thought I'd better come round and see what you wanted."

"It was very kind of you," the other said with a curious little smile. The tolerance, the kindness he had been trying to force upon himself had vanished in the long, dreary waiting. He felt now almost an abhorrence of the dissipated lad. "And from whom have you come to honour me so far?"

"From the concert hall in — Street," the other retorted fiercely. "Where you followed me, I suppose, last night."

"Do you go there then, every evening? And what is your attraction in such an utterly mean, vulgar, and inconceivably stupid place of amusement?"

"Everyone is not like you. I don't suppose you were ever young and fond of pleasure."

"Is that pleasure? I beg your pardon; it did not strike me in that light! So you go only for the pleasure you find there—the refined songs, the costumes, and general tomfoolery. I should hardly have thought it could be so fascinating even to twenty-

two years humanity. Certainly, if that is enjoyment, I never should have found it—not even when I was young. So there is no special attraction?”

There was a moment's silence; the two stared at each other. On the one side with looks of cold, averse displeasure, on the other with fierce but half-frightened glances. Clement broke suddenly on the stillness in a hoarse voice, from which all the music seemed departed. “Yes—there is—I'm not going to beat about the bush, for I believe you know. There's a girl there I'm in love with—I can't get on without her.”

“A young person with frizzled hair, who sings idiotic nonsense?” his father said in a low, iced tone, stroking his thin, hollow cheek with a hand that trembled.

“Don't provoke me,” the young man burst out with a sudden blaze of fury. “I'm half mad to-night—I can't stand much.”

“More than half drunk,” his father returned with contempt. “Let's make an end of this. You are going to the bad, or gone; you are throwing away time, money, talent, opportunity; you are going the path that ends in perdition. I can't stop you; I can't help it. I've done what I could for you—everything. I have kept myself straight that you might have every chance. I've borne and forborne. What is it you want now? What delirium of folly has got hold of you?”

“I want money; I must have money,” the boy cried fiercely, the wine firing his brain; the coldness and scorn in his father's looks and voice helping it to madden him, and make his moods into a fury almost insane. “Everyone says you have heaps of it, and I must have it.”

“I have kept myself on the verge of poverty that you should have enough,” the other returned bitterly. “I cannot give what I have not; and if I could I would not—to dissipate on sots and loose women!”

Clement started forward with an oath; he held up his cane almost as if he would strike his father, who looked at him coolly, without a muscle quivering in his fine white face.

“You cannot threaten it out of me,” he said in a voice unlike his own.

Clement let his arm fall a moment, and turned half away. As he did so his glance caught on the Claude over the mantel-piece; he pointed at it with his stick.

“You ask where you can get money,” he said sneeringly. “If you cared to save

me at the expense of your hobby, there are thousands, they say, locked up in that picture.”

“You think I would sell my Claude for you and your fancy for a low girl?”

The words were scarcely out of his lips, when, in a moment, a thing was done that left its mark on both their lives for ever.

Clement himself did not realise what the madness of the drunken impulse of the instant had done till he saw that the picture—his mother's heirloom—was for ever ruined, thrust through and through with a madman's frenzy of destruction.

He stood still as a statue, staring at his work, white and cold, and sobered with a ghastly shock of shame. As for his father, he sat motionless, not speaking, looking silently at the destruction of the comfort and hope of his life; not the destruction of the picture, but the destruction of something a thousand times dearer and more sacred. The boy Gemma had left him—this too was a ruin, like the stabbed canvas. The thrust seemed to him to have gone through his heart as well. Strangely enough, though, all the contempt, all the disgust were gone; only a vast pity and an unavailing ache of forgiveness remained; but he could not speak, his tongue, which had lighted readily enough on reproach, was still and dumb. Before he could move or say a word, the room was empty; Clement had turned, as if he felt the lash of the Furies, and was gone. His father started after him, called in vain. One door after another slammed, and Dumaresq was alone, standing stricken under the ruined picture—the type of the disaster and dismay which had come upon him in a moment.

“All that she left me, all that she left me!” he groaned out, stretching his arms above his head with a piteous appeal to the darkness and silence. “Was it for this I was born? O Gemma, my Gemma, why did you leave us to such a life as this?”

VICTIMS.

By THEO GIFT.

Author of “*Lil Lorimer*,” “*An Alibi and its Price*,”
Etc., Etc.

CHAPTER XV. THE COUNT MOVES.

MARSLAND was gone, leaving Vera the one small legacy of comfort he had been able to bequeath—the knowledge of his love and fidelity. And about the same time she began to find out a minor consolation for herself, in the fact of the Comte de Mailly's friendship, and to feel

glad or disappointed according as he came or stayed away.

For one thing, home was a much less pleasant place than formerly. True, her father did not say much more to her on the subject of her poor little love affair. Perhaps he thought it more politic to treat it as an unpleasant and humiliating incident, well over, and best forgotten. But his late illness had neither improved his nerves nor his temper; and the former had received an unpleasant shock from the alarming alteration in his friend de Mailly's manner of receiving news of Vera's unexpected outburst of independence.

Madame, wiser in her generation, would rather have kept the whole matter a secret, and simply announced that her daughter's return from England, sooner than had been expected, obliged them to cut short their own visit to the Count's Southern estates, and return to Les Châtaigniers to receive her; but M. St. Laurent's irritable nerves, and the wrath aroused in him by young Marstrand's letter, utterly prevented him from keeping such a secret from the man who was at once his host and his best friend; and he was only brought to a sense of his folly by observing the almost livid rage which swept across the Count's visage as the full meaning of the tidings took root in his mind.

"Unlucky chance!" he repeated after his guest, with a laugh fierce and bitter enough to awe even the latter into composure. "'Unforeseen, girlish folly'! Mais non, mon cher, there is nothing of chance or unforeseen in this. It is a design, a plan to rob me of my rights; and I will tell you of whom—of Madame! Madame has always been the enemy of my pretensions. She submitted to them for her own interests, see you, as long as they were in the remote future; but from the moment that Mdlle. Vera is grown up, is become a charming woman, she endeavours to hold me back. She even makes an excuse, affronting to myself and to my family, for sending her daughter away out of the country, and exposing her to the impertinent amours of foreign adventurers, and all because she detests me. My step-mother offended her once, and her jealousy of my friendship with you completes the offence, so that she would gladly sacrifice Mdlle. Vera to anyone of her own shop-keeper nation, even though—for, yes, certainly, it must come to that if one is betrayed—even though it were to be at the price of her husband's ruin."

"But, mon ami—but, my dear de Mailly, I entreat, I implore you to hear me," cried M. St. Laurent, all his own anger and excitement quelled before the expression in his friend's face, and the threat whose full meaning he comprehended only too well. "You are not just. Madame—it is only that you do not understand the English manner—Madame is devoted to you. She recognises in you the saviour of our house, and she is in despair. She overwhelms herself with reproaches at this moment for the imprudence which has exposed you, as well as ourselves, to the affront of this young man's temerity."

The Count smiled contemptuously.

"A despair easy of consolation, mon cher, as you will find when you have married Mdlle. Vera to this young——"

"But, de Mailly, permit me! Either you are laughing or you exaggerate enormously. What question of marriage is there in the absurdity we are discussing? These Jewish people have taken advantage of Vera's presence in their house to present this adventurer to her; and the innocent child, who, as you will recall to yourself, is not even aware of the honour you have done her, has not had sufficient hardness to refuse him permission to address her. She writes to her mother for counsel and protection, and we reclaim her instantly, and forbid these Joséphs and their friends ever again to intrude on our society. Voilà, mon ami! what would you more? These little contretemps are annoying, but one must have reason. It is too much condescension to regard them seriously."

It was plain that M. St. Laurent had already forgotten how seriously he was regarding the "contretemps" in question, at the moment when his friend's entrance afforded him an outlet for his irritation; but, if the Count had a better memory, he perhaps allowed it to remind him that his guest was more easily worked into a rage than the generality of men; and that the risk of being cheated out of his bargain might not after all be so great as he had at first imagined. He would fain have seen Vera's letter to her mother so as to assure himself that the young lady—who had never seemed so desirable to him as in the moment when he was threatened with losing her—was really as indifferent to her new suitor as her father endeavoured to persuade him. But courtesy forbade him to demand what was not offered; and he allowed himself by slow degrees to be

pacified, and even to consent to the substitution of Joanna for either the father or mother of the girl who was to be fetched home without a moment's delay. Not even to them, however, did he state that he intended to superintend in person the safe reclamation of his betrothed.

A wise man will oft succeed in extracting a victory from a reverse; and the Comte de Maily was wiser, as men go, than his friend Laurent. Quite convinced that he had read Madame aright, and that the English visit had been a successful piece of strategy for the express purpose of baffling his desire to curtail the period of his probation, he was determined now to draw from that very defeat and the mortification attending it, the weapons by which to triumph more decisively in the future. St. Laurent's helpless dependence on him and terror of his displeasure made him virtually master of the situation, and when he consented to allow his wounded pride to be appeased, he did so on the clear understanding that his rights and interests in Vera were to be recognised as at least as strong as those of her parents; and that therefore it lay with him now to throw them up, or carry them out, according to his own pleasure.

It may be imagined, therefore, that when Vera had returned, and the Count neither wrote nor came to Les Châtaigniers, M. St. Laurent felt profoundly uneasy. He was acquainted now with the fact of his friend's excursion, and questioned Joanna closely on the subject; but she assured him that, though the Count had certainly endeavoured to ascertain from her what Dr. Marstrand was like, and whether Mademoiselle showed emotion at parting from him, her reply that Mademoiselle seemed to care a great deal more about bidding good-bye to Miss Josephs than anyone else; and that the young man had not even been present at the final farewells, had appeared perfectly satisfactory to him, and probably served as an explanation of Vera's woe-begone appearance at the railway station. Then St. Laurent wrote to his friend, telling him humorously of the presumptuous lover's visit and rout, asking when they should see their late host at Les Châtaigniers; and adding that his enlivening society would be a boon to all there, not excepting "la petite," who naturally felt the separation from her adored Mees Josephs after the manner of young girls. The Count answered courteously but briefly,

excusing himself for a day or two longer on the plea of a business visit from his lawyer, and making no mention of Vera at all, beyond the usual formal recommendations at the end of the letter. M. St. Laurent felt almost frantic, and did his best to make his wife so into the bargain.

"You see, is it not so, Madame? you see now what you have done," he observed in private to that much-suffering woman. "He is disgusted. He sees through the 'chansons' of that Jeanne of yours, who is a fool like the rest of her countrywomen; and he wills to have no more to do with the girl. Do you mark that line in his letter, 'my lawyer is with me'? Ah, perhaps at this moment even his lawyer is advising him to call in his loans; and tomorrow he will write, 'Our compact is over. Pay me therefore the money that I have advanced you.' And thou, thou whose obstinacy has done this, dost thou know what that means? We have no money to pay; therefore we shall have to leave Les Châtaigniers. The Count will add it to the Maily estate; and we, when we have sold everything for food and have no more, we shall be reduced to picking up rags in the streets of Paris! Ah! the accursed day that I ever went to a certain girls' school there!"

It must be owned that Monsieur's manners were not Parisian, and that Madame in marrying him had not made for herself a bed of roses. Naturally, perhaps, she retaliated on Vera by an air of chilly displeasure, which, in conjunction with her father's irritability, made the contrast between this gloomy home and the happy, affectionate one she had so lately left, seem still sharper to the girl; and but for the possession of her lover's letter, read and kissed twenty times a day, she would hardly have known how to endure it.

She had two letters to comfort her now; the second a hastily-scribbled note in answer to hers, and sent through P'tit Jean, the weeding-boy, who, being Bénéite's cousin, had been easily persuaded to act the part of Mercury. But in it, while thanking and blessing his sweet-heart for the goodness of her letter to him, Marstrand said frankly that he would not set her parents further at defiance, or endanger her home happiness, by asking her to keep up any correspondence with him during their term of waiting; unless, indeed, some unforeseen trouble should cause her to require his help or presence, in which case he entreated her to write to

him at once, and he would answer or come to her without a moment's delay.

"I am your servant now for life," he wrote; "but I do not want to be a selfish servant, or to exact favours which might bring a shadow of discomfort to my darling little mistress." And Vera, reading it, wondered in her heart of hearts whether there was ever before a lover so good, or who wrote so sweetly.

It was the tenth evening since her return home, and the day had been so wet and windy that a tiny wood fire burned upon the hearth in deference to Madame's rheumatism, an ailment to which she had been very subject since the long night-watches consequent on her husband's illness. The Count had not yet called; and Monsieur was in a worse temper than ever, so that the poor child was glad to escape from the vicinity of the *béziq*ue, and, under cover of warming her despised fingers, to ensconce herself in a low chair by the fire, and seek a refuge from the present in memories half sad, but wholly sweet, of the past. Poor little Vera! Even Mr. Lucas, even those three hours' penance in the punt, became glorified by the light of memory, and she wondered with indignant remorse how she could ever have grumbled at them.

A sudden burst of voices in cheerful greeting startled her from these meditations, and she rose hurriedly to find that the Comte de Maily was in the room, and receiving quite a little ovation of welcome from both her parents. Even her mother, so indifferent to him usually, was smiling and holding out her hand quite warmly; while M. St. Laurent seemed to have cast away all his gloom and peevishness in a moment, and embraced his friend with effusion, not altogether unmingled with something like affectionate reproach for having left them so long to themselves.

The Count took his welcome very quietly, but even Vera could not help noticing how unusually well and cheerful he looked. He was always carefully got up; but to-day he had an air of being particularly well dressed and even young, which latter was certainly not one of his usual characteristics.

"Thanks, thanks, my friend," he said briskly. "Business, that frightful business, has been the only thing that has kept me from visiting you and your charming home sooner. But how has my dear Madame been, since she did me the honour of being my guest? And you, too, St. Laurent, are you quite recovered now? No, no; do

not disturb your game, I entreat you. I see you are still in the middle of it, and if you permit me while you finish to pay my homage to Mdlle. Vera, whom I have not seen for so long, I shall be spared the desolation of interrupting you."

He crossed the room as he spoke, without waiting for the permission; nor indeed giving much heed to it as M. St. Laurent called after him in tones so amiable that his daughter hardly recognised them:

"But assuredly, assuredly, my friend. Vera, ma mie, entertain our good neighbour while the mamma and I finish, since he permits us, our little game."

Vera had given the Count her hand, and as he looked at her (his eye had indeed been on her from the moment of his entrance) he was thinking how infinitely her late experience of life, however short, nay even the added expression in her sad eyes, and the wistful droop of her sweet young mouth, added to the new grace of womanliness about her; also, how much more prettily dressed she was than of old, in a softly-draped gown of some deep terracotta-coloured material, trimmed with ruffings of lace, and bought and made under Leah's tutelage.

"To think that Madame's intrigues nearly cost me this!" was the thought in his mind, indicated by a sudden hardening about the lines of the mouth, even while he was asking in his softest tones after the girl's health, and expressing his pleasure at meeting her again after her lengthy absence. "An absence, however," he added gallantly, "which doubtless seems less long to Mdlle. Vera than to the friends it deprived of her society."

Vera blushed faintly. If her father had not been in the room she would have liked to say that to her it seemed only too short. As it was she faltered a little, and then answered, with an awkwardness which was unconsciously flattering:

"You were away, too, Monsieur."

"Yes, truly, at my estate in the South with your amiable parents latterly, and before that at Dieppe, where the bathing season was altogether charming this year, and where my step-sisters were beyond measure afflicted at hearing you were not to join them. They overflow with jealousy of that Mdlle. Josépha, who they declare has stolen all your affections. Let me trust you left her in good health."

The Count was persistent in returning to the subject of Vera's visit, in hopes of discovering from her looks whether her

feelings had really suffered in it; but he did so with such an air of cheerful innocence that the girl, lifting her wistful, questioning eyes to him, fancied that he really spoke in ignorance of all that had happened to her.

"She was very well when I came away," she answered in a low voice, and added, as her eyes filled with uncontrollable tears, "I do miss her very much. I cannot help it."

"My dearest mademoiselle, who could be unnatural enough to wish you to do so?" cried the Count, leaning forward in his chair and speaking with quite refreshing warmth. "Surely the power of attaching oneself quickly and tenderly to another person is one of the loveliest privileges of youth and trustfulness. Even I felt the influence of Mdlle. Josephs's fascinations, and should be delighted at any time to renew the agreeable acquaintance I formed with her. Perhaps next year, indeed, she might be induced——" But he broke off there, as Vera gave an involuntary shake of her head at the thought of how little chance there was of her parents forgiving Leah by that time, and added in a tone of playful reproach: "Only Mdlle. Vera has too large a heart, I am sure, to be content with favouring one friend at the expense of others. She will keep a corner for Eulalie and Alphonsine, and for—for others who, if not as meritorious as the talented Mdlle. Josephs, have at least the claim of old and faithful friendship."

"Oh, but I do, indeed," said Vera simply. "I often spoke to Leah of the time I spent at Mailly, and of your sisters, though I thought they would hardly remember me now that it is so long since we have seen one another. When are they coming to the Château again, Monsieur, and is it true that they do not like Finis-terre?"

The Count burst out into protestations. His step-sisters adored the country of their birth. It was only their mother, who since her husband's death shrank from staying in the house which his memory still pervaded; and as there was no lady there to play hostess to the poor girls and chaperon them, it was difficult for them to come. Still, he must urge his stepmother to make the effort soon, as otherwise Alphonsine would not even be able to bid adieu to her old home before entering into religion; since she had decided (had Mdlle. Vera heard of it?) to begin her noviciate in the following June at the Convent of the

Sacré Cœur in Paris, where she had been educated.

"And will she be a nun, then?" exclaimed Vera, a sentiment of almost shocked pity banishing even her shyness. "Oh, poor Alphonsine! But why?"

"Ah, Mademoiselle, you, happily for the world you adorn, have never experienced that mysterious thing a vocation, which makes the 'why' for such a sacrifice possible even to a beautiful young woman. Alphonsine acts of her own free choice, and it is only in deference to the tears and entreaties of her mother and sister that she has consented to wait until her twenty-fourth fête day before entering a religious life, to which, indeed, she has been 'vouée' ever since her thirteenth year."

Vera listened with wide-open eyes full of astonishment and interest. It was quite startling to her to hear that her old playmate was voluntarily choosing what had never been held up to her except as a threat involving dark and mysterious terrors; but she found the Count's talk very agreeable, especially after the gloom and dulness of the last ten days, and answered to it much as a flower beaten down by the rain will lift its little head gratefully to the first gleam of sunshine. She had never talked to the Count so much in all her life before.

The game of bézique came to an end at last. It had been protracted as far as even M. St. Laurent's strictly Gallic sense of the proprieties would permit; but even bézique must be won or lost some time or another; and the capture of Madame's last ten was the finale of the Count's little tête-à-tête by the fire. He did not attempt to prolong it; indeed, he was quite man of the world enough to know that it never does to overdo even a success—and that his visit had been one so far, he felt assured. For the rest of it he devoted himself to his host and hostess with undiminished, if more sober, zest, and departed earlier than was his wont, leaving a sudden sense of dulness and blank behind him.

That evening Madame St. Laurent gave Vera a more affectionate kiss than usual in bidding her good-night, and Monsieur, while bending his cheek for his daughter's salute, patted her shoulder good-naturedly, asking:

"Eh, well, art thou less cold at present, little frog?"

Poor, innocent Vera went to bed, thanking the Count in her heart, and hoping sincerely that he would come again on the

following evening, if his mere presence was so efficacious in restoring her parents' good-humour. She was able for once to read her lover's two precious letters without weeping over them!

The Count did not come on the morrow. Perhaps he guessed he would be wished for, and stayed away to let the wish grow stronger; but a day or two later as Madame St. Laurent and Vera were taking a walk along the stretch of wide breezy moorland extending between Sta. Tryphine and Maily, they heard the tramp of a horse on the hard, springy turf behind them, and the next moment were overtaken by the Count, who explained that he had just been calling at Les Châtaigniers, and, hearing in which direction the ladies were walking, had made bold to overtake them. He dismounted accordingly, and walked at their side, chatting lightly and pleasantly, and actually going back a few steps once to cut a spray of red-bellied heather and white blackberry blossom which Vera paused to admire. The girl blushed crimson at the idea of his taking so much trouble for her; but the Count protested that the pleasure of serving a charming young lady was an honour into the bargain, and, while paring the stalks with his penknife before presenting them to her, added with vivacity:

"But since Mademoiselle is fond of flowers she ought to honour me still more by seeing the magnolias at Maily. Even strangers come from a distance to admire them, and just now they are in full perfection. Will not Madame St. Laurent generously fix a day to come with her husband and daughter to lunch at the Château, and inspect these floral triumphs?"

Madame coloured, hesitated, and stammered. She was really trying, though with painful ill-success, to mask her old stiffness and dislike under a thin veil of cordiality; but the Count did not seem to notice the effort, and as he put the flowers in Vera's hands ventured to gently press her fingers, saying:

"I shall leave my cause with Mademoiselle. She will be on the side of the magnolias, I am sure. One white flower sympathises with another."

"Mamma, how poetical the Count is getting!" Vera exclaimed as soon as he was gone; and Madame so far forgot policy as to answer with some irritation:

"He is getting very silly, I think. I can't bear with poetry in a man."

Vera was silent for a moment, and then said quite simply:

"Well, I think it does sound rather silly in so old a man as he."

And Madame immediately repented herself vigorously. She would have done so still more, if she had known that her daughter was thinking how differently the compliment would have sounded if Marstrand had paid it to her.

They went to the lunch all the same. Madame knew indeed that the invitation had only to reach her husband's ears to be accepted; and Vera certainly enjoyed the little dissipation. Comparatively near neighbours as they were she had not even been inside the grounds of Maily for nearly three years; and the Count felt a secret triumph at seeing the shy delight in her face as she first came in sight of the great pride of the Château, a row of magnolia trees on the south side of the building, all in full bloom, the magnificent cream-white blossoms loading the air with perfume, and contrasting grandly with the deep polished green of the large leaves. She did not, indeed, talk or eat much at the grand luncheon which followed; but there was an air of languid content in the very way in which she sat at the luxuriously spread board, looking from the display of glass and silver on it to the lovely view of orchard, and meadow, and far-away sun-sparkled sea, visible through the deep-set window facing her; and the Count smiled grimly to himself at the thought that he had merely to bide his own time and this fair, soft creature, so long marked down for himself, would bow her young head to his sceptre, and accept with naïve gratitude the position of châtelaïne over his superb demesne.

A well-laid plan and a promising one; for Vera, finding what a decided difference the Count's visits and civilities made to her, daily grew to look forward to them with frank pleasure, and meet him with the shy, sweet smile due to an acknowledged friend; so that M. St. Laurent, seeing how smoothly things were working, began to think that sufficient time had been wasted on preliminaries, and to grow impatient to bring the affair to an end. He was a man of too tyrannical a nature to have patience for such slow and feeble weapons as policy and management for carrying out his will. To his mind Vera had been shown quite sufficient indulgence already, and the apparent passiveness with which she had submitted to the edict against her English admirer, deceived him as completely as it had done the Count.

and made him contemptuous of any further need for working on her feelings before the final move. In truth he was a much injured man at the present moment; for de Maily, having suddenly conceived the idea that to pose as the elderly friend of the elderly father is not the best way to awaken a sentimental interest in the daughter, objected to returning to the regular whist evenings and other formal customs of old times; but made his visits at capricious and uncertain intervals, sometimes letting nearly a fortnight pass without one, sometimes coming two days running, sometimes bearing a bouquet or a new piece of music for Vera; but always disregarding with brutal selfishness the entreating glances at the whist-table which poor M. St. Laurent kept persistently casting.

As a consequence the latter's temper became more irritable day by day, and as the colour of his wife's spirits generally reflected his, life at Les Châtaigniers seemed even duller to poor Vera than it had been before Leah's advent. Indeed, she had fewer distractions than ever now; for Madame St. Laurent's rheumatism kept her very much at home this autumn, while the late visitation of typhus in the household had frightened their few acquaintances out of any eager desire to invade them. So poor Vera, living on memories of her brief sojourn "in Arcadia;" longing for a sight of her lover's face or Leah's, or even a word or line from either of them; could have cried for loneliness at times, and was ready to welcome the Count or any other friend with a kind word or a pleasant look for her as a relief from it. Perhaps the greatest friend she had at present was Bénéite's friendly smile and bright eyes beaming with knowingness and sympathy from under her square white cap when they chanced to meet; but even this comfort Vera dared not go out of her way to seek, for fear of exciting suspicion and so depriving herself of the one ally she possessed. It was only now and then that she ventured to exchange more than a word in passing with the kindly blanchis-sense.

Other confidante she had none. In justice to the girl it must be said that she did at first try, in a feeble, tentative way, to make one of her mother; and, while still under the influence of the loving, almost sisterly familiarity between good Mrs. Josephs and her daughters, did really put

forth more than one effort at drawing nearer to the parent of whose love for her, despite the coldness of her manner, she thought she felt sure. But she made her attempt badly, more especially in thinking she could forward it by praises of that Jewish mother across the Channel, of Leah's home virtues and Naomi's children; and Madame St. Laurent, secretly devoured with jealousy of all these people for the hold they had acquired over her daughter's affections, listened coldly and answered depreciatingly. Vainly, but bitterly, she repented ever having let Vera leave her for the country to which she had belonged, and never more so than when the girl, fresh from recollections of the Josephs's family circle, friends and relatives, would ask innocently natural questions as to what part of England her mother's family came from, and whether she had no friends and relatives living there now. "I asked you, mamma, in my letters; but you forgot to answer me," Vera said, and got short answer then. That miserable, vulgar mystery, the false and petty shame for her own parentage and upbringing, kept up so long before her own daughter, held the mother silent and reserved still, even on subjects which might otherwise have been most natural and pleasant to her; while her consciousness of Vera's unsuspecting ignorance of the way in which she was even then being disposed of made her nervously anxious to check, rather than invite, the least approach to confidence on the subject of the young lover whom this very disposal rendered it necessary to brush out of the girl's memory.

Quite suddenly the Count moved. Once or twice, perhaps, he had allowed a shade of something more than friendly warmth, a slight liberty of gaze, a longer pressure of the hand to invade the bland and courteous prudence of his demeanour when with the young girl; and Vera had shrunk back instantly, startled only perhaps the first time, but with unmistakable flinching and repugnance on the latter occasions. A little while ago she might have let these manifestations pass without notice or question; but those who have even nibbled at the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge get to know the colour of its leaves, and to tremble without even understanding. The Count felt that he had been repulsed, and, piqued and disgusted, determined to move all the quicker. He saw M. St. Laurent alone the very next day.

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

A Weekly Journal
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PRICE TWOPENCE.

ALEXIA.

BY ELEANOR C. PRICE,

Author of "Serald."

CHAPTER II.

As the Squire made his way towards Alexia's corner he stumbled a little among the furniture, for the room was dark, and there were a great many small tables and chairs in it.

"I'm very sorry—I can't see," he said, when he reached her at last. By this time she was standing up in front of the fire. "You are downstairs again; I am so glad. Do you feel all right, really?"

Alexia told him she was perfectly well. She took her little hand out of his, for he did not seem inclined to let it go. He stood looking down into her face—not at all confused or ashamed of himself—with a gaze that would have startled Miss Radcliffe. A feeling of warmth and happiness stole over Alexia, while Charlie, on the contrary, felt suddenly snubbed and cold. For she did not seem at all glad to see him; she turned away, and sat down on her sofa, where the heaps of rugs and cushions quite forbade any idea of room for him; and, after standing foolishly on the hearthrug for a minute, silenced, he did not know how, he meekly took the small chair that Mrs. Dodd had despised, and, leaning forward, stared into the fire for a few seconds, before he dared look at Alexia again.

"That was a horrid accident," he said. "I'm awfully glad you have got over it so well. I don't know when I've been so frightened. Lil made a great fool of herself, and I hope you don't mean to ride her again."

"Oh, certainly I do," said Alexia. "She will break her heart if I don't. I only

hope I shall not spoil another day's hunting for you."

Mr. Melville did not answer for a moment. Then he said gravely:

"You think it was spoilt, do you?"

"It was spoilt for me," said Alexia heartlessly. "One of the best runs we have had this winter. Oh, how cross and miserable I have been all this time!"

"But I suppose you have had lots of people to see you? Tea parties without end, in spite of the doctor?" suggested Charlie.

"Mrs. Dodd—a host in herself," said Alexia, and they both laughed.

Then they went on talking about the accident, and about hunting, and the skating since Christmas; and Charlie told her what he had been doing every day. He tried a little to make out that everything had been spoilt by her absence; but this was made a hard task by the sort of cool, friendly indifference that she chose to keep up towards him.

It was a pale, cheerful little face that the firelight flickered upon. She grumbled, but in a philosophic way, with a background of hard content. Charlie might look; she felt his eyes upon her, with a strange depth in them quite absent from his words. She would not look at him, and Charlie was aware of this, in spite of his simplicity, and found a little encouragement in it. Alexia frightened him, however; he wondered what was the matter. He felt rather injured, and would have liked to ask straight out what he had done to offend her. But how could one begin to bully a shadow like that? If she would only have been soft, and gentle, and sentimental, as an invalid ought to be, Charlie could have done what he longed to do—could have comforted her, could have told her something which he had once thought she

would care to hear ; but now he really was not sure.

It was very odd, he thought ; in all the years he had known Alexia she had never been so hard, so ungracious, had never received him so coldly. She evidently meant to show him that his visit was no particular pleasure to her. And if she could have guessed the feelings with which he came up to the door just now !

"Mrs. Dodd has been here this afternoon, and was very amusing," said Alexia. "She has been telling me all about the ball."

"Oh—that beastly ball!" muttered Charlie after a moment.

"What!" said Alexia, lifting her eyebrows with an air of surprise. "Mrs. Dodd did not think so ; and she did not think that you thought so. She said it was delightful, and splendid, and altogether nice, and that you—"

"What did Mrs. Dodd say about me?" interrupted Charlie. "Come now, a woman like that, always preaching, she had no business to be there at all. She only came for gossip and mischief, and you must not believe anything she said about me."

"It was nothing bad," Alexia went on calmly. "She said you danced all night, and seemed to be enjoying yourself immensely. Why shouldn't I believe that? I am quite sure it was true."

"Did she say nothing but that? Look here, one may dance a great deal, and talk a great deal, and be wishing one's self out of it all the time. I tell you the ball was beastly, and I was awfully glad when the people went away. Didn't you know I should feel like that, Alexia—tell me?"

"I really can't see into other people's minds. I know I should have enjoyed it," said Alexia, with a little fatigue in her voice.

She hardly knew what she was saying ; but as Charlie talked the old conviction came back of her power over him. She knew she might be happy if she liked ; yet she was half afraid, half sad, and she thought that everything had better float on uncertainly a little longer. She looked at him as he sat there, stooping forward, playing with his stick ; at that moment he was looking at the fire, and his fair bright head and honest face were in the full light of it. He was so unusually grave and thoughtful that she felt rather nervous, and went on talking hurriedly.

"And are you going to some more balls?"

she said. "Didn't you say something about going away?"

"Yes; to Lincolnshire. Skating, and three balls, I believe. I'm going tomorrow, unfortunately. I wish I could get out of it."

"How can you be so lazy!" said Alexia. "People like you are luckier than anyone, and more ungrateful. I wish I had the chance of flying off somewhere for skating and three balls."

"You wouldn't like it if you were me," said Charlie.

"Indeed I should," laughed Alexia.

"Well—for some things it's rather good, because I had a row with my mother this morning, and the house won't be comfortable till that has blown over. I wouldn't go for any other reason ; but I believe it's wise. One must think of the future. She will have time to come to her senses and understand that I am not—that after all she can't twist me round her little finger and make me do as she likes."

"She is sure to want you to do what is right," said Alexia.

"No," said Charlie positively. "She wants me to do what's wrong. You see you don't know what you're talking about, Alexia."

"Very true ; but I am safe in standing by Mrs. Melville."

"If you knew what you are saying"—said Charlie. And with a sudden, startling resolution he got up, and leaning on the back of his chair, bent down towards Alexia. "Do you know," he began, in a quick, low voice, while she shrank back into her corner ; but then he was interrupted, and all was over.

Mr. Page slowly turned the handle of the door and walked into the room. He saw Charlie Melville standing with his back to the fire, holding his hat and stick, his visit evidently just at an end. His manner was a little flurried, but Mr. Page did not notice that Alexia was flushed ; no wonder, so near such a blazing fire.

It appeared that the Squire was just going away. He could not stay any longer. He took leave of Alexia with a murmur of "shall see you when I come back," and Mr. Page went out of the room with him. After he was gone, Alexia looked at her hand for a moment, and then, with a sudden foolishness, kissed it. Then she drew back the heavy curtain that shaded the end of her sofa, and, hidden herself among the shadows, looked with wistful eyes after Charlie as he walked towards the

gate. He did not turn or look back ; but her father was with him, and they seemed to be talking very earnestly. Her father walked on with him, the gate clicked ; they were lost to sight now behind the ivy wall, and presently Alexia crept back to her corner and coiled herself up there again, thinking, and wondering, and wishing. It was impossible, it was unnatural, it could not be that Charlie could think of her as she thought of him. The difference was too great ; something in Charlie was always reminding her of that, with all his simpleness. And yet, what did he mean just now ?

As she lay crouched there half dreaming, with the weight of the next few days upon her weary little soul, her father startled her by coming in rather suddenly. He poked the fire with a good deal of violence, and then stood rubbing his hands, looking at her with a curious, excited expression. She pressed her face into the cushion, and wished he would go away.

"Alex, are you awake?" he said ; and she answered rather crossly, feeling as if she could not bear ordinary talk just then. "Look here, my dear, I don't think this will do, you know," said William Page.

"What?" asked Alexia, groaning.

"Young Melville says you know all about it, though he had not time to say much this afternoon. I came in at the wrong moment, it seems. But he was determined, at least, to have it out with me."

"Father, what are you talking about?" said Alexia, sitting up and smoothing back her hair. "What has he been saying to you?"

"Of course," said Mr. Page, gravely, "I always knew that you and he were great allies ; but I did not know that things had come to that pitch, quite. Alex, look here. He says that you promised to marry him years ago."

"Oh, that was nothing," said Alexia, colouring crimson. "That was—oh, yes, years ago, when we were almost children, and he was nobo'ly. I don't know what he means—why he should mention that at all."

"Exactly—I told him that was no engagement. People are not bound by childish promises like that. He understood ; he couldn't say they were. But he wants to have it all renewed now. How do you feel about it?" said Mr. Page, rather vaguely. He was a shy man, and this seemed a very awkward subject, even

with his daughter. It also struck him as one of the most serious things he had ever had to say to her ; and so no doubt it was. He was afraid that Alexia might take the decided line of telling him that he had no right to interfere. He thought he had a right : he could not bear to cross the child or make her unhappy ; but he saw great obstacles in the way of Charles Melville's wish. In fact, with an old-fashioned feudal loyalty in his mind, he did not think his daughter good enough for the Squire ; but he could not exactly tell her that, being gentle and considerate always.

For several moments Alexia did not answer him. She was, perhaps, too happy to speak ; yet she could not realise her happiness, which already seemed to have something terrible in it. "No, it is impossible," that voice kept on saying in the depths of her heart. She could not be at peace, as another girl might have been, in the knowledge that her love was her own love after all, no matter how many times he danced with Miss Radcliffe.

"He means it?" she said at last, half under her breath.

"Certainly," said her father. "He would hardly have said it to me if he did not mean it. And he seemed to have a sort of assurance that your ideas were the same as his. Perhaps it is not fair for me to ask you questions."

"I don't see any good in it, father," said Alexia after another pause.

"I should be very well satisfied if you could tell me that you don't care for the fellow," said Mr. Page ; but his daughter made no response to this, and presently he went on : "it seems a queer view for me to take of it perhaps. But the thing, as it strikes me, is an awkward thing, Alex ; not very good for you and bad for him. Of course you don't agree with me"—as she made some little murmur. "As far as character goes you might suit each other well enough. I am looking at it from a worldly point of view—thinking of his interests and the family opinion, and so forth."

"And you are not ambitious," said Alexia, with her face half buried in the cushion.

"No, I am not. Are you?" said her father more sharply. "Would you like to enter a family and be looked down upon by them and their friends? Charlie himself would always be good to you—I have no doubt about that—but there are his mother and a dozen other women to be

considered. Could you hold up your head amongst them, Alex?"

"I should hate them all, no doubt," said Alexia. "But I should not be afraid of them if——"

"Ah, very likely!" said William Page. "That is not real happiness, though. But—putting your feelings out of the question, my dear, for a moment—such a clear-headed young woman might be able to see that by marrying Charlie Melville she would be doing him an injury."

His first nervousness had quite left him now. He stood looking down at the floor; looking at Alexia was no use, for she had turned her face away from him. His quiet attitude, his smooth grey hair, and pale clear-cut face, all had somehow an air of calm determination. Very gentle, very matter-of-fact, seeing his own duty and Alexia's with a certain positiveness,—and yet behind all this there was considerable doubt of having his own way. Alexia had been too much for him in most of the affairs of life; she had ruled him and his house for many years now. It was true, they generally agreed in their views of things,—but now, if Alexia had set her heart on this?

"Father," said Alexia, interrupting his thoughts. She spoke with difficulty, for it seemed rather horrible to talk like this, when Charlie himself had not said a word to her. "Tell me what you mean," she said. "How could I?"

"The Melvilles' affairs are in a very bad way," said Mr. Page. "I was talking to old Morton the other day, and he gave me a frightful account of the sums of money George ran through. One would hardly have believed that a fellow could do so much mischief in so short a life. He said Charles would have to live prudently for years, might have to mortgage the estate very likely—George's debts are not half paid yet. He said Charlie must not marry at all, or else he must marry money. And that was what he seemed to think likely, from something Mrs. Melville had said to him. These times too—rents unpaid, land losing its value—he could better afford to make a fool of himself, if he was a sub in a marching regiment. It was a pity, by-the-by, that he left the navy—something at least to fall back upon."

"You pay your rent," said Alexia.

"Yes, and it is as much as I can do. There is no money to throw away as there was in old times."

Alexia was silent; she had nothing to

say. Only she wondered and longed to know what Mrs. Melville had really said to Mr. Morton, the old lawyer, who knew all the family affairs. Was it Miss Radcliffe's money that they meant Charlie to marry? Alexia was by no means a foolish girl, but she argued with herself that there was a right and a wrong in this matter, and that it would be supremely wrong if Charlie and she, who cared for each other, were to be separated because of money. If he had to live prudently—well, why should he not? Must one be extravagant in order to be happy?

Mr. Page did not say much more, for he saw with regret that Alexia differed from him. He felt a little angry, but he could not be harsh with her. It was not the marriage that he would have chosen for her. With all his attachment to the Melvilles, he did not respect them; he thought they had no strength of character. In many ways, he told himself, Alex was too good for the young fellow. But he supposed that if Charlie was in earnest Alexia would be obstinate, and so there would be nothing more for him to say. Perhaps his chief feeling on the subject was a very strong disinclination to meet Mrs. Melville.

CHRONICLES OF SCOTTISH COUNTIES.

THE BORDER COUNTIES. PART III.

THE little county of Selkirk, with its bare sheep pastures and bold hills, has changed in character altogether in the course of centuries, and only here and there an ancient thorn-bush or clump of birches remains to recall its fame as the once forest, the Ettrick Forest of song and legend.

The scenes are desert now and bare
Where flourished once a forest fair.

And although much has been done in the way of covering the hill-sides with artificial plantations, yet are the sheep pastures still paramount; although it is said that the forest, though subdued, is not and never will be extirpated, and that were the sheep removed and the country left to itself all the slopes would be soon covered with a thick underwood, and forest trees would push their slow growth till the scene would be once more as of old when the outlaw Murray ruled over the greenwood and when the Border minstrel could sing—

Ettricke foreste is a fair foreste;
In it grows manie a semelie tree.
There's hart and hinde, and doe and roe,
And of a' wilde beastes grete plantie.

The first clearance of the forest and the beginning of its reduction into sheep-walks was effected by James the Fifth—the goodman of Ballengiech—who, with the design of turning the nominal rights of the Crown over the waste lands of these regions to good profit, descended in strong force upon the Borders, in the guise of a great hunting expedition, and, taking the Border chiefs in detail, carried death and destruction among them. One of his first blows was delivered against the outlaw Murray—

I'ae either be king of Etrike foreste,
Or king of Scotland that Outlaw sall be.

At this great crisis of the fate of the Borderers the great chiefs of the clans were conspicuously absent. The King had shut them up in one fortress or another, and his Lowland lords and their followers, who had often suffered at the hands of the raiders, made short work of the smaller lairds and chiefs. Murray was hanged from one of the forest trees, and Adam Scott, the King of the Borders as he was called—a potentate whom the great novelist was proud to own as one of his forbears—was hanged also in front of his own tower of Tushielaw. The old elm which formed the gallows was still to be seen, its sturdy projecting limb still scored with the marks of the ropes of various executions, for it had been a favourite tree of Adam Scott himself, who, if family pride does not exaggerate the case, had there on his own account hanged many a stout fellow.

There was something specially cruel, too, in the fate of Piers Cockburn of Henderland, another of the forest worthies, who was actually preparing his racks and spits to feast his monarch royally when he was seized and hung up before the door of his own hospitable stronghold.

From the time of this reign of terror on the Borders the clans, broken and dismayed, ceased to rule the Borderside, and peaceful cottars and shepherds replaced the sturdy outlaws of the forest, and great flocks of sheep—the King himself is said to have had ten thousand of his own at one time grazing on the hills—displaced the hart and the hind and the other "wilde beastes." As late, however, as Queen Mary's time there was royal hunting in the forest, and the Queen herself followed the wild deer with horn and hound—

Up pathless Etricke and on Yarrow
Where erst the Outlaw drew his arrow.

In the wildest part of pathless Etricke

lies St. Mary's Loch, a lake that takes its name from the ruined chapel at its head; where the hills range in heights of something like savage grandeur, and close by was once a village of small settlers and cottars, which bore the name of Etrick, and was ruthlessly cleared away early in the eighteenth century to make room for the building of Etrick Hall by some unfeeling proprietor. Popular indignation found vent in maledictory verses containing a prophecy—

Or the trees owre the chimney tops grow green
We winna ken where the house has been—

a prophecy remarkably fulfilled in the event of the hall having followed the cottages to destruction. Etrick Kirk still stands lonely among the wild hills, and near here was the cottage where was born the well-known shepherd, the poet of Etrick Vale.

James Hogg was a veritable shepherd, the descendant of a race of shepherds and herdsmen who had lived on the forest side time out of mind. His father, indeed, had risen to the grazing of his own flock, but only to fall into utter ruin; and Hogg relates that at seven years old he was turned out to earn his own living as a cowherd, his year's wages in that capacity being an ewe lamb and a pair of new shoes. One winter he had the luck to have a quarter's schooling, and this, with as much at some other time, was all the teaching he got from recognised sources. And he went on tending cows and sheep till at eighteen he fell in with the ballads of Willie Wallace and the pastoral of the Gentle Shepherd, and so got a turn towards letters; for reading and writing seemed to come to him by nature rather than by instruction; and so he took to making songs and ballads for the lasses to sing in chorus. Among the lasses he became known as Jamie the Poeter, but for long attained no higher fame, or wider rather; for what higher fame can a poet aspire to than the appreciation of the lasses of his acquaintance?

Jamie had never heard of Burns till 1797, a year after the poet's death, when Jamie himself was in his twenty-sixth year. His delight in Burns was tempered by a little natural jealousy. If a ploughman with his eyes in the furrow could attain such fame, what might not be expected from the genius of a shepherd with his days and nights of meditation, his eyes roaming far over bank and brae or watching the stars in their courses? But in this the shepherd was sadly out of his reckon-

ing, for after all he never rose much beyond the versifier.

But the marvel is that with such scanty culture and in his thirty-eighth year, knowing no more, as he says, of life or manners than a child, he should by sheer force of will and determination push his way to something like literary success.

Where am I gaun—I darena tell;
Alas! I hardly ken mysel.
There's something burning in my brain
That leads me out this gate my lane.

The marvel, however, will be lessened when we consider what a strong and vigorous race, of what soundness of intellect and grasp of mind, is the peasant race on that wide stretch of varied country that lies between the Cheviots and the Grampians, a race that has preserved its vigour unimpaired under the strict laws of kirk and session. But when we read of three shepherd lads of Ettrick Vale, of whom Jamie was one, sitting on the hillside and discussing the art of poetry, and resolving forthwith on a poetic competition which was to settle the merits of rhyme against blank verse, we are filled with amazement mixed with a certain amount of incredulity.

The Ettrick shepherd took the publishers by storm, if he did not make an equal impression on the public. He had a pleasant touch with a song, and knew the lilt of the Border ballad; but he lacked the fire that should have lit up the rugged metre; it might burn in his brain, but it did not burn in his heart, as with the Ayrshire ploughman. And thus the shepherd is more than a little disappointing. Having done so much we wonder that he does no more, but the well-spring has exhausted its strength in reaching the surface, and lacks the power to overflow in a full, perennial stream. But on his own ground the shepherd is always interesting; the mischief is that he is too much the man of letters and not enough of the shepherd, when he takes pen in hand; and we get the familiar tap of the big drum instead of the notes of the shepherd's oaten pipe, rarer and more sweet.

Our notions of Hogg as to his personality are mostly derived from the "Noctes" of Professor Wilson. Hogg appears with the accessories of haggis, whisky toddy, oysters, and all the apparatus of a Scotch symposium, and Hogg's protests at the part he was made to play, and at the sentiments put into his mouth, and all this was part of the fun that delighted the conductors of Maga in those early days. It was a laughing, screech-

ing time, all kinds of jokes and mystifications were flying about, of which the shepherd was often the subject; but he was a distinct and powerful figure in the literary circle of Modern Athens, which in his time was in the fulness of its power.

But Hogg never altogether abandoned his vocation, and strange to say, while he made a good deal of money out of his books, all things considered, he lost it again over his sheep. If for a while he lived among the wits in Edinburgh, edited, wrote, quarrelled fiercely, and spent gay nights at the Forum with the jovial crew whose high jinks Scott has described with so much force in Guy Mannering, if he was driven to this it was because his flock had been a failure, and no man would hire him again as a shepherd. But his heart was always in Ettrick Vale, whose fairy folk had inspired some of his best verses.

Old David spied on Wonfell cone
A fairy band come riding on.
A lovelier troop was never seen,
Their steeds were white, their doublets green,
At every flowing mane was hung
A silver ball that lightly rung.
Fast spur they on through bush and brake,
To Ettrick Wood their course they take.

The poet's desire was fulfilled before long, for a worthy peer, one of the good old race of the Scotts of Buccleuch, Duke Charles of that ilk, offered the Border minstrel a home, a house and farm rent free in the very heart of the poet's country and close by the Dowie Dens o' Yarrow. And now the shepherd at home appears as a homely and yet dignified figure, no more successful with his sheep than of old, but making the publishers suffer—a lost art that, of which Hogg was master—for the murrain among the sheep.

And what days were those upon the hills when the sheriff came among them, with something light to be done in the way of quest or session, and then a hard gallop over the hills, full tilt on horseback, to hunt up some old ruin or battered monument. Walter Scott hunted antiquities with all the zest of a sportsman, and he infuses some of his enthusiasm into the lairds and farmers, and set the shepherd lads on their mettle. To-day the auld kirk, the ruined abandoned kirk among the wilds is to be explored. There are rumours of an old slab there which may reward the search of spade and pick. But nothing is found but an old iron pot, which the shirra' is inclined to think may have been part of a helmet, but which from the traces within

the farmers pronounce to have been just left there by the sheep-shearers; recalling the charter verse of Ettrick—

Green hills and waters blue,
Grey plaids and tarry woo.

But all is fun and good-fellowship. The shirra' laughs and jokes from morn till night, and then is always ready for some promising bit of fun. Now he and the shepherd are "leistering kippers" on the Tweed—burning the water, as it is called. The disasters of the night, the leaky boat, and forgotten tar-barrel, all are subjects for Scott's contagious laughter. Or he is sitting gravely, with his toddy in front of him, surrounded by an eager knot of farmers, who in loud voices are discussing over his shoulder the merits of long sheep or short ones. The shirra's joke sets their paws all wagging, whether they understand it or not.

Another kind of guest was Wordsworth, for whom the shepherd acted as guide and host to the bonny holms of Yarrow. In his gray russet suit and broad beaver, and with his dry and cautious manner, the neighbours think he is some horse-coper from over the fell, that their Jamie has got hold of; the name, too, strengthens the impression, as it seems that one Wordsworth was a great dealer of the period, better known on the Borderside than the poet. Wordsworth had already commemorated Yarrow Unvisited in a charming and spirited poem.

Let beeves and home-bred kin partake
The sweets of Burn-mill meadow;
The swan on still Saint Mary's Lake
Float double—swan and shadow!

We will not see them; will not go
To-day, nor yet to-morrow;
Enough it in our hearts we know
There's such a place as Yarrow.

Wordsworth's visit suggested the companion poem, Yarrow Visited, which, as the shepherd remarks, with critical acumen, is not nearly so successful. A result, too, for the shepherd was a cordial invitation to visit the Wordsworths at Rydal Mount, of which he availed himself so eagerly that he reached Rydal before his hosts had returned from their Scotch tour. But the visit was marred, and the humbler poet's amour propre wounded by an incident which may be termed the "triumphal arch" business, an incident variously told; but which the shepherd recounts substantially as follows. The scene is the terrace of Rydal Mount; the time, a lovely evening of autumn; an autumn marked by

splendid displays of meteoric fire in the heavens. On this particular night, a radiant arch of lambent flame spanned the star-sprinkled skies, and all had turned out of the house to witness it. The shepherd watched the sight with Miss Wordsworth on his arm, while Wordsworth, his wife, and De Quincey formed a separate group. The poet's sister, a woman of rare, but somewhat troubled spirit, let fall some anxious words of the dire presages that these lights were supposed to bring. "Hoot, mem"! cried the shepherd in his jolly, boisterous tones, "it's jist a graun treeumphal arch in honour of the meeting of the poets!"

The saying smote the lofty self-revering poet of the Lakes as it were with a knife. "Poets, poets!" he cried to his companions, "what does the fellow mean? Where are they?" The Ettrick bard did not hear the remark, and so far all was well; but De Quincey amiably lost no time in repeating it, and it cut the poor shepherd to the quick. He never forgot it; could hardly forgive it, although it afterwards occurred to him that De Quincey had possibly invented the speech; or, at all events, put the sting into it, a thing which might very well have happened.

The shepherd's pugnacity, however, is one of the salient features that mark him out as one of the good old Borderers. He fancies that somebody bites his glove at him, and then out claymores and pistols. It was a characteristic fierceness which came down from old times, when a man, hungering for a fight, would hang his glove up in the parish church; a challenge for anybody who dared to take it down. Fierce were the duels, too, in the old Border times. This very Vale of Yarrow owes, it is said, its melancholy associations to a duel between two members of the same family of Scotts, one just married, or on the point of being married, the subject being some family dispute, and the result the death of the bridegroom or lover, while the bride that should have been throws herself into the stream and is drowned.

The legends of Yarrow, however, are various, and all of vague and doubtful purpose—a vagueness which, perhaps, accords with the doubtful sweetness of the scene, depending more upon sympathy and a mind attuned to the surroundings than upon any distinctness of natural beauty. It is not for nothing that the sorrow of ancient days seems to rest like a mist upon the winding stream.

Meek loveliness is round thee spread,
A softness still and holy ;
The grace of forest charms decayed
And pastoral melancholy.

And the Flower of Yarrow is equally vague and unsubstantial. Who was she after all ? For Wordsworth surely is wrong when he makes the Flower one of the masculine persuasion. Was she the bride of yestere'en i' the ballad, or the lass whose lover comes to woo with horse and hound and gay gosshawk ?

He promised me a wedding ring,
The wedding day was fixed to-morrow ;
Now he is wedded to his grave,
Alas, his watery grave in Yarrow !

The tear shall never leave my cheek,
No other youth shall be my marrow.
I'll seek thy body in the stream,
And then with thee I'll sleep in Yarrow.

In itself, the valley so renowned in song and legend is a simple scene of low green hills, where a rivulet with bare grassy banks wanders through, "with uncontrolled meanderings," a scene which owes much of its pathos to its bare, peaceful simplicity. Lower down the stream finds its way through rich plantations of recent date, to where the shattered front of Newark's towers crowns the sylvan scene.

But the head of the stream,
By lone St. Mary's silent lake,
affords the more characteristic prospect,
Shaggy with heath, but lonely bare,
Nor tree, nor bush, nor brake is there ;
while the hills rise abruptly from the water's edge ;

And just a trace of silver sand
Marks where the water meets the land.

And here with strange persistency, notwithstanding his Calvinistic leanings, the Scottish peasant still brings his dead, although the kirk, within whose precincts the graves are thicker than elsewhere, has been a ruin ever since the old faith was abolished in the land. Here it was that Scott, in his youth, half dreamed of some refuge for his weary age.

Here have I thought 'twere sweet to dwell,
And rear again the chaplain's cell,
Like that same peaceful hermitage
Where Milton longed to spend his age.

And here peasants will still point out the wizard's grave ; not of the great wizard, Michael Scott, who lived, however, close by according to tradition in his tower of Oakwood, but of a more humble follower of his, a priest of the little chapelry :

That wizard priest's whose bones are thrust
From company of holy dust.

Above are the wilds of the Mereclough

Head, along which a narrow track is still shown as the route of the Scottish King when he came to spread death and destruction along the Borderside.

The King rode round the Mereclough head
Booted and spurred, as we a' did see.

The round tower near the eastern end of the loch is Dryhope Castle.

Then gaze on Dryhope's ruined tower,
And think on Yarrow's faded Flower.

Another Flower of Yarrow in this case, one of the many claimants to the title, was Mary Scott, who married Elliot of Minto, and who faded only in due course of nature, as her descendants are alive at this day to testify. By Dryhope Tower opens out the valley of a tributary rill, within whose solitary recesses lies the solitary ruined peel of Henderland, where, as has been already told, Piers Cockburn was hanged by the King before his own threshold.

That night the spoilers ranged the vale
By Dryhope Towers and Meggat Dale.

Miles away down the vale, passing Newark Castle, where the wandering harper of Scott's lay was hospitably entertained by the Duchess, we come to the meeting of the waters of Ettrick and Yarrow, and, in the angle of their junction lies Carterhaugh, famed as a meeting-place of the fairy conclave.

Fair as the elves whom Jane saw
By moonlight dance on Carterhaugh.

Famed too, in later years, as a meeting-place for the stout football players of the Border—a famous gathering having been held in 1815, when for the last time, perhaps, and this only in mimic war, the banner of Buccleuch was raised—and the circumstance inspired one of the Ettrick shepherd's lyrics.

Lower down the course of the united streams on the north bank, and just above Selkirk, is Philiphaugh, noted for the combat in which the rising star of the gallant Montrose was finally quenched in darkness. Hitherto the career of Montrose had been a succession of brilliant victories, the last of which had made him the master of Scotland. For while the army of the Covenant had been fighting against King Charles in England, Montrose had raised the Highlands for the King, had humbled in the dust his hereditary foe Argyle, and dispersed the hasty levies of the Covenanters. The great towns of Scotland were his, and the loyal nobility and gentry of the country were zealously working for

him; and the time had now arrived in the judgment of the brilliant commander when he might lead his victorious army into England to the assistance of his royal master. True that the Highlanders melted away from him as his purpose became known, but undismayed, and with the nucleus of a gallant army, Montrose pushed on towards the Borders, and was now with his cavalry quartered in Selkirk; while his infantry were encamped on the opposite side of the river on the plain of Philiphaugh.

But while many of the Border chiefs were loyal to the King, the peasantry were stern and rigid Covenanters to a man, nay, almost to a woman, for the very mistress of the tavern where Montrose was lodged is said to have remarked in the presence of her guest, as she popped a sheep's head into the cauldron, how glad she would be were that the head of Montrose.

At Selkirk lay Montrose, in perfect security as he thought; while if there had been a loyal herdsman or shepherd lad in the whole country side he might have been warned in time, and possibly have changed the result of the whole war. For in the meantime the lords of the Covenant, who were with the army in England, advised by their fugitive brethren of the disasters and despair of their brethren in the north, had dispatched David Lesley, a tried and veteran commander, with a picked force of about five thousand men, chiefly cavalry, the flower of the Covenant army, to make head against Montrose. This force crossed the Borders at Berwick, and hastened by forced marches towards Edinburgh, where Montrose was well content to leave them, intending to settle the matter on quite a different field.

But Lesley on his march, kept in full information by zealous volunteer scouts on every hand of his enemy's movements, suddenly changed his line of march when almost within sight of Edinburgh, and descending Gala Water encamped for the night at Melrose, within five miles in the rear of Montrose's position. But there was not a soul in all Selkirkshire, or in Roxburgh either, to warn the Royalist chief of the near approach of his foe.

The very elements conspired to the ruin of the King's cause, for next morning a thick mist overspread the whole country, and nothing could be discerned beyond a few yards' distance. Only the zealous aid of the country folk could have brought the army of Lesley within striking distance.

and at the last moment it is said that Lesley was wandering hopelessly astray, when a small farmer of the neighbourhood, upon part of whose farm the Royalists were actually encamped, took the guidance of the troops. According to tradition, it was this man who suggested the manoeuvre by which the royal troops were to be overwhelmed. As the Border ballad has it:

But halve your men in equal parts
Your purpose to fulfil,
Let ae half keep the water side,
The rest gae round the hill.

Montrose was busily writing despatches to the King, assuring him, so it is said, that his enemies in Scotland were finally disposed of, when the sudden uproar from the camp, the rattle of musketry, and the roar of combat warned him of some serious affair in progress. Hastily assembling his cavalry he dashed across the river to the scene of danger, but only to find his army already defeated and flying in all directions. In vain he strove to rally his men and restore his rank of battle. His horsemen presently joined the flying crowd, and with a handful of men he galloped off up the Vale of Yarrow, having lost everything at one fell stroke, and being reduced within hardly an hour's space from being the master of Scotland, and the saviour of the monarchy, to the lot of a fugitive and outlaw.

We now come to the chief town of the county—chief and only town indeed.

In Selkirk famed in days of yore
For sutors, but for heroes more.

A dull, little Scotch burgh, Selkirk presents few outward attractions, but its history is interesting, if only as an example of a municipality of artisans, who in the strength of their guilds and societies sustained themselves against the rude barbarism that enclosed them on every side. Nor were these men mere slaves of the work-bench, but as ready for the fray as for the feast, marching to battle under the banners of their guild and patron saint as readily as they turned out in civic pomp on a day of feasting and revelry. From the days of the Bruce Selkirk was proud to own itself a royal borough. A hundred men of Selkirk followed their King to the fatal field of Flodden; the town clerk at the head of them, who was knighted by King James on the field of battle. But few of the band returned, and to punish the town for its daring the English burnt the whole place to the ground soon after Flodden, while the inhabitants took refuge

in the woods. But the guild of weavers long could show a knightly pennon which they boasted as a trophy of war, while to be a sutor of Selkirk was to be accounted next in prowess to a paladin of chivalry.

And for long in the north was Selkirk as famous as Cordova among the Latin races for its leather and its shoes. The trade has passed away to other centres of industry, but even now perhaps there are more sutors in Selkirk than in other towns of like population, and half a century ago there was an old rhyme current among the youth of anti-sutorial sympathies :

Sutors ane, Suturs twa,
Sutors in the Back-row.

And harmless as is this ditty in appearance it was only necessary for some urohin to declaim it at the top of his voice in the neighbourhood of the Back-row to bring out all the shoemakers of the place, and all who did them service, like an angry swarm of bees.

Sutors and all turned out after Philip-haugh to plunder the camp of Montrose, after his defeat. There was good looting about there, and the Selkirk men might well compare themselves to the Israelites when they fell upon the camp of the Assyrians. Rich robes, horses, arms, rewarded the skillful plunderers, but the Selkirk men missed the military chest of Montrose, which, according to tradition, was flung into the cottage of a miller and his wife by its bearer, hardly pressed in flight. Thrown off their balance by the sight of all this money, the man and his wife began quarrelling as to the particular use they should put it to—the husband declaring he would buy an estate and become a laird, while the woman was equally decided upon some other project. The noise of their dispute attracted the attention of some of Lealey's soldiers who were riding by, and these, looking in upon the unruly pair, carried off the bone of contention, and divided the contents of the chest among themselves and their comrades.

Another exciting day for Selkirk was in the year 1707, when news was brought to the town of a great fight going on in the meadows, and all the town rushed down to see it. This was the famous Border duel between Pringle, of Crichton, and Walter Scott, of Ræburn, uncle, or perhaps great-uncle, to Sir Walter. The two young men had no apparent cause of quarrel, except that Scott had seen his antagonist bite his glove in what he considered a menacing manner. If there was a woman at the

bottom of the quarrel, some Flower of Ettrick or of Yarrow, her name was kept out of the gossip of the period. The fight was with the national broadsword, and lasted for hours with various turns of interest, eagerly watched and commented on by the spectators. Pringle would more than once have closed the business by an honourable reconciliation, but the other would not hear of it, and was run through the body for his pains, and so died on the field of combat.

A good many years after this—in fact, in the '45—the fame of the sutors of Selkirk brought them an unexpected and unwelcome order to supply the Prince's army with five hundred pairs of shoes, most of which were worn out on the famous march to Derby, the straggling forces who returned being mostly bare-footed. And although the sutors no longer form the majority of the population—yet their ancient supremacy in the town has left many traces in its manners and customs. Thus, until recent years, the ceremony of creating a Burgess was accompanied by a typical act, which seems to suggest that to be free of the town one must also be free of the guild of sutors; this being the meaning apparently of the ceremony of licking the birse or bristles—which every man in the council did in turn, and the neophyte last of all—a ceremony not in any way to be avoided or evaded, unless by one of royal blood.

They have left their traditions too, these sutors, most of which have been forgotten; but there is one eerie tale which is still sometimes told of a sutor who, late one night, served a strange customer with a pair of shoes, which the man carried off under his arm. So strange and weird was his appearance that the sutor followed him to see where he would go. To the shoemaker's horror his customer made straight for the churchyard and descended into [one of the graves. The cobbler had his awl in his hand, and marked the place by sticking it into the ground. Next day the sutor told the story, and, with the assistance of the authorities, the grave was opened, and there, sure enough, in a coffin, was the body of a man fresh and unchanged, while a pair of new shoes laid beside it. The shoemaker took the shoes, which he thought he could turn to better use. But on the following night, at the same time, the same customer appeared in a towering rage, and reproaching the sutor for his dishonesty, seized first his shoes and then

the shoemaker, and, flinging the latter across his shoulder, carried him off to the churchyard. There, next morning, the remains of the unhappy sutor were discovered torn limb from limb.

Those shoemakers of old must have had rather a morbid imagination, one would think, and if this is the best of their stories one can hardly regret that no more of them have come down to us. But we have been long enough about Selkirk, and must find our way over the hills to Dumfries.

CLAUDIA.

A STORY IN FOUR CHAPTERS. CHAPTER IV.

SEVEN years had gone by somehow: seven long, monotonous, desolate years. Louis Dumaresq had not thought of making any change in them, he seemed incapable of the effort. He came home to the silent rooms every night, and sat as he used to do. Even the Claude remained in its frame, though its beauty was gone for ever, and the holes in it would have astonished and horrified any one, if there had been any to see it. But Louis Dumaresq lived like a hermit and saw no one.

The only effort he had made, beyond just the necessary routine of his work, was in trying to get a clue to the whereabouts of his son. He enquired everywhere. He advertised; he employed detectives; he visited every possible acquaintance who might know something of him; but it was in vain. Clement Dumaresq had gone under, as so many young men do, as completely disappearing as if drowned in Letha. The only thing his father could discover was that at the same time the girl "Tillie" had vanished also, the concert hall knew her no more. He had made some discoveries about her, and they had given him a pang of self-reproach. Though she sang at such a place, and mixed with the most doubtful company, no one had anything bad to say of the girl. The manager of the rooms declared that she was a "good little thing," kept herself respectable, worked hard, was kind to people, and would "stand no nonsense." He was very sorry to lose her, and had an idea she went off with the young fellow who was so clever at the fiddle, and who called himself Dumas—he thought they were married and gone abroad, and had no doubt they would get on if the young man kept steady, as both were uncommonly clever.

Mr. Dumaresq took back this informa-

tion, and pondered it in his way. He seemed to see how his words about this girl, whom Clement loved perhaps truly and purely, must have enraged him, half wild as he was already on that fatal night. He well understood why he had disappeared after what had happened. Clement had never believed in his father's affection or indulgence, he knew his severe idea of right and wrong, and his extreme fondness for the poor Claude. After such a scene Clement would feel cut off for ever from his father's sympathy, for he little knew his heart. Indeed, Dumaresq had hardly known his own. He would not have believed beforehand how entirely resentment and anger would have died, even at the moment of the greatest injury done him, and that a woman's tenderness and inexhaustible pity would take possession of it instead. It was as if the gentle mother had given him her spirit. He put away the remembrance of the last phase of his boy's life, he dwelt on his childhood and growing youth; on his brightness, the flash of genius in him, his soft heart and caressing ways; the old dog, of which he had been fond, crept into his father's heart, though he had never cared for animals; the old applewoman to whom Clement used to give sixpences and chat with about "Oireland," in his winning way, was surprised at the grave, grey gentleman stopping to talk and giving her a shilling over and over again. When he sat alone in the dim room he recalled the boyish voice and laugh, the music of the little old violin, the tune which he called the "Claude tune" haunted his ear with a half-soothing persistence. The story of the son who came home, and of the father who fell on his neck and kissed him, lay at his heart.

One day in the beginning of December, about five o'clock, Louis Dumaresq came home. It was a Saturday, and he was earlier than usual. He had nothing to do with his time, and did not care to spend it anywhere but in that old room, where so many hours had worn themselves away. Whenever he opened the door he could not help, though he tried to do so sometimes, letting his glance fall on the spoilt picture. It had one gash through the sparkling water, another through the group of dancing girls; yet the light still caught it and brought out the soft mellowness of the colouring. He got his books; he was a great reader of all kinds of curious literature, and, finding in one of them a subject which was suggestive to him, he got a

piece of paper and sketched in black and white.

He was rather absorbed in his drawing, which took shape that pleased him, and whistled over it very softly, as was his habit when he was designing. Suddenly the low whistle stopped. He raised his head quickly, and listened with a curious intensity of expression. It was only the distant sound of a street musician's fiddle that he caught. What made all the muscles of his worn face quiver as the air was faintly borne in to him?

He started to his feet, ran to the window and threw it open, letting in the damp and smoky air, and, kneeling on the window-sill, stretched his head out, trying not only to hear but to see. The tune was distinct now. It was a light and merry one; but somehow the very lightness of it made it the more pathetic in the misty grayness of the London street. It was the tune which Clement had made years ago—"to fit the picture," as he said. Dumaresq's heart beat audibly to himself, as the notes were repeated more distinctly. He knew in a moment that only one person in the world could play that tune, and that the time had come at last for which he had hungered these weary years.

He left the window, forgetting to shut it, left the room door open too, so that the draught made the lamp on the table flicker and flare. He ran downstairs, as he had never run since he was a boy, opened the great heavy hall door, and went straight up to the wandering musician. He only saw his boy; he never even noticed that a dark-eyed, curly-headed child was holding on to his coat with both her little hands; holding on fondly to the one dear thing in

"Clement—you've come home—at last, my boy!" the father panted out, breathless with his haste. "I've looked for you, wanted you all this while—come in—come in—out of this cold."

He had one hand in his, the other was holding the violin. He clasped the arm, however, since the hand was full. He drew him towards the open door behind them. It was Clement; a moment would have satisfied him of this if he had ever doubted; but seven years of want and folly had wasted him to a shadow. Gemma's great eyes, as they had been in the last months of her life, looked out of his thin, brown, handsome young face, and if he had needed any appeal would have made his father's heart yearn over him.

"But stay, father," the young man said, drawing back a moment to bring forward the little figure half hidden behind him. "Here is another come to ask you to take her in."

Dumaresq stooped and lifted her in his arms without a word. He led the way, carrying the child, who trembled a little, but neither cried nor spoke. Clement followed him; they went silently up the broad dark staircase, silently entered the room from which the young man had rushed seven years ago. Dumaresq drew the old-fashioned sofa close to the fire, stirred it to a blaze, shut the window, and placed the child gently in one corner. Clement sank on the other; he was too exhausted in body for mental emotion; he only glanced up once at the ruined picture. The little girl called out with delight at the warmth, and spread out her eager little hands to it. She was still shuddering with the cold, and with a certain sensitive timidity which was not exactly shyness. Dumaresq stood a moment to look at her, as the firelight flashed on her small oval face, and was reflected in her wonderful dark eyes. He gave a sort of stifled cry at last, a hungry cry of delight.

"Clement," he said, "do you know! do you see? She has your mother's face!"

And kneeling down on the rug before her, he took the thin little arms and put them round his neck; his grey hair touched her thick, crisp, dark curls; he kissed her passionately.

Clement looked at them with a wistful, melancholy smile.

"Yes, I saw that," he said; "I think that was why I came. I thought I would give her to you, for I shan't stay long with her, and her mother's dead. I felt that I must come home and tell you."

"Don't tell me anything yet," the father said, turning from the child with a gesture, as if he would gladly have taken his son into his arms too, only the long habit of reserve forbade. "I'll take it all—everything—for granted, at any rate till you're well. Everything shall stop till then."

"I shall never be well," the young man answered indifferently; "and now that I'm home, and have seen you, I don't mind about that. The child's a good child—I give her to you."

Dumaresq sat down and took her on his knee. She leant her sleepy head on his breast; her little hand rested confidently on his for the first time. Clement leant back as if he had come to

the end of all strength and power of endurance; not unhappy or in pain, only worn out. His deep pathetic eyes were fixed on the picture. He said in a low dreamy voice: "Ah, how often I've thought of it! The poor Claude you were so fond of, I couldn't face you again when I came to myself—it was too much!"

"Clement!" his father cried in an anguish of reproach. "As if it were more to me than you!"

"But, you see, I did not know. I thought I had quite done for myself. I did not know till now what you were, father. But something told me to come and bring the child, I believe. I thought she would make up for it all; for the loss of that. I call her Claudia."

Dumaresq stretched out the hand that had held the child, whose eyes had closed on his breast, and took his son's in a close and tender grasp. They looked at each other sadly but fondly, and the long distrust, the unavailing remorse, the folly, and the waste were forgotten in the first touch of souls which had never met before.

So without any formal explanations, and with but few words of any kind, Clement and his child were taken to his father's heart and home. Each felt that it was not for long, but it was a peaceful and a gentle pause before the parting. Clement watched, as day after day he lost a little of his poor remaining strength, how the child grew and flourished like a happily transplanted flower; and he saw how she had won her way at once into the warmest niche of his father's heart. She made the quiet rooms gay with her innocent laughter; she had a thousand pretty winning ways and tricks of loving. A hand-to-mouth struggle for existence had given her docility and patience; and she was born with a sunny, loving heart. Louis Dumaresq forgot the weary years between at times, and almost fancied that this was his own little daughter—Gemma's daughter. His work was light now, for he had a purpose in it. His money went to buy comforts for Clement; pretty frocks, toys, trinkets for the little one. She never found him cold or stern; he had not a word of repression for her; she had nothing but gentle looks and caressing tones—the proper nourishment for her sensitive, tender, little soul. It was Clement who was quiet and silent now; his days of storm and sunshine were over; he waited calmly, and felt only tired. He had done little with his

gift of genius; but he could scarcely regret it, he was too languid for regrets. Only one last work he had set himself to do, and for that he braced all that was left him of energy, and forced his weary spirits to his secret task. When it was done, and he put down his brush, he said: "Now I can rest; there's nothing left to do."

That evening Dumaresq found his little Claudia waiting on the landing for him, trembling with eagerness, which quivered all through her finely-strung frame. She seized his hand.

"Oh, I've been listening and waiting for you so long! I thought you would never come! There's a surprise for you in there—father's surprise—and I've never told. I said I never would till it was done. Come, come, let me show it you!"

He followed her as she pulled him in with all her little strength, hurrying his steps. He looked first, as he always did now, with anxious glances at his son, who was lying back on the sofa with his arms clasped behind his head. It gave him a pang to see how every day left him whiter, thinner, more brilliant-eyed. There were surely tears, too, behind the drooping lids. But Claudia drew his attention away. "Look up!" she cried, "over there. Not at father; the surprise is there!" And her little finger pointed above the mantel-piece where the Claude had hung, where the frame still hung, but enclosing no longer the spoilt landscape with its wreck of beauty. The frame held now a little wistful face surrounded by a mass of curls, an oval face with soft, deep, tender eyes, and a half open, half smiling mouth.

"Clement!" his father said, and no more, his voice choked, and he put his hand over his eyes. Claudia pulled at the other, crying in disappointed tones:

"Don't you like it? Aren't you pleased? It's me, your little Claudia. I've kept the secret to surprise you. Father's painted me a little every day, and I've sat so still. Don't you like me there, instead of the poor, pretty picture father spoilt when he was naughty, and he was so sorry about? Don't you like it, grandfather?"

He stooped and kissed her.

"Yes, yes, my little Claudia; so much, I cannot talk about it. It is the sweetest picture in the world."

He left the child, who turned well pleased to her doll, and sat down beside Clement, putting his arm half shyly round his shoulders, thus half embracing him.

"I could not bear to see it always

like that," the son whispered, "it was too hateful a reminder. I thought, I fancied if I could put her there instead, you would be pleased. Claudia instead of Claude," he added with a curious little smile. "Will it do instead, father?"

"God bless you, boy! You've made me very happy, and better days are coming—you can paint still. You'll make a man yet."

He did not see the silent shake of the head. Clement said nothing; but he knew that the shadow was deepening, that his brush was laid down for ever, that the rest he wanted was close at hand.

"I have made it all up," he said to himself with weary satisfaction; "I leave him Claudia."

BELZONI.

BELZONI has not had half justice done to him. More than one wealthy traveller, who never attempted anything beyond going up the Nile in his comfortable, well-provisioned dahabieh, being hoisted on Arab shoulders to the top of the Great Pyramid, and taking a hasty glance at Luxor and the valley of the Tombs of the Kings, has, when he returned home, developed a taste for Egyptology; and, after skimming the cream of half-a-dozen learned treatises, has written a book, and has got more talked of than the man who first made Egyptology possible for English people. Napoleon's French savans had done a good deal for science, but the way they went to work was not calculated to smooth the path of those who came after them. They had any amount of armed force at their back; and therefore those for whom armed force was not forthcoming would fare but badly, especially among Arabs, whose commonest proverb is: "The stick came down from heaven." Nevertheless, without any armed force whatsoever, Belzoni managed to do a great deal more than the French had done; while, considering his antecedents, it is a marvel that he was able to do anything at all.

For Belzoni was an acrobat, and a giant to boot; the sort of man who at good, old-fashioned fairs exhibits inside the tent, while a man with a drum calls attention to the inviting picture of him hanging up outside. He was born in Padua in 1778, the son of a Roman barber who had settled in that city. At Rome he was brought up to be a monk, but, he remarks, "the sudden entry of the French altered the course of

my education." Monks seemed at a discount, and the Revolution made young men restless, and so, "being destined to travel, I went off, and have been a wanderer ever since." He came to England in 1803, and lived here nine years; but he does not tell us that during that time he went about the streets like the acrobat of my schoolboy days, who was often to be met with in void spaces around the Tower or by Spitalfields Square, and who, after swallowing fire and pulling out of his mouth shavings enough to stuff a small sack, would appeal for additional funds with the tempting assurance, never fulfilled, —in my experience at least: "Sixpence more and up goes the donkey!" There is a sketch in the British Museum (Sadler's Wells, vol. xiv.) of Belzoni's booth at Camberwell and Bartholomew Fair in the same year in which he arrived in England. He was six feet seven in height, and correspondingly broad, with a pleasing face and winning manners—altogether a very comfortable, well-proportioned giant, and as an acrobat he went about the London streets and attended the London fairs till he got an engagement at Astley's. Here he posed both as Apollo and as Hercules, in the latter capacity wielding leaden weights beyond the power of ordinary men to lift. He also took to himself a wife of the same gigantic proportions, and when the season at Astley's was over the two went through England exhibiting themselves, the husband trying to combine engineering with his mountebank's work. He had studied hydraulics at Rome, and had really made some improvements in water-engines, but he did not get much encouragement, and the Hercules tricks were very wearing. So in 1812 he made a tour of Spain and Portugal in the capacity of Samson. From Malta he, and his wife embarked for Egypt in 1815, and there, to sum up his discoveries in his own words, he "succeeded in opening one of the two famous Pyramids of Ghizeh, as well as several of the tombs of the kings at Thebes. One of these, pronounced by the best scholars to be the tomb of Psammuthis, is the most perfect and splendid monument in that country. The celebrated bust of the young Memnon, which I brought from Thebes, is now in the British Museum; and the alabaster sarcophagus, found in one of the tombs of the kings, is on its way to England. Near the Second Cataract of the Nile I opened the temple of Ybaambul; then journeyed to the coast of the Red

Sea to the city of Berenice, and afterwards visited the western oasis." That is the simple, unpretending record of nearly five years' hard work, accompanied with unexampled success as a discoverer. When he got to Europe he found, he says, so many erroneous statements about his discoveries that he "felt bound to publish a plain statement of facts; and if any one should call its correctness in question, I hope they will do it openly, that I may be able to prove the truth of my assertions." A little in the showman style this: "There's no deception, gentlemen. You can step up and see for yourselves; and if you're not satisfied that it is as I say, why, you can have your money back again." He writes in English, "though the reader will with great propriety consider him guilty of temerity, because he would rather describe his proceedings himself than run the risk of having his meaning misrepresented by another." No doubt his acrobat life had something to do with his contentiousness; while his want of education accounts for the prominence which he gives to his quarrels with French and German interlopers, and to his suspicion of Mr. Salt, our consul, who supplied him with funds for removing the Memnon.

These details detract from the pleasure of reading his book; at the same time they show what real difficulties—smoothed away for explorers nowadays—he managed to surmount.

But how did he get his first start? He does not tell much, though he is not quite so reticent about his beginnings in Egypt as about his early life in England. Some say he "tumbled" into favour with Mehemet Ali, winning the heart of that rather grim sovereign by feats of agility. He, on the contrary, says that what took him to Egypt was his hydraulic knowledge. He proposed, as so many since have done, to better the system of irrigation which has lasted since the Pharaohs. It is quite certain that before long he got an order to set up an improved hydraulic engine in the gardens of the Shubra Palace; for Mehemet Ali was wonderfully accessible to Europeans, and somehow Belzoni had an introduction to M. Baghos, the chief interpreter and director of all foreign affairs.

When he landed in June, 1815, the plague was raging in Alexandria, and he and his wife were put in quarantine.

"Fortunately St. John's Day, when the plague is supposed to cease, was not far off," is his remark on this trying occasion:

and he explains that it is not the saint, but the season, which checks the disease, great heat stamping it out as effectually as cold. Their only anxiety was to hide the sickness which really did seize them both as soon as they got into their lodgings. "Had it been known that we were ill, they'd have set us down as plague-stricken, killed us *secundum artem*, and added us to the tale of victims. Nobody, during the plague, is thought to die of anything else."

After the 24th they got away, and, passing Aboukir with its heaps of fresh human bones, settled at Boulak, close to Cairo, in a house so ruinous that its condition stood them in good stead when the place was plundered by a party of mutinous troops.

While waiting to be presented to the Bashaw, Belzoni managed to see the sun rise from the top of the Great Pyramid, and to visit those of Saccara and Dajior, and to meet the great traveller Burekhardt, a meeting to which we owe a good many of our best Egyptian antiquities. Riding up to the citadel with M. Baghos to see Mehemet Ali, he admired "the majestic appearance of the Turkish soldiers;" but soon found that looks are not everything, for one of these noble-looking fellows, passing on horseback, managed, out of pure spite, to cut two inches of flesh out of his leg with the sharp corner of his shovel-like stirrup. The wound was so serious that it kept him prisoner a whole month; and when "Ali Bashaw" noticed his limp and learned the cause, he simply said: "such accidents will happen when troops are about." The soldiers just then hated the very look of a Frank, for Ali was trying to teach them European drill. There was a mutiny about this not long after, and the attempt had to be given up; the mutineers getting off scot-free, though Belzoni remarks that just then there came on an unaccountable mortality among the high officers of the army.

By-and-by, after he had got into high favour with Ali, our traveller was nearly killed by a bimbaashi, out of whose way he could not get, a loaded camel filling up the street. The bimbaashi (lieutenant) gave him a blow in the stomach, which he repaid by cutting him over the naked shoulders with his whip. "The fellow then took out his pistol. I jumped off my ass; but the shot singed the hair near my right ear, and killed one of his own soldiers, who was getting behind me. He took out a second pistol; but his own men disarmed him." This was a narrow escape: for just then

the daughter of Chevalier Bocty, Swedish consul-general, was riding with a party of ladies, her mother among them, to get a bath, when a soldier shot her dead out of pure wantonness.

There was great trouble in getting his machine, which was to do with one ox as much as the native engines did with four, set up. Nobody would work for him; the smiths and carpenters argued that, if he succeeded, where three engines were used there would be only need for one, and so their trade would suffer. Still he persevered, though the sight of a hydraulic machine, worth £10,000, which had been sent out as a present to Ali, and was quietly allowed to rust away where it had been unpacked, was not encouraging. Belzoni's engine, however, did begin work in the presence of Ali and a body of experts; and everybody admitted that it did at least as much work as four of the machines in use. "But then," said the Pasha, "it'll cost four times as much;" and the deputy-governors, who would only have the control of 100 oxen, and a man to each ox, where now they had 400, were determined that it should not come into use. Mehemet's love of practical jokes, however, settled the question. A man who spent all his time with buffoons, and had been more pleased with the shock that Belzoni gave him after he had repaired an electrical machine that had long been lying useless, than with all his irrigation plans, thought nothing of ordering the oxen in the wheel to be replaced by men. Fifteen were put in, and along with them would go Curtin, the young Irish lad whom Belzoni had taken with him from England. But the moment the thing moved, out jumped all the Arabs, and of course the weight of the water sent the wheel spinning backwards so rapidly that the catch couldn't hold it. Curtin was thrown out and got a broken thigh, "and would have been crushed to death had not I managed to stop the engine." This accident was fatal: "It was not the will of Allah that the Frank machine should go on working in Egypt."

The question now was: should he go back to Europe, or take the opportunity of seeing some of the wonders of the land? He would have to economise; for, unlike his successors, Mehemet was a bad paymaster. "All that was due to me from the Bashaw was consigned to oblivion;" and Consuls-General in those days were not powerful enough to enforce even a just claim. He counted the cost, and found that he could manage to go—of course

with Mrs. Belzoni—to Assouan and back; but when he went to Mr. Salt, our Consul-General, for a firman, the Consul asked him if he would undertake to convey to Alexandria the bust of "the little Memnon," which had been lying inside a temple at Gournou near Thebes, ever since the French severed it from its body with the view of carrying it off. Belzoni is very anxious to prove that he got from Salt none of his personal expenses, nothing but the bare cost of getting the bust to the water's edge and putting it on board; and of this he said that Burckhardt, who had long been trying to persuade Ali to send the thing as a present to the Prince Regent, told Mr. Salt he would pay half. Salt's letter, given at full length, is certainly—as poor Belzoni says—"in an assuming" (and amusingly dictatorial) "style," but there is not a word in it about payment to the explorer. Be this as it may, Belzoni's work is an instance of what tact and imperturbable good-humour will accomplish in spite of every kind of drawback. The French ex-consul, Drouetti, was very anxious to send the Memnon to its original destination, the Louvre; and he managed, by small presents, to make Cacheffs and Kaimakans thwart Belzoni in all sorts of ways, even to the extent of putting in chains the workmen with whom they themselves had provided him.

It was very provoking. The Nile was beginning to rise; and, unless the Memnon could be speedily moved to the causeway by the river, there would be no chance of getting it off till next year. There was Belzoni, marvelling at Thebes, "that City of Giants," in a hut in which he had placed his wife, fretting himself into an intermittent fever at the trickery and delays, at last getting together a few men, who all thought the bust must be full of gold, and proposed to blow it in pieces instead of dragging it along. Then came the triumph of moving it a few feet, and the joy of tilting it on to the cart, which his Greek carpenter had prepared for it! It goes steadily on, not making much way, for it is Ramadan, and the wonder is how the poor fellaheen can work at all when they don't taste food till sundown. The river is not far off; they have reached the middle of the marsh which lies between it and Gournou, when, one morning, not a man appears. "How is this! It means absolute ruin. If the water comes up while we're in this soft ground, Memnon will get embedded so deeply that all the Bashaw's men—they don't use draught

horses out there—won't be able to get him out again. Bah! these smooth-spoken Turks are all the politer the more determined they are not to do what they promise." Happily, Mrs. Belzoni's health was splendid, far better than her husband's. She hadn't got young Memnon on her mind, and "she was constantly among the women in the tombs," learning the "Manners and Customs," which form such an interesting appendix to her husband's book. So she could be safely left while Belzoni crossed to Luxor, in quest of "that rogue of a Kaimakan, who had ordered the fellahs not to work for the Christian dogs any longer." This time the Kaimakan was the very reverse of polite; he exhausted on the mothers of the whole of Frangistan all the flowers of Eastern Billingsgate; and, encouraged by Belzoni's patience, "for my patience was great," he tried to lay hands on him, and, when the good-humoured giant resisted, actually drew his sword. This was going too far. "Before he could think of his pistols I had seized and disarmed him, my janizary taking up the weapons, and after keeping the fellow in the corner, kneeling on his stomach and giving him a good shaking, I said I should send his arms to Cairo to show the Bashaw how his orders were executed." The Kaimakan thereupon became very humble, and said he was only doing as the Cacheff bade him; so off went Belzoni to Erments, and coming in just at dinner-time had to take his part in the scramble for roast mutton and pilau, at which Hadjis and Santons went with sleeves tucked up to the elbows. "The men must work for the Bashaw," said the Cacheff, when with the coffee came the time for opening up the subject. "Be content till next season." "Very well; you refuse, and I'll get men from Luxor, and then you'll lose the merit of helping in the work. To Luxor I'll return this very night." "Nor need you fear the night journey with such a fine pair of English pistols as those in your belt." "They are yours, Cacheff, if you please; but I've written to Cairo for a far finer pair, which are on their way to you."

The Cacheff put his hands on my knees, and saying: "We shall be friends," dictated a firman for all the men Belzoni wanted and sealed it forthwith. And so, despite Drouetti, the statue was got to the Nile bank before the waters had risen.

While waiting for a big boat to put it in, Belzoni felt he must see something more of Egyptian wonders: and so, passing

Ombos, Dakke, and all the now well-known places "where the fellahs' huts inside the temples look as mean as wasps' nests," he gets to Ybsambul (Abu-Simbel they now call it), with the six colossi, each 30 feet high, sitting at its doorway. The doorway was so blocked with sand, that not till his second voyage, when he had the help of Captains Irby and Mangles and Mr. Beechey, did he manage to get inside. In the British Museum as it was (I don't know how it is now), the walls of an upstairs Egyptian room were covered with frescoes worked up from the sketches which Belzoni copied under difficulties (with the thermometer at 130 deg.) in one of the rooms in this temple. This opening up of the great temple he thought a grand triumph; for everything had to be done by influence, money being of little use up there in Nubia. When he held up a piastre the sheiks laughed and said: "Who'll give six grains of dhourra for a bit of iron like that?" One thing was in his favour—the people had none of the Arab fear of the supernatural. "They are so accustomed to be among the mummies, that they think no more of sitting on them than on the skins of their dead calves. I, too, became indifferent about them at last, and would have slept in a mummy-pit just as readily as out of it."

This time the temple remained sealed; and Mr. and Mrs. Belzoni made their way up to the Second Cataract, sleeping on one of the islands, among a strangely primitive people, to whom a looking-glass was a marvel of marvels. On his way down, Belzoni landed at Philoë, and found that a beautiful bas-relief group of sixteen blocks of stone, of which he had taken possession and which he had cut thin for convenience of shipment, had been mutilated by some rival curio-hunter, who had scrawled "opération manquée" on several of the blocks. "Drouetti again, or one of his agents"; and Belzoni's endeavours to bring them to justice for this and other misdeeds, take up a good deal of his second volume. Indeed this Drouetti business so worried him that his last word, in September 1819, was: "Thank God, we are embarked for Europe; not that I dislike the country, on the contrary, I've reason to be grateful. Nor do I complain of Turks and Arabs in general, but of some Europeans out there, whose conduct and mode of thinking are a disgrace to human nature." Unhappily the number of such scoundrel Franks is increased several hundredfold since Belzoni's day; they are

a curse to Egypt and a reproach to Christianity.* What astonishes me is how the Roman barber's son picked up English enough to write so fluently, unless indeed he was helped by Mrs. B., who, when he went a second time up the Nile, said: "Go to Thebes again I would not," and who actually managed (while he was gone) to see Syria and the Holy Land, getting into the temple at Jerusalem (the Mosque of Omar, of which she gives a plan), and losing her shoes in so doing. Anyhow, her style is very like his in its bitterness; she talks of "a countryman of mine" (who had laughed at her stories about Nubian women), as one "whose merit lies in low buffoonery, caricaturing, and imitating like a monkey those in whose company he has been, particularly unprotected females and old men."

There is plenty more in Belzoni's book—how he moved out of the tomb of Seti I., at Karnak, the splendid alabaster sarcophagus for which Sir J. Soane (in whose Museum it is) gave him £2,000; how he hit on a door in the Second Pyramid of Ghizeh, which, since Herodotus's day, had been supposed to be solid, and found in it the sarcophagus of Chephrenes; how he got from Philoë island and sent down as far as Rosetta the big obelisk which Dr. Erasmus Wilson afterwards brought to the Thames Embankment, and this despite the mishap of seeing the pier, from which it was to be shipped, slip down into the Nile—obelisk and all. All this is told in his pleasant way, with much vituperation of "Rossignano the Renegade" and his master, Drouetti, and some signs of jealousy because Consul Salt got so much glory out of matters in which all the hard work had been his.

He is specially proud of his trip to the Red Sea and identification of the City of Berenice; and he insists that the oasis which he visited was really that of Jupiter Ammon. There he had to tell the sheiks, who had heard of his finding in one temple a golden cock filled with precious stones, that he was not come for treasure, but to ascertain, by collecting inscribed stones, whether the ancestors of his nation had or had not come from those parts.

Visiting Italy on his way back to England, he was made much of by the Paduans, to whom he gave two Egyptian statues. They set up a monument to him and struck a gold medal (now in the British Museum)

* "For the Land of Egypt is alle fulle of Devyls and Fiendes that were cleepen Bondholders."—Mr. Lang to Sir J. Maundeville in "Letters to Dead Authors."

with a commemorative inscription. In England he opened the Egyptian Hall, and therein exhibited a model, from drawings and wax impressions, of the two chambers of Seti's tomb. This was also exhibited in Paris, where nobody paid much attention to it. At Berlin, however, his idea was acted upon—the Egyptian museum there is partly underground and exactly represents a series of tomb chambers. Taken in hand by that art-patron, the Duke of Sussex, Belzoni might have lived in honourable comfort in England; but such a man, whose suspicion of Mr. Salt shows eccentricity, if not wrong-headedness, could not rest quietly. "Destined to travel," he determined to prove the old theory that the Nile and Niger are one river; and getting funds from the firm of Briggs at Alexandria, and failing to obtain leave to go through Morocco, he began from Cape Coast, the King of Benin giving him his royal stick in sign of full authority. But Mrs. Belzoni was not there to look after him, and he died of dysentery at Gato, in December, 1823.

Considering Belzoni's origin, one cannot help rating him as the most extraordinary of Egyptologists. He opened the road for Lepsius, Mariette, Brugsch Bey, and the rest; and the genial way in which he accepted his early position in England without accepting degradation along with it (as too many Englishmen would have done under like circumstances), doing his best as a mountebank, yet never losing sight of better things, contains a wholesome lesson.

VICTIMS.

By THEO GIFT.

Author of "*Lil Lorimer*," "*An Alibi and its Price*,"
Etc., Etc.

CHAPTER XVI.

"ON ALL SIDES SORE BESET."

"VERA, is that you, my dear? What a long time you have been out to-day! I've been watching for you to come in this half hour. Your papa wants you."

It was getting late in November; the sapphire blue summer sea had been exchanged for grey, foam-capped waves, which raged and thundered against the black rocks of Penmar'che and the Pointe du Raz, and on stormy days made the echoes of their roaring heard as far as Les Châtaigniers and even Pont l'Abbé. The heather had shed all its pretty purple bells, and only a solitary yellow flower showed here and there on the gorse bushes dotting

the wide moorland stretches, made weird and mystic by the presence of strange, grim-looking menhirs, monuments of a past age, baring their heads against a windy sky, and keeping their strong feet warm with withered bracken and silvered moss.

Vera's daily walk, however, led her for choice along the lanes where there was at least shelter to be had, and where, now and again, the fading oak-leaves in the hedgerow above flung out a golden wreath, and, mingling with the blood-red streamers of wild raspberry and blackberry branches, lent a touch of colour to the landscape which would have delighted an artist's eye. They gave little comfort to Vera, however, and she was looking chilled and tired as she came into the hall, and dropped wearily on to the nearest chair in order that P'tit-Jean, who, unsuspected little traitor that he was, was specially deputed by Madame to attend the young lady in her walks, might remove her goloshes. Her mother's words made her look up with a nervous start.

"Papa wants me, mamma? What for? I haven't done anything to vex him, have I?"

"Why, what should make you think so, you foolish child?"

But though Madame smiled as she asked the question, the merriment was decidedly forced, and there was a paleness in her cheeks and a curious twitching about the mouth which had Vera noticed them, might have roused her wonder. "You are always fancying evils beforehand, Vera; but just now I believe your papa has something very—very pleasant to say to you. So come along with me, and don't look frightened."

"Mamma!" cried Vera. In a moment the blood had rushed into her pale face making it scarlet. A vision of Marstland in the study, of her father relenting and telling them to be happy, rose before her and dazzled her eyes. She could hardly speak. "Mamma, oh, is it——"

"You are not to ask me what it is. Your papa will tell you. But, indeed, Vera, it is great good fortune, and I hope you will feel it so," Madame St. Laurent said impressively; but her voice shook, and though she came beside her daughter and smoothed her hair, which the wind had ruffled, she did not look at her, and seemed to avoid the touch of the girl's appealing hand.

"Come, dear," she said with a curious catch in her breath, which even Vera noticed with increasing excitement, and

led the way quickly to her husband's study at the back of the house.

There was no Marstland there at all events, and the room looked comfortless enough, with no fire, and the uncurtained windows staring out on a vista of untidy "basse-cour," dilapidated hay-ricks, and grey sky, while M. St. Laurent himself, clad in an old dressing-gown and with his feet on a "chaufferette," scarcely wore as promising an aspect as his wife's words foretold; but as Vera entered, looking about her with wide, eager eyes, and a rapidly beating heart, he smiled in what was certainly meant to be an encouraging manner, and said, with even an attempt at joviality:

"Eh, well, little cat, so here you are! And what have you to say for yourself. for I suppose you know very well what I have sent for you for?"

"Papa, have you consented?" cried Vera huskily. It was cruel. The girl's expression was lovely at the moment; her eyes at once radiant and suffused; her lips apart; the pink colour coming and going in her cheek. Even Madame, cold as she was, could not bear to look at her, but bent nervously over the knitting which she had taken up on seating herself. Only Monsieur remained unmoved, and observed jocularly:

"Consented! Ma foi! one is not left much choice when it is a question of one's daughter becoming a Countess, and one of the richest women in Finisterre. Ah, the poor old father and mother will be put in the shade entirely. They have done what they could for their child hitherto, and now it is she to condescend to them; but there! she is a good girl with all her little faults, and parents must not be selfish. My daughter, I congratulate you!"

Vera had put out one hand to the nearest chair as if for support. It was an involuntary movement, a grasping at anything by which she could hold in that moment of reaction in which a great gulf appeared to open before her; a gulf across which she seemed to see, not Marstland's face any longer, but the Count's, with that look in it from which—while not even comprehending its meaning—she had shrunk with instinctive repugnance. A mist came over her eyes, so tender in their bashful joyousness a moment back, and she stammered out:

"Papa, I—I don't understand."

"Not understand! Nay, then, fillette, there is no need to affect that little air of astonishment with your parents. It will be very pretty and in the right place for the Count when he comes; but you are

not a 'bébé' to have misunderstood his attentions to you of late; though perhaps you were hardly prepared to hear already that he has done you the honour of proposing to us for your hand."

"For me! The Count! Oh, papa, he can't really mean it!" Vera cried incredulously. "Why, he is quite—quite old! He has always been your friend."

Her father's lips curled ironically. Poor Vera had a knack of saying the wrong thing with him.

"All the better reason for his being yours, my dear. A sensible girl finds her best friends among those who are her father's already. It is a tribute to both of us, that having been my best friend so long the Count should now wish to make himself yours; and I hope you will thank him for it in your prettiest style when he comes to you this evening for his answer."

"I ought to thank him, I suppose; but—but what do you mean by my 'answer,' papa?" Vera asked, her eyes beginning to fill and her lips to tremble. "I can't—he must know I can't do anything but thank him. I——"

"And nothing more is required of you, petite," Monsieur interrupted blandly. "The word was in truth a silly one, seeing that we, your parents, and the only persons having the right to dispose of your hand, have already answered him and in the one way possible. The Count is a man of the world, and can appreciate the modesty proper to a young lady in your position. It is a great thing for a little girl like you to become a Countess, Vera."

"Yes, I know, but I couldn't—I couldn't—— Indeed, I am sure he means to be kind," Vera faltered, the tears coming fast now; "but I don't want to be great, and I never thought of him for a moment in that way. I never could. Papa, you know——"

"I know? Truly, Mademoiselle, you pay too great a compliment to my spicuity, and I must ask you to explain yourself. I call you here to inform you of the happy and prosperous future in store for you—one indeed which will cause you to be the envy of every girl in the department—and in reply you make me a scene! See now, I am not fond of scenes; but you are young, and young girls are apt to be silly and hysterical when taken by surprise. I am willing therefore to believe that you were surprised a moment back; but now that you have had time to reflect and take in the good fortune proposed to you, I

should like to hear what you have against it, or more particularly against the Comte de Maily in the character of your husband. It appears to me that you have been very willing to receive him in that of an admirer."

Vera's cheeks were crimson.

"Papa, indeed I never intended to do so. I never thought or dreamt of such a thing. Why, he has been coming here so long, ever since I was a little girl. I thought it was to see you only. How could I fancy anything else?"

"Ah, bah! Girls have fancies which they do not always confess, even to their directors; though, by-the-way, you, poor unfortunate, have not got one. Never mind, the Count will alter all that, I dare say, and a good thing too. At any rate let there be no fancies now. I, your father, tell you in so many words that this gentleman, your oldest friend as you say, wishes to marry you. Your mother and I have given our consent. All you have got to do is to repeat it in whatever pretty words occur to you. Voilà, the affair is settled. That will do."

"But I cannot—I cannot. Oh, mamma, won't you speak to papa for me?" Vera exclaimed, crouching suddenly down by her mother and clinging to her. "If it had been earlier even, before—but now you know it is impossible; that he—Dr. Marstrand cared for me first. Oh! I know you sent him away, and I have tried not to fret, to be patient. I thought if we waited—if you ever knew him better—I could never, never marry anyone else."

Vera's voice was choked in weeping, and Madame St. Laurent, putting one arm round her, looked appealingly at her husband. He only answered the mute entreaty, however, with an angry stare, and, turning to Vera, said, in a tone of biting sarcasm more cutting than a lash: "So, Mademoiselle, this is the secret of your extraordinary conduct! You are still then thinking of that adventurer whom I chased from my house long enough ago, as I hoped, for you to have forgotten his name, even if shame did not prevent you from recalling it. But you, it seems, have neither shame nor decency, and it is I who have to blush for my daughter—my daughter who has the hardiness to tell me that she waits—waits for a man she has seen half-a-dozen times; an impertinent who was probably amusing himself with her, and who has been kicked out of her father's house for his presumption! If a man of honour

like De Mailly were to hear this, it might well be that he would withdraw from his offer altogether, and——”

“Oh, papa, papa! but he ought to hear it; he ought to know; he must!” cried Vera, lifting her head quickly from her mother’s knees, and speaking with a kind of trembling, desperate eagerness which found a momentary support in the mere feel of the maternal arm which was still around her. “It would not be right to let him think that I—that I—and I cannot help it. It was before I knew—and I know—I know that he is waiting too. I could never—— Mamma, won’t you have pity? Won’t you tell him? Oh, you must know I—I couldn’t be—shameless as papa says!”

The girl had broken down altogether. She was shaking all over, cold as ice, and sobbing in great gasps like some drowning creature. Madame St. Laurent almost lifted her on to her feet, and, turning to her husband, said imploringly:

“St. Laurent, let me take her away. It is no good saying anything more while she is in this excited state. She will see things differently afterwards, when I have talked to her a little. Come, Vera; hush! Your papa will let you go to your room for awhile.”

She led the girl away as she spoke, emboldened by getting no more decided negative from her husband than an angry growl; but directly they were outside the door Vera’s unwonted agitation overcame her. She turned faint, and her mother had to call Joanna, and between them to carry her to bed.

It was palpably impossible to say any more to her either then, or when, the faintness having passed off, the girl’s overstrained nerves found vent in hysterical weeping. Even Joanna observed that it would be “sheer cruelty to go on at her again that afternoon, at any rate; leastways, unless they wanted to drive the child into a fever.” But as, under these circumstances, it was equally impossible for her to receive the Count that evening, as had been intended, it became necessary for M. St. Laurent to go over to Mailly and put his friend off, on the plea of Vera’s illness, a severe chill—it was decided to call it—caught during her walk in the lanes that afternoon.

For the rest of that day, therefore, Vera was left in peace, and allowed to stay in her room, where she spent the time lying on her bed, crying sometimes over this

unlooked-for complication in her fate; but at others thanking God, in her ignorance, at having, as she thought, got over it with no worse result, and even a little proud at having found courage to do battle, however feebly, for the love to which she had pledged herself. One appeal for sympathy she did make; not to her mother, who after the work of restoring her had been partially successful, kept away from the room, as if on purpose to avoid further words on the subject, but to Joanna who brought her up her dinner, rather invitingly set out on a little tray, and insisted on cuddling her up in a big shawl while she ate it, observing, in a gruffly good-natured way, that it was no use for folks to be sick or starve themselves because they made other folks angry with them.

Vera looked up, her cheeks a moment back so pale, blushing vividly.

“Is papa still so angry then?” she asked nervously. “I suppose you know why it is—that mamma has told you?”

“I didn’t need your ma to tell me, Vera. Of course I know. Your pa has made up a fine match for you, and you’re silly enough not to be pleased with it. It’s enough to make anyone angry. Why, lor’ bless the child! what more d’you want?”

“I don’t want the Count,” said Vera decisively. “Why, Joanna, I wonder at you. He’s nearly as old as papa, and so stout and bald! I don’t believe anyone would have dreamt of his wanting to marry a girl like me. Now would they truly, Joanna? Is it even natural?”

“I don’t know anything about ‘natural,’” said Joanna with some embarrassment; “but as to dreaming, I’ve never dreamt of anything else this long time; nor I don’t suppose has anyone in the neighbourhood. Where were your own eyes, Vera, not to see it for yourself? And I thought you did see it. You’ve seemed to look to his visits a good deal of late.”

“Because they made papa more cheerful, and because, when it is so dull, any visitor is pleasant,” said Vera with doleful frankness. “I should never have cared to see him even once if there had been anyone else. Why, I quite disliked him when I was a little girl, and I thought mamma did too. Besides, if he were ever so nice, I shouldn’t want to marry him. I shall never marry anyone but—but the gentleman you saw in London; and oh, Joanna, how can you even talk of the Count when you did see him; when you know how different they are!”

"I should think they was different!" said Joanna curtly. "An' it's you I wonder at, Vera, comparing that cheeky young chap with a respectable gentleman like the Count, who can give you a mint of money, and make a lady of title of you into the bargain. Why, think o' that! Just to hear it would ha' made your grandfather get out of his grave with pride, and here are you turning up your nose as if you was a born Duchess. As for that other one, I don't believe he meant a bit of good, and if you ask me I tell you so plainly. Doctor, indeed, he called hisself! A man as couldn't speak civilly to a respectable female when he saw one. Medical student, more likely, I should say, with all that hair an' moustache; and if you'd ever lived servant in a house where six on 'em boarded, as I did, you'd know what sort they are. The rampagousest, devil-may-care lot as ever you see; and thinkin' no more of gettin' young girls into trouble and ruinin' them than of drinking brandy of a mornin'. 'See him!' Bless you, I saw through him the first moment I clapped eyes on him, an' you might ha' knocked me down with a feather when I see those Josephses letting him make free with you in the way he did. You may thank your stars and me, my child, as Mounseer don't know of it and that you're shut of him in time;" and Joanna took up the tray and marched out of the room.

Alas for poor Vera's feeler after even an old servant's sympathy! The failure of it left her more downhearted than ever; and, as soon as she was left alone, the tears came again, and she fairly cried herself to sleep.

It was late when she awoke. A little wood fire was burning in the room. Someone had put a warm wrap over her feet, and a lamp stood on the dressing-table, beside which her mother was seated working. The girl started up half dazed, thinking at first that it was the middle of the night, and wondering why her head ached so, and why she had been sleeping in her clothes; but before she could do more than push the damp hair back off her poor swollen eyes, and utter a half inarticulate exclamation, Madame St. Laurent was at her side, speaking kindly and giving her a cup of tea.

"What is the matter, mamma? Is it late?" Vera asked hazily.

"It is just ten. You ought to be in bed; but you have had a nice long rest, and so, as I want to talk to you a little, you had better drink this and listen seri-

ously to me. You can't think, you know, Vera, that you will be allowed to go on in this way."

Vera's pale face became paler.

"Mamma," she said trembling, "you don't mean— Oh! surely papa won't persist in wanting me to marry the Count whether I like him or not?"

"We want you to be reasonable, Vera, and it is not being so to talk in that way. You do like the Count. You were only saying the other day how kind he had been in bringing you flowers."

"I know I did, mamma, because I thought that it was kindness, and not that he wanted—" Vera broke off and blushed furiously. "I should have hated him if I had thought he was thinking of me in that way."

Madame St. Laurent gave a short, impatient sigh.

"What do you mean by 'that way'?" she asked coldly. "Really, Vera, I don't know what has come over you. You hardly seem like my own child, talking in this wild, exaggerated way about hating men, and all that. It positively isn't nice to hear you."

The tears came into Vera's eyes.

"I didn't mean to be wild or exaggerated, mamma; but surely one ought not to marry a man one does not love, and I know I could never, never love the Count. Do you think I could?"

"My dear, pray don't speak so excitedly. That is just what I am saying. How can you know anything of the sort! Of course you don't love him yet. It wouldn't be seemly you should, before he has even spoken to you on the subject. No well-bred girls do such things. Nor are you asked to marry him at once; only to remember that, as you will do so some day, there is no harm in your knowing that he loves you now, and feeling affectionate and grateful to him in return. Come, my child, do not be wilful. You were ready enough a little while ago to fancy yourself in love with an almost total stranger, because he chose to pay you attention, and turned your head, I suppose, with silly compliments; while now, when a friend you've known all your life, a good, steady man, whom your parents approve of, offers to make you his wife and devote his life to you, you cry, and faint, and go on as if something dreadful was proposed to you. My dear, can't a young girl like you trust her parents to know what is best for her happiness, and take pleasure in pleasing them?"

"But does it please you then, mamma?" cried Vera, fixing her large eyes suddenly on her mother's face. "Do you think the Count would be the best person to make me happy? For that is what puzzles me. I should never have thought you would. I know papa is fond of him, that they were friends even before I was born; but I never thought you liked him, or that you wanted me to. You never seemed to do so or even to care about taking me with you to Mailly when he invited us. I used to fancy you didn't much like him to take notice of me, and I never remember your ever praising him before. But with Dr. Marstrand— Mamma, don't be angry. I wouldn't speak of him, only you did—it was, oh! so different. It is true I had not known him long; but the Josephses had, and you can't think how highly they thought of him. Mrs. Josephs was almost as fond of him as if he had been her son; and Leah—mamma, you know how clever and sensible you used to think Leah was—she always said she knew no one quite like him, so talented, and good, and upright. Indeed it was because of that, and because he seemed to care so much for her, that I first cared for him; not— not because he paid me compliments."

"Indeed!" said Madame drily.

This unwonted outburst was rather a relief to her, for her cheek had burnt uncomfortably at Vera's opening remarks. Was it not too true that, in her morbid jealousy of the Count and his pretensions, she had actually predisposed the girl against him, and helped to block the path she was now trying to open?

"This is quite a new story. So Leah Josephs was as much in love with this hero as you imagine yourself to be; and he cared for her almost as much, and was already treated like a son-in-law by her mother! Then may I ask why he didn't propose to marry her, and let you alone?"

"Indeed, mamma," said Vera simply, "I don't wonder at your asking that. I quite thought myself that he was going to propose to her; that it was almost settled, until—"

"Until he threw her over to make love to you! I suppose he thought you had money, and would be a better catch than a Jewish singing mistress with nothing but what she earned. Well, Vera, I can't say it was very genteel conduct in you to be so willing to take away your friend's lover; and I don't wonder now at her giving you up so easily."

"Mamma, what are you saying?" cried Vera, her face white as a ghost, her eyes quite wild-looking. Leah, her darling, adored Leah, in love with George Marstrand, and she—!

"My dear, it is all as plain as possible. Of course I did say that I didn't wish any acquaintance kept up; but I own till now I have wondered at her never even answering me. However, if her lover—and a fickle, worthless scamp he must be—had already jilted her for you, I dare say she was glad enough to see you gone and out of his way."

"But, mamma, indeed, indeed you are quite wrong," cried Vera, a whole wave of loving memories sweeping over her and giving her courage to protest against this cruel suggestion. "Leah never even thought of Geo— of Dr. Marstrand in that way; nor he of her. You forget that he is a Christian and she a Jewess. They would neither of them dream of marrying one another. He told me so."

"He told you! Did you ask him, Vera? Things must have gone far between them then for you to do so indelicate a thing as to question a young man on such a subject. But the more I hear of your behaviour over there the more it distresses me. And as if it was not likely he would say whatever he thought would please you!"

"But, mamma, it was not only he. Leah herself was as pleased as possible when I told her he had—had spoken to me; and though she did say he should have written to you first, she wished me joy—oh, ever so affectionately—and I am sure she hoped almost as much as we did that you—"

"In other words, my dear, Leah Josephs had spirit enough to pretend to take it easily, and you were so simple you believed her. Ah, well, I dare say the young man has gone back to her now that he has learnt there is no chance of getting you; and I must say, Vera, that if you are still wishing you could take him away—"

"Mamma, if Leah had ever loved him the least little bit, or he her, I would never be so wicked as even to wish to see him again," said poor Vera, weeping; "but, oh, you don't know them as I do. I know it is not so, and that even now—"

"What now?" asked Madame coldly. "How can you know anything about him now; unless, indeed," and she turned a sudden, penetrating glance on her daughter's tear-stained face, "he has been in this neighbourhood or writing to you since we sent him away in September."

For a moment—one moment—the impulse came on Vera to throw herself on her mother's mercy and confess. And surely if her mother saw her lover's own words, words so brave, so loving and tender, she would believe in him more than she did now. But, on the other hand, the sternness of Madame's expression frightened her; and, if the effect of confession was only to be that of angering her parents more, and making them take measures to stop her from ever again communicating with Marstrand or Leah, what should she do? Now, especially, when she must—yes, at all costs she must satisfy this cruel doubt which had been put into her mind? She burst out crying and answered, "No!" and then tried to comfort herself between her sobs by remembering that it was true after all. He had not been in the neighbourhood, nor had they corresponded—since September!

Madame St. Laurent, however, accepted the negative easily enough. In truth she kept a close watch on the post-bag, and was too well aware that her daughter had no correspondents, and never went near town or post office except in her company, to expect any other answer. She thought she had been too hard on the girl, and even stroked her hair saying, "Well, well, there is no need to cry about it," in such a much gentler tone, that Vera was encouraged to do what she had never in her life done before, seize her mother's hand and kiss it as she exclaimed:

"Oh, mamma, I am so unhappy. Don't make me more so. Don't ask me to marry the Count, and I will love you so. I will be so good. I will never do anything more to vex you."

But Madame drew her hand away. She had to do so with a force that savoured of harshness, because Vera held it so tightly, and because the girl's appeal, touching as it did the deepest feeling in her heart—that silent, jealous craving after her daughter's whole love and devotion which her own coldness balked of its fulfilment—required extra resolution to rebuff. And yet it must be rebuffed and her distasteful duty persisted in. She had promised that Vera should marry this man, and there was no going back for her. Loosing herself, therefore, from the clinging fingers, she proceeded to point out, as strongly as she could, the sinfulness and presumption of a young girl setting up her own judgment against her parents' in a matter of such

importance; the happiness which she ought to feel at having her married home within easy reach of her childhood's one, and of the mother she professed to love; the high position and solid merits of the Count, and especially the fact that this was no sudden fancy with him, but an affection beginning six years previously and persisted faithfully in ever since.

"Six years, mamma!" Vera exclaimed, rather in a tone of horror than otherwise, "When I was only fourteen! He told you then? And—and I have never known!"

"My dear, you do shock me. As if it was nice for a little girl to discuss such matters, or have love-nonsense put into her head! But at present, when the time has come for you to know it, I hope you see how ungrateful and wicked it would be to throw this gentleman over now without rhyme or reason, especially when he has been so kind to papa all these years, helping him and—yes, I may as well tell you—lending him money to an extent which it would be impossible for us to repay, supposing you were heartless enough to make it needful for us to do so."

Vera was silent, the tears running down her face. Oddly enough her indifference towards the Count had become changed into something very like active dislike on learning for how long he had, as it were, held her an unconscious and involuntary prisoner in his net. Yet, on the other hand, if this that her mother said about Leah and Marstrand was true, she could never marry the latter; and in that case she cared little what else became of her. Only was it true? She must find that out first.

Madame St. Laurent rose, pressing one hand on the girl's shoulder.

"You are beginning to reflect, Vera," she said, "and I am glad of it, for I shall not say anything more. Remember, you are not required to fall in love with the Count at once. He does not even ask to marry you for another six months; and who knows what may happen in that time! Your feelings to him might be quite changed, or he might be—" "dead," Madame was going to say, but checked herself abruptly, and added instead, "he might be changed too. You are not even called on to say anything—yet; only to pacify your father by receiving his friend nicely when he comes here, and doing your best to return his affection for you."

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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ALEXIA.

BY ELEANOR C. PRICE,
Author of "Gerald."

CHAPTER III.

HE did meet Mrs. Melville, however, the very next day, on the road between his own house and the Manor, and he had to turn round, and walk with her a mile or more, while she poured her wrath upon his head. Not that she said anything rude, or unkind, or unpleasant. She had been fond of Alexia's mother, and had always treated the girl with kindness, and she did not change her tone now. She was too sensible to imagine that William Page could wish for anything so ridiculous as a marriage between her son and his daughter. It was Charlie she was angry with—foolish, selfish, inconsiderate Charlie. He had behaved very badly, she thought; and though matters might have been worse if he had himself spoken to Alexia, speaking to her father was quite bad enough. For William Page was obliged to confess that he had talked the matter over with his daughter, and that the attachment was not all on one side.

"There is no money, none at all," said Mrs. Melville. "We are not nearly out of our difficulties yet. You may guess how I have been struggling—to make up for the past—and Charlie, instead of helping me, sets his heart on this foolish, foolish marriage. The place will have to be let; and I don't know—I assure you the house is almost ruinous. They must live abroad, or somewhere, if Charlie has his way."

William Page walked along, looking gravely before him, and listening to her as she talked. She was a very handsome woman, tall and fair, a little flushed with

"I am sorry I mentioned the subject to Alexia," he said; "but I did not think—in fact I was not sure that they did not understand each other already."

"Oh, it doesn't matter," said Mrs. Melville. "Sooner or later Charlie would have committed himself. But I am glad you see things as I do."

They had been walking rather fast along a straight road bordered with elm trees. The afternoon was waning; the frost was stronger than ever; and the grey thick sky was lit up with a reddish brilliancy. It was a stern, hard, yet not cheerless day, and the red buildings of the Old Farm had warmth and beauty as these two people walked up to them. Mrs. Melville looked at them absently, and stretched out her hand to William Page, who had arrived at his own gate.

"Will you allow me to suggest something, Mrs. Melville?" he said. "It strikes me that if you were to talk to Alexia, you might put things before her in a convincing way."

Mrs. Melville looked him straight in the face, with her deep, anxious, blue eyes; the idea was startling, yet it did not seem quite impossible.

"What good would it do?" she said. "How would she take it?"

"She is not an unreasonable girl," he said, with his hand on the gate.

"But not so sensible and generous as her father," said Mrs. Melville, breaking into a sudden smile.

He smiled too. He had a great deal of loyal admiration for Mrs. Melville, and had once made Alexia laugh contemptuously by saying that her smile would take her to heaven. To Alexia, whose views were young and decided, Mrs. Melville was embodied worldliness.

rate," said Mrs. Melville; and so another visitor appeared in that old twilight room.

Alexia felt extremely startled and confused. Though Mrs. Melville had always treated her kindly, she had grown up with feelings of antagonism towards her; life had been a long course of taking Charlie's part against his mother, who had kept all her indulgence for her eldest son. And Alexia quite understood that she, her little obscure self, had now been the subject of a dispute between Charlie and his mother. But Mrs. Melville did not seem to remember this. She talked about the accident, and asked civil questions. For the first few minutes Mr. Page stayed in the room, then he went away, and after the first horror at his going Alexia began to be glad. If Mrs. Melville had anything to say to her, it might as well be said alone. As she sat upright in her corner, her cheeks and eyes glowing, a strange little bright picture, at which Mrs. Melville looked with a painful consciousness of having forgotten how very pretty she was—she was collecting all her courage, all her strength, to fight for herself and Charlie.

What would Mrs. Melville say? There she sat in her furs, handsome and calm, with an easy, quiet manner, and an expression in her eyes which reminded Alexia of Charlie. She looked earnestly at the girl opposite to her. She was much too well-bred and clever to try frightening Alexia, or treating her with the smallest sign of contempt. Neither did she try to gain her end by flattery.

"Alexia," she said, after a little pause, "I have had a great deal of talk with Charlie about you. May I tell you what I think about it all?"

"I know," said Alexia under her breath. She clasped her hands together, and looked away at the fire.

"And your father agrees with me," said Mrs. Melville, smiling faintly—"but you don't. Well—," she went on after a moment, seeing that at present she was to have the talk to herself—"I dare say I was more surprised than I ought to have been. I should have remembered that you and Charlie always used to be together—and he tells me that the last time he was at home here, four or five years ago, he said something to you, though of course you were both too young for any promises. I ought to have seen then, I suppose, but I had other great troubles to think of, as you know. Would you mind telling me, Alexia—did you expect Charlie to come

back to you the same, after all this time, and in such different circumstances?"

"I don't know what I expected. No, I think I was very much 'surprised,'" said Alexia quietly.

"Then you did not think there was any kind of engagement between you and him?"

"No. Did he think so?"

Mrs. Melville hesitated an instant before answering the low, quick question.

"Of course not," she said. "But girls often think, you know, that men mean so much more—however, you were both children, so that is absurd. Now, Alexia, you think me a selfish woman—and I am going to tell you a little of our history for the last few years. It is a history of troubles, and you ought to know it, before you decide on what you will say to Charlie."

Alexia was surprised and touched by Mrs. Melville's tone, which was much less positive than she expected. She turned towards her without any words, but with a little air of respect and attention.

Mrs. Melville thought it very pretty, and wished at the moment that Alexia Page had been in somebody else's place. It was very easy to talk to the girl, much easier than she had expected; she had also a conviction that no bad use would ever be made of her confidence. She went back to her trials of the last few years, talking quietly, but on the verge of breaking down sometimes. Then she spoke of Charlie, and of all her hopes for him. She spoke of him so that Alexia's eyes filled with tears, for she confessed that she had never done him justice, that she had neglected him, and had never loved him enough in the old days.

"But now," she said, "now you see he is all I have left." She said that she had come back to the Manor with all sorts of bright plans for the future: that Charlie should live there, and improve the estate, and make up by his goodness for the wasted years that had done such terrible mischief. And as Alexia listened silently, she went still further, and talked of the position she wished him to take in the county, and of her hope that some day he might be in Parliament—for Charlie was popular as well as good. Then she suddenly broke off, and, after a minute's silence, she said:

"Do you see anything wrong in my ambition for him, Alexia?"

"No," answered Alexia, frankly. "You are right; it is very good."

"You would have the same sort of ambition for him," said Mrs. Melville. "You would not like him to be obliged to leave the Manor, let or sell it, perhaps, and either work in some obscure way for his living, or dawdle through his days in some wretched place abroad?"

Alexia did not speak now. Perhaps she saw whither all this was tending.

"Because, you know," said Mrs. Melville, "one cannot get anything in the world except by sacrifice. Of course I knew that all along. None of these good things can come to Charlie except from the outside. He must give up something for them—and I think it is his duty to do that. Alexia, I think a girl who really loved him—unselfishly—would not wish him to give up this last chance of lifting the old name up again. I can't help thinking that you are too proud, and too generous, to make him give up all his prospects in life for you."

There was a long silence. Alexia sat with her face turned away, while Mrs. Melville watched her anxiously. Alexia was telling herself that of course it was all true; she had known every word of it before. She was weak; her bruises began to ache again; she was tired of the struggle in her own mind; and Charlie was gone away to skate and dance with his friends, none of whom she knew, or ever could know. And she felt that he was laughing and talking with them, just as he laughed and talked with Miss Radcliffe at the ball; and she, small, sad, and lonely, wished she could go away and creep into some hole and forget these troubles. After all, he need not have gone; he need not have left things uncertain for a whole week, have left her exposed to such an attack as this from his mother. Yet, even in the midst of her heartache, Alexia knew that she was unjust to Charlie, and felt with a happy thrill how much he was ready and willing to give up for her. Well, he was very generous; she would be generous too; but first she would make Mrs. Melville understand that she knew all her plans for Charlie.

"He must marry," she began in a whisper. "Do you mean that he must marry—Miss Radcliffe?"

Mrs. Melville was startled by this very plain speaking; she coloured, but she was quite able to answer Alexia.

"One does not generally mention names in that way," she said, "except in the strictest confidence. However, as you ask

me, I think he would be a fortunate man if he did marry Miss Radcliffe."

Alexia still sat gazing into the fire. The minutes stole by, and there seemed to be nothing more to say. It was growing dark outside, and Mrs. Melville began to think that her visit had been long enough. She got up, and Alexia came forward gravely from her sofa. She went across the room, and, having fetched a pen and paper from her writing-table, laid them down beside Mrs. Melville. Without raising her eyes, she said in a hard, quiet voice: "Please will you give me his direction?"

Mrs. Melville gave her a quick glance, took the pen, and wrote it at once. She did not quite understand the girl; but before she went away she laid her hands upon Alexia's shoulders and looked earnestly into her face, meeting a gaze in return which was full of some far-off mysterious feeling. Mrs. Melville at that moment felt something a little like shame; but Alexia did not know that, as Charlie's mother kissed her gently on the forehead, and went away into the twilight. Alexia crept back to her sofa, very tired; and yet no one could say that she had made much fight for herself in the interview.

CHAPTER IV.

MRS. DODD approved highly of the turn that Charles Melville's affairs had taken, and the whole neighbourhood agreed with her. They were all equally wise as to the causes of things. Mrs. Melville, Mr. Page, Alexia and Charlie kept their own counsel. The outer world only knew that Charlie stayed away for several weeks, skating and amusing himself; that when he came back he was never to be found at home, but always at the Martin Radcliffes'; that after about a month of this, his engagement to Miss Radcliffe was announced publicly; that early in May there was a smart wedding in London, and so Mrs. Melville's idea of her son's future was realised. The Redwood Church bells were rung, and the poor people were feasted, but Mr. and Mrs. Dodd considered it a grievance that the wedding had not taken place in the country. Mrs. Dodd thought it was a piece of finery and affectation on the part of Miss Radcliffe. Mr. Dodd had heard from Mrs. Melville that it was her son's particular wish.

"Not the way to be popular," said Mr. Dodd. "I wonder, now, could it have been because of the Pages? The Squire

was very much cut up about that accident, you know."

"Oh, rubbish, nothing of the kind!" said Mrs. Dodd. "What Alice Page may have imagined I won't pretend to say, but no one in his senses could have thought such a thing possible. Charles Melville was not such an idiot."

Alexia, poor child, had done her part only too well. She had made her father write a cold, stiff letter to Charlie, containing a refusal so flat and decided that there could not possibly be any appeal from it.

Charlie's feelings were deeply hurt; he was terribly disappointed in Alexia. She had deceived him, he thought; and yet on consideration he could not really say so, for her manner that afternoon had been repelling enough. Yes, she had certainly done her best to snub him, he thought. After the first sensations of despair he pulled himself together, and remembered that there were good things to be had in life still, with the help of plenty of money. He had no more love to throw away, of course; that heartless Alexia had had it all. But he liked Maud Radcliffe; she was a pleasant, good-natured girl, and quite ready to make a great fuss with him. Money was, after all, *the* thing in this world. Everything else was hollow and disappointing. Charlie, thus converted to his mother's views, set about acting on these new convictions as quickly as possible.

Though Alexia had honestly intended to give him up, his silent acceptance of her refusal was a new pain to her. She quietly put into the fire Mrs. Melville's little letter of thanks for her generous behaviour; it only made the headache worse. When Charlie came back, in dread of meeting him, she went away to an aunt in a distant county, and there in her father's letters she heard of his engagement, his approaching marriage. For one whole day she thought that her father must give up the Farm; she could not go on living there, with those people at the Manor. But then her pride and courage came back, and she scolded herself for the weak, selfish thought. Why should her father be uprooted, and his life made miserable, because it had been necessary for her to refuse the Squire? After all, he had very easily consoled himself; and as for her—well—not even her father should know in future that she cared any more than he did. Some day—very soon most likely—she and Charlie would meet

again, quiet matter-of-fact neighbours, and then they would go on living within a mile of each other, and in time they would both grow old and grey, and long before that Charlie would have forgotten that he had ever asked his tenant's daughter to marry him. And then Alexia thought, what an extraordinary difference there was between the memories of men and of women!

She had plenty of time for these thoughts in the idle months she spent with her aunt away in Devonshire. She had never before been so long away from home. Her father did not quite know how things went on without her; but somehow they did, and he obeyed his sister Mrs. Rowley when she wrote that he must not be selfish. Alexia had been seriously shaken by her fall in the hunting-field, and by her mental catastrophe afterwards; though her aunt knew nothing of that. It was good for her to be petted and worshipped by her young cousins, and to be kept for a few months from all household anxieties. When Edmund Rowley went back to Oxford at Easter, he made his mother promise to keep Alexia till June, when he intended to take her home himself. The time till June slipped away very quickly, and Alexia found herself travelling back into the Midlands under Edmund's care. He was a slight, fair, enthusiastic boy of two-and-twenty, clever and fond of books, and an advanced Radical of the old-fashioned youthful and poetic kind.

"What's all this about?" said Edmund, as they steamed into the station nearest Redwood, and found it all decorated with flags and garlands, carriages and a crowd of people waiting outside.

"I don't know, I'm sure," said Alexia. She looked out in some consternation, the truth at once flashing upon her mind.

"Is it all to welcome you home again?" said her cousin.

Mr. Page was standing on the platform, and came up rather hurriedly to greet the two young faces that looked out to him.

"Well, Alex, here you are," he said. "Glad to see you, Edmund," and his eyes met Alexia's with an anxious question in them. "Come along," he said, "this place is all in an uproar. The London train will be in directly. Let us clear out before they come."

"Are you expecting somebody great? Royalties, or Mr. Gladstone?" asked the young man curiously.

"No, no," said Alexia, laughing. "Only a bride and bridegroom. Isn't that it, father?"

William Page laughed too, looking at her with relief and admiration.

"Right, my dear, as usual. Suppose we get out of the way."

The train moved on, and the London train was signalled almost immediately. As they hurried out of the station they were met face to face by Mrs. Melville, looking handsome and happy. She stopped and took Alexia's hand, pressing it warmly. She was full of kind enquiries. Edmund Rowley wondered why his uncle and cousin were so restless under her friendly words, so eager to escape from them.

They drove into Redwood village under triumphal arches, through delaying crowds of shouting children. Alexia had become grave and silent; her father talked a good deal to Edmund, and whipped up his horse with spirit as they went spinning along the straight, dusty, shady road towards the Old Farm; it and the Manor both lay some distance beyond the village.

Alexia looked about her, and noticed how beautiful the foliage was on all her old elm-trees, which she had left bare and brown. The meadows were deep in grass, the hedges sweet with honeysuckle—for how many summers had she enjoyed it all! and now it did not matter much.

Edmund looked into her face rather exploringly. To him all this was beautiful, because it was her home, for at present, poor boy, Alexia was the whole world to him. He had been making wonderful pictures in his mind of long days spent with her, while her father was away in his hayfields. No mother, no brothers and sisters, to watch and listen and interfere; his darling cousin all to himself—and now why was she looking so sad? Alexia understood him, and smiled, and he was happier. His anxious eyes reminded her that the past must be past indeed; that she must be her old self, and that no one, not even her father, if possible, must see a shadow on her face.

"By Jove, here they come!" muttered Mr. Page. "I thought we should have got home."

Alexia had not thought so, for she had heard the church bells clang out their welcome a few minutes before. Now she sat up and looked straight before her as the Melville carriage dashed by in a cloud of dust. Not so thick that she could not see Charlie, as he sat with his back to the horses, and took off his hat and looked up at her. He did not smile at all; his expression in fact was sulky: but then, as

his mother said, he was a bear. The momentary, half-observed glance was over; but Alexia saw quite well that his eyes were angry; she had not known Charlie so long to be mistaken in his humours now; and there rose in her mind at that moment a little lurking fear of the future. For, if he did not care, he would have forgiven and forgotten long ago. She began to be afraid when she thought of the many times they must meet, of the long life, perhaps, that they must spend near each other; and again she thought that her father must give up the Farm. Then her means of escape, Edmund, with his fair eager face, turned to her and said:

"You have got a cross-looking fellow for a squire, Alex."

"He is very nice," said Alexia, a little absently. "Have you seen much of him lately, father?"

"No," said Mr. Page; "he has been away nearly all the spring. Quite friendly when we have met."

"Oh, I say, what a picture of an old house!" exclaimed Edmund, as they stopped at the Farm gate, and saw the old red gables lifting themselves out of a tapestry of pale roses, and the cedar shadowing the lawn, and the borders bright with all Alexia's favourite flowers.

"This is a fête-day for me, as well as for Mrs. Melville," said William Page, as he lifted Alexia down and kissed her, and she went in under the old porch into the dark, oak-furnished hall.

"Go in, my boy," he said to Edmund, and the lad followed his cousin, past the foot of the stairs, along the narrow polished passage into her drawing-room.

There it was more or less twilight always, even on a summer afternoon. Under the great chimney there was no fire now, but the fireplace was full of green boughs which the servants had put there, and the red blinds, half down, gave a soft rosy tinge to the room. When Edmund came in, Alexia was standing on the hearth-rug, gazing in an odd, aimless way into the leafy fireplace.

"There you are, Edmund," she said with a little start. "Come along, let us go out. I want to see the dogs and the horses. I must take Lil some sugar; perhaps she has forgotten me."

The boy stood silent; he was as sensitive as a girl, and knew quite well that she had started from some absorbing dream. He looked at her, and she came up to him and put her hand on his arm.

"Eddy," she said, "I spent so many horrid hours in this room last winter. It is not quite nice to come back to it."

He caught her hand in his. "Of course not," he said; "but you are all right now, and you will soon forget all that. Yes, come out and show me everything."

KNOCKS AND KNOCKERS.

It is a hot July afternoon. I have walked a few miles across country to enjoy a chat with a "bookish" friend. I have knocked at his door three several times, each time louder and longer; I have been round the back way only to find the garden deserted and all the doors fast, and have come to the conclusion that my friend and his family are enjoying the fresh air in some of the neighbouring lanes or meadows. However, being as sure that they will return at a certain hour as I am of a pleasant welcome, I decide to wait. Here, however, fortune favours me. My friend has attached to his modest residence something which reminds him of his early home. At the front door is a porch, with honeysuckle overgrown, and in that porch is a comfortable seat. I fill my pipe, and sit down to enjoy what is really the "contemplative man's recreation." Watching idly the wreaths of smoke curling and waving above me, my eyes fall on the knocker, with which I have become, so to speak, better acquainted this afternoon. Why, it is ornamented with a lion's head! I never knew this before. Scores of times have I handled that leonine visage, and yet I may say this is the first time I have really looked at it. This sets me thinking, and I try, but in vain, to remember what my own knocker is like. Images of many kinds of knockers arise in my imagination, but with none of them can I identify my own. Since I do not know what even my own is like, whence have I derived my knowledge of so many kinds of knockers? Where have I seen those lions' heads, some grim, some facetious; those Egyptian sphinx-like faces, generally, I seem to remember, in bronze? Where did I become acquainted with that bright brass hand clutching a small brass rod? It was on a green door, I am sure. At whose door hangs that wreath of oak leaves, ribbon-bound, that I seem to know so well? Is it Brown, Smith, or Simpson at whose door I knock with a goat's head? How is it that in trying to recall to mind the knocker on my own door I see, in imagination, knockers

like curious knobs in metallic rope; leaves of various kinds twisted fantastically; light dainty strips of metal with a tiny knob hardly sufficient to wake a baby; solid rolls of iron with a vindictive swelling in the centre warranted to make any listener jump; square knockers; round knockers; oblong, oval, round, high, flat knockers! Will any psychologist explain how one can see so much without looking, or look at so much without seeing?

I should like to see a model of that famous knocker which played its part in a certain ghostly scene one Christmas Eve, when Scrooge saw "not a knocker, but Marley's face, a dismal light about it like a bad lobster in a dark cellar," and as Scrooge "looked fixedly at it, it was a knocker again." Do we not all know how, whilst the reformed Scrooge on Christmas morning was waiting for the boy to come back with the turkey, the knocker caught his eye. "I shall love it as long as I live!" said Scrooge, patting it with his hand. "I scarcely ever looked at it before. What an honest expression it has in its face! It's a wonderful knocker."

In these utilitarian days it is strange that we do not get more out of our knockers than we do. At present they give the minimum of information with the maximum of noise, like a street preacher or a political agitator. We have no recognised method of giving information (silently) by means of the knocker, if we except the tying-on of a kid glove; and where is that put in practice nowadays? Once it must have been considered imperative in "gentee" society under certain circumstances; for who has not read how, "Mr. Kenwigs sent out for a pair of the cheapest white kid gloves—those at fourteenpence—and selecting the strongest, which happened to be the right-hand one, walked downstairs with an air of pomp and much excitement, and proceeded to muffle the knob of the street-door knocker therein," afterwards going into the middle of the road to see the effect? And yet how much trouble might be saved by the use of emblematic knockers? One pattern might imply, "travellers in coal need not call here;" another, "book-hawkers will be shot;" or, "begging letters referred to the police." Again, how useful it would be, on calling on some newly-made acquaintance, if the knocker intimated that it was "a serious family," or that the master of the house was a "thorough radical." Why should not one man have a jovial knocker, which

should mean, "welcome friends;" or why should not another man's knocker inform us that we "must not stop long," or, by a piece of blue ribbon tied round it, tell us that the "beer and wine were 'always out'?" What a knocker that would be which would convince duns of the uselessness of calling! We implore electric engineers to try and calculate the market value of a knocker warranted to "spificate" a tax-collector! And as for a knocker that would "do the needful" by "the gas" or "the water"—but there, words fail at the mere thought of such bliss!

From knockers, one's thoughts naturally turn to knocks. Is there any simple incident that awakens more interest than a knock at the door? The talker is silenced, the reader is aroused. Who is it? What is it? Only the postman's knock gives any intimation of who knocks. To say nothing of St. Valentine's Day, what hope or fear, what anxiety or doubt, are aroused by it! A letter! Who is it from? What does it contain? Has Arabella "come round," and written to say that it is all her fault, but that she forgives me nevertheless, and that she is as ever, etc., etc.? Or is it from my wealthy but very cross old Aunt Penelope, to say that she is coming to spend a month in London with me? Is it news that I have been appointed to that good post? Or is it an intimation from my tailor that something on account will oblige?

With what varied feelings do different people hear a knock at the door! With what pleasure does Emily hear Harry's knock, and with what opposite thoughts does Master Tommy, after an unusually mischievous day, flit swiftly and unobtrusively to bed without going through the ceremony of saying "Good night," when "father's knock" is heard at the door! To the embarrassed man, who in every knock hears a dun, the sound is hateful; as it is also to the criminal who, hiding from justice, mentally crouches at the sound. Watch his face as he listens from above, when the street-door is opened, half expecting to hear himself asked for, or to catch some mysterious whispering below. See that lone woman waiting, by the flickering light of a low fire, for a knock at the door. Hour after hour she sits through the night, weary, dejected, waiting the return of husband or of son. How her thoughts wander back, through past years, to times when the evening seemed so short, when home seemed so bright and joyous,

the present so happy, and the future so hopeful; to the time when her husband had not become the slave of the accursed drink; or when the son, now entangled in the bonds of evil connections, was a bright youth fresh from school, full of love and honesty, and of bright promise for the future! Vainly she endeavours not to think. The brain works on independently of her will—think, think, think, like the ticking of a weird timepiece, the dial of her life, with the hands working back, back, into the past, till she begins to feel what a real blessing would be one draught of the waters of Lethe. Hark! footsteps. A knock at last! The door is opened, and amid a dull sound of growling and muttered imprecations, the entrance of what should be the central point of her happiness, the support of her weakness, relieves her of the weary watch, and gives at least the sad relief of changing one anxiety for another.

There must be something, beyond the mere love of mischief, specially attractive to a boy in knocking at a door, some magnetic attraction which draws his fingers to the knocker, and gives him a fierce joy in hammering even at an empty house. It is this mysterious influence which undoubtedly gives birth to the irritating "runaway knock." Uncle is waiting for his new boots, or aunt is waiting for her new bonnet; father is waiting for Smith to send round that little amount as promised; delay is breeding bad temper; when all is bright, the clouds clear off, "there's a knock!" What a fall there is in the temperature when it is discovered to be a "runaway!" Do we not all of us suffer many times by finding that on those occasions, when we answer the door to "Fortune"—who is said to knock at every man's door once in his life—that in our case it is, alas! a runaway knock?

As bad as or worse than the "runaway" is what may be called the "noodle's" knock. After your curiosity and interest have been aroused on a winter's night, by a knock at the door, you are still further excited by a long pause after the door is opened, and your impatience is increased by a cold, cutting draught, showing that the street door is still open. At last the servant solicits your intervention. You go out, and find on the door-mat a fussy-looking individual, who is profuse in apologies for disturbing you, but cannot believe that the servant was correct in saying that Mr. Brownwig does not live here. You tell him she is correct. He is astonished; then

he must have moved, for he came here to see him last year. You remark that must be wrong, as you have resided here for five years. He is more astonished than ever; apologises again, and says, "Surely this is No. 27." Yes, it is. He wipes his brow slowly, and says with an air of business-like carefulness: "27, Plaster Terrace?" No, you cry at once, seeing your chance of getting rid of him, this is Lath Avenue; the next street is Plaster Terrace. At this he starts with surprise, and commences a new cascade of apologies whilst you bow him out, involuntarily glancing at the coat-rack to see that, after all, he has not succeeded in what you half suspected to be his intention all along. Sometimes the Noodle asks for a Mr. X, admitting at the same time that he does not know the number of his friend's house; thinks it either 27 or 53; is almost sure there is a 2 in it; and after a few minutes you elicit from him that he is not quite sure of the name of the street, but thought it might be Lath Avenue, adding, with a triumphant pride in his own acuteness, that he is sure it is in this neighbourhood somewhere.

Under the head of swindlers' knocks we may refer to the gentleman who, having gained admission, induces the servant to leave him in the hall for a few minutes, which time he improves by clearing the place of any portable articles he can lay hold of. There is also the man in the garb of a railway porter, who comes with a post-man's knock, leaves a parcel, afterwards discovered to contain bricks or mud, and gives a receipt for the three-and-sixpence he takes for carriage. This knock is generally practised at the West End, at the time when most of the "families" are out of town, and the housekeeper or other servant left in charge has no means of verifying the contents of the parcel.

There are some knocks which are not at doors, yet nevertheless are full of interest and suggestion. Who can measure, for instance, the amount of mischief that has been done by the knocks known as spirit-rappings? They have driven money out of some people's pockets, common-sense out of their heads, and in many cases have driven some weak heads to the shelter of a lunatic asylum.

Then there is "Mr. Chairman's" knock at a convivial meeting. With what a lively rattle he knocks down Mr. Sillikin for a song! With what a bang he comes down as a signal for the chorus! And at the close of

the song his hammer sounds a very Gatling gun as he leads the applause.

Another kind of knock is that with which, instead of men, "these splendid lots" are knocked down "for a song." With what a threatening air Mr. Levi Smart raises his little hammer, as though impatient at the mean spirit of those around him in letting this crimson velvet suite go at the beggarly price of eight pounds. He will wait no longer, he is disappointed with human nature, his confidence is misplaced; going—going—for eight pounds—going—thank you, sir—ten—eight pounds ten. He is a little better; mankind is not quite so bad as he thought; going for eight ten, for eight ten—any advance on eight ten,—a flourish of his hammer, he is sick of them, humanity is a poor lot after all; going—going—knock! Gone. Little Tomkins, who couldn't make up his mind till just too late, is sorry he did not offer the ten shillings more that would have secured the lot; and Boddles feels sorry that he did. For now he wonders where he shall find room for the lot, and wonders what Mrs. Boddles will say, and how many vastly superior methods of investing eight pounds ten she will bring under his notice during the next eighteen months.

Some knocks there have been which are so well known and are such familiar memories to all of us, that we might term them historical. How many of the English-speaking race would be unable to inform you who knocked at a certain door in Gray's Inn, and how astonished was Mr. Perker's clerk, when he opened the door, at the contrast between the continuous and imperative knocking and the calm, sleeping visage of the "Fat Boy" who knocked!

What memories of fun are conjured up when we think of a certain sedan-chair which turned into a certain crescent at Bath, one morning, just as the clock struck three! We think of the chairman giving a "good, sound, loud, double knock" at the door to wake the servants, whom he imagines to be in the "arms o' Porpus." We laugh at the awful consequences of Mr. Winkle's answering the door, and how nearly he fell a victim to the fierce valour of Major Dowler.

What a wonderfully dramatic use of knocking is made by Shakespeare in Macbeth! It is in the scene where, in the dark hour before dawn, the guilty Thane has murdered his sleeping King. Already he is overcome with sickly fear

and horror at his own deed. His stern wife's attempts to infuse some firmness into him are unheeded, his very soul seems steeped in horror; he dare not re-enter the chamber of the King to replace the daggers he has unwittingly brought away with him. His wife goes to do so, leaving him alone with his thoughts, the world around him seeming hushed, as though all Nature was appalled at the deed. At this instant is heard "a knocking without." The silence is ended, Nature has awakened. He feels that

Heaven's cherubim horsed
Upon the sightless couriers of the air,
Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye,
That tears shall drown the wind.

He feels the awful change in himself :

How is't with me, when every noise appals me?
Lady Macbeth returns, and the knocking is again heard; but Shakespeare skilfully shows the difference in the two characters. To her it is simply an ordinary sound, an incident of everyday life, and she can even localise the sound :

I hear a knocking
At the south entry.

Could anything be calmer or more collected? How wonderfully this remark contrasts her hard, wolfish nature with that of the weak-minded warrior at her side! The knocking simply suggests to her mind the precautions necessary for them to take at once. To him it suggests the despairing, repentant thought :

Wake Duncan with thy knocking! Ay, would thou could'st!

It is a relief to turn to another Shakespearean scene of knocking. There is a merry party assembled at the Boar's Head, that hostelry in Eastcheap, so well known all over the world. The Gad's Hill adventure has been discussed, the "men in buckram" have been fought over again, and Falstaff, anxious to turn the conversation from "courage" and "instinct," by "a play extempore" assumes the part of "The King," and with a cushion for crown, and a dagger for sceptre, he chides the Prince for his conduct, and warns him against his companions, excepting only "one virtuous man he has noticed in his company." The parts are then exchanged, and Falstaff, in the character of the Prince, is delivering a glowing eulogy on himself, when, at the words "banish plump Jack, and banish all the world," a knocking is heard. This proves to be "the sheriff with a most monstrous watch," who have come to search the house for "a man as fat as butter."

Perhaps the knock which had the most important bearing on our history was that prophesied by William Langland, in his "Vision of Piers Plowman," written in the latter part of the fourteenth century :

Then shall come a Kyng and confesse you alle
And beat you, as the bible telleth for breaking of
your rule,
And amende you monks, moniales and chanons,
And put you to your penance

For the Abbot of Engelande and the Abbesse his
niece
Shullen have a knock on their crownes, and incur-
able the wounde.

In the reign of Edward VI. this was supposed to have been prophetic of the blow given to the Papal supremacy by Henry VIII.

Sweet in the ears of Englishmen of the olden time must have been "ye cook's knock." We can fancy the guests and retainers in the great hall of some old manor-house giving a sigh of satisfaction as they heard the cook give three loud knocks on the dresser with the rolling-pin, as a signal for the servants to place the dishes on the table. Washington Irving, in his account of Bracebridge Hall, mentions this old custom, and quotes a verse of Sir John Suckling's "Ballad upon a Wedding," tempo Charles I.

Just in the nick, the cook knocked thrice,
And all the waiters in a trice
His summons did obey;
Each serving-man with dish in hand
Marched boldly up, like our trained band,
Presented, and away.

Addison has made certain knocks famous by his essay on that celebrated dramatic critic, the "trunk-maker in the upper gallery." He says: "It is observed that of late years there has been a certain person in the upper gallery of the playhouse who, when he is pleased with anything that is acted upon the stage, expresses his approbation by a loud knock upon the benches or wainscot, which may be heard over the whole theatre. This person is commonly known by the name of the trunk-maker in the upper gallery." After discussing the various rumours as to who and what this critic was, Addison says: "I find that he is a large black man whom nobody knows. He generally leans forward on a huge oaken plant, with great attention to everything that passes upon the stage. He is never seen to smile; but upon hearing anything that pleases him, he takes up his staff with both hands and lays it upon the next piece of timber that stands in his way with exceeding vehemence, after which he composes himself in his former posture until

such time as something new sets him again at work."

Very famous, too, are the knocks connected with the Cock Lane Ghost; knocks which attracted to the unromantic neighbourhood of Smithfield crowds of visitors of the wealthy and educated classes, among them Dr. Johnson, Dr. Douglas (afterwards Bishop of Salisbury), and that aristocratic author and letter-writer, Walpole.

The poet Churchill wrote a poem ("The Ghost") on this imposture, in which he ridiculed Johnson under the title of Pom-poo. The burly doctor, however, so far from being a believer in the ghost, was one of the principal persons to expose the cheat. Evidently the golden age of spirit-rapping had not then arrived, for we read in the British Chronicle of February 10th, 1762: "On Tuesday last it was given out that a new knocking ghost was to perform that evening at a house in Broad Court, near Bow Street, Covent Garden, information of which being given to a worthy magistrate in the neighbourhood, he sent his compliments, saying that it might expect to be much more usefully employed, than by answering questions, to knock hemp at Bridewell; on which the ghost very discreetly omitted the intended exhibition."

Perhaps the most remarkable experience in connection with a knock at the door was that of the gentleman who was knocked up at three o'clock one Sunday morning to see "The Great Fire of London."

Pepys in his "Diary," under the date of September 2nd—Lord's Day—says, "Some of our maids sitting up late last night to get things ready against our feast to-day, Jane called us up about three in the morning, to tell us of a great fire they saw in the City. So I rose and slipped on my night-gown and went to her window." He goes on to say very quaintly, "but, being unused to such fires as followed, I thought it far enough off, and so went to bed again, and to sleep." Fancy, after getting up to look at the Great Fire of London, going to bed and to sleep again!

A LAWN-TENNIS TOURNAMENT.

A COMPLETE STORY.

ONE summer afternoon a number of ladies and gentlemen, seventy or eighty altogether, was assembled in an enclosure which resembled a large yard. It was surrounded by a high wall, and in the centre were a couple of concrete lawn-tennis courts, on which the sun beat fiercely.

One of them was not being used; on the other, a burly, bronzed, elderly man with straggling grey hair and whiskers was contending against a red-headed, stalwart young fellow, whose undoubtedly excellent play was marred by affectation. At each end of the net there was a big barrel, and on the barrel a chair, and on the chair an umpire with an umbrella over his head. Perhaps neither umpire could give quite as much attention to the game as he should have done, for the groups around kept up a running fire of comments. Most of the ladies occupied benches placed along the shady side of the yard; but there was also a goodly show of sunshades, opposite, and a row of figures in flannels and straw hats behind.

On a bench apart from the rest sat two ladies and a lad. One was the wife of the elderly player, Captain Wigram; another was his sister-in-law, Miss Hubbard; the third was his son Godfrey. All there were remarkably alike—tall, thin, and angular, with pinched features, nearly black hair, and sallow complexions. Not a handsome trio by any means; but interesting—they looked so lonely, and were so shabbily dressed. They scarcely seemed to breathe as they watched the game, from which their eyes never wandered for a moment, and when the Captain, who had doffed coat and waistcoat, and wore a soft hat with a puggaree, made a successful stroke, their faces brightened simultaneously, only to return immediately to their prevailing expression of intense anxiety.

It cannot be said that their satisfaction on these occasions was shared by other spectators. There was manifest a general disposition to ridicule Captain Wigram and to applaud his young opponent, Basil Moore, who could do nothing wrong, while the elder man could apparently do nothing right. He showed no sign of annoyance at the cruel jests levelled against him; he was too absorbed in his game for that; but the three motionless figures sitting apart quivered at every stab. He had gripped his racket more firmly and set his teeth; he glared at two or three as if he would have felled them to the ground, their contemptuous indifference to him only adding to his wrath; and the angry light that blazed from his eyes was dimly reflected in the eyes of his wife and her sister. Nobody cheered the Captain but they; all the other people laughed at him; no doubt without knowing the pain they were inflicting. And yet, like many big men,

he was light of foot; he was singularly active for his years; and he fought with the greatest stubbornness, shouting aloud after each difficult stroke and incessantly appealing to the umpires.

What was his offence? Firstly, he was a talker without taste; in other words, a bore, to be which is to commit the greatest social sin. Secondly, he was considered mean and niggardly, though in truth the most abject poverty was at the root of the matter, and only the most strenuous efforts could have concealed it so long.

The originator of the lawn-tennis tournament which had caused such a stir in Overbury during the last few weeks, and was to be concluded this afternoon, he had been elbowed out of the management because of his fussiness, which was decidedly objectionable to some other fussy persons. However, instead of taking offence, he had given way to the new managers with his usual good-nature, and entered himself and his family just as if nothing unpleasant had happened.

There were four competitions altogether—one for wives, another for husbands, a third for spinsters, and the last for bachelors. The prizes were to be given in money, and as nearly everybody in the town, whether intending to play or not, had thought it a matter of duty to subscribe, the amounts were very considerable. It was possible, of course, for one family to win everything; and the ardour with which the Wigrams practised brought down upon their heads the strongest censure. It was scandalous, unprincipled, the height of meanness, and much more to the same purport. However, these good people did not know how very, very much a few pounds meant to those whom they censured so severely.

Captain Wigram, into whose circumstances it is unnecessary to enter further than the statement of their woeful plight, lived in a tumble-down old farm-house, situated at some distance from the town, and therefore remote from the prying eyes of neighbours. In the wilderness of decrepit trees, tangled bushes, and rank grass that surrounded it, he had made a couple of lawn-tennis courts. And here he manoeuvred his little crew, roaring his orders at them just as if they had been at the masthead and he on the quarter-deck, and capering about with marvellous energy, his white puggaree floating away behind. They worked at the game from morning till night, wet or fine; when the sun blazed

with intolerable heat they hoisted torn and rusty umbrellas and so defied him. Now and again some passer-by, peeping through the matted fence, would see them, and wondered when they fed. When did they? But seldom, I fear. They knew that what they were striving for was in reality a respite from starvation.

The Wigrams improved wonderfully, considering the short time at their disposal, and the Captain grew very sanguine. Poor old man! he talked a little too loudly and a little too soon about what his wife could do, and what his son could do. For when it was suddenly proposed that the tournament should be played, not on grass, but on the concrete courts which had been constructed for the new club, his heart sank within him. He opposed the proposal tooth and nail; it was unfair, and he said so with unusual warmth; but it was carried against him.

Once more his good-nature reasserted itself. Those whom his outspoken words had offended he tried to talk into a more friendly mood; he volunteered his services to carry out many things—his own suggestions—which were declined without thanks; and finally he and his troupe joined the club and practised on the ground as much as possible during the two days which still remained to them. But it cost them a terrible wrench for the subscriptions nearly emptied the family purse. This step, it should be said, was taken by the Captain against the wishes of his wife and her sister, who would both have retired from a contest which they considered hopeless. However, he stood firm; he used his powerful lungs to breathe courage into them; he rated them soundly for their cowardice; he predicted their signal triumph. In the end they yielded, smiling to order yet quaking inwardly, and so he led them into the contest.

Mrs. Wigram was soon out of it, but the others managed to struggle into their respective "finals." When the Captain stood up against Basil Moore his family had still a chance of winning three prizes, small though it was, for the young man was much the better player and knew the ground. The ladies were most eager to back him for countless pairs of gloves, and when the fair but prudent sex takes to plunging, you may be tolerably certain they have got hold of a foregone conclusion. And so it proved. The score was called "one—love," "two—love," "three—love," "four—one"—the Captain having at last

won a game—"five—one"; and then came a long and desperate struggle, ending as most of the others had done. While a noisy group of friends gathered round Moore, who gave himself as many airs as if he had performed an act of lofty heroism, his vanquished opponent put on his shabby old blue coat, and slunk away to his wife's side, where he sat down without a word.

Moore presently followed, under the pretence of consoling him. There are some men who derive the most exquisite pleasure from this part of their triumph, and he was one of them.

"Upon my word, Captain," said this insufferable puppy, "you played uncommonly well; you did really, though. Don't you think so, Mrs. Wigram?"

"You have the advantage of age, Mr. Moore," she replied quietly.

"Ah, yes, that's something, certainly. But with a little more practice, Captain, you would be a good match for me. Upon my word, I think you would, really."

"Confound you, you cad," shouted Godfrey, springing to his feet and shaking his fist. "There are ladies here, but come outside—just come outside—and I'll knock better manners into your red head."

Moore gave the lad a cool stare, and then turned his back on him.

"Sit down, sir!" said the Captain, drawing his son back into his seat. "Can't you trust your father to fight his own battles? I'm very sorry indeed, Basil, that he should have been so rude——"

"Oh, don't mention it," said Moore coldly. "By-the-way, as the afternoon is getting on, the Committee have decided that the two remaining competitions are to be played simultaneously." With which he walked off.

The Captain's face darkened at this news; for he meant to superintend the play of his sister-in-law and his son, and feared that if they were engaged at the same time each would be embarrassed by anxiety for the other. He went to the Committee and stoutly protested against the new arrangement, but in vain. Two additional umpires mounted the chairs at the second court, which was alongside the other, and the competitors were summoned to take their places.

"Courage, Louie," said the Captain. "You can beat Edith Reed into a cocked hat, if you only keep cool."

With a shiver, and a piteous look at her sister, Miss Hubbard rose, racquet in hand. In order to reach her place she had to pass

in front of the whole line of spectators; and as she did so, white-faced, trembling, jerky in her walk, and with a certain pitiable air of pride, there was a general flutter of fans and sunshades, and much whispering and tittering behind them. As there is no kindness so kind as a woman's, so also is their cruelty the most cruel. This unfortunate girl winced and quivered beneath them; she stumbled, and nearly fell, but recovered herself and went on again. She knew the meaning of that smothered laughter and those cutting remarks very audibly uttered, but the men behind did not. They saw that her very short and shabby dress hung like a limp rag upon her thin and angular figure, and they afterwards noticed that she ran about with singular freedom, but how should they know the reason? Whatever it was that excited so much comment, the responsibility rested with the Captain.

An athletic contest between two ladies is never a pretty sight; it was positively painful to-day. Notwithstanding the encouragement of her many friends, Edith Reed, a saucy little girl in a big hat turned up at the brim, looked almost as distressed as her opponent; they confronted one another with smiles on their white faces, and who shall say what feelings in their hearts. Godfrey, who was opposed by George Carmichael, a muscular little bull-dog of a man, with unfailing nerve, was at the same end of the ground as his aunt, and close to her. The Captain stood behind, their only supporter, except his anxious wife sitting over yonder by herself.

A slow twister to Miss Hubbard opened the game. She advanced to meet it.

"Back, Louie, back," roared the Captain, gesticulating wildly. "For mercy's sake, girl, get further away from it. There, of course, it has done for you," added he, as she made a frightened scoop at the ball which darted at her like a snake. "Didn't I tell you to keep back? Right on the edge of the court."

"Captain Wigram," said the umpire, "would you be good enough not to interfere with the players."

There was an instantaneous silence. Would he show fight, they wondered, this mean old fellow who was trying so hard and so unfairly to get a few more pounds to add to his hoard? He looked desperate enough. But, bowing his grey head to the umpire, he drew back and leaned against the wall, where for some time he watched the progress of both games in silence.

The score was called "love—one" against Miss Hubbard, who was playing very badly. She seemed quite to lose heart when the second game also went against her; and no wonder, considering the value of the prize to her. The heat and glare from the concrete were trying enough, but not so trying as that battery of unfriendly eyes or the cheers given to her opponent, who was improving every moment. They rose to quite a shout of triumph when Miss Reed gained her third consecutive success.

The Captain could stand it no longer. At the commencement of the next game he seized his hat by the brim and rushed forward, waving it in the air and crying:

"Well played, Louie, well played indeed. Get back from that one—back, back, for heaven's sake, back! Good, Louie, very good! Now, over in the far corner with it. Well done, my girl, bravo!"

"Upon my word, Captain Wigram," called out Basil Moore, who was now officiating as umpire, "it's too bad; it is really, though. I must request you to go away and keep quiet."

"Must you? Then why don't you see fair play? If the other side is allowed to cheer, I'll cheer; by heavens! I will. Go ahead, Louie, you shan't lose for want of shouting, anyway."

"But—ahem—what do you mean about fair play? Cheering is one thing, but dancing about the court and giving advice is—well, it's another, you know."

"If you choose your way of giving encouragement, I'll choose mine. If you don't like that arrangement, let the game be played in silence."

"Very well," said the umpire.

So the Captain crushed his hat on his head, and once more withdrew to the wall. But Miss Hubbard continued to play so badly that he had to turn away lest the temptation to speak should become too powerful. He scarcely knew when she was beaten, so quiet had the spectators become. There were not a few men present who pitied that poor, limp thing, as she dragged herself back to her sister's side.

The other competition was more closely contested. Carmichael, playing with consummate coolness, sent the balls flying like so many bullets; but nearly half of them were stopped by the net, fortunately for Godfrey, who was kept rushing from one end of the court to the other. Though inferior in skill, the lad was quick and active. So the score rose very evenly until at last

it stood at "five all." Carmichael, having the service, won the next game.

"What's the value of this prize?" asked the Captain, in a hoarse whisper, of one of the eager spectators who was pressing around.

"Twenty-five pounds."

"Twenty-five pounds! Why, they could live for three months on that, and before then his pension would be due; and here it was to be lost or won by a stroke of a racquet! He felt his strength going as his voice had gone already; so he crept away to his wife and sat down between her and her sister, not one of the three being able to give even a smile of encouragement to the frightened lad who was standing but a few feet from them.

It was long since Overbury had witnessed such an exciting scene. For the moment everything was forgotten except what was taking place on that dazzling concrete slab around which the spectators were gathered, standing or sitting. As Godfrey raised his racquet there was a breathless silence, followed by a sigh of relief, as the ball struck the net. His hand was shaking so, that his next service was equally unsuccessful.

"Love—fifteen," announced Basil Moore, now acting as umpire at this court.

After another couple of failures, then followed a smart rally which Godfrey won; and then another, most desperately-fought and eagerly-watched, which fell to Carmichael. The score, therefore, stood at "fifteen—forty." Godfrey then got a fast ball over the net. It was feebly returned, and he was about to send it back just as feebly, straight to Carmichael, who was waiting with a grim smile to receive it.

It was more than flesh and blood could endure to see a game thrown away like that and do nothing to save it. The Captain sprang up, gesticulating and moving his lips as if he was shouting, though his hoarse tones were scarcely audible.

"Not there," he said; "not there, lad, whatever you do. Over here—here in the shadow." For the high wall already over-shadowed part of the court.

Every eye was indignantly turned upon him, but there was no time to say anything. Godfrey, flurried by these instructions, missed the ball; then arose a shout of triumph, and while it was ringing in his ears his father tottered and fell, in the shadow at which he was pointing. As he did not rise immediately, a couple of medical men who happened to be present

hastened to his side, but he was already beyond the reach of their assistance. He had passed into that deeper shadow through which we must all pass sooner or later.

I have spoken of "the good people" of Overbury, and without the least wish to be satirical, for they now earned the title. Mrs. Wigram had no money to pay for her husband's funeral, and so the pitiful truth came to be generally known. The result was a handsome subscription, which placed her above want until her son could support her. But glad as all were to give, they would have been still more glad to have been able to recall those ill-natured speeches, the last that the poor old Captain heard in this world.

SOME FAMOUS PLAYS.

II.

GOLDSMITH'S "SHE STOOPS TO CONQUER."

IN TWO PARTS. PART I.

WILLIAM COOKE, Esquire, barrister-at-law and author of a didactic poem, relates that his friend and neighbour, Oliver Goldsmith, met an old acquaintance at a chop-house soon after he had finished his comedy, then unnamed, but subsequently known as *She Stoops to Conquer*, or *The Mistakes of a Night*. And with him the ingenious writer fell into confidential discourse concerning his play, of which he begged his honest opinion as a friend on whose word he relied, as a critic in whose judgment he trusted. Therefore, in his "strange, uncouth, deranged manner" he laid bare the plot, which his hearer understood turned upon one gentleman mistaking the house of another for an inn. This device, his critic believed, was one the public, "under their then sentimental impressions," would think too broad and farcical for comedy. Hearing which, Goldsmith, who like all poets was alternately sanguine and despondent, looked most serious. Then, seizing his friend's hand, he "piteously exclaimed," he was much obliged for the candour of his opinion; "but," he continued, "it is all I can do; for, alas, I find that my genius, if ever I had any, has of late totally deserted me!"

This happened in the spring of 1772, when Goldsmith's age numbered forty-four years, most of which had been spent in toil and trouble. Sixteen years previously he had returned from those strange, eventful travels abroad, where he had experienced such humiliations as were produced by "living on the hospitalities of the friars in

convents, sleeping in barns, and picking up a kind of mendicant livelihood by the German flute with great pleasantry." Meanwhile he had played many parts upon life's stage. During the night of misery preceding the dawn of his prosperity, he had herded with the beggars of Axe Lane; mixed medicines, spread ointments, and run of errands for Jacob, a poor apothecary in Monument Yard; became a physician "in a humble way"; corrected proofs for the press of Samuel Richardson, printer and author; taught in a polite academy for young gentlemen at Peckham; contributed to Griffith's "Monthly Review;" returned starving and miserable to resume his ushership; and began his career as an author by writing a series of papers for the columns of the "Public Ledger," called "Chinese Letters," reprinted under the title of "The Citizen of the World."

Then came brighter days. From reviewing books he fell to writing them; from occupying a garret in Green Arbour Court near the Old Bailey, he rose to chambers in the Temple. Moreover, the companionship of the beggars in Axe Lane was exchanged for the association of men of learning and parts, who loved the simplicity of his nature and valued the worth of his genius. Accordingly, he became a frequent visitor to the shop of Tom Davies, an unsuccessful player, who renounced the stage to become a prosperous bookseller and publisher. His shop, located in Russell Street, Covent Garden, was famous as a place of resort for actors and authors, poets and their patrons, wits and gossips. It was here Boswell met Johnson; young Mr. Reynolds discoursed with the admired author of "Night Thoughts;" Foote mimicked Garrick; and George Colman, Richard Cumberland, Hugh Kelly, and Arthur Murphy, playwrights all, debated on the condition of the drama with George Steevens, Esq., a cynic by nature, a critic by profession.*

Here the fortunes of a play were frequently decided, the value of a book declared, the fate of an author determined. The potent-voiced, central figure of the brilliant group congregating on these

* Here, likewise, was it, that Johnson, hearing of Foote's intention to caricature him on the stage, asked Davies: "What is the price of a common ash stick, sir?" "Sixpence," answered the bookseller. "Why, then, sir," exclaimed the philosopher, "give me leave to send your servant to purchase me a shilling one. I'll have a double quantity; for I am told Foote means to take me off, as he calls it, and I am determined the fellow shall not do it with impunity."

premises was the ex-player, who was, indeed, as Steevens wrote Garrick, "to the full as much a king in his own shop as ever he was on your stage. When he was on the point of leaving the theatre," continues the critic, "he most certainly stole some copper diadem from a shelf and put it in his pocket. He has worn it ever since." Recognising Goldsmith's genius he had bidden him to his levees, and the future poet was proud to associate with the frequenters of the bookseller's shop.

It was not conversation concerning literature, exchanged by Davies's friends, which alone possessed keen interest for Goldsmith; all topics regarding the theatre exercised a fascination for him, little suspected by his acquaintances. The stage had, indeed, ever proved a source of great attraction and innocent delight to him in the past; it was destined to become a centre of brief triumph, a source of bitter humiliation, to him in the future. A proof that his talents had early inclined towards the drama, lay in the fact that he had written part of a tragedy in his days of struggle and want. And now he had achieved success as author of "The Vicar of Wakefield" and "The Traveller," and possessed a reputation for elegance, humour, and pathos, he resolved to write a comedy. This determination was quickened to fulfilment by the success of The Olandestine Marriage, the joint composition of David Garrick and George Colman.

Nor was Goldsmith unaware of the difficulties which beset a dramatist's path. In the previous decade, a reaction from the gross indecencies of Dryden, Wycherley, and Congreve had set in; and a species of play, introduced by Steele, known as sentimental comedy, held possession of the stage. From this school of dramatic writing, Goldsmith was resolved to depart, and determined to portray life in a manner true to nature.

But before he could succeed in presenting his play to the town for approval, it was necessary he should first gain favour with the managers of Drury Lane or Covent Garden theatres. Of the obstacles here awaiting him he was well convinced. Indeed, in his "Enquiry into Polite Literature," he had already devoted a chapter to the subject.

"A drama," he said, "must undergo a process truly chemical before it is presented to the public. It must be tried in the manager's fire, strained through a licenser, suffer from repeated corrections till it may

be a mere caput mortuum when it arrives before the public. . . . Old pieces are revived and scarce any new ones admitted. The actor is ever in our eye, the poet seldom permitted to appear, and the stage, instead of serving the people, is made subservient to the interests of avarice. Getting a play on, even in three or four years, is a privilege reserved only for the happy few who have the arts of courting the manager as well as the Muse; who have adulation to please his vanity, powerful patrons to support their merit, or money to indemnify disappointment. Our Saxon ancestors had but one name for a wit and a witch. I will not dispute the propriety of uniting those characters then; but the man who, under the present discouragements, ventures to write for the stage, whatever claim he may have to the appellation of a wit, at least has no right to be called a conjuror."

However, Goldsmith determined to try his fortune as a dramatist, and whilst his first comedy, The Good-natured Man, was in progress, decided on offering it to Rich, then lessee of Covent Garden theatre. The manager's death occurring at this period, and his affairs being thrown into confusion, Goldsmith resolved on submitting his play to Garrick's consideration. Unfortunately a misunderstanding had sprung up between the poet and the player, which suspended kindly feeling on either side. Shortly after Goldsmith's remarks on the stage, just quoted, he had striven to obtain the vacant secretaryship of the Society of Arts, and had personally canvassed the great Mr. Garrick for his vote. On this occasion the actor, with some show of indignation, replied that it was impossible Dr. Goldsmith could lay claim to any recommendation from him, having taken pains to deprive himself of his assistance by an unprovoked attack upon his management of the theatre. The poor author, not dreaming of making an apology, replied simply enough that "in truth he had spoken his mind, and believed what he said was very right." Hearing this, Garrick dismissed him with civility, and Goldsmith lost the office he sought.

After this interview the poet and the player avoided each other's company; and though possessing many mutual friends, did not meet until kindly Joshua Reynolds brought them together in the drawing-room of his house in Leicester Square, in order that Goldsmith might place his manuscript of The Good-natured Man in Garrick's hands. Their meeting

lacked the cordiality which foreruns friendship. Davies, in his "Life of Garrick," speaking of the occasion, says the manager "was fully conscious of his merit, and perhaps more ostentatious of his abilities to serve a dramatic author than became a man of prudence," whilst Goldsmith, on the other hand, was no less persuaded of his own importance, and anxious to assert his independence. "Mr. Garrick," writes Tom Davies, "who had been so long treated with the complimentary language paid to a successful patentee and admired actor, expected that the writer would esteem the patronage of his play a favour; Goldsmith rejected all ideas of kindness in a bargain that was intended to be of mutual advantage to both, and in this was certainly justifiable. I believe the manager was willing to accept the play, but he wished to be courted to it; and the Doctor was not disposed to purchase his friendship by the resignation of his sincerity." The original breach therefore remained unbridged; and when presently David Garrick took his leave with many smiles, the distressed poet muttered "he could not suffer such airs of superiority from one who was only a poor player." To which Joshua Reynolds replied: "No, no, don't say that; he is no poor player surely."

The manuscript of *The Good-natured Man* remained in Garrick's keeping a considerable time, during which Goldsmith chafed at the strain to which his patience was subjected. At first the manager regarded the comedy with favourable eyes, whilst he took care, as Sir James Prior states, "not to express himself so frankly, as to be unable to retreat from any rash inferences of the author." Hesitation and prevarication followed. Goldsmith was led to anticipate success for his work, whilst Joshua Reynolds and Johnson were assured that it would never gain public esteem. Meanwhile Goldsmith battled with booksellers, and slaved for editors that he might earn his daily bread; and at last, harassed by unmerciful circumstances, he took heart to ask, in hopes of future success, that the great manager would lend him a little money upon his note, a request immediately granted. Interviews at Garrick's house were now held, when he suggested certain alterations and amendments strongly objected to by the author. And no prospect of a mutual understanding being visible, Garrick proposed that the comedy should be submitted to the opinion of his reader, Whitehead, the Poet Laureate, or others.

This incensed Goldsmith thoroughly, who concluded that the manager had canvassed his friends for their unfavourable opinions of the comedy. He therefore vented his feelings in expressions of anger, whilst Garrick, serene and affable, loftily assured him that "he felt more pains in giving words to his sentiments than Dr. Goldsmith could possibly have in receiving them."

The last days of June, 1767, were now at hand, and Garrick left London to visit his native town, Lichfield. The fate of Goldsmith's play was yet undetermined, but an event had recently happened which caused him to look hopefully towards its acceptance in another theatre. Some months after the demise of Rich, George Colman purchased a fourth share in Covent Garden Playhouse, and became its manager. To him Goldsmith forwarded his comedy, and in return speedily received some sorely needed words of encouragement. The poor playwright's gratitude overflowed. "I am very much obliged to you," he writes to Colman on the 19th July, "both for your kind partiality in my favour and your tenderness in shortening the interval of my expectation. That the play is liable to many objections I well know, but I am happy that it is in hands the most capable in the world of removing them. If then, dear sir, you will complete your favours by putting the piece into such a state as it may be acted, or of directing me how to do it, I shall ever retain a sense of your goodness to me. And, indeed, though most probable this be the last I shall ever write, yet I can't help feeling a secret satisfaction that poets for the future are likely to have a protector who declines taking advantage of their dependent situation, and scorns that importance which may be acquired by trifling with their anxieties."

Having placed his comedy in the hands of a rival manager, he wrote to inform Garrick of his action. He had forwarded the play to Covent Garden, he said, "thinking it wrong to take up the attention of my friends with such petty concerns as mine, or to load your good nature by a compliance rather with their requests than my merits. I am extremely sorry," he continues, "that you should think me warm at our last meeting; your judgment certainly ought to be free, especially in a matter which must in some measure concern your own credit and interest." He then states he has no disposition to differ with him on this or any other account, and that he entertains a high opinion of his

abilities and a real esteem for his person. Garrick's reply was generous and courteous: "I was indeed much hurt," he says, "that your warmth at our last meeting mistook my sincere and friendly attention to your play, for the remains of a former misunderstanding which I had as much forgot as if it had never existed. . . . It has been the business, and ever will be, of my life, to live on the best terms with men of genius; and I know that Dr. Goldsmith will have no reason to change his previous friendly disposition towards me, as I shall be glad of every future opportunity to convince him how much I am his obedient servant and well-wisher."

In due time *The Good-natured Man* was accepted, but five slow months passed before it was produced. For this delay there were several excuses. Disputes arose between the proprietors of the theatre; disagreement followed concerning the lady selected to represent the heroine; some of the actors protested against the characters they had to undertake; and Colman abandoned all hope of the success of the play. Ultimately it was produced on the 29th of January, 1768. On first representation its success was not assured, but it ran for ten nights, and was much commended for striking originality and hearty humour.

Inasmuch as the incidents just narrated regarding *The Good-natured Man* bear on the production of Goldsmith's second and more important comedy, they are mentioned in these pages. Though he had intimated that his first play should be his last, he was again tempted to write for the stage by knowledge of the honours and profits awaiting successful dramatists. But whilst strongly desirous of popularity in this line of art, and of the resulting gains which he sadly needed, he was resolved to again combat the public taste for sentimental comedy, and hunt, as he expressed himself, "after nature and humour in whatever walks of life they were most conspicuous." That he might be freer from interruptions whilst engaged in writing the comedy, he took lodgings in a farmhouse, situated in Hyde Lane, close to the pretty village of Hyde, and six miles removed from London. For him the country possessed inexhaustible charms; the voice of nature found a reverent echo in his heart; the peace of pastoral life soothed, refreshed, and inspired him. He had more than once, when oppressed by work and bewildered with care, fled from Fleet Street, with its dark

bookshops, noisy taverns, and crowded ordinaries, to take refuge in Islington, which then boasted its green fields and pleasant lanes. He had likewise, in company with his friend Bott, taken a house on the Edgware Road, some eight miles removed from town, where he wrote his "*History of Rome*." And when, through stress of circumstances, he could not afford the luxury of a country lodging, he stole a few hours from work that he might spend them in the purer atmosphere of the suburbs. This relaxation he called his shoemaker's holiday. William Cooke quaintly describes the innocent manner in which these holidays were passed. At ten o'clock in the morning three or four of the author's intimate friends met at his chambers; at eleven they proceeded by the City Road and through the fields to Highbury Barn. Here an excellent ordinary, consisting of two dishes and pastry, was served, at tenpence a-head, including a penny to the waiter; the company generally consisting of a few Templars, some literary men, and some citizens retired from trade. About six o'clock in the evening Goldsmith and his friends adjourned to White Conduit House, where they drank tea; and concluded a pleasant excursion by supping at the Grecian or Temple Exchange Coffee Houses, or at the Globe in Fleet Street. The whole expenses of the day never exceeded a crown, but generally amounted to three shillings and sixpence or four shillings each.

Having in contemplation the comedy which was destined to delight, not only his own, but succeeding generations, he once more sought the country, and hired a room in the Hyde Lane farmhouse.* After months of toil and anxiety he rested here as in a haven of contentment.

* Some months ago I went in search of the home-stead where the poet lodged; and arriving at Hyde Lane, a charming locality gradually rising on a hill-side, bordered by thick hedges and commanding a prospect of peaceful meadow-lands, I hesitated as to which of two houses standing not far apart, was sacred to the poet's shade. The place seemed deserted; no sound of life disturbed the noonday quiet, until the figure of a postman with an empty bag upon his back, whistling as he walked for want of letters, came in sight. To him I addressed myself enquiringly, begging he would inform me in which of these houses Goldsmith had lived. A thoughtful expression crossed his vacant face. "Mr. Goldsmith?" said he. "Well, I don't remember the name of such a gentleman, and I've been in this district three years. He must have lived here before my time." I gravely replied that he had, and we parted with expressions of mutual civility. I succeeded in identifying the house, and in seeing the apartment in the upper storey where *She Stoops to Conquer* was written.

His days were chiefly spent in his room, where his meals were served, that continuous work might not be interrupted. At times—his stooping figure attired in an old dressing-gown, his neck exposed by a wide open collar, his feet encased in worn slippers—he sauntered into the kitchen, and taking his position on the wide open hearth, remained silent and abstracted, till some thought flashing through his mind, he hurried away to record it instantly. Occasionally, when days were fair, he wandered about the neighbouring fields, sometimes with a volume in his hand, and again loitering in the shade of hedgerows, lost in thought. At intervals he journeyed to town and tarried there for days, and now and then Dr. Johnson, Joshua Reynolds, and Sir William Chambers visited him, when they drank tea, and told excellent stories, in the prim parlour which was placed at their service for such special occasion.

Meanwhile his comedy drew towards its close, and early in the year 1772 Goldsmith was back in London, battling with booksellers, labouring to surmount financial difficulties, and striving to get his play accepted. He had submitted it to George Colman; but tedious weeks and lingering months wore away, and no satisfactory answer was returned to the expectant author. Spring passed and brought him no hope; summer came, and he lay prostrate from illness. With the reopening of the theatrical season in autumn his expectations rose again, only to meet with disappointment once more. At last, harassed by doubts and beset by difficulties, he wrote the following pathetic letter to George Colman in January, 1773:

"DEAR SIR,—I entreat you will deliver me from that state of suspense in which I have been kept for a long time. Whatever objections you have made or shall make to my play, I will endeavour to remove and not argue about them. To bring in any new judges either of its merits or faults I can never submit to. Upon a former occasion when my other play was before Mr. Garrick, he offered to bring me before Mr. Whitehead's tribunal, but I refused the proposal with indignation. I hope I shall not experience as hard treatment from you as from him. I have, as you know, a large sum of money to make up shortly; by accepting my play I can readily satisfy my creditor that way; at any rate I must look about to some certainty to be prepared. For God's sake

take the play and let us make the best of it, and let me have the same measure at least which you have given as bad plays as mine.

"I am, your friend and servant,
"OLIVER GOLDSMITH."

In answer to this appeal his manuscript was returned, with various remarks and proposed alterations scribbled over the blank sides of its pages; it was accompanied by a note, stating that notwithstanding its blemishes the play would be produced. Feeling the hardship of this treatment he was powerless to resent, Goldsmith sent his comedy, with the corrections thick upon its pages, to Garrick. Constant intercourse between the actor and author at Joshua Reynolds' house had made them better acquainted, and helped to establish kindly feelings in which past hostility was happily forgotten in present friendship. Therefore the poet had hopes that his play would be produced at Drury Lane; but before Garrick had time to arrive at a conclusion concerning it, Goldsmith, acting on Johnson's advice, requested the manuscript might be returned.

"I ask many pardons for the trouble I gave you yesterday," he wrote. "Upon more mature deliberation, and the advice of a sensible friend, I began to think it indelicate in me to throw upon you the odium of confirming Mr. Colman's sentence. I therefore request you will send my play back by my servant, for having been assured of having it acted at the other house, though I confess yours in every respect more to my wish, yet it would be folly in me to forego an advantage which lies in my power of appealing from Mr. Colman's opinion to the judgment of the town. I entreat, if not too late, you will keep this affair a secret for some time."

Garrick having returned the play, Johnson, who was ever anxious to serve his friend, waited on Colman, "who was prevailed on at last by much solicitation, nay, by a kind of force, to bring it on." The time fixed for its production was March.

Colman, accepting the comedy against his will, predicted its ill-success, and his tone was speedily adopted by some members of his company. Mrs. Abington, Gentleman Smith, and Woodward—three of the principal players, for whom the characters of Miss Hardcastle, Marlow, and Tony Lumpkin were respectively intended—declined their parts. This was a severe blow to Goldsmith, who had boasted of

writing the heroine to suit Mrs. Abington, and moreover expected much help from Smith's and Woodward's playing. The motive instigating their conduct may be judged from the subsequent confession of the latter, who declared that he was influenced by the manager's opinion that the comedy would never reach a second performance. In this dilemma Shuter, who had rendered Goldsmith much service in *The Good-natured Man*, proposed that an actor named Lewes should represent Young Marlow; but to this the author was unwilling to consent, Lewes being principally employed as a harlequin, and but seldom entrusted with speaking parts. Shuter was, however, of opinion that he had talents which merely required opportunity for development. Therefore he had frequently urged him to throw down the mask and don the buskin. He now advised him that there was a part in the new comedy befitting his abilities, which Smith had declined, and at the same time besought Goldsmith to entrust him with the character of Young Marlow. To this the author consented with some reluctance, but seeing him at rehearsal declared that next to Shuter, who played *Hardcastle*, Lewes's was the best performance. Miss *Hardcastle* was allotted to Mrs. *Bulkley*, and *Tony Lumpkin* to *Quick*. The cast, with the exceptions mentioned, proving most indifferent, Goldsmith's friends urged him to postpone the performance of his comedy until autumn, when probably the better members of the company might reconsider their judgment. But he answered stoutly, "I should rather that my play were damned by bad players, than merely saved by good acting."

Therefore the rehearsals were continued in a dispirited manner, when Colman occasionally suggested fresh alterations, now accepted, and again rejected by the suffering author. Nor was the manager willing to avert the apprehended failure by incurring the slightest expense for scenery or clothes. Stock scenes which had seen active service, and old dresses taken from the general wardrobe, were reintroduced. Occasionally these gloomy rehearsals were brightened by the presence of the playwright's friends. Here in front of the semi-lit stage sat ponderous Johnson, surrounded by Joshua Reynolds and his sister, the Horneck family, Edmund Burke, and Arthur Murphy, all being ready to offer suggestions and express comments.

VICTIMS.

By THEO GIFT.

Author of "*Lil Lorimer*," "*An Alibi and its Price*,"
Etc., Etc.

CHAPTER XVII. THE PROFESSOR LECTURES ON GHOSTS.

IT is a relief to turn from the moral atmosphere of *Les Châtaigniers* to a very different home in smoky old London, where in the gloomiest month of all the year—when yellow fogs reign supreme and white curtains become dingy in a week; when you cannot open your mouth without swallowing enough soot to make your inside as black as a chimney, and the brightest little back garden degenerates into an abomination of desolation—the Josephses yet managed, by dint of bright fires, smiling faces, and the fund of energy and good spirits peculiar to the whole family, to render even November more cheerful than elsewhere, and make their Saturday evenings centres of mirth, music, and talk, which attracted a good many of the artistic and scientific world into their vortex. Not the big fixed stars of that world, perhaps, but the smaller ones, whose light, if extending over a more limited area, often shines quite as brightly in the homely circle of a drawing-room.

Dr. Marstland was not seen there quite as often at present as heretofore. To speak the truth that impetuous young man was a little disappointed in the Josephses; a little inclined to be huffy with them, or with the Professor and his elder daughter at any rate. It had seemed to him—when he came back from Brittany, full of his adventures, burning with his wrongs and with enthusiasm for Vera, whose pathetic little note had made him more in love with her than ever—that his old friend and former tutor showed himself less sympathetic than might have been expected from his usual benevolence of character, and the kindness which he had already shown to the lovers. He had chafed the young man on the tremendous heat of his lately kindled flame; had humorously professed to uphold the severity of M. and Madame St. Laurent, as a wholesome corrective to the over-indulgence accorded to young people of the present day in general; and only dropped his bantering tone to administer a sharp and scathing rebuke to his ex-pupil on what he styled the "blasphemous folly" of even talking of throwing up a noble profession like that of medicine for the sake of a girl's pretty

face, whoever she might be. Altogether, and between jest and earnest, Marstrand grew to feel that he had better put his love troubles in his pocket when the Professor was present; and, though Mrs. Josephs, on the other hand, was most kind and sympathetic about them, and ready to ask questions and listen with as much interest as he could desire, the ungrateful young man could not help remembering that the sympathy thus extended to him was of that wide order which would have embraced just as readily the sorrow of a burglar mourning over his lost "jemmy," and felt almost irritated when the good lady would say in her jolliest and most comfortable tone:

"Ah, poor little Vera! Yes, it's quite true; short a time as she was with us I got almost as fond of her as if she'd been my own. Not much backbone, I'm afraid, but as gentle a bit of a thing as ever I saw. Oh yes, my dear, of course I'd be very glad to hear of her again now or at any time; but as to her father and mother being kind to her, don't you fret yourself. Fathers and mothers are always kind to their children, especially if they've only one, when there's no one to make them otherwise."

But it was Leah who, more than her mother, disappointed Marstrand's expectations at present; Leah, who did not share the former's optimistic view of parents in general, and whose sympathy was the more valuable because more discriminating: Leah, too, who had been the chief centre of Vera's idolatry, and whom Vera's eyes had been wont to follow with such fond, worshipping admiration. He had expected more from her, more active assistance and advice as to breaking down the St. Laurents' prejudices; less of that heartless readiness which her father showed to take those unpleasant people at their first word, and retire from an acquaintance to which he had looked forward as a means of obtaining occasional news at any rate of his poor little sweetheart; and more palpable eagerness to secure him the *têtes-à-têtes* in which alone he could find the solace of pouring out his heart on the all important subject. When he could secure one for himself, indeed, he found nothing to complain of, and Leah all that was sweetest and most sympathetic; ready to talk or listen to his heart's content, to praise Vera lovingly, and offer either advice or pity as he most needed, which was all very delightful, and made him congratulate himself on having got hold of a friend who

could be at once appreciative and intelligent. But alas! she was so difficult to get hold of! It had not been so always. Now she was always so busy, so busy that, since her return from Brittany, she scarcely even seemed able to find time to go with him on those errands of philanthropy or mercy which in previous days they had shared so often and so pleasantly. She had not lost her interest in them. When he told her of some tale of trouble among his poorer patients, her dark eyes would kindle or moisten as readily as ever, and she would say:

"Write me down the name and address, and I will make a half-hour to go and see them." But somehow the half-hour was never one when he could have gone with her, and occupied the time there and back with those plans and confidences which it would have been so delightful to him to pour out to her; and now and then the ghastly suspicion would occur to him, that she, of whom he thought so highly, was no better than shallower women, ready to weary of a man and lose interest in him directly he betrayed his interest in the love of another woman?

In plain fact, Marstrand was to some extent a spoilt child, and Leah had helped considerably in making him so; but it was well all the same that neither he nor anyone else, save one old spectacled scientist, guessed at the stern and bitter battle which the girl was waging with herself and her own heart at present; nor at the strenuous and sensible care with which, while resolutely showing all frank kindness and friendship to the man who was dearer to her than any other, she withdrew herself steadily from an intimacy whose closeness had been disastrous to her own peace of mind in the past, and might be dangerous to his loyalty in the future.

People were saying this autumn that Leah Josephs was growing handsomer than ever; that her features had gained a new sweetness of expression, her voice a greater richness and depth; and Marstrand himself seemed to hear of her everywhere: now winning laurels by her singing at some fashionable concert for the poor; now lending the same talent to charm the helpless inmates of a hospital for incurables; now as the composer of a little song everyone was singing; and again, as taking daily lessons on the violin in order to be able to impart them to certain youthful and ragged geniuses in the slums of Drury Lane.

The young surgeon was convinced at

this time that he hated music; as also that musical people had less largeness of soul, and were narrower and more deficient in sympathy for things outside their own useless and frivolous art, than any others. As a consequence he kept away from the Josephs' house more than he had ever done before; and, not knowing any other equally fascinating and absorbing to him as ever. More so, indeed; since he had made up his mind to use it as a means for gaining name, fame, and fortune for the benefit of the girl whom he hoped to make his wife.

"Monsieur told me sneeringly that he had higher views for his daughter than the bestowing her on a 'petit médecin inconnu,'" the young man thought, throwing back his splendid head. "Let's see if he will be equally scornful when I have made my name known in Paris as well as London, and can count my income by thousands as easily as I can now in hundreds. I believe I shall. I believe that if this very experiment I am trying now succeeds——"

Ah, well, it is the way of the world, and the great difference between men and women! George Marstland was very much in love; but there is no denying that between experiments, hard work, and natural hopefulness, he found his love, and his life through it, very much pleasanter than did poor Vera, amid the storm-clouds and gloom of her uncongenial home.

"And now let us have an explanation of this rubbish," said the Professor. "I never heard anything so ridiculous in my life. 'Ghosts' indeed! and such babies! Tell me all about it at once."

Something of a storm, a domestic uproar of a small and laughable nature, had been going on in Addison Gardens that evening. It originated in Naomi's two children, Benjy and Alix, who were on a visit to their grandparents, and who, after being perfectly good and even lamb-like all day, had, when bedtime came, stoutly refused the maid's invitation to them to retire to rest, and, when vanquished on this point, had attempted to make it a condition of their yielding that they should sleep together and not, as usual, in separate rooms. Vanquished again by brute force, and not without the expenditure of much kicking from Benjy, and lusty howls from both, they had maintained a treacherous quiet until the servant had gone downstairs, and

had then arisen and horrified the elders of the party assembled below by presenting themselves in their little white night-gowns hand-in-hand at the drawing-room door, bare-legged and rumple-haired, announcing with fiercely-scarlet faces and wet eyes that they "wasn't going to sleep alone when nasty, bad things might come to them." "Ghosts," Benjy put in distinctly, while Alix hesitated on the addition "'pirits."

Mrs. Josephs caught them up both at once in her motherly arms, and bore them off to the fire, scolding and fondling in a regular tumult of anxiety lest croup or cold should be the result of the escapade; but the Professor had a soul above such puerile details, and lifting Benjy on to his knee, demanded an explanation of the matter. This, however, Benjy seemed to find it rather hard to give; and only after much difficulty and questioning was it extracted from him that Rose, the Christian cook (Professor Josephs, as belonging to the Reformed Jews, had a penchant for cooks not liable to be troubled with culinary scruples on the Sabbath), had asked Becky the Jewish housemaid to get her something, and that because Becky, who was just taking a bunch of carrots out of her market-basket, did not at once obey, cook got cross and gave her such a shove that Becky started and jerked the carrots out of the window beside which she was standing; further, that Becky had burst out crying, and said cook was very wicked and spiteful, as everyone knew that witches—"what is awful bad, horrible old women things," Benjy explained—had power to injure any one who threw away a bunch of carrots without untying it.

"Becky is a stupendous fool," said the Professor. "There are no such things as witches, except that Auntie Leah of yours there, who never injured any one in her life; and if there were, what have they to do with ghosts or spirits?"

"Why, then, grandpa, Becky said next time Rose went near the ashpit she'd shove her down on it, for bad spirits always sit on rubbish heaps; an' I asted Rose what a spirit was, and she said a ghost, what's a tall thing all in white, an' 'pears in the dark to frighten people."

"Rose, too, is a stupendous fool," said the Professor. "There are no such things as ghosts either; and as to bad spirits, the only ones I know of are—ahem! those my grocer sends me, and they're kept corked up tightly in green glass bottles."

"Raphael, deary, don't," said Mrs. Josephs, who was still chafing and cosseting Alix's little pink feet before the fire. "You shouldn't joke in that way."

"Is grandpa joking?" asked Benjy, solemnly. "But, grandpa, you's mistook, for I know there is ghosts sometimes, 'cause when Becky complained to granny, granny said she and Rose should sleep together to-night, and then if anythin' came it couldn't hurt them, 'cause ghosts never hurt two people what's together; so that's why me and Alix want to sleep together, too, so's we mightn't be hurted either."

"Yes, 'cause I's welly 'fraid of ghosts, I am," put in Alix's small pipe as Ben's ceased; "and I 'onts to sleep in Benjy's bed, too. Us may, mayn't us, granny?"

The Professor lifted his hands in silent deprecation, and turned a remonstrant gaze on his wife, who was bending her head over the little girl's black curls in rather comical confusion, till young David, after looking expectantly from one to another of his parents, put in:

"Is it all nonsense, father? Because Johnny Cohen, he used to say that about rubbish heaps, too; and——"

"It is worse than nonsense, my lad; it is lies, and hurtful lies into the bargain; for everything is hurtful that turns brave boys and girls into wretched, miserable, little cowards," said the Professor, with a look which made Benjy wriggle uncomfortably on his perch, and turned his cheeks to a more poppy-like hue than before. "Also," half closing his eyes behind his spectacles, and speaking more dreamily, "it is, I grieve to say, one of the most unerring signs of an effete and fast decaying creed, that when all real knowledge or study of its dogmas is rapidly dying out among the very people who profess to adhere to them, its superstitions survive and flourish more rankly than before, as if in direct contradiction to the theory of natural law which, by the doctrine of the survival of the fittest——"

"Leah, love," burst in Mrs. Josephs briskly, "take Benjy up to bed, won't you? Alix can sleep with him till it's time for you to go up, just for once—only once, you know, father dear. Here, David, you carry her, there's a good boy. I hear a knock at the door now, and what would anyone think to see the state of us now!"

"They won't see much. That's only the postman's knock, mother dear," said Leah, laughing, as she shouldered her

sturdy captive, and bore him out to the postbox, where indeed a letter was lying for her; but as David and Alix followed, the mother drew near to her husband, and said reproachfully:

"Raphael, I wonder at you! To go on that way about the decay of religion—our own religion too—to David!"

"And, mother, I wonder at you!" said the Professor, smiling, and patting the worn, wrinkly hand which was lying on his sleeve with infinite tenderness. "Encouraging the vilest of superstitions in the minds of servants and children; your own servants and grandchildren too! 'Rubbish heaps,' indeed! The whole thing is a heap of rubbish."

"Ah, well, deary; of course you're too learned to—though I know one person who believed in it thoroughly, and that was Mrs. Josephs, your mother—But, dear, I don't want you to go upsetting David; for you know he thinks all the world of every word you say, and I do want him to be a good, orthodox lad. I know he's not as clever as Matt or John; but he's always been ten times as religiously minded, and never misses saying his Poorahah* of a morning, however late he may have overslept himself. Only yesterday he reminded me that next year he'd be thirteen, and old enough to wear the phylacteries, as men do; and he asked me straight out: 'Father wears it, doesn't he?' So I was glad to be able to say 'yes.'"

"My dear, I'd wear all the law and the prophets unabridged if it would make you glad; though I doubt all the same, old woman, if I couldn't remember their precepts just as well, and more comfortably, without doing so," said the man of science kindly. "Hullo! that rattle-te-tat isn't the postman!"

It was not; for Mrs. Josephs had only time to get back to her chair before Naomi and her husband entered, and were followed very shortly after by young Rosenberg, accompanied by a long-haired male friend with a roll of music under his arm, and a short-haired female ditto with a violin clasped in both hers; finally, by George Marstland, on whom, as a now infrequent guest, and one more in his line than the others, the Professor pounced immediately, and engaged in conversation on the "germ theory" and the recent experiments of M. Pasteur.

* A chapter, or portions of a chapter, in the Hebrew Bible recited by orthodox Jews on getting up of a morning.

Leah did not make her appearance from above stairs till the whole party were assembled. She said she had waited till the little ones were asleep; but both Naomi and Marstland noticed how unusually grave she looked, and that her cheeks were flushed to a vivid crimson, which, though adding to her beauty, gave it an almost feverish appearance. She was extremely restless too; nearly broke down once in singing one of her own songs, let her attention wander in the most unpardonable manner during a most interesting description which Herr Müller, the long-haired man, was giving her of the performance of Gounod's new oratorio at the Albert Hall; once lost the thread of what she was saying herself, and started nervously when Marstland, having finished his talk with her father, happened to cross the room in her direction. A few minutes later, however, she went up to the young surgeon as he was standing rather apart from the others, glancing over the pages of a scientific journal, and, under cover of a duet for violin and piano which was being performed by Naomi and the short-haired lady, said in a low tone:

"I was half wondering if we should see you to-night. I wanted to ask you"—she paused a second, the flush deepened on her cheek—"if you have heard from Vera?"

Marstland looked at her with a start of surprise too palpably frank to be put on.

"From Vera? No, not a line. You know we agreed there should be no writing without some serious cause. Why do you ask? Have—have you heard?"

"Yes." Leah's expression had changed. There was a look of sudden relief in it. "I had a letter only this evening. No; I am sorry, but I can't show it you," for Marstland almost put out a hand in his eagerness, "because" (her face must have been burning, for she put up one hand to it, but went on speaking with extra quiet and distinctness) "it has to do with some private affairs of my own; but she is well, which you will be glad to hear; and true to you, though that, I am sure, you don't need to be told; and sadly unhappy, poor child! because—because those 'views' which M. St. Laurent hinted at have at last been announced to her."

"Indeed! And they are——?"

"Just what I suspected long ago. That Count! It seems he proposed for her when she was fourteen. Her parents settled the matter for her in French fashion there and then; and have only now con-

descended to take her into their confidence."

"And she?" exclaimed Marstland; then, fixing his eyes on Leah's troubled face in the piercing manner which Vera used to find so embarrassing. "But how is it she wrote to you and not me? Surely——"

"Surely you are not going to be jealous of me!" said Leah smiling. "Remember, please, I was her first friend, and do not grudge me one little note. Indeed it was not easy for her to write at all, for she was in great disgrace with her parents for having refused to receive the Count's addresses."

"She did refuse them, my brave, true-hearted, little angel! And have they given in since? Has he—Leah, I am not grudging you your letter," and Marstland tried to check his impatience, and smiled, though evidently pained and perplexed, "but I can't think why, at such a crisis, Vera did not write to me too."

"My dear friend, you forget that she has no intimate friends or correspondents, and is looked after as strictly as a child of five years old, so that it is very difficult for her to write or post even one letter without attracting notice. And then—I think she had another reason. I think that after the months that have passed since you and she met she wanted to make sure through me whether you would be as pleased to hear of her loyalty now as you would have been then; and she knew—she said so—that I would tell her the truth."

"Good heavens! Does she doubt me, then? I who have not a thought or wish that is not concentrated on her! But I will soon satisfy her on that subject. I will write to her at once; and, Leah, you can endorse what I say, can't you? You will write to her now?"

"Yes, I shall certainly write to her now," said Leah very gravely. "I should like of course to do so openly; but as she would not be allowed to get my letter—I did not tell you before, but Madame sent back my last unopened—I must do it through Bénéite."

"Your father will make no objection, I suppose?"

"No, for I shall not compromise him by asking his permission. I shall simply tell him that I am going to disobey one of his commands, and that I would rather he did not ask me what it is."

Marstland looked a little doubtful.

"But—but is that wise? What will he say, do you think?" he asked, and then

was made to feel ashamed by Leah's smile.

"He—will trust me," she said quietly. "We always trust each other in this house; and if you will do the same and give me your letter to enclose in mine, I think it will be less risky for Vera than sending her two separate ones. She tells me that she has managed to temporise for awhile, and put her parents off, how, I don't quite know; nor whether she has told them plainly that she has given her love to you, and cannot help but be true to it. At any rate their dislike to you has evidently been freshly roused; and I should not like to do anything ignorantly which might make her position more painful and difficult than it is. I must write!"

"I should like to kiss your hands in gratitude for your saying so," said Marstland, "for I know how a line from you will delight her; but I think you'll agree also that, after what you have told me, it is also necessary for me to write as well."

"I suppose, if I were you, I should do so!" said Leah, smiling a little, "and since you certainly will, do you mind my giving you one little hint for her comfort?"

"A thousand, if you like. You are her best friend, and I, too often, a thoughtless, hot-headed fool. What is it?"

"Only this. She knows of course that she had your whole love while she was here, and you will tell her that she has it still; but I think it would give her greater confidence in—in herself, if you were to assure her as strongly as you know how, that it has never been given, even in the least degree, to anyone else before. I,"—there was a faint little smile on her mouth as she said it, though her eyes had a strangely sad look in them all the time, "I have known you so long that I think I can endorse that too; but she is very timid and humble. She cannot realise her own power over a man like you; and—but I really must not stay talking to you any longer. Some one is calling me."

Marstland had heard no call, and tried eagerly to detain her; but poor Leah had not strength enough to stay and listen to the protestations which she felt he would in all honesty make. She glided away even as she spoke; and try as he might for the remainder of the evening, he could not again get her to himself. The crimson flush had all died out of her

cheek, however, nor was there any further sign of feverishness or abstraction in her manner; but no one there guessed—Marstland least of all—what cruel and unlooked-for pain had been the occasion of these manifestations, nor that the wound, which for weeks back she had been trying so zealously to close, had been ruthlessly torn open and the most private and sacred feelings of her heart laid bare in the letter which she had received that evening.

"I cannot ask him," Vera had said, "because mamma says it is indecent to question young men about such things; and besides, he assured me once that there had never been anything at all but friendship between you, and laughed at me for thinking the contrary. But it is quite true that I did think so in the beginning, and now mamma says he only said that to please me, and that I took him away from you! Leah, is it true? How could I? I, who am not even pretty or clever, from you! But if it were so—if he had ever cared the least little tiny bit for you, or you for him in that way, you would tell me now, would you not? You would not be so cruel as to hide it. Remember, I trust you entirely. I will believe every word you say; and, on the other hand, if you hide it I should be sure to find it out, perhaps when we were married and it was too late to go back. I might even find that he was tired of me in my turn; and in any case I should be miserable all the rest of my life, and he too. And you—you would have made us so! Oh, I am sure you couldn't do it. You know how I love you; that you are my best, my only friend; that I would not mind anything now which would be for your happiness. I would even marry the Count. Dear, dear Leah, you will tell me the truth, will you not? And you will not mind my asking you?"

"Mind!" Leah repeated to herself. "But there, I suppose the best proof that she had no real doubt in her own mind as to the answer lies in the fact of her having written at all. Surely, if she had even the slightest she would not, simple and tactless as she is, have been cruel enough to ask me, the woman affected by it, to satisfy her. Fortunately," and the brave lip quivered a little, "I can satisfy her very easily about him. I have only to tell her the plain, unflattering truth, and if I lie about myself no one could surely blame me!"

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

A Weekly Journal
CONDUCTED BY
CHARLES DICKENS

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

ALEXIA.

By ELEANOR C. PRICE,
Author of "Gerald."

CHAPTER V.

FACT generally reigns, except among fools and distracted people. A new position, a new state of things, is accepted much more easily than anyone expects. The most dreaded meetings, the most thrilling moments in a life, are gone through with calm smiles, thanks to that wonderful smoother of all things, civilisation. The truth is that human life, with all its romances, is built on a firm foundation of matter-of-fact. Many excursions may be made, but nature in the main is ruled by practical common-sense; and civilisation has grown out of nature; otherwise, she would not last a day. Nature is hard, and civilisation is cynical; the most successful human being is he who enters most into the spirit of both.

So Alexia and Charlie met like friendly old neighbours, and nothing more; she need not have been afraid. They shook hands after church with the village looking on, under Mr. Page's slightly nervous glance, Mrs. Dodd's sharp eyes, Mrs. Melville's smile. And all the rest of the day Alexia was in her brightest spirits, almost too bright for Edmund, who felt sentimental on that sleepy summer Sunday, and wanted to read Browning to her under the trees.

"Oh," she said, "I hate poetry!" and she took his book and threw it away on the grass. "Let us fetch the dogs," she said, "and go for a walk by the river."

A few days later she went with her father to call at the Manor. Her old friend Mrs. Melville was out, Charlie was nowhere to be seen, and they were received by the

bride, a young lady of very easy manners, who presently told Mr. Page that Charlie was at the stables, if he liked to go and look for him.

"Thank you, I think I will," said Mr. Page. "I want to see him."

"Bring him in, please," said Mrs. Melville. "He is so awfully unsociable."

So Alexia was left alone with the bride. At the moment she was thinking more of the old room than of her—the long, stately, old-fashioned drawing-room, with the two pillars in the middle, and the rather gorgeous old carpet, and dark gilded paper, and great oil-paintings of ancestors. How she had played at hide and seek behind those heavy crimson curtains, and how Charlie had set her up on cushions in that satin arm-chair, with a gold bracelet of his mother's stuck into her curls by way of a crown, and had knelt down and vowed homage to his queen! It was all the same now, except that the room was brightened up with a good many wedding presents, and that poor little queen knew that she had been a mock queen indeed, and Charlie's real queen sat there opposite, and was the Maud Radcliffe, whom girls thought so stupid, and men good-natured, in the old days.

The art of Paris had made Mrs. Melville a very smart and fashionable woman; but it could not make her pretty, or handsome, or attractive. She had a bad figure; a bad complexion; commonplace features; and hair which must be coarse and ugly, however it might be cut, and frizzed, and fringed. Her eyes were cold and bright; she had no smile, but a very loud laugh; and a deep voice which perhaps was the best thing about her, for it had a pleasant and honest sound. She, by way of being kind to Alexia, stared at her hard, and asked one or two questions about her

accident in the winter, which Alexia answered lightly: she was quite well now, and the accident had been nothing at all.

"You missed that ball, though," said Mrs. Melville, "and it was a very good ball. I enjoyed it, that is—perhaps we shall have one next winter. I don't know, though. I hope we shall not be here."

"Not here?"

"No; not if I can get away. I generally have a cough in the winter, you know, and I have always hated this climate. In fact I don't like this part of the country at all. I wish Redwood was in Hertfordshire, or Sussex, or Hampshire, or somewhere else. This is the dullest, and coldest, and stupidest county in England. Don't you think so?"

"No; I like it," said Alexia.

"Oh, I dare say; but then of course it is so very much home to you. I suppose you have never lived anywhere else? My husband pretends he is fond of it, and my mother-in-law really is, I think. She evidently expects us to be fastened down here for ever. But even if the country was nice, the house is so old-fashioned and inconvenient. I suppose you know every inch of it? You used to come and play here, didn't you, when you were a child?"

"Oh yes, many years ago," said Alexia.

"I have always thought the house perfection—but then of course, as you say, I have never seen any others."

"This room, for instance, you can't think this room perfection," said Mrs. Melville, with a contemptuous fling of her hand, and a glance from floor to ceiling. "It is antediluvian, and so ugly. There is not one pretty thing in it—there was not, till my things were unpacked. However, this room will soon be altered. You will see a great difference, when I have furnished it to please myself."

Alexia had no doubt that there would be a great difference; whether it would be an improvement, she could not feel so sure; and she wondered what Charlie's mother would say.

Presently Mrs. Melville began to talk about the neighbours, all or most of whom Alexia knew slightly. But she now heard things about them which not even the wise Mrs. Dodd had ever told her. Skeletons in cupboards were very impartially dragged out and shaken by this young lady, who seemed amused at Alexia's ignorance. Alexia listened, rather hating herself as time went on, and wondering why Mrs. Melville should tell her these things. Per-

haps because she was a harmless girl, and knew no one very intimately, and these stories were of a sort to amuse the teller of them.

At last came something so scandalous about a quiet couple in the neighbourhood, that Alexia found her courage, and wondered how she had ever lost it.

"I am quite sure that is not true," she said. "Mrs. Lindley is not so idiotic, and he is a good man."

Mrs. Melville stared and laughed.

"I don't wonder at her," she said. "Life is too dull. He was the idiot, with his jealousy. Awfully stupid of men to be jealous."

"Some men can't help it, and have good reason for it, I suppose," said Alexia. "I don't believe, though, that Mr. Lindley was, or that she—gave him any reason."

"Well, everybody says so," said Mrs. Melville, and then she stared a little thoughtfully. "One never knows what one is capable of," she said, "but I don't think I should ever be jealous. Too much trouble. It never hurts anybody but one's self, unless one has the strength of mind to carry it through."

"How do you mean?"

"Poison somebody," said Mrs. Melville with her deliberate gaze.

She certainly did not mean anything—how could she? But Alexia's cheeks were burning at that moment, and she was glad that it was absolutely necessary to control herself, for her father came into the room with Charlie.

Charlie did not look quite so easy and pleasant to-day as on Sunday after church. He had a downcast look, and hardly spoke to Alexia; evidently something had put him out of temper. He began teasing his wife's little dog, which presently growled at him, and then he pushed it roughly away with his foot.

Mr. Page was talking to Mrs. Melville, and Alexia tried to talk too, and not to be so painfully conscious of that sulky face at the other side of the room. He disliked her now, she thought, and perhaps it was no wonder: people do not like to be reminded of their disappointments.

She thought she would never come to the Manor again, if she could help it. She did not like Charlie's wife, and the change in himself was too painful. It was not manly, she thought, to visit the past on her by a manner which was almost rudeness. She had done what seemed right. For his sake she had crushed her hopes and her

happiness, and had resisted the strongest temptation she had ever had in her life. Of course he did not exactly know that, or the sacrifice could never have been made, but if he had cared much he could hardly have married this woman immediately, and in any case he might behave like a gentleman.

"The Squire tells me you are thinking of making some alterations in the house," said Mr. Page.

"The house is not fit to live in," replied Mrs. Melville. "There are only three or four good rooms in it. That old part is exactly like a rabbit-warren. I should like to pull it down and build a few good rooms, if I am to live here, and there would be a large bonfire of rubbish, for I really don't care for the relics of past generations. The Melville family are so very sentimental," said she with a loud laugh, "that they keep the Latin grammar their great-grandfather had at Eton. It's a great treasure. I suppose you are not surprised, Mr. Page, for you have known them a long time. But they are a most romantic family, and my husband is one of the worst of them. Seriously, these old rooms are full of the most awful, moth-eaten rubbish, all tumbling to pieces from the damp, and perfectly uninteresting to every creature. There are some cases of stuffed birds and butterflies——"

"Come, we are going to draw a line there, you know," said Charlie suddenly, laughing in his turn, and walking across the room. "You can do what you like with most of the rubbish, but I won't have that room touched. Those are my own things. That little case of humming-birds is the thing—the thing I like best in this house—or in the world," he added under his breath.

Mrs. Melville was immensely amused. She laughed, she evidently thought Charlie the greatest fun possible; she looked for sympathy to Mr. Page and Alexia, and her voice was quite musical with pleasure as she retorted—"Those humming-birds! Well, that really is a joke. Do you know what he means, Miss Page? Charlie, go and fetch them this moment. The most dreadful little wretches, stuck about on twigs, with a nest and two of them sitting on it. So badly stuffed that they are tumbling to pieces—and such a wretched case, too—not properly done at all. Charlie, fetch them. I should like to show a specimen of your treasures."

Charlie did not move, but he looked at

Alexia with a curious smile; he was standing quite near her now.

"It's a bad account of the humming-birds, isn't it?" he said. "If Mrs. Melville turns them out, you will have to give them a home."

"I'm afraid I have quite enough rubbish already, thank you," said Alexia cheerfully, hating herself all the time.

"Then one of these days we'll make a bonfire of them," muttered the Squire, turning away.

"Yes, quite right; we'll have a grand cremation," laughed Mrs. Melville.

She understood nothing. How was she to know that Charlie had brought those little skins home from his first voyage, and that he and Alexia had stuffed them together, that Alexia had made the nest and arranged the twigs; and that the case had been Charlie's finest work in carpentering and glazing. How was she ever to guess at the delightful hours spent over those poor humming-birds, hours which ought to be quite forgotten now, and which indeed Alexia was doing her best to forget! She was right after all, with her hard, common-sense: the humming-birds had better be burnt, with many other relics of Melville boyhood—very few of them had a right to be respected now.

Mr. Page, for his part, had some glimmering what it was all about, and Alexia was glad to find, after a minute or two, that he was quite ready to go.

As they walked down through the park together, he was at first quite silent, and it was not till they were outside the gates that he said anything at all of the visit just over.

"I don't like that ménage, Alex, do you?" he said, as they turned along the dusty road towards the Farm.

For a moment Alexia did not answer. Her feelings were mixed and puzzling; and her instinct of fierce self-defence, when Charlie, in all his estrangement, made that attempt to recall old times, had hurt herself a good deal more than him. But she was quite resolved to keep on the safe surface of things.

"I wish she was nicer," she said in a low voice. "But no doubt she says things she doesn't mean."

"There's something about her which must suit Mrs. Melville very badly, I think," said Mr. Page. "I call it coarseness—but I believe I shall be told that that view is middle-class and old-fashioned—shan't I, Alex?"

"Not by me," said Alexia. "I hate——" but she checked herself: her opinion of Charlie's wife would have sounded too hard, put into words; and her father had something of the same feeling.

"Well, we must make the best of her," he said. "I hope Charlie will behave well to her, for I think she is fond of him, with all her bravado. I hope she won't pull the old Manor about his ears—but probably, having the money, she will do as she pleases."

"She doesn't like the place, she doesn't want to stay here," said Alexia. "It is too cold for her here, and she dislikes the whole thing."

"Will Charlie stand for the county, I wonder!"

"I don't think she will make him. I should say no."

"I agree with you. He seems rather indifferent. What will he do then? Nothing. And if they leave Redwood, what will the advantage of the marriage have been? None."

Alexia did not speak.

"He's a weak fellow, and humoursome," said her father. "One must have a liking for him—and I am sorry for him now; but Alex, my dear, I don't regret the past."

Alexia's honesty was too much for her.

"Sometimes, father, I think we were all wrong," she said quietly.

Mr. Page looked at her in a little consternation; this was one of the strangest things he had ever heard her say.

"Do you—are you unhappy then?" he asked nervously.

"I was not thinking about happiness," she said, and then with a quick glance she added—"I ought not to have said that, you must forget it—and do let us keep off the subject, as much as we can. It makes me feel like a coward."

"You are the bravest girl that ever lived," Mr. Page answered. And then they came to the gate, and were met by Edmund, who had been wandering dismally about the garden, waiting for them.

Mr. Page was a little out of patience with Edmund. He loved books himself, and had been romantic enough in his young days, but his tastes were thoroughly manly too. Even when he was in love with the rector's daughter, he would hardly have been contented to lie under a tree all day reading poetry and gazing at her. Edmund was found impracticable by his uncle. He would do nothing but what Alexia made him do; and even with her, he did not care

to play tennis, or ride, or drive, or walk, or boat. The garden was his Paradise; and Alexia generally spoiled him very much, perhaps from half-unconscious pity. She could not help it if the boy loved her; she had been nothing to him but a very nice cousin, and she knew she could never be anything more; but how was she to show poor Edmund that? She could not help it if her presence was heaven; and no doubt the worship was a little sweet to her.

Once or twice Mrs. Dodd walked in unexpectedly, and found Edmund at Alexia's feet on the grass. Alexia was faintly annoyed; but a sniff from Mrs. Dodd was not likely to make her drive Edmund away.

CHRONICLES OF SCOTTISH COUNTIES.

THE BORDER COUNTIES. PART IV.

THE county of Dumfries is formed of three principal dales, the valleys of the Esk, the Annan, and the Nith, and these rivers all find their way into the great Firth of Solway. The general character of the county is of a rough and somewhat gloomy wildness. The river banks indeed often afford pleasant nooks; but the bare, rolling hills, the stony pastures, and rugged plough-lands, suggest their former state of moor and forest, and the poorly repaid toil of generations who have wrought the ungenial soil and made the harvest blossom instead of thorn and whin-bush.

The lower part of Eskdale is, however, an exception to this general character. From Langholm to Cannobie Bridge, along the road which follows every wind and turn of the pleasant river, is one of the fairest pilgrimages that man can make, through a country rich beyond description, with a glimpse of Johnnie Armstrong's ruined stronghold of Gilnochie on the way, and everywhere pleasant white cottages, covered with woodbine and honeysuckle, shining among the trees.

A few miles below Cannobie Bridge the Esk river is joined by Liddel Water, which for some distance has formed the border-line of Scotland and England. But the frontier from this point does not follow its natural course down the Esk to the Solway, but runs along an artificial dyke in a straight line almost due east and west till it reaches the bank of the little river Sark:

Now Sark rins o'er the Solway sands,
And Tweed rins to the ocean
To mark where England's province stands.

This triangular patch of country between the Sark and the Esk was long known as the Debateable Land—a sort of No Man's Land, where neither writ nor summons of English or Scottish King was of any avail. In this Debateable Land lies Solway Moss, near which was the battle-field where a Scottish army of ten thousand men, out of sheer sulkiness and unwillingness to fight under the King's favourite, Oliver Sinclair, dissolved and took to flight upon the attack of a handful of English Borderers. The news of this disgrace was the last blow which broke the heart of King James, as he turned his face to the wall in lonely Falkland—a fit retribution for his deeds of slaughter on the Borders. He missed his brave Borderers then, and his ten thousand sheep that fed in Ettrick were all he had to show for a thousand armed men who would have been faithful to the death.

Solway Moss is noted also for another catastrophe of later date. The Moss itself lies a good way above the level of the surrounding country, in a kind of hollow among the low hills—a sort of moorland lake, which in course of centuries had become choked with vegetable accretions. As a reservoir of peat it had been diligently worked by the neighbouring farmers, and its banks had been pared and cut away till at last they proved too weak to support the pressure upon them, and in the gloaming of one November evening this pit of Acheron was suddenly tossed upon the cultivated and fertile region below. The flood advanced—a great, moving wall of black mud—and buried beneath it fertile farms and smiling homesteads, covering the face of the country with a black and slimy veil. Strange to say, no human lives were lost in this calamity, although many families were imprisoned by the muddy avalanche, and were only rescued by being dragged through the roofs of their houses.

On the Scottish side of the river Sark, not far from Solway Moss, lies the parish of Graitney, better known for its taverns than its kirk, for Graitney is only a less familiar but more correct form of Gretna. The origin of the importance of Gretna as the great mart for hasty marriages is to be found in Lord Hardwicke's Marriage Act of 1753. Before that date there was no occasion to travel far to escape the tedious formalities of banns or episcopal license. A Fleet parson would do the business as effectually as anybody, and we read of enamoured youths overpowered by the

charms of beauty sending out late at night for the fiddlers and a parson, and being joined in matrimony to their enslavers without more ado. In this hasty and light-hearted way a beautiful Miss Gunning was made a duchess; but, henceforth, the way was to be no longer short and joyous, but encompassed with all the formalities that suggested themselves to a grave and formal lawyer. But Scotland retained, as she still retains, her old civil code, in which the acknowledgment of mutual consent is recognised as the essence of the marriage contract, and thus the beaux and belles who were fortunate enough to have a coach and six at their disposal might safely drive the same through Lord Hardwicke's Act, and be securely married at Gretna Green.

The Green itself owes its celebrity to the founder of the trade in marriages, one Joseph Paisley, a tobacconist, who lived at Meggs Hill, betwixt Gretna and Springfield. Pennant, the amusing pioneer of the tourists of to-day, describes the aspect of the place in 1771—the grove of firs, the village green, the fisherman who acted as the high-priest of Hymen. There is a general impression that a blacksmith was one of the chief celebrants, but this blacksmith eludes research. Strictly speaking there was no necessity for any regular ceremony, the acknowledgment before any competent witnesses being sufficient. But the feminine mind clung very strongly to some kind of official rite, and a regular form of marriage was usual, with a formal registration, which impressed upon the contracting parties that everything was properly done.

As time went on the arrangements for runaway weddings fell into the hands of the innkeepers and postmasters of Carlisle and Gretna, who went shares in the profits with the men who performed the ceremony. Every kind of extortion was freely practised upon the aspirants for matrimony, and the usual fee for those who came in post-chaises was thirty or forty guineas, while expectant postboys and hungry hangers-on shared in the shower of gold that fell around. The whole community lived almost entirely upon the proceeds of the marriage business, and thus the rattle of wheels and the crack of the whip of the postilions was a welcome sound by night or day, as welcome as the patter of falling rain to farmers after a drought, or the rustling of the coming breeze to sailors long becalmed.

Gretna Green marriages went out with postchaises, high neckcloths, and swallow-tailed coats. Parents are less flinty-hearted perhaps, lovers less ardent, heiresses less plentiful and more prudent, nowadays, and though we may still hear of runaway matches, they no longer run in the direction of the Scottish Borders.

It is curious, by the way, in connection with Gretna's ancient fame, to note that the whole of Eskdale was formerly rather noted for irregularities in connection with the marriage tie. The old wives of Eskdale, too, were long noted as witches, and a flavour of uncanniness lingered about the whole district.

Hardly to be classed as dalesmen were the hardy fisherfolk of the banks of the Firth, a strong and passionate race, who had often to defend with force of arms their very means of living from the encroachments of feudal superiors, who, not content with their rents and privileges on land, would also be lords of tideway and viscounts of the seas. Of such contests, continued almost to recent times, we have a graphic picture in Scott's "Red Gauntlet;" and an actual occurrence was the rising of the Scottish fishermen, who mustered in arms and marched to pull down a dam-dyke which Sir James Graham of Netherby had raised in the bed of the river Esk. Sir James armed his own tenants and retainers, and a real Border battle seemed imminent, but a parley was called, concessions were made in the way of gaps and salmon ladders, and peace was finally arranged.

Following the coast of the Firth towards Annan another independent streamlet is crossed, the Kirtlewater, on whose banks, by fair Kirkconnel Lee, may be found the grave of Burd Helen, of ballad fame, and of her faithful lover, Adam Fleming. The peasant still points out a spot marked by a heap of stones where, according to tradition, Helen was killed in her lover's arms by a shot fired by a rejected rival. The faithful lover wandered over land and sea, but could find no solace anywhere for the loss of his beloved one, and returned at last to lie down on her grave and die.

The quiet but thriving little burgh of Annan is the chief town of the great valley of the same name, the metropolis of a district which has strong and characteristic features both in its inhabitants and its scenery. Burns personifies the town as

Blinkin' Bess of Annandale,
That dwells by Solway's side.

And it was by Solwayside in the little

sea-bathing village of Brow that the poet spent some of the last sad hours of his life, and thence he wrote despairing letters to sundry friends imploring trifling loans to save him from the horrors of a jail.

Long ago Annandale was an independent stewartry, and Scotland's hero King, the great Robert Bruce, was Lord of Annandale before he was King of Scotland. The old stronghold of the Bruce is higher up the valley at Lochmaben, "Marjorie o' the monie Lochs," a grass-grown and primitive village.

Then slow raise Marjorie o' the Lochs,
And wrinkled was her brow;
Her ancient weed was russet grey,
Her auld Scots bluid was true.

The weird and ancient aspect of the village, surrounded by a chain of lakelets, is repeated in the gloomy remains of the castle, enormous broken walls hidden in the pine barren that occupies a commanding promontory on the castle loch. Numerous vague traditions testify to the ancient fame of this primitive stronghold. The castle loch has its own peculiar species of fish, and a curious paved causeway of unknown antiquity and purpose runs across the bottom of the lake. The little burgh was highly favoured by the Bruce, and it is said that descendants of his retainers and personal followers may be still found among the kindly tenants of Lochmaben, a community which hold their lands by a peculiar free tenure, and which up to recent times formed a caste apart from the rest of the inhabitants.

Between Lochmaben and Annan lies a district of some interest in literary history. For below lies Hoddam with its old Border tower, and on an opposite height the more famous Tower of Repentance, over whose portals are carved the serpent and the dove, mythic emblems of penitence. The story goes that one Lord Herries, a famous Border chief, was returning from a raid in English ground with goodly booty and a number of English prisoners, when, in crossing the Firth, a storm arose, and to lighten the ship, which was in danger of sinking, Lord Herries gave the word to throw the prisoners overboard. And to expiate this crime was built the Tower of Repentance.

This tower and the frowning hill of Burnswark, where an old and probably prehistoric earthwork crowns an isolated bluff, are conspicuous objects in all the country round, and were familiar enough to a certain barefooted scholar who, wet or

dry, made his way daily from the village of Ecclefechan to Hoddam parish school.

The Carlyles were of the sturdy race of Annandale, stout and rugged Borderers, with a family tradition of an ancestor who had been hanged for cattle lifting—unjustly, as was added; and perhaps a sufferer under the Jedwood Code, of hanging in the morning and trying in the afternoon. The actual grandfather of the great Thomas was another Thomas, a carpenter, a fighting chiel whose prowess was well proved at Border trysts and fairs. It is recorded that this Thomas saw the clans file through Ecclefechan in the '45 on their famous march to Derby; but notwithstanding his fighting propensities he could have been little tempted to join them, for to the stern Cameronians of Annandale the Highlanders and their cause seemed alike foreign and papistical. After this Thomas settled on a farm called Brownknowe, near Burnswark Hill—the name, by the way, seems to refer to the rude entrenchment or work of the Brownies or Picts—and here, while wrestling with the uncongenial soil, he married Mary Gillespie, by whom he had four sons and two daughters, who had through their early years to shift pretty much for themselves, their father having failed in the farming line and living henceforth a shifty and desultory life.

The second son of this wild Borderer found more congenial employment through the opening of a stone quarry in the neighbourhood—the whole county seems to promise more in the way of stones than wheatstacks—and turned out a rare stonemason, famous for hard strikings and hard sayings. The mason built his own house in Ecclefechan—a rude, unlovely edifice—and married Margaret Aitken, of staunch and sterling Cameronian race, who reared her barefooted weans in thrifty care and painful economy, so that when the time came there was something in the stocking to provide for the education of the lads. And when the boy Thomas had learned what Hoddam school could teach him, he was sent to the grammar school at Annan.

A youth from Annan, five years older than Thomas Carlyle, was about this time making some little stir at the University of Edinburgh and in the Kirk of Scotland as a probationer of rare promise and rich gifts. This was Edward Irving, the son of a well-to-do tanner of Annan, whose influence over Carlyle, though transient, was of high importance. When Thomas had passed through his course at Edinburgh—intended

to fulfil the darling ambition of the Scottish peasant family to have a son in the ministry—he returned to Ecclefechan for a while, his mind in a mutinous state against the formulas of any church, and took employment, against the grain, as mathematical tutor at Annan. Meantime Irving, while awaiting his call to an established ministry, had taken charge of a grammar school at Haddington, where one of his private pupils was a fascinating and promising girl, the daughter of the chief medical practitioner of the town—no other than Janet Welsh, the future wife of Carlyle.

After a time Edward Irving was invited to a more important charge, in the way of a school at Kirkcaldy. But here, the brilliance and imagination with which Irving invested the old Scotch doctrine, caused dissatisfaction among some of the cautious old townfolk, and Carlyle was invited to conduct a rival school as a sort of antidote to Irving's pernicious teaching. This was not a promising introduction to a friendship; but Irving's magnanimity and sweetness of temper were proof against any unworthy jealousy, and he welcomed Carlyle as a brother dalesman, a son of Annan, dear among the strangers of Fife, and from that time his friendship never failed, as Carlyle's often did; and the paths that opened before the rugged genius of the Borderside were mainly opened by Irving's kindly hand.

When Irving received his momentous invitation to serve the Caledonian Chapel in Hatton Garden, and removed to London to enter upon that wonderful course of oratorical triumph that drew all the world, both great and small, to the Scotch chapel, he seems to have transferred the charge of his favourite pupil and disciple, Janet Welsh, to his friend Carlyle. Between Irving and Miss Welsh there existed, no doubt, a strong and passionate affection, which was frustrated by a long-standing engagement on the part of the young divine. And thus, when, in course of time, Carlyle developed from the friendly counsellor and literary adviser into the ardent wooer, it was rather in a spirit of romantic self-sacrifice than of personal devotion, that Janet Welsh accepted him as a husband.

All this concerns our chronicle, for Carlyle is still of Annandale. His family have removed to Mainhill—a low, white-washed cottage on the road to Lockerbie, where Carlyle spent his time, having definitely renounced all pedagogal prospects, in studying German, in wrestling with the

spirit of Goethe in Faust, and in translating Wilhelm Meister. Nor do we lose sight of Carlyle altogether when he marries and lives on his wife's little domain at Craigenputtock. There is surely some softer Celtic original buried in this barbarous name; but anyhow, the Welsh family had long been lairds of this solid and gaunt old manor house and wide moorland farm. This little oasis among the crags—green and fertile by contrast with the heaths and bogs around, with its shaggy grove of pines and stern outlook from the otherwise bare hillsides—lies at the head of the sister valley of the Nith; not readily to be reached from anywhere, but owning Dumfries, sixteen miles distant, as its market town.

The next step is from the Craig to Chelsea, and here we, in Annandale, lose sight of our giant, except for occasional flashing visits, although his increasing fame and authority are told proudly in the vale; till at last, after long silence, comes the funeral train of the old seer, and his body to rest among his fathers in the bleak kirkyard.

To further explore the Vale of Annan, in following the course of the river rather than that of highway or railway, we shall reach Spedlins Tower, on the south-west bank of the river, about which there is a curious ghost story; as well authenticated by the testimony of divines and exorcists as such stories can possibly be. It was in the seventeenth century doubtless, that Sir Alexander Jardine was lord of Spedlins, and the ruler and chief magistrate of the county side. To him in his hall of justice at Spedlins, was brought one day a luckless tailor, one Porteous, charged with some trivial offence. The justice remanded the prisoner to one of the strong rooms of the castle, locked him up, and put the key in his pocket. Suddenly called away to Edinburgh, Sir Alexander forgot all about the prisoner, till, riding under the great bow or gateway of the city, he dipped his hand into his pouch and found the key of the dungeon. Sir Alexander sent back a man on horseback to release the prisoner; but it was too late. For days and days the poor wretch's screams and cries of anguish had sounded through the castle; but nobody had come to his aid. If it was the laird's pleasure that the man should be starved, starved he must be. But though dead and afterwards decently buried the spirit of the murdered man could not rest, nor leave any rest to those who slept or tried to sleep in Spedlins Tower. All night, and some-

times all day, the ghost would scream and rave, and all that the pious ministers and elders of the kirk could do, was not to lay the spirit, for that could not be, but to confine it to the one particular dungeon where it had suffered, and this by means of a great Bible, which must be always kept in a particular place in the tower. The Bible is still preserved in the family; but as they have abandoned the tower for a more convenient residence, they have taken the Bible with them, and the ghost, neglected and abandoned, seems to have resigned his function in despair.

Between Spedlins and Lockerbie runs Dryfe Water, with its famous sands, a level plain where was fought a desperate battle between the Border clans of Johnstone and Maxwell. Lord Maxwell, the leader of his clan, was killed in the fight, and his followers were put to flight, many of them disfigured by slashes in the face from the axes of their foes, that a Lockerbie lick came from that time a proverbial expression. In the present day Lockerbie is chiefly noted for its lamb fair—a great gathering from all the Borders, English as well as Scottish.

Lochmaben, on the opposite bank of the river, has already been noticed; but we have said nothing about the blind harper of that ilk, commemorated in the old ballad—a curious bit of folk-lore that seems to have originated in far-distant climes:

Oh, heard ye na o' the silly blind harper
How lang he lived in Lochmaben town,
And how he would gang to fair England
To steal the Lord Warden's Wanton Brown.

The Wanton Brown was a famous mare and the most swift-footed of her race. But to steal her, and steer her successfully home, seemed a task a little above the competence of a blind harper. The old rascal, however, had an idea, one inherited possibly from Scythian ancestors,

This wark will ne'er gae weel
Without a mare that has a foal.

quoth the harper sagely, and, as his own grey mare was now the dam of a well-beloved colt, he had not far to seek, and taking the mare, and with his wild hair slung behind him, he found his way to the Warden's court at Merry Carlisle.

The notes of the harp made the minute welcome everywhere, and a seat in the Warden's hall for the harper, and a stall in his stable for the harper's grey mare, were freely offered and accepted. But when the feast was in progress and all were merry,

carousing, the harper stole out to the Warden's stables, and, in the words of the ballad,

He took a cowl haltar frae his hose,
And o' his purpose he did no fail.
He slipt it ower the Wanton's nose
And tied it to his grey mare's tail.

And then, opening the stable door, away went the grey mare, making tracks at once for her home in Lochmaben and the colt that was whinnying pitifully for her return.

The germ of the story is to be found in the Greek legend, derived from Scythia, of the Arimaspians, and similar stories are current among the Tartars. But our harper improved upon his model. When the theft was discovered, who so loud in his lamentations as he for the loss of his good grey mare? And so the Warden generously gave him three times the worth of the mare, and the blind harper returned rejoicing to Lochmaben.

Higher up the dale we come to Moffat, famed from ancient days for its water-cure; with renowned medicinal springs, and a settlement of water drinkers inhabiting the sweet primitive vale. Not among the water-drinkers, however, were the celebrated trio who met there when

Willie brewed a peck o' maut,
And Rob and Allan came to see.

A veritable meeting between Robert Burns and two of his friends in pleasant Moffatdale.

While the source of the main river of Annanwater is not far to seek in the mossy fields where

Tweed, Annan, and Clyde,
Come out o' ae hill side,

Moffatwater may be followed into the wilder and often magnificent scenery of the great glen which connects Dumfries with Selkirkshire. A tributary rivulet forms the strange cascade known as the Grey Mare's Tail, where the stream flings itself from a precipice three hundred feet in height, and bounding from ledge to ledge spreads itself out into something like the shape of a horse's tail. A dark and gloomy gully is flanked by strange earthworks, called the Giant's Grave, and hereabouts are lurking places of the persecuted Covenanters.

Among the hills that form the divide between the vales of Clyde and Nith, the pass of Dalveen affords other grand and lonely scenes haunted by the memories of Covenanters and stern sectaries. And the little, lonely town of Sanquhar was once occupied by Richard Cameron himself, the leader, who gave his name to the Cameronian sect, where he boldly published his

testimony, and proclaimed the deposition of King Charles the Second.

There is something strange and foreign about Sanquhar, in name as well as in fact.

Auld black Joan frae Crichton peel,
O' gipseye kith and kin.

And Crichton Peel is the supposed birth-place of the Admirable Crichton, of more or less fabulous accomplishments. But Sanquhar Castle itself is a ruin of considerable interest. Then there is the wild glen of Durisdeer, famed in the ballad of John of Breadislee.

And he has gone to Durisdeer
To hunt the dun deer down.

Durisdeer is a wide and lonely parish, which stretches across the whole vale of Nith from the hills of Galloway to those of Clydesdale, and its sequestered kirk is almost overpowered by the grand monuments of the Queensberry family, elaborate structures in marble and alabaster. For the castle of Drumlanrig is in the parish—an enormous and massive structure of the seventeenth century, built by the first Duke of Queensberry, who, it is said, slept but one night in the costly building. The family of Drumlanrig was founded by William, son of James; the Earl of Douglas, who was killed at the battle of Otterburn; a branch of the famous house of Douglas, which family became extinct in the person of Old Q., the last Duke of Queensberry, whose squat and ugly person is familiar in the caricatures of the early years of the present century.

More graceful and generous figures are those of an earlier Duke and Duchess, Charles and Catherine, "Kitty, beautiful and young," the friends and hosts of the poet Gray. It is curious to picture the fastidious spark among the wilds of Durisdeer; but a cave which tradition connects with the secret rites of the Druids, and later with the psalms and prayers of the proscribed Cameronians, was also, it is said, the resort of the poet of St. James's and the Mall.

Descending rapidly the Vale of Nith we pass the Castle of Closeburn, the ancient seat of the Kirkpatricks, descended from him, who made "sicker" of Red Comyn in the church of Greyfriars down the vale. And as we approach Dumfries we may pause at Ellisland, a small upland farm, where Robert Burns was the good-man about a hundred years ago. Friars Carse was a little higher up the vale, where lived a good friend of the poet, and here he met

Captain Francis Grose, who was then compiling his "Antiquities of Scotland;" the original

Chiel amang you taking notes.

Robert pressed the Captain to make a note of Auld Alloway Kirk, his father's resting-place, and to point the occasion he composed, a few days after, the inimitable "Tam o'Shanter," which was published for the first time in Grose's "Antiquities of Scotland."

The farm at Ellisland proved a failure, and after a few years Burns took up his abode at Dumfries.

A dame wi pride enough, whose chief pride is now the mausoleum of the poet, and its connection with his life and death.

But Dumfries is still a prideful place, the metropolis of south-west Scotland; a handsome commercial town, built of good freestone, with commodious bridges over the river Nith. Of old Dumfries, however, there is little left. The Priory, where Bruce and his friends killed Red Comyn, has long been demolished; but the memory of its site is preserved in Greyfriars Lane. But there are many interesting scenes in the neighbourhood, as Sweetheart Abbey—the beautiful pile of Lincluden.

Yon roofless towers,
Where the wa' flowers scent the dewy air,

On the opposite bank of the little river Cluden is an eminence once occupied as a summer-house of the old monks, a favourite resort of the country people near, as it was of Robert Burns.

The stream adown its hazelly path,
Was rushing by the ruined wa'
Hasting to join the sweeping Nith,
Whose distant roarings swell and fa'.

Lincluden was once a nunnery; but was turned into a collegiate foundation by Archibald the Grim, whose wife, of the royal Stuart line, sleeps within the ruined walls.

Another historical relic is the Castle of Caerlaverock, a massive and picturesque ruin, some eight miles from Dumfries, on the low ground about the estuary of the Nith. A famous stronghold was this in the Scottish wars, and the subject of an interesting rhyming chronicle in crabbed old Norman French, by one Walter of Exeter—

Karlaverok casteaus estoit
Sis fort ke siege ne doustoit—

a chronicle which pictures the banners and achievements of all the brave knights and gentlemen, who followed the pennon of King Edward the First to the siege of the redoubted citadel. But, perhaps, a more

vivid modern interest attaches to the grand old ruins, as the reputed model from which the great novelist drew his picture of the famous castle of Ellangowan, in "Guy Mannering."

THE IRON PRESS OF LOUIS THE SIXTEENTH.

DURING the closing years of the eighteenth century the inhabitants of Versailles were wont to observe a solitary, decrepit, strange-looking man, walking about the retired alleys of the park there, and glancing ever and anon fiercely from beneath his rugged brows at the melancholy château. His had been a tall, wiry figure, but he was bent now, and leant on his stick, for his legs were feeble; his brow was deeply furrowed, his cheeks sunken, and his hair was white and thin. You would have said that he had long passed beyond the threescore years and ten, yet in truth he was only forty-four; but he suffered under grievous ailments, and life, he said, had become a burden to him. This was François Gamain, the locksmith, whose family had been at Versailles ever since the time of the "Grand Monarque," engaged upon the works of the palace, and whose father had been contractor for the buildings of the King.

François had been a clever mechanic, a most skilful worker, and his father had given him charge of the locksmith's work in the interior of the château, at which he had laboured incessantly. We all know how fond Louis the Sixteenth was of mechanical work, and how he loved to spend an hour or two trying his skill as an artisan, entering into the occupations of his people, while they too often, as Thierry told him, laid hold of the functions of the King. It had pleased him to witness the skill of Gamain, and after the two had chatted together, the King became a learner of the locksmith's art. They will show you to-day the workshop in the château where the master and his royal pupil laboured together; the latter, we may be sure, far happier in becoming a locksmith than ever he was in wielding the power of a King.

But these times were departed, and Louis lay peacefully at last in his tomb, while the "Sieur Gamain" wandered, like an uneasy spirit, about the quiet byways of Versailles. Yet, when the evenings drew in, the locksmith would betake himself at times to a certain inn in the town, where he unbest and chatted much as the others did; but

an evil light flashed from his eye whenever the name of "Louis Capet" was mentioned. In fact, anent this same unhappy Louis, the erewhile serrurier du roi was wont to tell, when his anger moved him thereto, a very singular story, which brought him many auditors. It is a story that touched very closely the great French Revolution, though it is but glanced at in the histories of the period, and the full details can be found only in French narratives.

It was in the year 1792, in the month of May, as the locksmith recounted, when the King and Queen, after the flight to Varennes, were living under surveillance at the Tuileries, that he was standing in his shop at Versailles one day engaged upon his ordinary business. All at once a man on horseback stopped at the door, and in him, although disguised as a waggoner, the locksmith recognised one Durey, a man who had helped the King at his forge. "M. Gamain," said the visitor, "His Majesty sends me to bid you come to him at the Tuileries. You shall enter through the kitchen, and no one will suspect you." But Gamain was in a bad temper apparently on that day, and so, despite his office of locksmith of the King's cabinets, he declined point-blank to go. Upon this Durey rode disconsolately away; but in three hours' time he was back with new requests, against which the locksmith held out as stoutly as before. On the next morning he came a third time; but, on this occasion provided with a letter in the King's own hand, asking the locksmith, in quite a friendly way, to give him his help for a most important work. This was too much, according to Gamain, for his own vanity, and, dressing himself post-haste, he embraced his wife and children, and hied him with the stranger to Paris, promising to be back ere nightfall, for those were troublesome times, and it was often dangerous to be abroad.

When the pair reached the palace they entered by some back way, and Durey conducted Gamain to the King's workshop, where the latter noticed a lock-door, very well made, as he thought, and an iron casket, which had a hidden spring not easily discovered. To him presently entered the King. "Ah, my good Gamain!" said he smiling, and touching the locksmith on the shoulder, "it is a long time since we met." "I am sorry for it, Sire," answered the other, "but my visits have been misinterpreted. We have enemies, Sire, who seek only to destroy us. That was why I

hesitated to obey your commands." "Alas! it is true," said the King, sighing, "the times are very bad, and I don't know how we shall end; but, there," resuming his gaiety, "what dost thou think of my ability? It was I alone who did these works in less than ten days! I am thy apprentice, Gamain." It was a proud moment for the locksmith, and he was profuse in his thanks and in his professions of loyalty to the poor King, who, as he said, was kept like a prisoner in his palace. "I do not hesitate to put into thy hands the fate of myself and my family," added the King, taking Gamain into his bed-chamber, and thence into a passage which led to the chamber of the Dauphin. It was dark, but Durey brought a taper, and, raising a panel in the wainscot, disclosed a round hole, scarcely two feet in diameter, worked in the wall. The King told Gamain that he had made the casket to hold money, and that Durey, who had helped him to cut the hole in the wall, had taken several journeys during the night in order to throw the rubbish into the river.

It was to fix the door he had seen to the opening of the recess that Louis had summoned Gamain, who forthwith set himself to the work, his royal pupil helping all the time as well as he could. The locksmith altered the wards of the key, intending to improve it; and he fixed the staple and the hinges in the masonry. They were afraid of being interrupted by those who were but too watchful without, and the King begged Gamain to make as little noise as possible. "At last the key was put in the casket," said Gamain, "which was placed beneath a flag at the end of the corridor." As for the press behind the panels, it locked of itself when the door was pushed to. The work had lasted eight hours without interruption; the perspiration was rolling down the locksmith's brow; and he wanted rest, and was failing with hunger, he said, for he had tasted nothing since the morning. But now a singular thing happened. The King, handing him a seat, asked him to be good enough to count a large sum in double louis of gold, which, when done, were put into four leathern sacks. But the quick eye of Gamain was not solely occupied with the money. He detected Durey carrying certain bundles of paper, which it struck him were to be concealed in the hidden press; in short, he divined that the money-counting was but a pretext to divert his attention, and that the papers alone were secreted.

The King's mind at rest, he begged the locksmith to sup at the palace; but the gorge of the "Sieur Gamain" rose at the very idea of eating with valets and scullions, and he was in a hurry to see his wife and children; so nothing would please him but immediate departure; and he declined the offer of an escort, for he feared the royal livery might draw undesirable attention upon him, and he had no faith in Durey. "Why," said he to himself, "have they kept the real use of that press from me?" He had not, however, gone a step when the Queen entered by a hidden door, having in her hand a plate with a glass of wine and a cake upon it. This surprised him, for Louis had said that she knew nothing of the work at the iron press. "My good Gamain," she said, in a caressing voice, "you are warm, mon ami. Drink this glass of wine, and eat the cake; they will sustain you at least on your journey." He was all confused with her goodness and forethought, and emptied the glass to her health, but slipped the cake into his pocket quietly, thinking he would take it home to his children. Then he put on his coat and hat, and left the palace at about eight o'clock in the evening.

But now a melodramatic scene follows. Gamain takes the way to Versailles, gets no farther than the Champs Elysées, is attacked by violent colicky pains in the stomach which threaten to tear him in two; he can stand no longer; his legs give way beneath him; he falls in the mud, where he lies rolling and groaning for an hour unheard. Happily a rich Englishman comes by at the end of that time in his carriage, and, curiously enough, Gamain is known to him, and has done him a favour. The poor man is taken up, carried off to an apothecary in the Rue du Bac, given an emetic, vomits, and comes to himself. The Englishman then gets him off to Versailles in his carriage, where he arrives more like a corpse than a living man. Gamain is ill, and a physician and surgeon, M. Lamayran and M. Voisin, attend him. After three days of fever, delirium, and inconceivable pain, he begins to recover; but a paralysis, almost complete, which is never quite cured, remains to him, and he is afflicted with neuralgia in the head and with an inflammation of the digestive organs until his dying day. Still, nothing will he say about the adventure that befell him, though the doctors declare he had been poisoned, until, in spite of himself, the truth comes out. Some days afterwards his servant

finds the cake in his pocket, eats a mouthful, and throws it to a dog, which gnaws it; the servant falls grievously ill, the dog dies. The cake is analysed, and found to contain enough corrosive sublimate to kill ten men. Gamain then grows impatient to avenge himself, but, being deprived of the use of his limbs, he cannot go to Paris for five months. Then, however, he goes to the Minister, Roland, and discovers to him the secret of the press; it is opened, and the papers found. Roland carries them away, impeaches the King chiefly on the strength of them, and in the next year Louis and Marie Antoinette pay the debt on the scaffold.

This was the story told by François Gamain, about the year 1795, shortly before his death, and he told it with the energy and violence of a wronged man who hated the memory of those who had done him ill. Either it was true, or it was a delusion; either he was the victim of an attempted murder, or the victim of a fixed idea; either he was sane, or he laboured under the influence of monomania. Certainly he suffered under grievous ailments that had worn down the prime of his years into the semblance of decrepit age. Unfortunately, however, it differed from another story that its author had told at an earlier date to the Paris Municipality and to Minister Roland. We may here remark that Gamain had early become possessed with revolutionary zeal; that in January, 1792—the date should be observed—he became a member of the Conseil Général of Versailles; that he attended its meetings during the following summer; and that, on September 24th, he was one of the Commissioners deputed to do away with all paintings, sculptures, and inscriptions that told the story of royalty and despotism. It was in the May of this same year that he said he made the iron press; Durey declared that it was in 1791, before the flight to Varennes. However, it was on November 20th, 1792, that Gamain told M. Roland of the press; not until fifteen months later that he petitioned for compensation, and told his full first story. This differed from the second story in the important particular that it made Louis himself, not the Queen, to have given him the poisoned glass. "The recompense of which is," says Carlyle, "pension of twelve hundred francs and 'honourable mention.'" Gamain, however, so fickle is fortune, enjoyed this pension only for one single year. Now, the first story told by Gamain was

believed by the Republican faction of the time, and it was a great item in the impeachment of Louis "Capet." There is much reason to question the locksmith's good faith when he went to Minister Roland, for the twelve hundred francs and the honourable mention loomed in the future; but, when he told his second variant and very melodramatic story, we may feel almost sure that it was a monomania with him, that he believed it, just as George the Fourth is credited with having believed that he commanded the British forces at Waterloo. Yet this second romantic story may be subjected to searching criticism. How could Louis the Sixteenth make his spring door and his casket at the Tuileries when he had no workshop there? How could he and Durey cut out a great hole in the masonry without alarming those who mounted guard over the royal apartments? How deaf those spies must have been! Can we believe that the King attempted to delude Gamain by giving him an immense sum of money to count in gold, when, the work being finished, he might far more easily have sent him away? We may also remark that, if a quantity of corrosive sublimate be put into wine, a violet-coloured precipitate will be formed, and that the liquid will acquire a metallic and very disagreeable flavour. Evidently Gamain was no connoisseur in wines. Why, also, in the second story, did he say that he was at work eight hours, when in the first he alleged that the job occupied some days? Why, finally, did he say that it was Marie Antoinette who gave him the wine, when he stated first of all that it was the King?

Yet, on the faith of the first story, Musset, addressing the Convention, declared that it was not enough for the last of the tyrants to have sacrificed millions of citizens to the sword of the enemy, but that at last, so familiarised was he with cruelty, out of the ferocity of his soul he poisoned the father of a family, that he might thereby conceal his perfidious design. It is on the strength of the second story that Louis Blanc, in his book on the Revolution, has hurled another charge at the monarchy he detested, and that Bonnet and others have followed in his footsteps. It was chiefly because of the evidence contained in the papers stated to have been found in the iron press that Louis the Sixteenth and Marie Antoinette gave up their lives on the guillotine. Thus the story of the locksmith Gamain, though most his-

torians have given it a mention only—some have not mentioned it at all—will ever occupy a place in the tragic drama of the great French Revolution.

RONDEL.

THE sweet old words, whose ring caressed;
Whose sound was something like a spell
To us, who used to love so well;
Come, let us bear them to their rest!
They served when Love was full and blest,
They shall not blend with its farewell—
The sweet old words!
So, in our fair Past's fairest dell,
Lay them on withered rose-leaves pressed,
The roses red we prized the best;
While tender Memory tolls their knell—
The sweet old words!

SOME FAMOUS PLAYS.

III.

GOLDSMITH'S "SHE STOOPS TO CONQUER."

IN TWO PARTS. PART II.

AND now, though the night of its first appearance was fast approaching, no name had been given the comedy. Various titles were proposed. "We are all in labour," writes Johnson, "for a name for Goldy's play." Joshua Reynolds suggested *The Belle's Stratagem*—afterwards used by Mrs. Cowley for one of her comedies—and playfully assured Goldsmith that if it were not used, he would exert his utmost endeavours to damn the play. Another friend considered *The Old House* a *New Inn*, more suitable; but the author finally selected *She Stoops to Conquer*, or *The Mistakes of a Night*, as the most appropriate title. Nor did difficulties connected with the representation of the comedy now end; on the contrary, they seemingly concentrated themselves in a final effort to bewilder and overwhelm poor Goldsmith. Garrick, by way of proving his friendship towards the author, wrote an excellent prologue for the new play, and Arthur Murphy supplied an epilogue. The latter, it was intended, should be sung by Miss Catley. Becoming aware of this, Mrs. Bulkeley protested that, if she were not allowed to speak the lines, she would throw up her part. By way of pacifying them Goldsmith wrote a "quarrelling epilogue," in which both were intended to take part, and debate as to which should speak the piece. This compromise Miss Catley in her turn flatly refused. The distracted poet then penned an epilogue for Mrs. Bulkeley, to which Colman objected, inasmuch as he considered it lacked merit, when Goldsmith finally wrote another, which was ultimately accepted. "Such," he writes to

his friend Cradock, "is the history of my stage adventures, and which I have at last done with. I cannot help saying that I am very sick of the stage, and though I believe I shall get three tolerable benefits, yet I shall on the whole be a loser, even in a pecuniary light; my ease and comfort I certainly lost while it was in agitation."

As the date fixed for the production of his play drew near, the gloomiest anticipations of its fate were entertained. Its plot was considered decidedly low; its humour was thought extremely vulgar; and, from the first scene to the last, it betrayed an absence of those moral maxims and vapid sentiments dear to public taste. However, some hope lay in the fact that an innovation occurred in theatrical representations about this time, which helped to prepare the town for his comedy. On the 15th of February, Samuel Foote, the incarnate genius of satire, had opened his theatre in the Haymarket for the spring season, with an entertainment he was pleased to call a "Primitive Puppet Show," its business being to ridicule sentimental comedy in the most glaring manner. The production by which Foote's company of so-called puppets sought to accomplish this end was entitled *The Handsome Housemaid*; or, *Piety in Patens*. The audiences witnessing this merry comedy "tasted," says the *General Evening Post*, "the salt of satire; they saw the evident intention of the burlesque upon modern comedy; they confessed that a dull truth, when stripped of its artificial guise of words, was the offence of the generality of those sentiments the writers of the present age lard their pieces with; and, convinced of having adopted a false taste, they joined in their own verdict by loudly approving what may justly be termed Foote's mirror for sentimental writers." The town, having seen this performance and laughed at its vagaries, was better prepared to appreciate a comedy which copied nature.

At last the 15th March, 1773, the date fixed for the first representation of *She Stoops to Conquer*, arrived. Goldsmith's friends, resolving to celebrate the day as became its importance, agreed to dine in company before visiting the playhouse. George Steevens, who was to form one of that goodly group, whilst on his way to the dinner* called for Dr. Johnson, whom

he found attired in bright colours. As the court was then in mourning for the King of Sardinia, and it was the custom for all loyal subjects to wear sober black in public places during such periods, Steevens reminded him of the fact. On this, the burly philosopher hastened to change his suit, the while giving vent to his gratitude for "information that had saved him from an appearance so improper in the front row of a front box." He would not, he declared, "for £10 have seemed so retrograde to any general observance." Being clad in neutral hues, he accompanied Steevens to the dinner, where they met Joshua Reynolds, Edmund and Richard Burke, Caleb Whitefoord, Major Mills, and Goldsmith.

Now that the hour of his trial, long anticipated and greatly feared, was at hand, the poor playwright was nervous beyond expression. His fame as a writer could scarce be injured by his failure as a dramatist; but as such he was strongly desirous of success, the more so as his finances at this time caused him bitter distress. Accordingly, at the dinner, he was, by turns, extravagantly mirthful and profoundly depressed. The friendly sallies of Johnson, the hopeful prognostications of courteous Sir Joshua, the epigrammatic speeches of Edmund Burke, were unable to divert his thoughts or calm his feverish excitement; and his mouth, as Northcote states, "became so parched and dry from the agitation of his mind, that he was unable to swallow a single mouthful."

When dinner was over, and glasses were drained to his prosperity, the party started for Covent Garden; but Goldsmith declined to accompany his friends, for, unable to bear the strain of witnessing the performance, he resolved on absenting himself from the theatre until the fate of his comedy was assured. Meanwhile the playhouse, having opened its doors at five o'clock, was filled by an eager and expectant crowd. The various perplexing delays in the production of the comedy had been freely canvassed in Tom Davies's shop, and in ordinaries and taverns throughout the town. As a result, the manager's behaviour was set down to the jealousy of a rival playwright; and a strong sympathy had arisen in favour of the distressed author. This feeling found practical expression in a thronged house. At six o'clock the curtain rose, when Woodward appeared dressed in mourning, with a white handkerchief applied to his eyes, weeping for the fate of

* Cumberland, who is usually incorrect, states this was held at the Shakspeare Tavern; Northcote, Sir Joshua's pupil, told Sir James Pryor that it was held at the great painter's house.

Comedy, which, he explained in the words of the epilogue, was just expiring. Therefore did he entertain sore fears for himself and his brother comedians; however, he had some hopes of her ultimate recovery, as a certain well-known doctor had come to her relief, and it rested with the audience to pronounce whether he was a quack or a regular practitioner.

Then the play commenced, and an eager house, catching the humour of its scenes and appreciating the wit of its dialogue, quickly warmed into hearty merriment. By degrees, the fears of the actors subsided, and, the feelings of their audience being magnetically communicated to them, their parts became invested with new interest. Northcote, who was in the gallery with Sir Joshua's "confidential man," says that, after the second act, there was no doubt of the comedy's success. All eyes were turned upon Johnson, sitting in the front row of a box, "and when he laughed everybody thought himself entitled to roar." Enjoyment and good humour were contagious. Tony Lumpkin's antics and Marlow's mistakes set the house in excellent humour. The while Goldsmith, hoping little and fearing much, wandered moodily in St. James's Park, where he was met by a friend, who, remonstrating with him on his absence from the playhouse, and representing "how useful his presence might be in making some sudden alterations which might be found necessary in the piece," prevailed on him to visit the playhouse. Accordingly he bent his steps towards Covent Garden, and timorously entered the theatre by the stage door. As he reached the wings, a solitary hiss fell upon his ear. This was evoked by the supposed improbability of Mrs. Hardcastle believing herself forty miles removed from her house, though standing in her own gardens, a deception actually practised by Sheridan on Madame de Genlis. Hearing this ominous sound Goldsmith started in terror. "What's that?" he said to Colman, who stood beside him. "Paha," replied the manager, wrathful that his prophecies of failure had been falsified, "don't be fearful of squibs when we have been sitting these two hours on a barrel of gunpowder." The heartless cruelty and injustice of the speech were never forgotten by the author, who, hearing the immoderate laughter and loud ap-

plause which quickly followed, was speedily assured of his success.

This happy result was in some measure due to the excellent acting of Shuter and Lewes, whose merits are extolled in the columns of *The Morning Chronicle* and *London Advertiser* of the following day.

Between the night of its first performance and the close of the season, in consequence of holidays, and benefits, when actors selected their own pieces, but twelve nights remained at the disposal of the manager. On these *She Stoops to Conquer* was played to crowded houses and with increasing popularity. "The applause given to a new piece on the first evening of its representation," says the *Public Advertiser*, "is sometimes supposed to be the tribute of partial friendship, but the approbation shown on the second exhibition of Dr. Goldsmith's new comedy exceeded that with which its first appearance was attended. Uninterrupted laughter and clamorous plaudits accompanied his muse to the last line of the play; and when it was given out for the author's benefit, the theatre was filled with the loudest acclamations that ever rung within its walls."

Its success was moreover doubly assured from being witnessed on the tenth night of its production by George the Third; and receiving a most favourable verdict from Johnson. "I know of no comedy for many years," said he, "that has so much exhilarated an audience—that has answered so much the great end of comedy—making an audience merry." That His Majesty would honour the play with his presence was a compliment which Goldsmith strongly desired. "I wish he would, not that it would do me the least good," he said, "with affected indifference," according to Boswell. "Well then, sir," replied Johnson laughingly, "let us say it would do him good. No, sir, this affectation will not pass, it is mighty idle. In such a state as ours, who would not wish to please the chief magistrate?"

The three benefit nights allowed the author brought him the welcome sum of between three and four hundred pounds. The copyright of the comedy was then given to Francis Newbery, of St. Paul's Churchyard, by way of paying certain monies amounting to between two and three hundred pounds, which had been advanced by him to Goldsmith. Its sale surprised both author and publisher, six thousand copies being disposed of in a few

* A different version of this story states that Colman's remark was made at one of the rehearsals; but Cooke, who heard it from Goldsmith, avers that it occurred as stated above.

months, by which Newbery profited over three hundred pounds. The comedy was dedicated to Johnson in terms of affection and respect. "In inscribing this slight performance to you," he wrote, "I do not mean so much to compliment you as myself. It may do me some honour to inform the public that I have lived many years in intimacy with you. It may serve the interests of mankind also to inform them that the greatest wit may be found in a character without impairing the most unaffected piety."

Amongst the general applause which greeted the comedy, two dissenting voices were heard. These proceeded from Ralph Griffiths, editor of the *Monthly Review*, and Horace Walpole, the superfine critic, of Strawberry Hill. The former declared "the merit of *She Stoops to Conquer* consisted in that sort of dialogue which lies on a level with the most common understandings, and in that low mischief and mirth which we laugh at while we are ready to despise ourselves for so doing." Horace Walpole, who, because his father had been attacked by Goldsmith, detested the author, is yet more severe regarding the play. "Dr. Goldsmith has written a comedy," he tells the Rev. William Mason: "no, it is the lowest of all farces. It is not the subject I condemn, though very vulgar, but the execution. The drift tends to no moral, to no edification of any kind. The situations, however, are well imagined, and make one laugh, in spite of the grossness of the dialogue, the forced witticisms, and total improbability of the whole plan and conduct. But what disgusts me most is that, though the characters are very low, and aim at low humour, not one of them says a sentence that is natural or marks any character at all. It is set up in opposition to sentimental comedy, and is as bad as the worst of them." Such a criticism, whilst shaming its writer's memory, is powerless to injure the playwright's fame.

It seemed as if sentimental comedy had now received its death-blow. The journals teemed with squibs intended to burlesque the old school and commend the new, one characteristic specimen of which will be sufficient to indicate their general tone. Under the heading of *Theatrical Intelligence*, the *Morning Chronicle*, on the occasion of one of Goldsmith's benefit nights, grimly states: "It is with much pleasure we can inform the public that the ingenious and engaging *Miss Comedy* is in a fair way of recovery. This

much admired young lady has lately been in a very declining way, and was thought to be dying of a sentimental consumption. She is now under the care of Dr. Goldsmith, who has already prescribed twice for her. The medicines sat extremely easy upon her stomach, and she appears to be in fine spirits. The Doctor is to pay her a third visit this evening, and it is expected he will receive a very handsome fee from the lady's friends and admirers."

In the midst of Goldsmith's success the humiliation and pain Colman inflicted were not forgotten. Letters, lampoons, and paragraphs censuring and condemning the unhappy manager appeared in the public prints. In making these attacks the writers not only joined in a universal condemnation of Colman, but probably avenged mortifications which they likewise had suffered at his hands. His criticisms on *She Stoops to Conquer* were repeated to incite ridicule and produce laughter; his suggestions were attributed to jealousy; his judgment was regarded with contempt. How could future playwrights, it was asked, offer pieces to a manager so deficient in discrimination, so wanting in appreciation? The town jeered at him, and its meriment was continually fed with fresh satires. The *Morning Chronicle* of March 24th says: "The multitude of epigrams, verses, paragraphs, letters, etc., which we have received on the subject of Dr. Goldsmith's new play, the manager's behaviour, etc., shall be inserted in their turn as fast as possible." They fell upon Colman with dire effect.

"The comedy of *She Stoops to Conquer*," says one writer, addressing him, "has triumphed over all your paltry efforts to bespeak its condemnation; efforts in which the envy of the author was no less conspicuous than the duplicity of the manager. . . . Mr. Foote has hung you out to ridicule at the conclusion of his *Puppet Show*. Every newspaper encourages the laugh against you—so that Colman's judgment will become a proverbial expression to signify no judgment at all. Every friend of Dr. Goldsmith's insists on his having no further connection with you, and Mr. Lewes is much too negligent of his own interests, if he does not speedily demand to have his salary raised on account of the consequence he has derived from a piece, which you were willing to persuade the world would never appear a second time on the stage."

At last, bewildered and overcome by

repeated attacks,* Colman left town and sought peace at Bath, from where, "being so distressed with abuse," he solicited Goldsmith, as Johnson writes, "to take him off the ruck of the newspapers." With this wish the forgiving playwright, who had taken no part in the assaults, was quite willing to comply. "The undertaking of a comedy not merely sentimental was very dangerous," he said to his friends, "and Mr. Colman, who saw this piece in its various stages, always thought it so. However, I ventured to trust it to the public; and though it was necessarily delayed until late in the season, I have every reason to be grateful."

Goldsmith's triumph was, however, attended by envy; his joy was mixed with pain, the chief cause of which was a gross attack made upon him in the columns of the *London Packet*. To judge of its scurrility and offensiveness it must be read verbatim: "Sir," it began, "the happy knack which you have learnt of puffing your own compositions provokes me to come forth. You have not been the editor of newspapers and magazines not to discover the trick of literary humbug. But the gauze is so thin that the very foolish part of the world see through it and discover the doctor's monkey face and cloven foot. Your poetic vanity is as unpardonable as your personal. Would man believe it, and will woman bear it, to be told that for hours the great Goldsmith will stand surveying his grotesque ourang-outang figure in a pier-glass? Was not the lovely Horneck as much enamoured, you would not sigh, my gentle swain, in vain. But your vanity is preposterous. How will the same bard of Bedlam ring the changes in praise of Goldy? But what has he to be either proud or vain of? 'The Traveller' is a flimsy poem, built upon false principles, principles diametrically opposite to

* One of the most humorous satires ran as follows:

Come, Coley, doff those mourning weeds,
Nor thus with jokes be flamm'd;
Tho' Goldsmith's present play succeeds,
His next may still be damn'd.
As this has 'scap'd without a fall,
To sink his next prepare;
New actors hire from Wapping Wall
And dresses from Rag Fair.

For scenes let tatter'd blankets fly,
The prologue Kelly write,
Then swear again the piece must die
Before the author's night.
Should these tricks fail the lucky elf
To bring to lasting shame,
E'en write the best you can yourself,
And print it in his name.

liberty. What is 'The Good-natured Man' but a poor water-gruel dramatic dose? What is 'The Deserted Village' but a pretty poem of easy numbers, without fancy, dignity, genius, or fire? And pray what may be the last speaking pantomime so praised by the doctor himself but an incoherent piece of stuff, the figure of a woman with a fish's tail, without plot, incident, or intrigue? We are made to laugh at stale, dull jokes, wherein we mistake pleasantry for wit and grimace for humour; wherein every scene is unnatural and inconsistent with the rules, the laws of nature and of the drama, viz., the gentlemen come to a man of fortune's house, eat, drink, sleep, and take it for an inn. The one is intended as a lover to the daughter; he talks with her for some hours, and when he sees her again in a different dress he treats her as a bar-girl, and swears she squinted. He abuses the master of the house, and threatens to kick him out of his own doors. The squire, whom we are told is to be a fool, proves the most sensible being of the piece; and he makes out a whole act by bidding his mother lie close behind a bush, persuading her that his father—her own husband—is a highwayman, and that he is come to cut their throats; and to give his cousin an opportunity to go off he drives his mother over hedges, ditches, and through ponds. There is not, sweet, sucking Johnson, a natural stroke in the whole play but the young fellow's giving the stolen jewels to the mother, supposing her to be the landlady. That Mr. Colman did no justice to this piece I honestly allow; that he told all his friends it would be damned I positively aver; and from such ungenerous insinuations, without a dramatic merit, it rose to public notice, and it is now the ton to go see it, though I never saw a person that either liked or approved it. Mr. Goldsmith, correct your arrogance, reduce your vanity, and endeavour to believe as a man you are of the plainest sort, and as an author but a mortal piece of mediocrity.

Brise le miroir infidèle
Qui vous cache la vérité.

"TOM TICKLE"

This letter escaped Goldsmith's notice until his friend Captain Higgins, an Irishman possessing the natural love of warfare, acquainted him of its existence, and contended that it was but just the writer should receive corporal punishment. There was not much difficulty in persuading the abused author to agree with him in this

conviction, and therefore, accompanied by the gallant Captain, he directed his steps towards Paternoster Row, where the London Packet was published by Evans. Entering the shop, he demanded to see the latter, who immediately came forward from an adjoining room. Addressing him, the poet said that his name was Goldsmith, and that he had called in consequence of a scurrilous attack upon him and an unwarrantable liberty taken with the name of a young lady in the London Packet. "As for myself, I care little," he exclaimed, "but her name must not be sported with." Declaring his ignorance of the matter, Evans said he would speak to the editor, and then stooped down to look for a paper in which the offensive article appeared, whereon Goldsmith struck him smartly with his cane across the back. Jumping up at once, Evans, who was a sturdy man, returned the blow; a scuffle ensued, during which a lamp suspended overhead was smashed, and its oil fell upon the combatants. One of the shopmen ran for a constable, and Dr. Kenrick,* who doubtless wrote the attack, rushed from an office, and separating them, sent Goldsmith home in a coach. Evans, who received a black eye, promptly summoned the author for assault and battery; but friends interfering to heal the breach, Evans consented to abandon the charge, provided Goldsmith gave fifty pounds towards a charity he mentioned, and, the doctor complying with this demand, the affair was allowed to rest.

The press was not willing to let such a topic quietly subside; various accounts of the affray were given, and in some quarters Goldsmith was condemned for "beating a man in his own house." Therefore he thought it necessary to defend himself, and wrote a forcible letter to the General Advertiser of the 31st of March. In this he made no reference to his chastisement of Evans, but, lest it should be supposed that he had been willing to correct in others an abuse of which he had been guilty himself, he begged leave to declare that in all his life he never wrote or dictated a single paragraph, letter, or essay in a newspaper, except a few moral essays under the character of a Chinese, and a letter, to which he signed his name, in the St. James's Chronicle. The press, he said, had turned

from defending public interests to making inroads upon private life; from combatting the strong to overwhelming the feeble. No condition was too obscure for its abuse, and the protector had become the tyrant of the people.

"How to put a stop to this licentiousness," he concludes in a letter presenting one of the finest examples we can boast of vigorous and polished English, "by which all are indiscriminately abused, and by which vice consequently escapes in the general censure, I am unable to tell; all I could wish is that, as the law gives us no protection against the injury, so it should give calumniators no shelter after having provoked correction. The insults which we receive before the public, by being more open are all the more distressing; by treating them with silent contempt we do not pay a sufficient deference to the opinion of the world. By recurring to legal redress we too often expose the weakness of the law, which only serves to increase our mortification by failing to relieve us. In short, every man should singly consider himself as a guardian of the liberty of the press, and, as far as his influence can extend, should endeavour to prevent its licentiousness becoming at last the grave of its freedom."

Twelve months and four days from the date of this letter, the hand that penned it lay cold in death's grasp. Petty jealousy, personal abuse, or bitter criticism would never again disturb poor Goldy's peace.

VICTIMS.

By THEO GIFT.

Author of "Lil Lorimer," "An Alibi and its Prie,"
Etc., Etc.

CHAPTER XVIII. CATHARINE.

AFTER all, temporising, combined with other agencies, proved more successful than might have been expected, for the winter glided by most uneventfully, and without bringing the project of Vera's marriage with the Count half so prominently to the front, as might have seemed likely.

Vera was allowed to keep her room for two days on the pretext of illness, during which time she wrote her letter to Leah, and the Count rode over to Les Châtaigniers twice, to enquire after her health and leave a choice bouquet of flowers for her as testimony to his devotion. On the third morning, however, she was obliged to come down and face an encounter with her father, whom she dreaded so much more

* Dr. Kenrick was an unfortunate playwright and an unpopular man. He has been described in the Morning Chronicle as being "as arrant a snarler as e'er a German pug in the kingdom."

than his friend, that it was a relief to her that, when they did meet, he contented himself with scowling at her and remarking :

"Ah, it is you, Mademoiselle, is it ! So you have condescended to reappear among us, and, let us hope, in your right senses. See that you continue in them, and, above all, that you receive my friends when they call in a proper and becoming manner. Nom d' Dieu ! ma fille, I tell you one thing sincerely—if I hear any other word of the revolting imprudences by which you have already so much offended me, I shall consider that your visit to England has corrupted your morals sufficiently to make it necessary to send you, old as you are, to some strict school of discipline for your reformation."

He seemed to want no answer, and indeed Vera had none to give him. "Pacify your papa. Don't go on angering him unnecessarily," was all that Madame St. Laurent had entreated, and Vera was too timid by nature not to desire to comply. Besides, her letter to Leah was still in her pocket, waiting for the chance of being passed into that of Benoite, and, till the answer came, she could not tell whether further resistance would be worth the pains or not. She did not believe her mother's insinuations about Marstland, but the more she thought over them the more credible they seemed. If Leah also confirmed them, that would settle the question, and she would receive any one her parents pleased, and in any manner. Her faith in Leah was absolute.

But next day, while the question was still unsettled and the letter only on its way to the post office at Loctudy, the Count called. Vera had not been told he was coming, and being anything but rapid in her intuitions, had gathered nothing from the fact that during dinner her father grumbled at her for having arrayed herself in a somewhat old and unbecoming gown belonging to the pre-Leah period. He asked what had become of that "pretty little robe" he had seen her in a few weeks back ; and after the meal was over Vera went upstairs and changed one dress for the other with her usual docility. But not even the most becoming colours could make her look anything but transparently white and sad ; and as she rose, startled and trembling, to greet the Count when he was shown into the drawing-room, where she was seated alone at the piano, he was reminded of nothing so much as a delicate white orchid blossom in the bouquet he had

last sent her. Curiously enough, however, he admired her all the more under such conditions, or rather his desire to possess her became all the greater. A flower so exquisitely frail that it blooms but a moment before perishing under the hot touch of a finger ; a young, little white rabbit shivering out its feeble life for sheer terror in the grasp of a hand from which it has no power even to attempt an escape ; were just what stirred the Count de Mailly's jaded passions to keener life, and gave him a sensation of triumphant enjoyment, which stronger and more robust organisations might have failed to excite in him.

He bowed most tenderly over the cold, damp hand which Vera extended to him, and inquired with demonstrative anxiety after her health, declaring that he had been so afflicted by the news of her seizure that, but for the consolation of the daily bulletin rewarding his enquiries, he would hardly have known how to support his solicitude. Was she sure, quite sure, that she was recovered now ?

"Oh, thank you, yes, M. le Comte. It—it was nothing—not worth enquiring for, I mean," Vera faltered, and looking ill enough at that moment to justify any one in believing in her illness. Even the Count himself (though for the first time) began to do so.

"Mademoiselle Vera underrates her own importance," he said gallantly. "Since, however, I am permitted by M. and Madame St. Laurent to see her to-day, and I need not say" (he added this with a meaning that the girl could not fail to understand) "that without such permission I could not have ventured to intrude on her, may I presume to offer her some little reproaches for treating so lightly a health which is more precious to others even than to herself ? I take it for granted," drawing a little nearer to Vera as he spoke and fixing his eyes keenly on her, "that Mademoiselle is aware how precious it is to one at least of her friends ; that she has been informed by her parents of the pretensions which I have been presumptuous enough to lay before them for the hand of their daughter, and to which they have accorded so gracious an assent ?"

The Count would fain have taken the hand alluded to in his as he spoke, but, colder and damper than ever, it clenched itself with its fellow in the lap of their owner's gown as she sat pale and sick with nervousness on the music-stool on

which she had perched herself after the first greetings, her eyes wandering helplessly to the window, outside which the chestnuts in the avenue were tossing their naked boughs against a leaden sky. She answered almost inaudibly :

"Yes, M. le Comte."

"And may I trust, Mademoiselle, that the news did not displease you ; that you are willing to ratify the gracious condescension of your parents ?"

"Monsieur," the poor girl stammered, turning those large eyes of hers, now brimmed and glassy with tears, upon him, "I—I—it was so sudden to me—I never thought—I—I could not——"

"Justement, justement, my dear mademoiselle ; but that is just what it should be. How should the mind of a young lady so pure, so virginal, so tenderly guarded, condescend to think of such subjects until the moment when her parents find it their duty to unfold them to her ?" exclaimed the Count with an earnestness which, for all Vera could tell, might be real, or merely the mask of a ghastly irony. She only moved uneasily on her seat and longed—longed with all her heart—that Leah were there to stand by her, answer him for her, speak out plainly and frankly as she herself dared not : no, not though all the world depended on her doing so. The Count persisted.

"But now that you know of my feelings for you they do not displease you ? You are not angry with me that I care for you, Mademoiselle ?" he said, leaning more forward still, and venturing to lay his hand on those ice-cold nervously-clenched ones on her knee. The girl started violently at the touch and flinched away ; then coloured crimson, and looked at him imploringly.

"Oh no, I am not—angry. How could I be ? I know it is very kind of you, and that I ought—indeed I am grateful. But if you think—oh ! I don't think you can have thought ! I am so young, so very different. I—I——"

"Mademoiselle is everything that I desire," the Count interrupted blandly, "and her youth, her modesty, make her all the more charming in my eyes. Do not distress yourself as to the wisdom of my choice, Mademoiselle. As your father will have told you, it is not one of yesterday, and if I have the happiness to possess, as you say, your gratitude, your esteem—for you do esteem me a little, I trust ?"

"Oh yes, M. le Comte, I—esteem you,"

poor Vera said, her tears falling fast, as his decided pause made an answer of some sort imperative.

"And you do not altogether dislike me ! I may hope at least, Mademoiselle, that I have not been so unfortunate as to make myself displeasing to you in the course of my long devotion to your family ?"

The Count had risen ; but he was still holding her hands, thus compelling her, as it were to rise too and face him ; and as he uttered the last words, there was something so threatening in his tone, something so sinister in the sudden flash from the dark, steely eyes which met hers, that all the poor girl's flickering courage died away, and the confession, the appeal to his generosity, his compassion, which had almost risen to her lips, seemed suddenly frozen there. Twice, indeed, she tried to speak ; but each time the remembrance of her father's threats, her mother's injunctions, checked her, and, frightened of remaining silent any longer, she stammered faintly :

"M. le Comte, you—you know I do not dislike you. You have been our best friend ; but——"

"But my dear mademoiselle, what need to say more ? Such amiability is more than recompense enough for a lifetime of devotion," cried the Count, raising the hand he held to his lips with fervour. He dropped it, however, as soon as they had touched it, and stood quietly on one side ; for at the same moment the door opened, and M. and Madame St. Laurent came in. Whether they had heard what had passed, what greetings were exchanged between them and the Count, or how Vera made her escape, she never exactly remembered. She knew that her father kissed her, and that some word was said of " fiançailles " and the " future Countess " ; but her mind was in a whirl, and she hardly knew what she was doing till she found herself, a few minutes later, on her knees in her own room, sobbing passionately, while Bénéite, who had come in with a basket of starched and frilled garments to lay on the bed, was pressing a couple of brown, hard hands on her drooping head, and saying soothingly :

"Chut, chut donc, ma p'tite ! What is it then that afflicts thee ? Is it that after all thou art affianced to Monsieur the Count ; that thou art going to be a grand lady ? Enfin, one ought not to pity thee."

"Oh ! but I am not. I am not !" Vera sobbed out wildly. "I was promised before, and I cannot go back. I don't want

to do so. And I hate the Count! Yes, I did not always; but I do now, and I will never marry him unless—unless——. Oh! Benoite, are you sure my letter went safely?"

"Alas, Mademoiselle! I fear it was a sin for me to post it. It would have been better, perhaps, if it had not gone. How is it possible that you can want more? A Count! And the Count de Mailly!" the woman said wonderingly.

It was fortunate none heard them.

But after that came a sudden calm, a reprieve. On the very next day the Count was summoned away by telegram to his southern estates, and Vera was told by her mother that he might be gone for some time, possibly till after Christmas. He had been sent for on very important business. The girl could hardly contain her gratitude. Even her mother's severe countenance was not sufficient to repress the exclamation which broke from her.

"Oh, mamma! don't you think in that time he may change his mind—may leave off wanting me? There are so many other girls who might like him, and when he knows—he must know that I don't——"

Madame St. Laurent looked startled.

"You did not tell him so, I hope," she said sharply. Then, recollecting herself: "No, I know you did not. You behaved well, he told us; but, Vera, I wish you would not talk in that way. Perhaps, before he comes back—and your father thinks he may even be delayed till the spring—you will have changed your own mind. You are really too childish and silly at present to know your own likes or dislikes; and it is fortunate for you that you have parents to judge and decide for you."

But Madame knew better than to bend a bow, which had already shown signs once of splitting, too sharply. Knowing Vera's general character, and believing that when the time came for her to submit, she would do so all the more easily for not having been goaded into rebellion before she had time to get used to the idea, she was rather disposed not to press the subject at present, but to let matters drift quietly on to the desired end.

For that reason she answered Madame de Mailly's polite letters on the engagement without even showing them to her daughter, and scarcely made an effort to persuade the latter into wearing the magnificent diamond ring which the Count sent her when he had been about a week

gone. Vera herself would not look at it, and almost thrust it back into her mother's hands.

"Why should he send it me? I never wear rings. I should hate to wear it. Mamma, you will not make me, will you?" she said entreatingly, and indeed, she would rather have thrown it away, and said it was lost, than have committed the disloyalty to Marstrand of putting it on. Simple, as she was, too simple to be even aware of the extent to which others looked on her as committed with regard to the Count, she was aware that young ladies do not accept diamond rings except from the men to whom they are engaged; and engaged to the Comte de Mailly—the man who by one self-betraying look had changed all her hitherto mild feelings towards him into dislike intensified by terror, and terror stronger even than dislike—Vera nervously assured herself she was not and never would be.

She had not accepted his addresses. Indeed, it was only in deference to her parents that she had refrained from telling him that it was impossible for her to do so, that she loved another. She had but listened to him out of civility, and answered—nothing; for how could that reluctant word about "esteem" and "dislike" be counted as anything? Why, she could have said as much or more twenty times over to Albert Lucas or Dr. Dupré! Yet she trembled as she looked imploringly at her mother, and it was an immense relief to her when the latter answered in her cold, monotonous tones, from which all expression seemed to have been eliminated:

"You cannot wear it, however much you might wish to do so, Vera, for it is too small for any of your fingers, except the little one, and it would look ridiculous, and no compliment to any gentleman, to wear such a showy thing on that." She added, however, in a moment, "But if the Count comes back, or your papa says anything about it, you must tell them that that is why you have not got it on. I cannot have you being rude or making any more scenes when I am so kind to you."

"Thank you, mamma," Vera said humbly and with a curious light in her eyes. Her old idea that her mother did not like the Count, and was not, at heart, anxious to see her married to him, had come back to her; and, though she knew by the experience of that terrible interview in the library that such a feeling on

Madame's part was utterly impotent to make her support her daughter in anything like open rebellion against her father's will, the girl could not help deriving a tacit encouragement from it to go on in the path she was pursuing, and trust to time and accident, to the prolongation of De Mailly's absence, and to Marstland's loyalty and audacity, to bring her to a happy outlet. If the former would only stay away till the spring was her great hope, for her twenty-first birthday was early in April, and her lover had told her that after that she would be of age and free to decide for herself. And, though she herself had not the slightest idea how that decision was to take effect, she was willing to leave all that to him, and in the meantime to carry out the policy (which it seemed to her her own mother enjoined on her) of disarming her parents' anger and suspicions by an outward appearance of passive neutrality.

Tyranny begets cunning, and it is not the simplest natures which are the most incapable of a certain amount of that faculty—harmless and ineffective sometimes, but more often successful from the very fact of its being so unsuspected. Poor Vera had the sweetest disposition in the world. She asked nothing but to love and be loved; or, if even that might not be, to have her own gentleness met by gentleness in return; to see smiling faces and be left in peace. She had no angry passions to be roused, no self-willed desires to be combated. On the whole she preferred to submit, to obey. She would have liked to have been able to please her father, her mother, everybody—even the Count. A very little confidence and affection from her parents, a little frank dealing, an appeal to her generosity and filial love would have been sufficient to make her their devoted slave, and ready to sacrifice her love and her life to them; but they had chosen to rule her by mere authority, and had given tenderness the go-by, ignoring the fact that love has been, and ever will be, through all ages, a more potent master over the human conscience than mere law and power; that to say, "do this because I tell you" will only be effective until it is put into comparison with "do this because you love me." And it was Marstland who had taught her the latter lesson; who had shown her what love was! How could she ever be contented to return to the old barren life, the chilly routine of motiveless obedience after

such an awakening? The utmost she could do was to assume an air of submission in the present, and trust to something turning up to release her from the necessity for it in the future.

The happiest result just now was that she was allowed to find a reward for her presumed good conduct in certain privileges and freedoms which had never before been accorded to her, chief among which was permission to visit some of her father's poor tenants, and take them little comforts in the way of food and clothing, after the fashion in which she had watched Leah endearing herself so easily to them.

Madame St. Laurent had not at first been willing to consent to the innovation. Vermin, and "nasty infectious illnesses," were as present to her mind in connection with these poor Breton families as the fear of Vera being suspected of low tastes in visiting them; but the girl's education was supposed to be finished at present. She was allowed to choose her own occupations; and Madame, an active woman herself, had been shocked to discover that this seemed to mean, for the most part, absolute idleness, and a daily increasing tendency to languor and dreaming. She spoke to the girl quite sharply about it once, adding:

"I can't think how it is you don't care for your needle, Vera. Why, at your age, I could sit at my sewing by the hour together, as happy as possible."

Vera looked up wearily.

"Do you want me to sew, mamma? I will if you wish it," she said with her usual meekness, but with so little life that her mother answered irritably:

"It isn't that I want you to sew, child. Joanna and I can do all that's needed in that way, thank Heaven! But most young ladies care for fancy-work, at any rate. I'm sure the slippers and things I've made when I was a girl—but I believe you like nothing but to be left alone to dream of that Miss Josepha. I saw you with my own eyes kissing her photograph not long ago."

Vera blushed crimson.

"Mamma," she said, "how can I help thinking of her? It was you who brought her here; and she was so bright, so pleasant—I miss her so terribly. If I had any other friend, anyone to talk to, or take an interest in! But even walking is dull without any object. There is no good in anything."

And then she suddenly brought all her courage to bear, and made her little petition, urging that in England quite grand

ladies visited the poor. Even the Queen, she had heard, went to sit with the old cottagers near Balmoral, and surely Her Majesty would not do anything that was not quite—nice! If she might begin to look after just two or three respectable ones; the bailiff's old mother, for instance, who was over ninety, and had not left her son's snug cottage, even to cross the threshold, for thirteen years; the cowman's little consumptive daughter, whose mother had been carried off in the typhus period; and Bénéto's bedridden sister, Catharine.

"She keeps their cottage so very clean, you know, mamma, and then it is so near; only just beyond the avenue."

Madame gave in. Perhaps the arguments of royalty had its weight with her. Perhaps when Vera asked so little; showed so little of resentment, or even sullenness, against those who were selling her to a fate she abhorred; the mother had not the heart to be unnecessarily strict. For the rest of the winter Vera found plenty of the solace and comfort for her unexacting needs in the moments passed in that little cottage with its hard-beaten earthen flooring, and one tiny window almost smothered in ivy, the big deal table and rickety arm-chair sacred to Bénéto, who was a clever ironer, and worked for other houses besides Les Châtaigniers, and the curious sort of cupboard of carved oak, the "lit clos," without which the poorest Breton house would not be complete, wherein, throned high on many mattresses, poor Catharine's pale face and wasted form lay day after day, the while her thin fingers traced garlands of delicate embroidery stitches on the strips of white mualin lying about her. There was a high oaken chest, carved, too, at the foot of the bed, which held all the sisters' wardrobe, and on which Vera sometimes sat. The cottage door stood always open, both to let in the sunlight and Bénéto's white hens, which hopped pecketing about on the brown floor. Little, stray sun-gleams flickered in and out of the ivy twigs, and touched the invalid's white cap and the big iron griddle on the hearth where Bénéto baked the week's supply of the "buckwheat" cakes which form so large a portion of the staple food of the Breton peasant that it has even the verse of a hymn consecrated to its honour:

Ah, que la sombre nue aux funestes lueurs
Planant sur la campagne,
Épargne les blés noirs, les blés aux blanches fleurs,
Le pain de la Bretagne!

and which were piled up afterwards in a

little cupboard in the corner. There was a hive covered up warmly in straw for the winter, and a tiny potato patch out at the back. Over Vera's head bunches of sweet-smelling herbs, onions, and smoked her-rings, were hanging among the rafters. It was all very poor, very small, but wonderfully neat and clean. The girl spent the pleasantest hours there that she had known since her return from England, chattering away like a little bird with Catharine about "la bien-aimée Mademoiselle Josephs," and getting in now and then a shy word respecting "Monsieur son ami," or coaxing the bedridden woman to tell her for the twentieth time how impressed she and Bénéto had been by the sight of the young doctor, so big, so handsome, with such a lovely colour in his hair, and such a bearing! so valiant and impassioned, pacing up and down outside the avenue gate.

It was easier to talk of Leah, however. Bénéto and Catharine were very kind about Marstrand. They admired and sympathised with him immensely. They appreciated his liberal payments from the very bottom of their hearts; but since the news of Vera's grander prospects they could not help feeling that it was a pity for him to have fastened his affections on a young lady for whom Providence had already provided in such an unexceptionable and altogether superior manner. Nor indeed could either of them entirely conceal the fact that there was something slightly shocking to them in the idea of a "jeune demoiselle" desiring to think for herself in such matters.

"But I did not think about it. It was he," poor Vera pleaded wistfully; "they might have done what they liked with me if he had not come first; but when I promised him—oh! Catharine, one must keep a promise!"

Catharine shook her head doubtfully.

"It is not according to our customs," she said. "See you now, what are parents for but to arrange these things? And for why? They know; they have been married themselves. It is not for a maiden, our Blessed Lady forbid! to go prying into the ways of men, and deciding which one is good or bad for them. Fi done, no!"

"But it was Mdlle. Josephs who told me he was good. She said he was the best man in the world," Vera argued almost in tears. "I should never have cared for him otherwise; and oh! Catharine, ought not a girl to care for her husband? And how is it possible if he is old and fat and——"

"St. Joseph was an old man," said Catharine solemnly, "and though it is true they do not make him fat in the pictures, it would be impious to believe that Our Lady would not have cared for him in any case. Au contraire! Did she not leave her comfortable bed and her 'pot-au-feu,' and go off with him and our Blessed Saviour into foreign countries directly he bade her? Va donc! I have heard our curé tell about it. And yet it is not to be supposed that she chose him for herself. Far from it! She was too much occupied with going to mass and saying her rosary, as honest maidens should be, to think of such things."

Vera received this statement quite placidly, and without opening her eyes to the width that might have been expected by girls whose religious education has been carried out under somewhat wider auspices than those of Madame St. Laurent and Joanna. She knew that the mass was a Popish invention, but then Our Lady, as Catharine called the Virgin, was also involved somehow in the same stricture; and after all neither interested her as much as the more tangible affairs of the world in which she was living. She went back to her original question.

"But, Catharine, surely you—country girls like Bénoite and you, I mean—you are allowed to choose, are you not?"

"Bénoite! Ah! Mademoiselle, it must be a generous man in these parts who will marry two women, and one a poor invalid like me. Bénoite sacrifices herself for her good-for-nothing sister, and the bon Dieu recompenses what is done 'de bon cœur'; but as for our girls in general, have they not mothers and the 'bazvalans' to arrange their marriages? It is not they who move in them."

"The bazvalan!" Vera repeated wonderingly.

"But yes, Mademoiselle. He works for all sorts of men, see you, and goes from house to house and knows everyone, till one day he comes to your door, and says he to the good mother: 'Tiens, you have a fine, well-grown daughter there. Why do you not think of marrying her? I know a young bachelor, a decent lad with money in his sabot, who is wanting a wife at this moment. What say you? Shall we arrange it?' Or perhaps it is the day of a Pardon, and as you know we are all congregated there, the girls and their mothers and the young men and all. The girls do

not say anything to the young men; they stand modestly on one side; but the mother goes up to the bazvalan and whispers, 'Well, do you see my girls there! Where will you find handsomer ones! And they are clever. They can knit; they can milk; they do this and that. Have you a good husband in your eye for one of them! What is that young Martin Bec doing, hein?' And so they arrange it; and if Martin Bec is chosen the girl is informed, and there is a day, or perhaps two days, of courtship, and then the marriage, and then she is a wife and does her duty. But all the same, Mademoiselle, I have a profound sympathy, believe me, for 'le beau m'sieur,'" Catharine exclaimed with a sudden tender relenting, as she saw the tears welling up into Vera's eyes; "and I say an 'Ave' every day of my life for him, and for you too, for you too. Only when one thinks of it—that you might be a Countess, the Countess de Maily!"

There was no denying that it was pleasanter to talk to Catharine about Leah only; but there was infinite pleasure in being able to talk at all, to say out what was in her heart to anyone; and all Vera's happiest hours, the only hours in her belated, monotonous life which could be called happy at all, were those which she passed in that little, mud-floored cottage, rented by the two sisters. She cared little enough about her other visits. In truth she had no natural sympathy for poor people, as such—none of Leah's faculty for talking to them, or skill in alleviating their afflictions; while her very consciousness of these defects gave her a shyness with them which had the effect at times of want of feeling and hauteur. But having asked permission to visit the poor simply and solely as a blind to cover the intimacy which she had longed to establish with the one house in which she could find sympathy with her own troubles, she went to them conscientiously, each in their regular order, and giving each their full time, finding absolute in the act for the tacit deceit involved in those after moments of enjoyment under Bénoite's roof.

But, indeed, the poor child did not look upon it as deceit. She had asked her mother's leave for a special favour, and her mother had granted it. No special negotiations had been made as to her mode of availing herself of it. How could anyone blame her, for doing so in the way which seemed most pleasing to her?

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CONTENTS OF PART 211.

No. 914.	PAGE
Alexia. Chapters VI., VII.	361
A Fine Old Moslem Gentleman	367
Recreations of the Unemployed	371
Moray and His Thirty. A Poem	373
Next of Kin. A Story in Three Chapters. Chapters I., II.	374
Victims. Chapter XIX. The Net Closes	378
No. 915.	
Alexia. Chapter VIII.	385
Next of Kin. A Story in Three Chapters. Chap. III.	390
Highways and By-ways.....	397
Victims. Chapter XX. Menhir Dabut	402

No. 916.	PAGE
Alexia. Chapter IX.	409
Chronicles of Scottish Counties.—The Border Counties. Part V.	413
The Children's Holiday	418
Pot Pourri. A Poem	420
The Passion-flower of Talvère.....	420
Victims. Chapter XXI. "She's o'er the Border and awa' "	427
No. 917.	
Alexia. Chapters X., XI.	433
What it must come to	437
Ogres.....	444
A Mining Disaster. A Complete Story	446
Victims. Chapter XXII. The Telegram from Leah... ..	451

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SATURDAY, JUNE 5, 1886.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

ALEXIA.

BY ELEANOR C. PRICE,
Author of "Gerald."

CHAPTER VI.

CHARLIE MELVILLE and his wife did not get on at all badly together at this time. She was thoroughly fond of him, poor woman; it was not altogether her fault if her fondness was of a rough sort, and showed itself chiefly in chaffing and teasing. Charlie had always borne the character of being good-tempered; the girls he used to make friends with were mostly of a noisy, joking, laughing, dashing sort, and the friendships were very like an exchange of hard knocks. But there was one little exception. The Charlie who went about among all those girls was one man, and Alexia's lover was another. The girl he had meant to marry had spirit enough of her own, but she was of a quieter kind than these young ladies, who were not accustomed to think her at all worthy of notice.

However, those days were over now, and one of the chaffing crowd had got possession of Charlie, and was not by any means tired of him yet. His mother felt unhappy enough sometimes, when she saw them together, and noticed Charlie's indifference. Generally, when he was in a good temper, and ready to enter into Maud's jokes and repay them in kind, things went well enough. At all times she was ready to forgive him a good deal, and his mother was often touched by her attempts to tease a smile into his grave face. It was all very well now, when they had not been married many weeks—but how would it be in the course of years? Maud was a stupid woman; she had a heart, but her perceptions were thick, and her ways self-

indulgent. Her love for Charlie was not of a kind that would be patient, and last for ever.

One very wet afternoon, two or three weeks after Alexia's visit to the Manor, these two young people had gone away together to Charlie's den in the old part of the house. It was a most charming workshop, very long, with a sloping roof, extending right across one of the gables, with a long latticed window at each end, one of which was half covered with ivy; now rustling against it rather dismally in the wind and rain. For it was raining as it can rain in July; there was a pond under the cedars on the lawn, and yellow streams were running along the gravel walks.

Here was Charlie's carpenter's bench, but his tools were rusty now; he had also a turning lathe; and the low walls of his den were ornamented with those cases of stuffed birds which made his wife so angry. He had drawers of butterflies, and a shelf of story books, George's and his own. Cricket bats, and fishing-rods, and all kinds of boyish tackle and trophies; and two or three old oil paintings standing against the wall, with a chest of ancient deeds, and two fiddles in cases. It was a room full of rubbish and lumber, dusty and neglected, for Charlie rightly regarded the housemaids as the natural enemies of his treasures, and very often locked the door, and carried the key in his pocket.

This afternoon the old room looked bright enough, for he had collected chips of work thrown aside long ago, and had made a fine flaming fire under the low chimney piece, along which grinned a row of Indian idols. Poor Charlie had brought them home to his mother from a voyage, and she had half-broken his heart by saying they were far too horrid and hideous for the drawing-room. George was reigning then,

and Charlie took his snubbing in silence. He only told Alexia, and rewarded her sympathy with the ugliest of all.

There was one splendid armchair in the den. Its woodwork had once been white and gold, and it was covered with worn old tapestry, the story of the Hare and the Tortoise. On crept the reptile, while the poor animal was to be seen far behind, his ears laid back in amazed disgust. Charlie and Alexia always agreed in their love and sorrow for the Hare. She used to sit in that chair for hours, when she was a child, reading fairy tales to Charlie while he worked, if his work was not too noisy. George would sometimes come in, and tease and patronise a little. Mrs. Melville never troubled herself to penetrate those passages, long, narrow and twisted, and to climb those old stairs which led to Charlie's room. Neither did she ever trouble herself to know that little Alex Page was there. The hours would slip away, and when it began to be dusk one of the good-natured maids would run home across the park with Alexia, whose mother had not been at all anxious about her, having most likely an absorbing novel to read.

Now Charlie had once more a companion in his den. She sat in the old chair, dressed in a red cotton gown which helped to lighten up the room, and watched him with her steady eyes while he knelt down, poking at the fire. In the depths of her heart she was satisfied with Charlie; she had always liked him, and admired his looks. That simplicity of his amused and pleased her, and she did not mind the variability of his temper, which of course was a new discovery since she married him. She would not at all have liked Charlie to belong to anybody else. He was a nice thing to possess: all men must have faults, but she did not mind his faults—not at present, at least. She declared privately to herself that she hated demonstrativeness; this was fortunate, if true. If any voice more inward still had asked Maud Melville what life would have been, if her husband had happened to be in love with her, she would most likely, as a sensible woman (which she thought herself) have refused to listen. One's own skeleton had better be locked up safely in its cupboard, hidden from one's self, as well as from other people.

She was in rather a nice mood that afternoon. She sat among Charlie's treasures without threatening to burn them, and while he played with his chips and

arranged the fire, she talked to him about plans for the winter, in which there was nothing very destructive. She had made up her mind to go to Cannes, and, as Mrs. Melville intended to live in London, Redwood must be shut up. That would be nothing new for Redwood. Charlie had to confess that no doubt Redwood would get on very well; men with delicate wives must do as their wives chose; and his recollections of last winter were not very pleasant. He did not care much about the hunting, he said, rather to his wife's surprise; she had expected him to hate the very mention of Cannes.

Her triumph raised her spirits, and suddenly, as if at the suggestion of some fiend, as she looked at the fire Charlie had made, she exclaimed—"Now, look here! you never do anything to please me—"

"What! do you suppose I'm going to Cannes to please myself?" enquired Charlie.

"Yes, you are, so don't pretend to be unselfish. Now you shall offer up a little sacrifice to me. Where are those humming birds? You shall pull them out of the case and burn them."

Charlie sat still on his side of the fire, and a cloud came over his face.

"No," he said, "I won't burn my humming birds."

"Not even to please me?"

"Not even to please you."

"Then I'll tell you something. You are keeping them to please somebody else."

"Only myself."

"Oh, well, perhaps so. But—well," said she, with a sudden loud laugh, "it's no kindness to encourage people of that sort. The young woman is quite conceited enough already, without you letting her know that you remember your old flirtations. I know she was a child—I know all about it—so you needn't look so awfully cross," ended Mrs. Melville, a little doubtfully; for Charlie was frowning, and it was not only the fire that made his face red now.

"I beg your pardon," he said, and he had never yet spoken to her in such a tone, "but you know nothing at all of what you are talking about."

"Don't be sensitive," said his wife. "I only advise you to burn those moth-eaten humming-birds, and not to tell Miss Page that they are the greatest treasure you have. I saw at the time that she was rather struck, but of course I didn't understand the whole story. You can't go on being a boy for ever, can you?"

She spoke quite good-humouredly, in her usual rough way. They were strange things to be said by a young woman so lately married, but she had always been accustomed to say what she thought, and nothing was sacred with her.

Charlie did not answer her at once; she had reached a subject on which he could not stand chaff. He could not, however, knock Maud down; he could not even be very rude to her; and he was conscious that she was right after all, though her plain speaking was an astonishment.

"You had better not talk about it," he said gruffly. "Miss Page is fifty times too good for any of us:" and as his wife, though she lifted her eyebrows, did not retort at once, he went on, "Some stupid fool has been making mischief, I suppose. Who told you that she had anything to do with the humming-birds?"

"Did not she help you to set them up?"

"She did, and why shouldn't she? Who told you?"

"Mrs. Dodd."

"Mrs. Dodd!"—down tumbled the fire-irons. "I hate that woman," said Charlie, kicking the fender. "She is a mischievous woman. If you believe her you'll come to grief. If she told you anything against Alexia Page, you may be sure it was a lie. She has always been horrid to her. She's jealous of her mother, and she tried to patronise Alexia—as if Alexia could be patronised by a vulgar fool like that. Don't listen to a word she says to you."

"Very well, that will do," said Maud, shrugging her shoulders. "I'll listen half to Mrs. Dodd and half to you. I may mention that she didn't say a word against this charming Alexia, except that she was a little bit of a flirt, which we knew before, and which is no fault, of course. I know she helped you with the humming-birds when she was about thirteen. Mrs. Dodd made no mischief, and I am not jealous of any of your old friends. No doubt their name is legion. You need not be so furiously angry, if I suggest that old sentimental nonsense had better be forgotten, and the relics of it burnt. There, Charlie, shake hands."

She looked almost handsome, a little flushed, with a new softness in her eyes, and in another moment she was out of her great chair, and kneeling on the floor beside him: under these circumstances Charlie could not help making friends. Maud went back presently to her chair.

and as Charlie stooped rather moodily over the fire, and the rain pelted more furiously than ever, she said in her usual tone: "Do you know anything of that young man who is staying with the Pages?"

"No. He's at Oxford. He looks rather a stick," said Charlie. "I believe he's a cousin, or something."

"Yes. Mrs. Dodd thinks he will be more than a cousin, one of these days. In fact, she rather fancies that they are engaged already, from things she has——"

"Look here, for heaven's sake, don't give me any more of Mrs. Dodd's sickening gossip!" exclaimed Charlie, snatching up the poker.

"Oh, very well! I thought you would be interested," said his wife carelessly.

Just then a message came from the Squire's bailiff, who wished to speak to him. It was rather a fortunate interruption. Charlie went off at once, and Mrs. Melville, after staring for some time at the fire with a queer and not very happy expression, got up and went away to her own part of the house. The old den was not such an amusing place to spend the afternoon in, after all.

An hour or two later the rain had almost stopped, and a dim watery sunshine made its way through the clouds to the steaming earth wrapped in its deep bright-green. The air was heavy with mist and heat, and showers were dripping from the trees.

Charlie Melville took this opportunity of walking through some woods about a mile from his house. The path was a good deal overshadowed by nut-trees, and there was a thick undergrowth of bracken and brambles. At the far side from the Manor this wood opened on a lane leading through William Page's farm, and a large upland field on the other side of the lane was the scene of Alexia's accident in the winter.

Charlie, striding dismally through his woods on this damp summer afternoon, lifted his eyes as he came near the gate, and saw Alexia.

CHAPTER VII.

ALEXIA, like the Squire, had rushed out gladly into the fresh, rainy air to escape from trying scenes indoors. It was Edmund's last day; with all her liking for her cousin, she could not help being a little thankful for that, for it was becoming day by day more difficult to know what to do with him. Some people are improved by being in love; Edmund was not. He was sentimental by nature, poetical in the man-

ner of boys, and a little inclined to be morbid; all this was intensified now. It would have been a very good thing for him to be teased and laughed at in a healthy way by Alexia; she knew this, but could not do it. It had been much easier to laugh, and be hard with Charlie, however keenly she might suffer afterwards. She only felt sorry for Edmund, and could not rouse herself to be anything but gentle with him.

They spent nearly all that wet day in the house together. Mr. Page was gone to a distant town, and Alexia had heartily wished that Edmund would go with him, but the young man did not seem willing to move; he had a cough, too, so that she could not insist. He talked a good deal in rather a dismal strain; he seemed a little hopeless about life, and the thought of going away to-morrow was evidently despair. He followed Alexia from room to room, looking pale and shadowy, his fair hair pushed back, his blue eyes very bright, and yet sad, with a piteous eager expression.

Alexia thought to herself with relief—"only a few more hours"! She was patient with him, and her manner was simple and grave: the most presumptuous lover would have found no encouragement in it.

In the afternoon, while the rain still poured, while Mr. and Mrs. Melville were sitting in the old room at the Manor, talking about humming-birds, Edmund and Alexia were together in the drawing-room. She was writing a letter, and he was half lying in the deep window-seat, holding a book in his hand. Suddenly he startled her from her writing by saying, in low, deliberate tones, two lines of a poem:

Since nothing all my love avails,
Since all, my life seemed meant for, fails—

Alexia just lifted her dark curly head, and glanced towards him, smiling a little faintly.

"I'm very glad I'm not poetical," she said. "Please take great care to pack up all your poetry-books, and especially Mr. Browning."

"He is the king of poets," said Edmund. "He knows everything that any human creature ever felt."

"Poor man!" murmured Alexia.

"And you know you did like some bits—"

"A sentence here and there, when I happened to understand it. I'm not mystical, or anything of that sort. I never like what I can't understand."

"Those two lines I read just now were plain enough."

"The words of a despairing idiot," said Alexia.

"No, he was not that at all. I wish I was half as brave."

"Life is not worth living at all, unless one can be brave," she said.

"Ah—well, but you don't exactly know what it is, you see."

"Don't I?" said Alexia, half to herself.

"No, you don't. You don't feel that to-morrow is a plunge into a black, dark sea—I sometimes wish it was a real one, for life is too dreadful to bear, away from—"

"Eddy—don't!" she cried out suddenly, as if she was in pain.

He had started up from lounging on the window-seat, and was sitting bent forward, gazing at her. In another moment Alexia had controlled herself; she stooped over her letter, and said quickly—"don't be so unkind as to talk such nonsense to me, Eddy," and then she laughed, though with deep irritation she knew that she was flushing to the roots of her hair.

"Ah, you laugh," he said. "You drive one mad, and then you laugh. It's awfully nice of you. Of course it is all nonsense, and I don't love you, do I, with all my heart and strength?"

She said nothing, still looking down at her writing, and shading her eyes with her hand. There had been little enough reality in the laugh, which had roused this sudden flame.

"You have spoilt my life for me, Alex," he said presently. "This sort of thing is ruin. I suppose I knew it all the time, only I wouldn't let myself. The very feeling of being near you was too glorious. Till the last day comes, one doesn't know—and the pain is rather too awful—and you can only laugh—"

"Has it been my fault, Eddy?" she said. "Oh, I didn't mean to laugh. I am most dreadfully sorry."

He sat silently looking at her for a minute or two. Where he found any hope, it is impossible to say; but he came forward then and stood near her, and stretched out his hand so that it almost, but not quite, touched her hair.

"Look here, my heart's darling," he said, "you know all now—think, and tell me—must I really be so miserable? Is there any good reason?"

"There is a good reason," she answered, without looking up, and her voice sounded sad and cold. "You know it already. You know—I don't feel as you do."

"And never will!" said Edmund. The words were more an exclamation than a question, and Alexia did not answer them. "Of course I knew it already," he said, and after standing still for a moment longer, he went back to his place in the window. There he turned away from her, and leaned his face against the glass, staring out into the rain, which was lessening now, while a faint yellow gleam was beginning to shine softly through it.

After all this it was no wonder that Alexia seized the smallest excuse for escaping from the room, and then, while Edmund still sat brooding over his fate, went quietly out at the garden door, and away into the fields and lanes, with a resolution to keep out of the way till her father came home, and not, if possible, to be alone with her cousin again. She was much more soft-hearted than anybody thought, and Edmund's pain hurt her intensely. She was really fond of the young fellow, and was not even afraid of comparing him with Charlie Melville, not to his disadvantage. Edmund was cleverer, better educated, more refined; he had a sweeter temper, stronger principles, a more enlightened mind. No reasoning, no pressure, no pique, would drive Edmund to marry another woman three months after Alexia had refused him. His love was true and worth having; she knew that. He certainly might shine by contrast—but she had loved Charlie, and Edmund's pleading had only brought all the old pain back. Sometimes it was impossible not to forget all that lay between, and to go back to the old, happy thoughtless days, till the last of them, when Lil threw her in the field. Alexia was not a morbid girl, and did not encourage these thoughts; in fact, she had been getting on grandly in the way of self-conquest, till these new waves broke over her—Charlie's words about the humming-birds, and Edmund's melancholy love-making. Alexia knew that the battle must all be fought over again, but that afternoon she let her old self have its way; she walked up to the field, or almost ran, for she was intensely excited, and stood by the place where she fell in the winter, and thought of it all over again. Then, with the light and the gloom of those recollections in her eyes, she went down to the gate, and out from the yellow glowing upland into the damp shadow of the lane. Then suddenly, seeing Charlie as he came out of the wood, she knew what a terribly foolish thing it was to give way to the past, even in the

depths of one's own heart. One's reserve of strength may be wanted, just when it has been thrown away. Alexia felt like a coward, and that was a very rare feeling with her. She wished to run away, and walked in fact a few steps down the lane. Perhaps Charlie would turn the other way; it was quite possible that he would not wish to speak to her. If he did, she could trust herself to be cool and natural, though such an effort might shorten her life by a year or two. Down this very lane he had carried her, that December day—certainly the wrong thing to remember at the moment, if one wished to be cool without difficulty. Here were his quick steps coming: here was his shadow on the grass under the hedge: here was his voice close to her shoulder: "Are you running away from me?"

"I am not running away at all," said Alexia, and she turned round quietly and gave him her hand. "How nice and fresh it is after the rain!"

"Is it? I don't know: I thought it was stuffy," said the Squire; and as he spoke Alexia knew that he was right, and that she had never been out on a more oppressive day. An uncanny, horrid-feeling day, which seemed to weigh one's spirits and senses down.

Charlie walked on beside her silently. Alexia knew that he was looking very grave, as if he had something on his mind. She wanted dreadfully to say something careless, but it would not come; she could think of nothing but last December, and longed wildly to be out of the lane. Charlie was too much wrapped up in his own thoughts to be aware of hers; he was frowning, and his pleasant blue eyes looked dark and cloudy.

"Lil is all right now, I suppose?" he said presently. "What an escape you had!"

"Yes, a narrow escape," said Alexia. "I hope I shall be more lucky next winter."

"You mean to hunt again?"

"Yes, I think so. Don't you?"

"I don't know, and I don't care," replied Charlie, with all his old boyishness. "But no, I suppose I shall be away in some beastly French place. Not that I care—mind the puddles. I say, this lane is worse now than it was in the winter. But I'm glad I met you, for I want you to tell me something. Alexia, did you mean, when you—did you mean that we were entirely to leave off being friends?"

He went up to a field gate and stood there, swinging his stick and leaning on the top bar. There was a view of green soaking grass, and elm-trees, and cows feeding, all vivid in the yellow light from the west, which to these two was the saddest light that ever shone.

Alexia stood and looked at him as he stared at the cows. She did not dream of walking on her way, or escaping from anything that he might choose to say to her. She felt braver now, and was not afraid of him or of herself. Friends from childhood, lovers for years—did not they know each other well enough to be a little plain-spoken, even now?

"No, I did not mean that at all," she said. "But, of course, circumstances change things entirely. We are not young any longer. Everything is different."

"Indeed, it is!" said Charlie. "But I have forgiven you."

"I suppose so," she said in a low voice; but the satirical touch in her words was lost on him; he was always thick-headed.

"Come and stand here on the grass for a minute," he said imploringly. "It's not wetter than the lane. Alex, I know I have no business to go back to things—it is unheard-of—but then I think your behaviour to me was unheard-of, you know. Don't be angry. We are old now—at least I am—my hair's turning grey. I don't care about anything now—but I do want you to make me understand, just out of kindness, you know."

"Make you understand—what?" said Alexia, coldly.

"What a piece of marble you are! That's what I said to myself at the time—she's a piece of marble, but no one would have thought it!—It was really, then, because you didn't care for me—never had—that's the wonder. I could have sworn—Alex, I never was so knocked down in my life."

She stood very like a little statue now, except that she turned from white to red, and white again, while Charlie, with one arm on the gate, looked down into her face and talked in this terrible way.

"You didn't care for me one bit—not even when——" but there he was stopped by Alexia's lifting her eyes suddenly, with a flash of anger in them.

"If you really wish to keep up our old friendship," she said, "you can hardly expect me to listen to this sort of thing. It most certainly *is* unheard-of. As for my behaviour to you, you should have asked

me for an explanation a very long time ago—not now."

Charlie Melville was checked and startled; it was long since he had seen Alexia really angry and in earnest. He wished to apologise, but rather made matters worse.

"I beg your pardon—I'm very sorry; but don't you know, not being able to talk to you—it's like half one's life torn off. However, I see we had better be enemies, for you will never do anything but mub me."

"It is impossible for us to be friends," said Alexia, as calmly as she could.

"Why?" said Charlie.

It was a barbarous question, but all his behaviour that day was perfectly bad. For a moment she could not answer him, but wondered wildly why all this misery should have come upon her. He watched her intently: the stupid, selfish, simple young man could not help seeing that there was something here besides anger and assumed indifference.

Alexia's little courage, her little dissimulation, were not quite enough for the occasion. She should have escaped long ago, for discoveries were breaking on Charlie's mind as she hesitated for an answer. At last he said, almost under his breath, and with an expression that frightened her:

"Alex, they made you do it!"

She looked up for one moment, and then with a sudden hardening and stiffening of her whole self, as if she were turning into the marble he called her, and without indulging any more in anything so dangerous as anger, she said: "I don't understand you, and I think we have talked long enough. My father will be coming to meet me. Good-bye."

Charlie was really ashamed now. She had brought him back to himself, reminding him of one or two things he ought never to have forgotten. In the light of some of her words he was beginning to understand Alexia—months too late, it was true. He felt quite sure now that his last guess was right; and it certainly followed that they had talked long enough. Even if she would have let him, he could see that it would be awkward and foolish to talk to her any more, but he could not help saying, quite reverently, "Do believe me, I did not mean to offend you. May I walk on with you to meet Mr. Page?"

"As you like," said Alexia, looking down the lane; but her tired eyes seemed to say that he would be a bore.

Charlie coloured a little, but he knew he deserved it.

"Well, perhaps after all I had better go back this way," he said.

Alexia shook hands with him, and they parted there at the gate. She walked on alone, and he turned back to the woods.

"It won't do ever to speak to her again," he meditated. "What an ass I have been! What an awful mess I have made of it all!"

A FINE OLD MOSLEM GENTLEMAN,

ONE OF THE MODERN STYLE.

SCENE the First: The Madras Club. Enter Sir Charles Turner with a tall, Europeanised native, who doesn't look a bit uncomfortable in English dress. Dozing among a pile of newspapers, the deputy-assistant collector of Krishnapatam, and a sub of the Blankshire Buffs. They eye the native at first languidly, then with as much animation as their exhausted frames are capable of. Then they look at one another; and, after a deal of head-shaking, the D.A.C. rises, and rolling up, glass in eye, to Sir Charles says:

"Really, it's very unpleasant, you know, but I must trouble that person to withdraw."

"This person," replies Sir Charles, "is my friend, Syed Mahmud, son of the well-known Syed Ahmed Khan, C.S.I., and I was just showing him the club rooms, that's all."

"Very sorry, but can't help it. Rule absolute. No natives admitted. The person must withdraw."

I do not think Sir Charles's feelings were to be envied, as he and his Mussulman friend walked out.

Scene the Second: The Railway Station at Patna. Mr. Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, Arabi's friend, and an earnest if sometimes wrong-headed advocate of the Ripon policy in India, is going off by train. To give him what we call an ovation have assembled some thirty of the chief Mussulman inhabitants, with the Nawab Villayet, Ali Khan, at their head. The Nawab Villayet is a venerable old gentleman much respected by Europeans as well as natives. A voice from the train:

"What's all this bobbyery about?—keeping us from starting. I devoutly trust we shan't have to take on all this lot of blank'd niggers; they'll make the train stink worse than stale fish. Ah! worse and worse: they're not going on at all—

they're just come down as a deputation to say good-bye to that firebrand, Blunt, who's more than half a Mohamedan. Yes, my dear," says the excited speaker to his wife, at the far end of the compartment—"fancy these fellows getting up a deputation. What next, I wonder? Here! you fat old baboo with the ivory-handled stick"—to the Nawab—"you ought to be ashamed of yourself at your age, making a fool of yourself in this way. Be off, I tell you, at once, and take all your tag-rag and bobtail with you; or, by Jove! I'll thrash some of you soundly."

The Nawab, not understanding the reason of the gentleman's wrath, goes on quietly smiling and salaaming to Mr. Blunt. Gentleman thereupon grows fiercer, leans half his body out of the door, and swishing his cane, cries:

"If only I could get a hit at the fellow. But if he doesn't go off in double-quick time, I'll be out upon him."

The noise attracts Mr. Blunt, who summons the station-master, and insists on his calling the irascible passenger to order. But that functionary is quite nonplussed.

"Oh no, sir, we can't interfere. Things like this are happening almost every day."

The Nawab, too, begged Mr. Blunt not to trouble himself: "Unhappily it's the sort of treatment we have to put up with from people who consider themselves gentlemen."

"And who are you, sir, that you should interfere?" roared out the passenger, in a tone which at once drew Mr. Blunt to the carriage door.

Well, it may suffice to say that Mr. Blunt got the man's name, registered a complaint, and, after much delay, extorted a very lame sort of apology, not for himself, but for the native gentleman.

It seems to us a strange way of promoting peace and goodwill to treat natives in this sort of style. Civil servants are not the usual offenders; although they are not quite so friendly as they used to be. The reason of the change is that two of a trade never agree, and the native has begun to compete for Civil Service appointments; but very few civilians are like that traveller. Such conduct stamps the third-rate man, the raw sub, the being who—in whatever profession—is wholly wanting in culture; but even men of mark are not a quarter careful enough of wounding the feelings and touching the susceptibilities of the natives. How

sensitive these people are we can hardly think, unless by a strong effort we put ourselves in their place. In Syed Ahmed Khan's life we shall see how often he was touched to the quick by a chance remark made in pure thoughtlessness. Such remarks seem to have "put him out," as much as that affair of the Madras Club must have annoyed his son.

And who is Syed Ahmed Khan? Simply the foremost Mohamedan in India since the death of Sir Salar Jung; equally great in force of character, influence over his fellow-men, and literary ability. He comes of a famous line; his grandfather had high military rank at the Great Mogul's Court, and his father was offered the prime-ministership, but declined in favour of his father-in-law, already famous as a diplomatist, and a great friend of General Ochterlony, a man who rejoiced in all the three titles, Amin ul Mulk—answering to our Duke; Dabir ud Dowla—Earl; and Jang—Baron. The Syed's father was satisfied with being the Mogul's chief friend, the only one permitted to sit in his presence—which breach of propriety was managed in this way: the Mogul, seated cross-legged on a low platform, would quickly let one foot hang down, and Syed Mohamed would seat himself on the ground on pretence of shampooing it, thus at once satisfying etiquette and convenience. The young Syed, brought up about the Court, distinguished himself for fearless truth-telling, scorning the usual ways of Eastern courtiers, and never fearing to give the real reasons for his behaviour. He had an intelligent mother, who used to make him repeat to her each evening all he had learned at school during the day. English formed no part of his boyish education. At twenty, a longing seized him to take service under the foreigners. Much against the wishes of his relatives he entered as a clerk in the Criminal Department at Delhi, and after several promotions became in 1855 subordinate judge of Bijnore, having already acquired fame and a Fellowship in the Royal Asiatic Society by a book on the "Archæology of Delhi." He was at Bijnore when the Mutiny broke out in 1857, and it is not too much to say that nothing but his skillful management saved Collector Shakespeare and the other English residents from sharing the fate of those at Cawnpore. Mohamed Khan, with 800 men, came down upon the place, which had no garrison, though there was a very considerable sum in the trea-

sury. The Syed went as an ambassador to this rebel chief, and pretending to identify himself with the mutineers, said: "We have two courses open to us. Either we can massacre these Europeans, and then, if Delhi falls, the English will be revenged on us; or, I will get them to go away after having formally made over the country to you."

Mohamed Khan was persuaded that the latter was the wiser course; and, on receiving a document in Persian handing Bijnore over to him until the English should return to claim it, he not only provided two elephants and a bullock-cart, but also took Syed Ahmed to the treasury and gave him 3000 rupees. With this help the Syed led the Europeans safely through Mohamed's men, and sent them on to Meerut. For these and other services during the Mutiny he received a special pension of 200 rupees a month, a robe of honour, a cup of maintenance, a pair of shawls, a pearl necklace, a sword of honour, etc. Money he preferred to land, his strong wish being to travel, after he had spent a few years more in the service; and tender-conscienced though he was, he felt that something was due to him, his losses, through the pillaging of his property at Delhi, etc., having been more than 30,000 rupees.

Syed Ahmed's views as to the causes of the Mutiny are worth noting. Government, having no native in the Legislative Council, worked in the dark; and its intentions were wholly misapprehended. Such a simple thing as rearing in the Christian faith the orphans, of whom every famine made so many, was looked on as what we call "the thin end of the wedge." "They're gradually impoverishing us," was the cry, "and doing away with the study of Arabic and Sanskrit. By-and-by we shall all be poor and ignorant; and then they'll force us all to be of their religion."

The open-air preaching of missionaries, again, was very disquieting. Anyone could preach as he liked in his own mosque or temple; but violently to attack another faith in fairs and markets was a thing hitherto unknown; and, as people fancied the missionaries were paid by Government, they naturally grew suspicious. Our land-laws, too, gave great offence. To force a sale of land for debt was a thing which the most arbitrary of the Mogul Emperors had never done. "Contempt, too, is an ineradicable wrong," and the Government made no effort to secure

the affections of the people. At the same time they foolishly fused Mohamedans and Hindoos in the same regiments, instead of keeping them apart so that the one might be a check on the other. The treatise in which these views were set forth was translated into English by Sir Auckland Colvin; and was followed by a pamphlet on "The Loyal Mahomedans," whose good services, the Syed complains, have been ignored by all the historians of the Mutiny. He also wrote on education, his panacea being "educate, educate;" and he actually began a commentary on the Bible.

Transferred to Allygurh, he there founded, just twenty years ago, a scientific society; and in his fifty-third year determined to take his son up to Cambridge. On the voyage he met Miss Carpenter, on whose plan for educating Indian women he cautiously remarks: "We must strive after good in accordance with manners and customs. God bade Joshua 'order the sun to stand still, not the earth to stop,' for He knew what was the general opinion at the time." While prayers were being read on ship-board, he stood respectfully by, "seeing the way in which God was prayed to, and admiring His catholicity." An artillery officer insisted on drawing him into a religious argument, and then would not shake hands with him next day; and when they lost sight of Egypt, a Major, who was also Director of Public Instruction, said to him:

"You've left the land of the Prophet and come into that of the Kaffirs."

"I was very near telling him what a very impolite speech it was, implying that I looked on the Europeans as unbelievers; but I restrained myself and replied: 'Don't say that; say rather that I've come to the land of the people of the Book.'"

When a second Major wrote in Miss Carpenter's album: "The natives of India are heartless and ungrateful," the Syed was naturally astonished; but a thick-skinned Englishman can scarcely understand his making a grievance out of another of the Director of Public Instruction's remarks. He was talking with an ayah, who had done the voyage twenty times already, when the Director of Public Instruction, hearing her say: "I am a Mohamedan," turned to Ahmed and remarked:

"Of your religion," meaning (Ahmed thought) to shame him by bringing him into close relations with a low-class woman.

"Yes," solemnly replied the Syed; "in religion all Mohamedans are my brothers."

He tells without comment the well-known story of Perim, though in regard to the Canal his sympathies are with the French, who seem at Marseilles to have let him through their Custom House very easily. The glories of Marseilles soon made him forget all he had seen before. Egypt had appeared to him "to beat India into a cocked-hat;" but the Marseilles cafés, with their glass roofs, and gas, and plants in pots, called forth the remark: "How good God is, that he makes even workmen to refresh themselves in such paradises as could never have been conceived by Jamshid." At the hotel he has to go up to the fifth storey; and feeling that he should like some tea, wonders how he is to find his way down the 120 steps to order it. "Suddenly I saw on the wall a lovely ivory flower, and thinking this must be the knob of one of the electric bells that I had heard of, I touched it, and, to my delight it acted." He stayed another day in Marseilles, admiring everything except the elephant at the Zoo, "which was small and thin;" and at night went to a café chantant, and wandered through the brilliantly-lighted streets. "Not even in fables have I ever heard of such fairy scenes."

The rail to Paris tired him, as it does everybody; but their commissionaire ruthlessly hurried the party off to Versailles to see the grand fountains. The Versailles paintings Ahmed speaks of as "matchless," except one depicting the capture of Abd-el-Kader's harem.

The Bois de Boulogne pleased him immensely, and he aired his French at the Lake hotel by saying "s'il vous plait," instead of "thank you," to the gorgeous waiter. At the Grand Stand at Longchamps, the politeness of a man who, seeing he was a stranger walked with him and showed him everything, made him "blush for the manners of his countrymen." At a glove-shop, he almost rivalled Sterne's experience. "Hearing some one say 'gloves,' the very pretty and well-dressed young woman began talking English like a nightingale, brought gloves to suit us, and put them on with her own hands." But the marvel of marvels was that at midnight a tailor's shop was as bright and lively as by day; and, going in to buy a warm coat for one of his sons, he parted with him at the door of a beautifully furnished room, whence the lad soon emerged "quite a handsome young man in a new suit."

Of the horrors of the Channel passage he had his full share: "Almost senseless . . . we got to the end of our journey." In

London he stayed more than six months—dining with Lord Lawrence; getting a special ticket for the opening of the Holborn Viaduct; going to the Derby, where what astonished him most was the sudden flashing round of the vast crowd of white faces as the horses turned Tattenham Corner.

All this while he was living in lodgings, where the landlord used to attend chemistry and other improving lectures of nights, and the wife's sister, when ill, borrowed from the foreign gentleman a book to improve her mind, and one of the maid-servants always bought and read the "Echo," and could enjoy the jokes of "Punch." The Syed details all this to the Allyghur Scientific Society, and draws a striking contrast between English intelligence and Indian want of education. "We are but beasts," he says, "in comparison with them, and one is not wont to treat a beast with courtesy. If the English behave well to us it is out of policy; we, being what we are, really don't deserve good treatment." A man this, full of love for his people, and yet, just because he loved them so much, not afraid to scold them quite sharply on occasion. Some of his Allyghur friends had taken offence at his unflattering contrast between Indian and European ways; so, writing to the secretary, he says: "Whatever fault I find, I find also with myself, for am I not one of you? . . . I don't absolve the English of discourtesy; what I say is, there is in us a great deal to excuse them. . . They have education; and the results are politeness, knowledge, good faith, cleanliness, skilled workmanship, thoroughness. Our people know nothing of Europe; they are like the frogs in a well, who, when a fish fell in among them out of a man's basket, wouldn't believe a word he said about the sunlight and the big waves of the Ganges." One is sorry he should have added: "These English who mix with us and treat us well do so out of policy, they cannot help despising us"—an opinion which happily further intercourse led him to give up.

But his object in all this fault-finding is to tear open "the fatal shroud of self-complacency" (as he calls it) which has kept the Mohamedans from taking advantage, as the Hindoos have done, of our educational help. Syed Ahmed believed in education; his son got the very first "North-West Scholarship" for giving natives an English university education. The young man went through Cambridge

and Lincoln's Inn, and by-and-by was the very first native appointed to a judgeship in the High Court of the North-West Provinces. The dinner given by his father to celebrate his return as a full-blown barrister, was the first in the North-West at which English and Mohamedans sat down at the same table; and to see the young man going about in Cambridge cap and gown was as great a pleasure to the Syed as to be himself appointed by Lord Lytton a member of the Viceregal Council, or made C.S.I.

His great aim, however, was to educate the masses. "Translate all the arts and sciences into our own tongue; that is our only chance," he would say, "and these words I should like written in gigantic letters on the Himalayas." Yet this educational reformer, this Broad-Church Mussulman, whom some of his co-religionists looked on as at least one of the lesser Antichrists, because he denied Mohamed's bodily night-journey up to heaven, went in strongly for denominational education. He felt that Mohamedans would never send their sons to mixed schools, or to places where their religious scruples were not carefully respected. And, when by private subscription he had started his Allyghur College, where a thorough education, under a principal who had been President of the Cambridge Union, was given at a cost of from £16 to £25 a year, he took care that not only were Moslem theology and literature made prominent in the curriculum, but also that there were separate praying places for the rival sects of Shias and Sunnis. The College is, in many ways, just like a great English public school; each boy has his own set of rooms—verandah, study, bed-room, and bath-room; and the games are modelled after ours. There is even a gold medal for the best cricketer, named after a Mrs. Aikman, who had the courage to ask the School Eleven to lunch and to sit down with them as well. And yet this man, so careful of his hereditary faith, so conservative amid his progressiveness, was denounced by Moslem fanatics, as well as sneered at by some few among the English officials. A clique of Mohamedans actually sent to Mecca to get a formal excommunication of him from the chief moolvies; and one bigot went so far as to affirm that Lord Mayo's murderer would have done better had he killed Ahmed instead; while others swore on the Koran that by some means or other they would have his life—as the Jews swore they

would "kill Paul." All this moved him not a whit; he never thought of seeking police protection, but went about getting subscriptions for his College—Hindoos helping him as well as Mohamedans.

"I'm more proud," he would say, "of the nine rupees gathered in annas among the boys of a poor Hindoo school than of the thousands subscribed by rich men."

Everywhere the native gentry wanted to give him "a big dinner." They have learnt from us to think that nothing can go on without a dinner.

"No," said he, "give me the cost of it instead as a subscription."

His College is thriving, and he is enjoying a green old age, "preserving his patriotism but divested of prejudice."

On the question of native Volunteers such a man who, when on the Council, went in strongly for vaccination, deserves to be heard with attention. The Mogul Emperors used to get many of their best generals from among the Hindoo nobility; our plan has almost wholly kept high-class men, with Hindoo and Mohamedan, out of the army, condemning them to a life of inaction and, therefore, too often, of debauchery.

For female education he does not feel much enthusiasm. His mother was able to help him in his work. Most mothers, he thinks, can do the same if they like; and "when the men get better educated they are sure to draw the women up also. Besides, among the Mohamedans there are already even lady-preachers," and yet he couldn't help admiring the English servant who used to read the "Echo," and who apologised politely for calling Khudadad Beg "Mr. Beg":

"Please pardon me, sir; but your full name is very difficult."

Men like the Syed must command high official rank as well as respect; and the sooner we recognise this the better for our position in India as well as for India itself. We are wanted there to keep down fanatics like those who would have killed the Syed in order to do Heaven service; but if we mean to stay there, we can only do it by making full use of men of the Syed's stamp.

RECREATIONS OF THE UNEMPLOYED.

If Thomas Gay were now alive, and had to write his "Trivia" afresh, I have no doubt that he would devote a goodly string of his sounding couplets to the consideration

of the methods by which the unemployed—not of necessity the unpaid—manage to divert themselves in this sombre city of ours. No social reformer has yet arisen to counsel and urge the ruling powers to provide amusement, in addition to food, clothing, shelter, and education, for those who cannot, or will not, make an effort to provide it for themselves; but when he does take up his parable—and he will, sure enough, some day—he will at least have an easy task in showing that the loafer of the London streets cannot be a very difficult person to amuse, and that a very moderate grant from the Consolidated Fund would serve the purpose.

By the smallest exhibition of eccentricity, or deviation from the straitest way of the street-walking Englishman, the investigator may supply himself with plenteous examples of the voracious appetite of the haunter of the London streets for the very mildest excitement. Let him stoop to tie his boot-lace; let him blow the dust out of his latch-key before inserting it into the key-hole; let him stop a policeman and tell him that there is an unmuzzled dog just round the corner, or a lost child in the next street, and in a second the pavement will be crowded with anxious enquirers burning to know what may be the cause of this abnormal attitude and action, or the purport of the thrilling news which is just being whispered in the ear of the guardian of the peace. There will be the working-man just going back from his job to the shop for the screw-driver which is always forgotten when screws have to be driven; there will be the apothecary's boy, with his basket full of medicines to be delivered immediately; there will be at least half-a-dozen of that unmistakable class, the street-loafer pure and simple, with greasy pot hat and tattered overcoat many sizes too big for his narrow-chested wizened frame; and, lastly, there will be the milkman, the butcher's man, the buttermilkman, the candle-stick-maker's man, and many others too numerous to mention.

From the way they stand gaping and staring, listening for something when there is nothing to be told, and looking for something where there is nothing to be seen, it must be evident that for them the "tædium vitæ" is a dread reality. Can there be elsewhere in the world a people so weighed down with ennui? What weariness must be the rule in an existence where such incidents as those I have

noticed stand for recreation; and any student of street-life will be able to add a dozen other similar causes which will serve as the nucleus of a staring crowd. Only a few days ago I was passing a house where a "To Let" bill was being removed from the window-pane by a carpenter inside, and at least a score of people, all apparently with work to be done on their hands, were standing gazing in rapt attention at the operation. They were seeking their recreation, and they certainly found it easily enough. If the facility in finding amusement be allowed to rank as a chief factor in a people's happiness, then our London loafer is highly blessed. I doubt whether the Roman citizen of the baser sort ever knew more pleasure in the costly circuses, which were planned at such vast expense for his recreation and debauching, than his British equivalent finds in the contemplation of a burst water-plug or a fractured wheel.

I have often talked this matter over with a friend of mine who is a staunch believer in progress after the modern fashion (Progress spelt with a large P), and he always tells me that my analysis of the working man's motives, as he sadly takes his wistful pleasure, is altogether incorrect. "The fact of the matter is," he says, "you are a loafer yourself, and you fancy that every man who stops to take an intelligent survey of any little unusual circumstance he may encounter must of necessity be such another. You yourself enjoy the spectacle of a piano being taken out of one house, or a spring mattress being slung into the second-floor window of another just as much as any street boy, but you are ashamed to stop. Your respectability gives you a warning prod, so you glance at the operation out of the corner of your eye, and slink off unwilling. You are not paying a shilling school-rate for nothing. The people you condescendingly speak of as the lower classes are becoming intensely curious. Every man, in short, is his own Socrates, and goes about asking the most embarrassing questions, chiefly—Heaven be thanked!—to his own understanding. What you take for dull vacuity is nothing else than a keen desire to fathom the hidden source of things. The man who stirs your bile so deeply, because he stops to look at a fellow-workman cleaning a house agent's bill off a window, is possibly an upholsterer's man, speculating as to the consistency of the particular paste used to affix the bill above-mentioned, and saying

to himself that had his own particular composition been used the bill would have taken half the time to remove, or might even have fallen off by itself. The sight of a burst water-plug probably recalls to the watching artisan those hours of his school-time which were devoted to the study of hydrostatics. This listlessness you grumble at in such churlish fashion is not listlessness at all. It is simply the legitimate outcome of the Policy of the Board."

I have the highest opinion of my friend's powers of discernment, but his theory is to me a stumbling-block. I venture to hint to him that the tendency I have been criticising is no new thing; that I remember it years before there was a Board to have a Policy: but he cuts me short by saying that he declines to accept any comparisons between then and now, made by a person of my notorious inaccuracy of thought. So I drop the subject. I should like to point out to him, however, that a vast number of his seekers never apparently move a single step forward to the goal. How is it that a fallen cab horse presents such an insoluble difficulty! Yesterday, in Cheapside, I saw a hundred people standing round a horse which had fallen; and as horses are falling about everywhere, and all day long, there could have been no striking novelty in the spectacle. Round about were old men, who must have been considering the caducity of cab horses for fifty years and more; men of middle life; young men; and boys; and the veterans were just as much fascinated by the sight as the ten years old, and just as far, apparently, from any apprehension of the cause of the calamity. Hence it seems to me that the working man has not yet found out the right channel whereby to approach the elucidation of the mystery, or that the mystery itself is elusive beyond the human powers of grasping, or that my friend's theory is all moonshine.

Of course I am fully persuaded in my own mind that the last-named view is the correct one. The crowds, whose gathering together has moved me to sit down to denounce and moralise, are made up of idle loafers and nothing else. The opportunity of dawdling away half-an-hour or so of time—all the more delightful if the time be paid for—and the desire for some change, let it be ever so trivial and senseless, are the main motives which arrest their steps and block the pavement. To say that they ever think about the cause of the manifestation they gape at is an insult to

reason. How many of them would be wise enough to contradict me, if I were to descend into the street and say that cause follows effect? My friend, to whom I have before alluded, would say that this is mere priggishness, and that these people are Nature's logicians, who have been reasoning all their lives without knowing anything of the form of the syllogism.

As I write these words the Railway Parcels cart drives up to the door opposite, and the young man in charge delivers over to Mary, who answers the door, a neat box—containing, according to a private theory of mine, butter, and eggs, and fowls, from Norfolk or Devonshire. Though I have witnessed this weekly event for more than a twelvemonth, I rise from my table and go to the window to see it once more. The young man is evidently a bit of a wag, for Mary smiles and blushes as she rather leisurely closes the door. Perhaps he is telling her that he wishes the box came twice instead of once a week; perhaps he is bolder, and declares his belief that the eggs, and the butter, and the chickens inside the box are not half so fresh and so tender as she herself.

Suddenly, as I watch this street-door idyll, a light breaks in upon me, and I am conscious of a certain proverb about people who live in glass houses. What if there should be a particle of truth in that rather brutal remark of my friend's, that I am a loafer in will, though not perhaps in deed when the world is looking on? It really seems very much as if he had gauged aright the weakness of my nature, seeing that I am always ready to saunter to the window and waste my time when I am safe from the pressure of public opinion, in watching household details over the way, and framing frivolous theories thereanent just as egregiously as the baker's man and the butcher's boy do, without sense of shame, in contemplating the fallen cab horse or the ignited kitchen chimney.

MORAY AND HIS THIRTY.

March, 1313.

LONG as the fair old City stands, the glory of the North;
Long as "King Arthur's Seat" o'erlooks the flashing of the Forth;
Long as o'er lovely Edinbro', queens high her castled hold,
Of Moray and his Thirty shall the gallant tale be told.
St. Andrew's Cross was gleaming from many a taken wall,
As Highland isle, and Lowland glen, rose to the Bruce's call;
But from Stirling and from Edinbro', in firm defiance still,
The English Lion flaunted free, and told her Sovereign

Cold in his noble abbey, lay He whose sun had set
In clouds of stormy presage, the great Plantagenet:
Mid favourites and fooleries, the weakly sapling lost

All that the mighty oak had won—won at such bitter cost.

But still King Edward's standard from the Castle floated gay,

And still the rock impregnable held Bruce's best at bay,

To loyal threat and loyal strength, laughed frank defiance down,

Where Moray's baffled legions camped about the subject town.

A soldier sought the warrior Earl, whose ready ear and wit

Caught every rumour as it flew, and took the heart from it;

"I have scaled the rock full oft," he said, "in boyish fears despite;

Who is there, that for Bruce's sake, will try my path to-night?"

"Oh ay, the road is perilous, craves wary grasp and tread,

And once a sentinel look down, by Mary, we were sped!

But the moon is at her birth I wot, the clouds heap in the west,

To dare and die—to dare and win—for Scotland, which were best?"

"Right art thou," fiery Moray said, and to his soldiers spoke,

And, as they heard, an eager cry from every squadron broke;

Full many a stalwart trooper felt crossed hope was hard to bear,

As Randolph chose his Thirty, from the host of heroes there.

The moon hung dim and haloed above the tossing Firth,

The wind swept with a muffled moan across the frost-bound earth;

And from the driving wrack of clouds the light gleamed faint and far,

As, in black robes, the Thirty met round Moray's silver star.

High up in Edinbro' Castle, secure the English slept;

Their dreary rounds the sentinels in careful order stept.

And creeping, struggling upwards, nerves, sinews, all astrain,

Clomb Randolph and his Thirty, their glorious prize to gain.

"Below there, ho! I see you," a soldier cried in jest;

I trow the throbbing pulses froze in every warrior breast;

Yet, nor stir nor cry betokened their deadly peril, when

The loosened crag came bounding down, 'mid Moray and his men.

Then rose the cry of wild surprise, of desperate darkling fight,

As, like ghosts! the bold invaders sprung upon that guarded height;

Brief was the furious struggle, as, startled from their rest,

Unarmed, amazed, the English met each fierce, unbidden guest.

And when the lingering morning broke upon the Castle Rock,

The ruddy Lion ramped no more, the Scottish breeze to mock;

And when King Robert to his feast bid the captains of his host,

"To Moray and his Thirty," he pledged the crown—
ing toast.

NEXT OF KIN.

A STORY IN THREE CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER I.

"WANTED, NEXT OF KIN.—If Josiah Brown, son of John and Patience Brown, late of 18, Wells Street, Carchester, or his direct heirs, will apply to Messrs. Snaggs and Taip, Gray's Inn, he or they will hear of something to their advantage. The above-mentioned Josiah Brown left Carchester for Melbourne in May, 1817, and has not since communicated with his family."

This advertisement might have been read a few years ago, day after day for a considerable time in the second column of several London papers; but among all those who read it there was no one who made the necessary application to Messrs. Snaggs and Taip.

At last, since it seemed as if Josiah Brown must have passed beyond the need of worldly advantages, leaving no one behind him to represent his claims, Messrs. Snaggs and Taip wrote to their client, Mr. Peter Brown, of Carchester, advising him to withdraw the advertisement. However, Mr. Peter Brown's hopes of finding some trace of his long-lost brother had been too sanguine to die easily, so he instructed his lawyers that the advertisement should still continue to appear from time to time, and decided that the will he had made in favour of Josiah or Josiah's heirs, should remain for the present unaltered.

"It's awfully queer," said the clerk, who read and replied to the letter in Peter's cramped, illiterate hand. "It's awfully queer that an old fellow like that should have saved nearly £10,000, and queerer still that he should have no one to leave it to."

For Peter Brown was a man who had grown old and grey-headed, then older and white-headed, and then older still, and had covered the nakedness of his bald pate with a square black cloth skull-cap, in a walk of life, where men—as a rule—do not amass fortunes, or at least where fortunes are called by the humbler name of savings. Some men, however, are born with the financial instinct, though circumstances give them no chance of becoming Chancellors of the Exchequer or leaders on 'Change.

Peter Brown was one of these. No one—not even himself—ever fancied he had talents of any sort. He called himself a "careful man"—"a man who took care of

the pence, and let the pounds take care of themselves." His neighbours looked upon his thrift as miserliness, and were wont to say that "he must have lots laid by, for he was uncommon near."

His father had done some saving before him, having been butler and confidential servant for nearly half a century in the family of a long bygone Dean of Carchester. There were two brothers who should have divided this little inheritance, but Peter succeeded to it all, for Josiah, the elder son—a sad scapegrace—had run away to the gold-fields, and had never sent home tale or tidings of himself to his broken-hearted parents.

Peter, having come into his patrimony, might have retired and lived independently in a very modest way; but he was a constant-minded man, and had no desire to leave that state of life in which Providence, by the interest of his father's master, the Dean, had placed him. This state of life was the combined office of clerk and verger to the Cathedral of Carchester. What his place was worth—I mean what he received from the treasurer of the Dean and Chapter, I will not divulge. It was a mere pittance.

However, when, after his father's funeral, one of the Cathedral magnates said to him very graciously: "I suppose you will be leaving us now, Brown, to do something a little better for yourself,"

Peter answered respectfully: "Well, sir, if the Dean and Chapter see no reason for dismissing me, I should prefer to remain as I am."

"Then, no doubt," returned the magnate, still more graciously, "no doubt you will remain."

Which Peter did. And the years sped on, setting their seal silently on all things: on the trees in the Close; on the graves in the churchyard; on the stalwart walls of the Cathedral. The years sped and fled: they carried away Bishops; they developed Deans into Bishops; they turned choir-boys into choir-men; they swept choir-men out of their stalls; but they didn't sweep Peter away. They only added to the sum of his experience until it stood at a total of five decades and a half, and they added as well to his few hundreds in the bank, until at last he had that large sum at his disposal which so greatly astonished the clerk of Messrs. Snaggs and Taip.

How did he come by his money? It was a question of shrewdness. Very early in his verger career he had learnt to dis-

tinguish at a glance between those sight-seers who meant to heed the Dean's printed request that no gratuity might be offered to the Cathedral attendants, and those who meant not to heed it. Further, he could tell to a nicety whether an advancing squad of tourists was a half-crown, a shilling, or a sixpenny party; he was wonderfully skilful in securing the former for himself, and leaving the latter to his co-vergers, whom he called his "colleaguys." Didn't he know too, to a nicety, which lady or gentleman would "tip" him for a comfortable seat at service time? This was why you saw him handing some worshippers to their places with such marked politeness, while others adjusted themselves according as the proportion of assurance allowed them. Then there were the great days at the Cathedral, choir festivals, famous preachers, and so forth; these yielded him a rich harvest, especially after he had reached the patriarchal age.

The old verger, it is needless to say, made a confidant of nobody; nevertheless, there is good ground for asserting that it was a poor day at the Cathedral which did not bring him a sovereign's worth of loose silver, and that he would not have farmed one of the "special" occasions for less than five guineas; while as to his Christmas-boxes—well, the sum total would have gladdened the heart of any struggling father of a family. And yet Peter was so old, so odd, and, above all, so ready to receive, that you would as soon have thought of the stone effigy on the founder's tomb amassing wealth, as of the ancient verger growing rich. It was a fact, notwithstanding appearances; for the money so shrewdly gathered in had been just as shrewdly invested in infant colliery shares, which had yielded cent. per cent.; in railways, whose rails seemed overlaid with gold; and in mines, which had actually been found worth, and more than worth, working.

When Peter Brown, already old and nearly decrepit, was left a childless widower, he grew more thrifty than ever he had been, in spite of the sad conviction which was growing upon him that his thrift would benefit no one he cared for.

Every life has its pathos, though one does not naturally connect pathetic ideas with a little, spare, bent figure in a grotesque black gown, who carries a verger's mace in his shrivelled hand, as he heads the procession of clergy or conducts the reader to the lectern. It was an

aching weariness in this old man's life to feel that his well-hoarded money would gladden and warm no kindred of his own; and when he heard read from the Cathedral lectern Abraham's lament that his servant should be the heir of his substance, a thrill of sympathy shivered round his heart, and stealing upwards made his failing eyesight a shade dimmer for a few seconds. But another page of the massive Cathedral Bible threw another light upon the question. One day the Dean was reading in sonorous tones the most glorious tale of homeward-bound repentance to which the world has ever listened. The well-known words came to Peter with a new meaning. "Lost and was found," he thought; and he suddenly fell into such a fit of musing that for fully thirty seconds after the words, "Here endeth the Second Lesson," he forgot that the Dean was awaiting his escort back to his stall.

The result of that brown study was Peter's advertisement for another long-lost prodigal—his only brother. But day after day the post came in and brought no answer to it; and day after day the old man's feverish anxiety increased, till, at last, when his hope of finding his relatives had grown very faint, a new interest came to him, so that he gradually grew less peevishly eager for the postman's knock, and less bitterly disappointed when no knock came.

CHAPTER II.

ONE day, after morning service in the Cathedral, Peter was sitting in his accustomed place in the south aisle, waiting for sight-seers, or for a gossip with anyone so disposed—all the Cathedral dignitaries, from the newest Vicar Choral to the Dean himself, would stop and chat with Peter—when his attention was arrested by a young lady who carried a paint-box and an easel, and who came to settle herself to work on the long perspective of the aisle in which he sat.

Peter's unerring instinct in such matters told him at once that this artist was not in a position to lavish half-crowns, or any other current coin of the realm, in return for small and interested acts of politeness, yet something about her so caught his fancy that he watched her with interest and curiosity.

She was a plainly-dressed girl of two or three and twenty, not very tall, and not very short, but lithe and shapely. A pair of merry grey eyes and an earnest, resolute

mouth gave a great power of expression to an intelligent face, which she bent anxiously over her easel as she grappled with the intricacies of her subject.

Peter sat contentedly watching her as if he had nothing else in the world to do.

At last she drew back to take a final inspection of her drawing, and then, with a long breath of satisfaction, opened her paint-box and took out her palette. She was so intent on mixing a tender grey for the pearly shadows which nestled under the fretted roof and between the stately pillars that she did not notice Peter (who had risen and come forward) until he said :

"Won't you have this chair, Miss? It's more comfortable than that stool with no back."

The girl looked up into the old man's face with such a genial smile that her conquest of him was complete, and he thought of no other gratuity.

"How very kind of you!" she said. "Certainly I shall prefer the chair, especially as you have been so thoughtful for me."

"It's a fine bit you've chosen," Peter went on, as if he wished to make conversation.

"Yes, very fine," she replied; "one of the finest bits of the whole interior."

"A mighty hard bit to put in a picter, I should say, though I never tried drawing it myself," went on the verger.

The girl smiled.

"It is not very easy or simple," she said. "The number of lines confuse the eye."

"I suppose so," said Peter, condescendingly, "but you're doing it very well, as far as you've gone, and I hope you won't take it amiss if I make so bold as to say so."

"Not in the least. I daresay you have seen so many sketches made here that you are quite a judge of what is good and what is not."

"I can't deny that," answered Peter, with an assumption of modesty which implied unlimited self-confidence. "It's easy enough to tell a good likeness from a bad one, and if ladies and gentlemen come here to take what you may call likenesses of the place, you've only got to look over their shoulders to see if they've hit it off. For what do you ask of a likeness but that it shall be a likeness? That's what I say."

"Very true," replied the artist. "I see you have thought the matter out."

"And so I have, Miss—and so I have.

Many a time I could find it in my heart to say to a lady or gentleman who sits here drawing for hours, 'You won't get a picture out of your paint-box, because you haven't got the right notion in your head. You'd better by far go away, and get something else to do. You're wasting time and wasting paper. You'll have nothing to show for it.' Dear heart! how it would go against my grain to come to the end of a day, and have nothing to show for it but a mess of a picture that no one would look at twice."

"I am not sure I can agree with you in all that," rejoined the lady. "You mustn't forget that everyone has to do a thing badly before he can do it well, and that every time one tries one is a little wiser."

"Umph!" said Peter; "I think it would be wisest of all to leave painting to them as is gifted to do it—which is a good bit more than laying on blues and yellors, and holding a lot of things in your left hand, while you have a brush in your right. Now anyone can see with half an eye that you know how to do it properly. The way your brush flits in and out among your bits of paints, as if it was alive—that's enough for me. La! you've only got to look how they mix up their paints, you'll know where the likenesses will be good and where otherwise."

The girl was smiling quietly at her quaint companion's strictures on amateur failures and artistic ability when he brought them to an abrupt conclusion; for, through the south door a party of sight-seers was entering—a solvent, profitable-looking party, who could not be relegated to any of the "colleagues." So off went Peter at a swift trot, to make sure of his quarry, and to add another mite to the treasure for which he had found no inheritor, and which he could keep so little longer.

The girl at the easel looked after him for a moment, and then returned to her work on the bands of sunshine that fell through the tall mullioned windows, and made tremulous lights on the solid pillars down the long length of narrowing arches, while her thoughts wandered whenever they dare quit her palette and brushes, to a quiet, plainly-furnished room, in a very unfashionable part of the city, where a dear, pale face was awaiting her return to brighten up as a mother's face can brighten over the child she loves.

When Peter had done his duty by the party of sight-seers and pocketed their

handsome gratuity, he met one of the Honorary Canons with a learned archæologist from Oxford, and some ladies who wore blue spectacles. Peter was straightway introduced by the Canon to his friends as an antiquity that deserved inspection. A long conversation, in which the old man's reminiscences were almost uninterrupted by his listeners, came to a most satisfactory conclusion, and he then returned to the south aisle, in hopes that the pleasant young lady would still be there. But she and her easel were gone, and the Cathedral clock presently striking one, he trotted off to eat his frugal dinner in his lonely, gloomy little house, on the north side of the Ladye Chapel enclosure.

The next morning, about the same time as he had seen her first, Peter's new acquaintance reappeared with her easel in the Cathedral. Peter was very soon aware of her presence, and leaving alike his mournful musing over that much looked-for letter which never came, and his eager expectation of paying clients, he came at once to station himself beside the busy painter.

"I suppose you have come to Carchester to make a few pictures?" he said timidly, when she had pleasantly returned his "good-morning."

If he had felt less curious about her he would have asked this and a dozen other questions, more or less impertinent, with perfect equanimity.

"Oh no!" answered the girl frankly. "I am not a bird of passage. I came to live in Carchester a few weeks ago."

"Ah!" returned Peter, "I thought you were quite a stranger. I never noticed you before yesterday, and I know every face that comes here anything like regular."

"No doubt you do. You have been verger here for a very long time, have you not?" she said, seeing that he was bent on another chat.

"Well," replied Peter, with the air of a man who recognises in himself an ancient and venerable landmark, "I've been verger and lay-clerk to this Cathedral ever since the days of Dean Ridley, and if you look at his brass tablet yonder in the transept, you'll see he died fifty-two years ago, come next January."

"Indeed!" said the artist, duly impressed. "That is a long time."

"It is a long time from your point of view, Missy," said Peter, "that is, with it all before you; but from my point of view it is but just something to think over in a lonely evening, when things that scarce

anyone but myself can remember come back plainer, and nearer, and clearer than the things which happened but a week ago."

The girl looked up at him in silence; he spoke plaintively, as if the thought of those lonely retrospections oppressed him. "Some day," so her thoughts shaped themselves, "I shall look back along my own life. My future will be all over, and reverie will be nothing but remembrance. How strange, and how impossible to realise!" Before she could think of an answer to the old man's half expressed appeal to her sympathy, he had changed his key.

"Why," he continued, "I can call to mind every parson that came here for Bishop Winter's enthronement; but every incumbency in this city has changed hands since then. I can remember further than that—back to the Thanksgiving Service after Waterloo; and I'm the only official left who was there that day. It was a grand day. There hasn't been such a day since. La! they couldn't manage things like that nowadays."

"Yes, yes," replied his listener; "you have seen a great many changes and a great many things and people in your time."

"I should think I have," he exclaimed. "Why, I sometimes think that if all the folks I have shown round this sacred edifice were to come in all at once, every corner would be crowded, and there'd be crowds that couldn't get in. But I'm getting old now—old and shaky. I'm like the last leaf on a bough, or the last twinkle of a fire. There's only a little time more for me to be in the Cathedral."

Once more the girl's eyes glanced up at the old man with a sympathy that would have been difficult for her to express in words; but he read it, and it reached his heart, for, with a slow head-shake he murmured: "God bless you! God bless your pretty, kind face!"

For a short time there was silence between this odd pair. The artist broke it by saying:

"If you have a few minutes more to spare, would you mind going and standing beside that second pillar? I should very much like to put you into my sketch. I meant to have asked you yesterday morning, but you went away too soon."

Peter had more than once posed for sketchers, which he called having his likeness done. He had always been hand-

somely remunerated for his services as a model, and had looked on his remuneration as money well earned; but, on this occasion, when the young lady told him she had finished, he pretended not to see her purse and outstretched hand, and, for the first time in his life perhaps, turned away from a "tip."

That afternoon, while Peter, with his curiosity respecting his fair unknown still unslaked, was fulfilling his duties about the vestries at service time, he heard one of the Minor Canons say to Rowdey, the big bass:

"I say, Rowdey, do you know that girl who was painting in the Cathedral to-day?"

"Oh yes," replied Rowdey, who knew all about everybody's business in Carchester. "Her name is Lake; she gives lessons in painting; she has a brother in the post-office here; and her mother, who is a widow, keeps house for them."

The Minor Canon, who was very aristocratic, said: "Ah, indeed," and dismissed the subject as having plebeian connections which counterbalanced its attractions; but Peter was much gratified by the crumb of information which had fallen to him. That evening, for the first time since the appearance of his advertisement three months before, he forgot to ask whether the post-man had passed his door before he went home to tea.

VICTIMS.

By THEO GIFT.

*Author of "Mr. Lorimer," "An Alibi and its Price,"
Etc., Etc.*

CHAPTER XIX. THE NET CLOSES.

THE errand on which the Count meanwhile had departed was an extremely unpleasant one, and detained him far longer than he had at all anticipated; right into the spring indeed. The steward who managed his property in the South for him had been murdered, and the crime was said to have been actuated by revenge, and to have been connected with the disappearance of a young girl—sister to the assassin—whose dead body, wasted almost beyond recognition, was found in the river which flowed at the bottom of the estate just six months after her flight, and only the day before the crime which rumour declared was in expiation of it. This was not all, however. The murderer was taken almost red-handed after the fact; and conveyed to prison; but popular opinion declared itself on his side from the first. All the other labourers on

the estate, the vineyard men, the miners, struck work; a desperate attempt to rescue the prisoner was made on his way to goal, and, this failing, the house of the murdered man was attacked, the furniture destroyed, the building set on fire, and the money and papers made off with.

A perfect shower of telegrams conveyed the news of these events, one after another, to the Count; and those who saw his face as he received them never forgot the almost livid look of rage, hate, and anxiety which distorted it. He had been going over to Les Châtaigniers that morning; but a mounted groom bore a note to M. St. Laurent instead, and within another hour the writer was in an express train and speeding on his way to the South.

Nor, being gone, was it easy for him to come back again. The country was in a disturbed state that winter. Bread was dear and wages low. Men were striking everywhere, forming into threatening bands, and ready to break out into tumult and destruction at a word. In the Landes matters were worse than elsewhere; and, even apart from the loss of his steward, who was an old and valued servant, the Count might have found it necessary to contribute the weight of his presence to the maintenance of order and security on the property where he was at once feared and disliked. Naturally, too, the sudden manner of his agent's death, and the destruction, or disappearance, of most of the latter's registers and accounts, threw an immensity of work upon him; but, in addition to all this, there were found unkind people who said that M. le Comte did not dare to return to Finistère till his steward's murderer had been brought to justice, and the papers which had disappeared on the night of the riot proved to have been burnt, or restored to his hands. It was whispered that the relations between the murdered man and his master had not been confined to business only, but had embraced matters of a more delicate and confidential nature; and that if certain of the Count's private letters had chanced to fall into the hands of an enemy vindictive enough to make them over to the "avocat" for the defence, the result might be a scandal undesirable and disagreeable in the highest degree.

Little enough of this gossip filtered, however, to the quiet nook on the coast of Brittany, where the young girl whom de Mally had so long before marked down for his wife was growing up for him under

her parents' roof. She, indeed, would have been the last in any case to hear a syllable of it; and if any faint rumours reached M. St. Laurent he shut his ears against them, and took care not to repeat them to his wife. After all, as he would have said, few men have not had some irregularities in their lives, written some letters which they would prefer to see in their own pocket rather than give them to the world; and the Count's proposed marriage was in itself the best proof that he had done with youthful follies, and was prepared to "ranger" himself as decorously as his friend had done. Monsieur therefore cursed the rioters as heartily as the Count himself could have done, and wrote the latter a letter full of warm sympathy and condolence, mingled with regrets for his absence; and meanwhile the absence continued, for the papers were not forthcoming; and the trial of the assassin dragged on as only French trials do drag, with one delay after another, till it seemed likely that Vera's hopes would be fulfilled, and her twenty-first birthday attained, without bringing back the object of her dread and dislike to share it with her.

He did not suffer himself to be forgotten, however. He wrote, not indeed to Vera, but to her father, and was always sending special messages to the former, to which M. St. Laurent replied in whatever terms he considered most befitting a young lady in his daughter's position, without even troubling himself to consult her on the subject. Game from the Count's preserves, forced vegetables and hot-house fruit, were also sent from Maily to Les Châtaigniers; and, on New Year's Day, Vera received a package containing a lovely ivory and silver casket full of dainty preserved fruits and bonbons, and accompanied by a flowery little note deploring the sender's inability to pay in person the visit customary on that day, and trusting that his little "étrenne" would be honoured by acceptance at the hands of the too charming young lady, whose faithful and devoted servant he begged to subscribe himself.

It was the first letter from any man, save Marstland, that Vera had ever received, and at first the mere sight of it startled her as much as though the writer had suddenly stretched out a hand from the distant department where she had been thinking of him as safely established for an indefinite period, and had laid it in an iron clutch on her shoulder, in reminder of the claim which she had foolishly hoped

he might still be persuaded to abandon. But when she came to read it, the very contrast between it and those oft-read epistles from her English lover, its inflated style, stilted compliments, and Gallic formalities, reassured her a little. If Marstland's letters were those of a man truly and passionately in love with her, as Vera felt exultingly confident they were, this, so utterly different in every way, could not be written by a man who was in love at all; nay, rather was the work of a man who had already repented of a foolish fancy for a little girl utterly unsuited to him, and was therefore the more anxious to show her all formal and customary courtesies by way of atonement. And, after all, most men called on their lady friends on New Year's Day and brought them bonbons. No girl need think anything of that.

But with all this special pleading—and there is no advocate so eloquent and persuasive as one who is trying to convince, not another, but himself—the incident of the casket, in connection with that horrible diamond ring upstairs, had left an uneasy effect on her mind, very disturbing to the artificial tranquillity she had been so laboriously cultivating; and though she would not touch or taste the unwelcome offering, but left it lying on the drawing-room table till the luscious bonbons were all spoilt, and made her note of thanks as prim, formal, and non-committing as it was possible to be, the fact of having to write at all was so intensely repugnant that but for sheer cowardice, and the fear of enraging her father, she would certainly have abstained from doing so.

"And what would have been the use, save to offend M. le Comte?" Bénéite said when the anecdote was told to her, "and, believe me, Mademoiselle, that is not well. The Seigneur, see you, is a man of gallantry. He thinks. He remembers himself of these little attentions to those whom he favours, but if one is unfortunate enough to anger him, it is no light matter. And it avails nothing either. Mademoiselle knows, without doubt, the motto of the de Maily family which is even written up over the château gates, "Vouloir c'est pouvoir, Maily le dict;" and the blessed saints know it is true, for who ever heard of the Count, or his father before him, being balked of anything they had set their minds on? No one! All the world can say so."

Poor Vera's heart sank. Between her father and the Count she felt like a little

grain of wheat between two slow revolving mill-stones. A little sooner, a little later, what did it matter if the crushing must come at last! But in the same moment the vision of Marstrand came back to her; the brave confidence in his eyes, the deep, cheery tones of his voice as he said: "My acquaintance with you, Vera, will last as long as our two lives. If you love me as you say you do no one living can separate us. It is but waiting a little, and all will be well with us in the end." And did she not love him? Was she not as willing to wait as when he said those words, holding her in his arms, in a clasp so strong and tender, that it seemed as if no human power could have torn her from them? Her tranquillity returned after a little while, and she was able to laugh at her own folly in having allowed it to be shaken by such a trifle.

Probably her mother was of more assistance to her in maintaining it, than either she or the good lady herself at all imagined. Owing to the necessity for his sudden departure following so immediately on his proposal, and the inability to fix any date for his return, the Count had himself suggested that the engagement had better not be made public until he was back again; but some rumours of it had got about—these things will—and certain of the polite French families from neighbouring châteaux, and one or two of those migratory English who always make their home near Quimper, and who, by reason of their being generally of extremely aristocratic birth, small means, and endowed with an insatiate appetite for finding out everything about their neighbours, Madame had always kept at greater arm's length than any others. Vera escaped these visits. A dread that they might be called forth by the Count's admiration for her, that she might be supposed to reciprocate it, made her choose to slip off to her poor pensioners as soon as carriage wheels were heard in the distance; but even her absence was not more efficacious in damping the cordiality of the good people in the neighbourhood than Madame St. Laurent's frigidity and hesitations, and her air of being at once unwilling to accept or refuse their felicitations, or answer their questions. They went away with a pretty general belief that there was no engagement after all, and that if there had been any talk of one it had either been exaggerated by the St. Laurents' aspirations, or had suffered some hitch in its progress.

It was very odd the Count being away so long, and was there not some whisper of a scandal? After all, "la petite Vera" was very young, and strictly brought up, and her mother was said to be "pieuse" as a nun. Perhaps M. St. Laurent had made difficulties, though indeed that was hardly likely, for was it not generally known that de Mailly held Les Châtaigniers in the hollow of his hand, and that its owner owed everything to him? To offer his daughter's hand in payment was a small thing, and it was more probable that the difficulties were on the Count's side.

Fortunately for Vera she heard none of these chatterings; but Madame St. Laurent's manner deceived her also, by helping to foster that consoling belief of hers that her mother sympathised with her in secret, and would be far from sorry if the marriage under discussion never took place.

As a matter of fact they were all wrong, and poor Madame's unfortunate manner, of which her neighbours made so much, meant nothing whatever but her own natural awkwardness and want of ease; her ignorance of the right thing to say, and her nervous inability to say it, her morbid suspicion lest people might be satirising her, or thinking her daughter over-honoured by the Count's choice; and her secret, unacknowledged, but undying dislike to the idea of giving up the girl to anyone, or allowing outsiders even so much right as that implied by congratulations over her.

She was not troubled with many repetitions of them; and matters went on for a time as tranquilly as if the Count had never existed until—

"Vera," said Joanna, coming into the girl's room one cold day in February, "there are visitors for you in the drawing-room, and your ma's sent for you. Lor! child, how froze you look up here! Why don't you sit down in the work-room where there's a fire, with your ma and me! But come, brush up your hair and make yourself look smart, for these young ladies are as fine as peacocks, and have come all the way from Quimper to see you."

"Young ladies!" Vera repeated blankly, the shawl which was gathered round her shoulders falling from her as she stood up.

"Ay, you used to be glad enough to see them once, and I've known you to cry for an hour because you wasn't allowed to

spend the day with 'em. It's the Mamzelles de Mailly."

"De Mailly! Eulalie and Alphonsine here?" Vera exclaimed, with a flush of genuine girlish pleasure lighting her pale face; but next moment it died away as recollection suggested as with a sudden stab why they had come, and though she dared not refuse to go down, her hands trembled so much that Joanna had to take the brush out of them and perform her toilet for her. It did not grieve her that the result was not ornamental. She would rather have looked ugly, dowdy, anything, save the well-pleased object of a rich nobleman's admiration, receiving a complimentary visit from his sisters.

Those two young ladies, however, who were waiting in the drawing-room for her, were far too well-bred to give any sign of what their thoughts were—if they had any—on the subject of their old friend's appearance. They sprang up and greeted her with effusion, kissing her on both cheeks, calling her "chère petite Vera," and continuing to hold her hand in a cordial clasp after their embraces, until Vera felt quite overwhelmed. In truth, this flow of pretty speeches, this vehement affection, these eager, high-pitched Parisian voices, both prattling at once, fairly confused her, and, though she returned the kisses of her quondam friends, she looked pitifully pale and shy, and scarcely answered above a whisper, or by more than "yes" or "no" to their civilities. How, indeed, could she help it? How was it possible to be frank and natural under the circumstances, and more especially with her mother sitting there watching every word, and wearing that nervous, slightly displeasing air which always had such a depressing effect on her daughter?

Whether it was similarly unpleasant to the visitors did not appear. Eulalie, who of old had found such difficulty in examining into her conscience, and who had grown into a very pretty animated girl of two or three-and-twenty; and Alphonsine, who, though only a year older, had a decided air of seniority and was graver and gentler in her manner; were both as agreeable and caressing as it was possible to be, and as if they were receiving the most charming of welcomes. They explained that their visit to Quimper was undertaken partly because Alphonsine, who was to take the white veil at Easter, would not have another opportunity of bidding an adieu to an aunt whom she dearly loved, and who was the

abbess of a convent there; and partly that they might avail themselves of the chance of renewing their friendship with their old playfellow and future sister (Vera started violently and flushed crimson, directing an imploring glance at her mother) and conveying to her all manner of charming messages from their mother, who looked forward to seeing her and Madame in Paris during the spring. Madame had not seen her daughter's mute appeal. Indeed, she had carefully avoided looking at her; but the mention of Paris recalled all her own painful experiences there, and that never-forgiven interference of the Countess de Mailly, which had led, as she believed, to her never seeing her parents again, and to the loss of her first child, and she answered in her coldest manner, observing that she did not know, she was sure. M. St. Laurent and she had certainly given their consent to the Count's proposals; but, owing to his enforced departure for the South, nothing definite had been settled: certainly no date for—for anything; and indeed her daughter was not in any hurry to leave home, and had hardly had time as yet to realise the compliment which the Count had paid her. The de Mailly girls lifted eyebrows of mildly despairing enquiry at one another. With all their tact and quickness they did not in the least know how to understand this chilly, hesitating reply to their own gracious civilities, or in what way to answer it, except by deploring their brother's misfortune in being detained in the Landes so long, and expressing a hope that he would soon be set at liberty, and the assassin of his faithful servant brought to justice.

It was a relief to everyone when Gervais brought in a tray with cake, wine, and other refreshments for the young ladies after their long drive and journey by train; though even then Eulalie nearly affronted Madame's easily-ruffled susceptibilities by exclaiming:

"But, Madame, you, who are English, ought not to give us wine now. You should have a 'five o'clock.' In Paris, we are all mad on the 'five o'clock.' Everyone of ton has them, and, for me, I adore them. Indeed, I adore everything English; and I would have them à la mode de Londres, that is to say, with the tea only; but mamma says 'No, she must have 'sirops,' and wine too for those who prefer. Is it possible that you have not begun 'five-o'clocks' here? Of course in Brittany everything is most frightfully old-

fashioned ; but you who have the happiness to be English, you ought to condescend and set the mode to our poor provincials."

They went away at last ; but with the proviso that Vera might be allowed to spend the following day with them at the convent, and make the acquaintance of their aunt, for whom they said their brother Raoul had a great respect.

Once again Vera looked entreatingly at her mother. With all her heart she hoped the latter would not agree to a request, the refusal of which had been one of the sorest disappointments of her childhood ; and indeed Madame was already preparing to decline, partly out of long habit, partly because her rheumatism did not allow her to go out herself, and it did not occur to her to even dream of permitting her daughter to venture within the walls of a nunnery without her ; but M. St. Laurent had come in by this time, overflowing with ponderous cordiality, compliments, and gratification at the attention paid them, and the question was taken out of her hands. He declared that Vera would be charmed, delighted. The child had been yearning all the autumn for a "causerie intime" with the friends she so tenderly loved. The invitation was accepted without demur.

And Joanna was deputed to accompany the young lady. Madame St. Laurent was determined that the latter should not go except under the protection next best to her own ; but neither would she listen to one word from Vera, when the girl, startled and frightened out of all her self-deceiving tranquillity by the frank assumption on the part of the de Maily sisters that she was engaged to their brother, tried in vain to get a hearing from her. Madame kept persistently out of her way, or at her husband's side, for the rest of the evening ; sent her to bed early under pretext that she looked pale and had a tiring day before her on the morrow ; and sent down word in the morning that she herself was confined to her room with a bad headache, and must not be disturbed until it was time to bid her daughter good-bye.

Vera gave up the attempt to speak to her then. Indeed, she knew it would be no use, for the carriage was at the door, and her father fidgeting about in the hall waiting for her descent. He put her into the cumbrous, old-fashioned vehicle himself, and dismissed her with a harshly-toned injunction not to show herself as awkward and formal as she had done yesterday. It

would be the lasting disgrace of the family and a thing he would never forgive, if she were to say or do anything to offend de Maily's sisters.

Vera had no intention of doing so ; but a fresh hope had come into her poor little troubled mind, a scarcely-formulated plan, which almost reconciled her to the excursion, and kept her silent and absorbed throughout the journey. She had remembered that in their childhood Eulalie and Alphonsine had not been remarkably fond of their step-brother ; that they had regarded him with more of fear than affection ; and, perhaps, if they were to find out that she shared their feelings now, that the marriage they talked of was being forced on her, they might sympathise, nay, even uphold her in standing out against it. It was all very well for Catharine to talk of the "bazvalan," and quote Breton betrothals in her class ; but she was only a peasant after all, and Vera remembered that Mr. Burt had once said in her hearing that, among the Breton peasantry, women were regarded as very little more than domestic slaves and beasts of burden. It was not likely that the Demoiselles de Maily had their marriages arranged for them in the same arbitrary manner ; and at any rate it would be worth while to sound them to find out.

The convent stood a little back from the pavement of one of the older, narrow streets not far from the Cathedral, and was shut off from the former by a high wall and a gateway, with a "grille" in it. At the back there were pleasant sunny gardens sloping down to the river, from which they were only divided by a wall covered with ivy and creepers ; but in front, the ancient building, built of blackened stone, crusted with lichens, with small, barred windows and overhanging roof, had a gloomy aspect, and Vera shivered a little and crept closer to Joanna, as the lay sister who admitted them, led them across a stone paved courtyard and thence along a stone-paved corridor to the visitors' parlour, a grimly-bare apartment with white-washed walls hung with half-a-dozen sacred pictures, a polished floor, and no other furniture than a long, mahogany table, a double row of chairs with horse-hair seats, and a small altar at one end with a statue of the Virgin on it. Joanna patted her foot suspiciously on the floor.

"It feels solid enough," she observed ; "but I have heard of trap-doors in 'em, to let people through ; and, upon my word,

Vera, I scarcely like leaving you here, even for an hour, though I can't possibly get through your ma's commissions in less."

The entrance of the *Demoiselles de Mailly* prevented Vera from answering. They came in with a rush and rustle, looking more charming than ever—Alphonsine in flowing black, with a large ivory cross round her neck, which gave her something of a conventual appearance; and Eulalie, in the daintiest of flowered "peignoirs," their hands outstretched, and their voices going before them in a cheerful duet of welcome. Vera was taken possession of at once, kissed, and embraced, told that the "mère supérieure" was too occupied to receive her at that moment—"She is so busy, occupied always up to there!" Eulalie said, touching her brow with one pretty finger—and carried off to the young ladies' own apartments to be relieved of her wraps, and treated to a cup of chocolate brought in on a little tray by a smiling sister, to refresh the young lady after her journey. Vera was glad of it; it helped her to get over the shyness which always kept her tongue-tied at first; but she was not prepared for Eulalie's lively exclamation as she lifted the cup to her lips.

"But, Vera, ma mie! where is your ring? Do you not wear it?"

Vera started, blushing guiltily.

"My ring! What—ring?" she asked almost in a whisper.

Eulalie laughed.

"What ring! Ah, what innocence! She does not know Raoul commissioned mamma to buy it, because he could not get one to satisfy him near *Château le Loup*. A ring which is the fellow to this, *mademoiselle* my sister that is to be," and she held up her left hand on which glittered a very large diamond ring, so like that one the very thought of which made Vera shudder that her eyes opened in bewilderment. Eulalie laughed still more.

"Ah! she stares; she thinks she is the only fiancée in the world! You do not know, then—Raoul has not told you—that I too am engaged? Selfish fellow, to be too much occupied with his own love affairs to have room to mention his poor little step-sister; and for all that Eustache is not unworthy of comparison with his lordship. He has not perhaps the dignity of my revered brother, but then—he is a little younger!"

"Eulalie, hush!" said her sister gently. "You will hurt Vera." But Vera had looked up with a quick light in her eyes.

"Oh, no, she will not!" she said earnestly. "Why should she? The Count is not young. To me, indeed, he seems quite old; as old nearly as papa."

"And yet you are in love with him!" said Eulalie with evident wonder. "But I suppose he makes himself very nice to you, as, to say truth, Eustache does by me. Ah, you must see his photograph! Not that it flatters him—Alphonsine will tell you it does not, that—"

"That nothing could flatter the *Vicomte de la Ferronnays*!" said Alphonsine, smiling indulgently at her sister. "Vera, this child is off her head! She even chatters to the good sisters here of her Eustache till the *mère supérieure* says: 'talk of him less, that you may pray for him more, little one.'"

Vera's eyes turned wistfully to the blushing Eulalie. She felt a sudden, intense envy for her.

"Then you—you love the gentleman you are engaged to?" she said eagerly. "He is your own choice, and your mamma consented to it!"

Eulalie threw up both her hands with a playfully shocked gesture.

"My choice! *Petite sœur*, what do you take me for? Is it that I would dream of paying such a compliment to a man? No, no! We met him at the baths—he is a lieutenant in the *Chasseurs*, and wears the loveliest uniform—I danced with him. He came to our five-o'clocks. Alphonsine there and other people teased me about him; but I—I never thought of anything until the day when mamma called me into her boudoir, and said: 'Eulalie, my child, who do you think has been here to-day? The Countess de la Ferronnays.' 'Yes, mamma?' said I, calmly. 'Yes, my child,' said mamma, 'and on an errand which concerns you. It seems that the *Vicomte*, her grandson, has communicated to her the fact that he has become attached to you. She was kind enough not to be displeased at the news, as she has a great respect for our family. So she came to me to ascertain what were my views on the subject. At first I hesitated. With Alphonsine so soon about to leave us, I could scarcely bring myself to give away my only remaining daughter. But, my child, mothers must not be selfish. You are twenty-two; it is time for you to marry, and Eustache is amiable. He is a youth of excellent dispositions, and the idol of his grandmother. I have given my consent, and you—what do you say?'"

"Yes, what—what did you say?" Vera asked, her lips trembling with eagerness. Eulalie blushed and looked demure.

"I said, 'Mamma, I will obey you in everything; but don't ask me to leave you. I love you better than any one in the world.' All the same, when I found she was invincibly determined to make me over to that impertinent there, I rushed away and consoled my wounded and outraged feelings by—whisper, Vera" (bringing her saucy face nearer) "by pirouetting three times round my room. Alphonsine saw me. It is useless to deny it. And you, petite amie, have you also consoled yourself?"

Vera looked at her piteously. She could see the other girl's eyes shining with innocent love and delight barely masked in fun; but the story sounded so like her own (minus the Marstrand episode) that she felt instinctively that it would not do to refer to that, or appeal to her friend's sympathy. She answered with perfect literalness, "No, I am not consoled. They—my parents decided it like yours; but they did not ask me what I would like, and I—it is not easy for me to like what is so different from anything I have ever thought of, even though I know it is of course too good for me," she added humbly.

Alphonsine looked at her with some curiosity. That the marriage of the St. Laurents' little daughter with their brother was one of "convenience" on the former side they had taken for granted; but considering that Vera had always been a pet of the Count's, that he was regarded as a very gallant man, and that all the solid advantages would be on her side, it had not occurred to them to suspect her of any repugnance to the scheme; and her extreme pallor and the unshed tears glimmering in her large, mournful eyes fairly awed them.

"Is it then that you dislike Raoul?" Eulalie exclaimed, "or" (as Vera, terrified by the sound of the blunt question, began a stammering negative) "that you have a vocation like Alphonsine? But no! I remember myself, you are a Protestant."

"That has nothing to say to it," said Alphonsine gravely. "One may have a vocation, one may be drawn to the truth, without knowing anything of it; and, indeed, Vera looks to me like one who would care more for spiritual things than those that take up thy mind, little sister. But, chère amie," taking the young girl's hands

in hers and speaking with shining eyes, "if it is so with thee, why not speak frankly to thy mother, to Raoul? Without doubt one must submit to one's parents. That is simple, and indeed how should we who know nothing of the world, judge what is best for us in it as well as they? Even I who, as Eulalie will tell thee, have never since I was fourteen had a wish that was outside the religious life, I submitted when our mother said to me, 'Do not ask me for it. I have lost thy father. I cannot give thee too.' And afterwards, when it was time for me to go out into the world which I hated, and I thought that Eulalie could take my place both in it and at home better than I ever should, even then my confessor said to me, 'Not without thy mother's consent! Obedience is better than sacrifice; and to submit to those whom God has put over us is the highest sacrifice.' So I submitted and prayed. And one day—it was last Corpus Christi—I was praying before the sacrament in the Church of St. Roch. My mother was there too, but I had forgotten her. I could not help weeping, and when we came out I saw she had been weeping too, and she said to me, 'My child, do as thou wilt. I have been striving, but I will do so no longer. If Heaven asks me for thee I will not hold thee back. Go then with a good heart.' Vera, dear, if thou hast a vocation too it would be impious in Raoul, in thy parents, to resist it. If they truly love thee—"

"Oh, but I have not. I don't even know what it means," Vera exclaimed, as the door opened to admit a tall, elderly nun of dignified appearance, whom the de Mailly girls greeted by rising respectfully to their feet as they exclaimed:

"Ah, here is our aunt. Dear reverend mother, how good of you to visit us here! See, this is the little Vera."

The tête-à-tête was over; but indeed where would have been the use of its continuance? Did they not all say the same, ring the same changes on the same tune—marriage with the man of your parents' choice or a convent, the convent with which her father had threatened her! Was it only in England that freedom was possible, possible and right too? And England was far away across the sea! The net had closed suddenly round her, and something told her that even to-day would draw it tighter.

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ALEXIA.

BY ELEANOR C. PRICE,

Author of "Gerald."

CHAPTER VIII.

CHARLIE'S mother had no intention of living at Redwood, now that he was married. She thought that the young people, whether they stayed there or not, would get on much better without her interference. She and Charlie had never understood each other particularly well, and as Alexia had shrewdly guessed, she disagreed with her daughter-in-law on almost all points. Still they were all very civil to each other, and Mrs. Melville was staying on at Redwood through the summer weeks, intending by and by to go to the sea, and afterwards to settle in London for the winter.

Very soon after that wet day, when the weather was hot and dry again, Mrs. Melville was walking alone in the park, and saw Mrs. Dodd coming to meet her. Without caring much for Mrs. Dodd, Mrs. Melville always thought her a satisfactory clergyman's wife. She dressed plainly and sensibly, and her opinions about poor people were to be relied upon. She did what she believed to be her duty, and one cannot say that of everybody. Advancing from the broad, dazzling sunshine into the shadow of the elms, where Mrs. Melville was walking, Mrs. Dodd, in her cool fresh dress, was quite a pleasant sight; her cheeks were rosy, and there was an agreeable brightness in her eyes. Mrs. Melville went forward to meet her with rather more friendliness than usual. Since she had given up the reins to Maud, she felt more and more as if everything and everybody at Redwood belonged to her.

"And have you heard the news?" said

"No, indeed. What is it? Another wedding?"

"Well, I don't know about the wedding. That will be put off for some time, I fancy. He is so young, and has nothing at present. But Alice Page——"

"Alice Page! Alexia, do you mean?" exclaimed Mrs. Melville, very much interested. "Is it possible! Dear me, I am very glad to hear that. But who is he? Somebody good enough for her, I do hope."

"Oh, quite—quite good enough," said Mrs. Dodd, a little surprised. "That nice-looking boy who has been staying with them—her cousin, Edmund Rowley."

"Really! Well, I heard some hint of that, but I thought there was nothing in it."

"I had my suspicions," said Mrs. Dodd, with a wise smile; "I found them together once or twice in the garden. However, I don't think anybody knows yet. I happened to meet Mr. Page just now, and I asked him as a friend, you know, if there was anything in it, and he acknowledged that it was a settled thing."

"Dear me! That boy!" said Mrs. Melville, and she almost sighed, and poked absently in the grass with her parasol.

"He is a very intelligent young man," said Mrs. Dodd, "getting on well at Oxford, I hear. He has some thoughts of taking orders. I don't quite know what sort of clergyman's wife Alice Page will make."

"She will do very well. She is clever enough for anything," said Mrs. Melville.

"Ah—clever, certainly, but——" hesitated Mrs. Dodd. "However, I think it is decidedly a good thing. A girl like that wants an object in life. She wants trials, too, and a long engagement will do her no harm. She has been too much accustomed

smooth, she has ruled everybody at home all her life, and poor Mr. Page has spoilt her thoroughly."

"No, there I can't agree with you. I don't think she is spoilt, do you know," said Mrs. Melville. "I admire Alexia. I think she is as nice as her father, and he is one of my greatest friends. Don't I see him coming along the road now?"

They were close to the gates, and Mr. Page was approaching in the distance.

"Yes, I think so," said Mrs. Dodd. "You would like to speak to him."

"I should. But you were coming to see us. Do go on to the house; you will find Maud at home, and I shall be in very soon."

"Thank you very much, Mrs. Melville, but pray don't hurry."

"I shall only be a few minutes," said Mrs. Melville, gazing anxiously through the gate; and, having parted with Mrs. Dodd a moment later, she forgot her existence altogether, and walked quickly out to meet William Page.

He was looking very grave, very unhappy; this was her first thought; and then she remembered her last talk with him about Alexia, and coloured at the remembrance. She was not quite so sure that she had been right, now, though she would not listen to her own misgivings.

"My dear Mr. Page," she said immediately, "what is this I hear about Alexia?"

With all his loyalty he looked surprised, almost offended. It was hard for him to be attacked twice on this sore subject in the course of one afternoon. He knew that telling Mrs. Dodd was telling the county, and he was afraid that Alexia would be angry; but, when a woman came up and asked him a point-blank question, what was he to do?

"I suppose you mean that Mrs. Dodd has told you of Alexia's engagement," he said to Mrs. Melville, after a moment's hesitation. "It is true. She has engaged herself to marry my nephew, Edmund Rowley."

"Indeed! Well, I hear a very good account of him, and I hope she will be happy," said Mrs. Melville, feeling checked.

"Thank you," he said, with a faint smile, which died away directly from his honest face.

"Of course you must feel it very much; you will miss her dreadfully," said Mrs. Melville, who felt that she must go on

saying something. "What will you do, really? Alexia is so clever, isn't she? and manages everything so well."

"Yes—except her own affairs, I think," said Mr. Page.

"I'm very sorry"—said Mrs. Melville, in a lower tone of sympathy, and then she stood still for a moment, looking at him, half wishing she had not yielded to her friendly impulse of asking about Alexia. "Poor little thing! she must always be a rather awkward subject, and if she was happily married, it ought to be a comfort to everybody, including her father. Well," she said presently, "I can understand that you think him rather young, and—some people don't like cousins marrying—but I have known many instances that turned out very well. Alexia is not the sort of girl to do anything really foolish, is she? She will be the ruling spirit, perhaps, but after all—in fact, we must let young people settle these things in their own way."

Saying this, his liege lady smiled upon him; but her smile had a little lost its celestially healing effect, somehow. Perhaps he thought, just then, that her preaching was not quite the same as her practice. He answered her in a grave, straightforward way.

"Alexia is at liberty to do what she likes. I should be contented, Mrs. Melville, if I could understand her."

"I don't quite—" murmured Mrs. Melville.

"For the first time in our lives," he went on, "she and I don't understand each other. I have no objection to Edmund Rowley, except that he has nothing to live upon, so that it must be a long engagement, I suppose, which is a bad thing——"

"Oh no—not when people are so young——"

He did not notice the interruption in her soft, low tones, but went on, looking beyond her at the great elm trees with their dark masses of leaves, shading the entrance to Redwood Manor.

"I thought I understood Alexia, and that we had no mysteries between us, but I cannot make out why she has done this. I thought the fellow was rather a plague to her, with his ideas and his poetry-books, and that she would be glad when he was gone. I assure you, Mrs. Melville, I was thunderstruck, when, an hour after he left us, she came and told me. I would give all I have to know the meaning of it," he

said, hitting his stick against a stone. "There is something strange about the girl. I know her—I know her—she is not happy," and his voice shook a little. "She has no one to look after her. I have done my best, but it's no use; she is beyond my understanding."

Mrs. Melville was touched by his confidence in her, but she thought girls were not generally such riddles, and Alexia less than most of them. A brave, proud, sensible, good little soul, who had very wisely got over her disappointment, and was not unwilling to accept the first devoted young man who asked her.

"I don't think you ought to distress yourself," Mrs. Melville said very kindly. "It is hard to be father and mother in one, and you have managed it better than most people. And girls are shy about these things, you must remember. From what I know of Alexia, I don't think, Mr. Page, that she would marry a man unless she cared for him."

"I should have said so too—but—here comes the Squire. Thanks for all your goodness. Goodbye."

He was gone, and almost out of sight, before Mrs. Melville met Charlie.

He was looking grave and angry; his eyes were fierce; now, as very rarely in his life, he reminded Mrs. Melville of his father, who used now and then to be moved in this way to sudden indignation against wrong. He was excited too; his lips were pale; and he spoke with his teeth close together.

Mrs. Melville looked at him anxiously, for in these moods he was difficult to manage. At first she thought he had been quarrelling with Maud; then she knew that Maud, poor thing, except from the fact of her existence, had nothing to do with it.

"Mother, this is a dreadful business," began Charlie. "Was that old Page you were talking to just now? What does he say?"

"What do you mean?" said his mother, rather coldly.

"Is it true about Alexia, or one of Mrs. Dodd's lies?"

"Charlie! Mrs. Dodd does not tell lies. And besides——"

"Hang Mrs. Dodd! It is true, then? Mother, look here. You interfered before, I know. You must interfere again. She must not be allowed to do it."

"Charlie, you shock me," said Mrs. Melville. "I should not dream of interfering. What business is it of ours? And

Alexia is perfectly capable of managing her own affairs."

She walked on fast as she spoke, for they were standing in the road, and she thought this talk had better be carried on inside the park gates. She went quickly across the grass into the shade of the elms, where she had met Mrs. Dodd not long before. Charlie kept close to her, repeating at intervals, "It can't be. It's an awful thing. You must interfere."

When they were far enough from public view, she turned round and faced him.

"Do you know, Charlie," she said, "that you pain me exceedingly. I think you are quite forgetting your position, and hers. I respect Alexia very much, and wish her well; and I can see that a safe and happy marriage will be the best thing for her."

"But you don't know everything," said Charlie.

His mother's face was very hard and stern, and her blue eyes shone as she looked at him.

"I am quite at a loss to know what you mean," she said.

"Look here, you and I had better be truthful with each other," said Charlie, his face darkened with a sudden flash.

"I wish for nothing better," said Mrs. Melville.

"Then answer me this. Was it your doing that Alexia refused me last winter?"

"Considering what has happened since——"

"Mother, answer my question."

"It was my doing, partly," said Mrs. Melville. "Such a marriage would have been madness. I spoke to William Page, and he agreed with me. I then spoke to Alexia. She behaved very well, and quite felt the strength of all I said. But of course I could only advise; I could only represent things to her. The refusal was her own decision, and her own doing. She behaved very generously and well."

"You women have queer ideas of right and wrong," said Charlie. "If I had known—good heaven, to think that I had no notion of this till a day or two ago."

"And may I ask, did Alexia tell you?" said Mrs. Melville with extreme coldness.

"It is your turn to be truthful now. I must say, all this is rather terrible, and so far from interfering with her marriage——"

"Mother, remember who you are talking of," said Charlie. "Blame me as much as you like, but Alex is the noblest girl in the world, though she has done an awfully wrong thing now."

There was a boyish earnestness in his manner which touched his mother a little, shocked and anxious as she was.

"Please explain this mystery," she said; and Charlie, in answer, very plainly told her the story of his meeting Alexia in the lane, and the sort of talk they had had there.

"I'm quite sure she was not engaged to the fellow then," he said. "I could swear it. It must have been settled that evening, because I saw Mr. Page driving him to the station the next day. And, mother, that child cared for me, and it was because of what I said to her that she went and engaged herself to him. Of course now it's all as clear as daylight. She behaved splendidly; she snubbed me down to the ground. You couldn't have behaved better yourself. So now you know all about it. And you can't let her go and marry a fellow she doesn't care a straw about, because——"

"Because you made a sad fool of yourself," said his mother. "And worse than that, Charlie, for it was very, very wrong of you to go back to the past at all."

"Don't bully me: I know all that," he said; and Mrs. Melville, seeing the depth of sadness in his face and attitude, knew that her heart was aching for him, and for a few moments, forgetting the world and its claims, was troubled with a bitter regret. Presently she said, with a slight sigh:

"It is unfortunate, certainly. Still I hope she may be happy. Everybody does not marry for love."

"No, they don't," said Charlie. "But she won't be happy, any more than——"

"Hush!" murmured his mother. "At any rate, *your* duty is clear."

"But hers isn't!" exclaimed Charlie rebelliously. "I know Alex. She did it in a desperate hurry—all my fault—and she's sorry now. I don't believe she's happy. What did old Page say? Is he satisfied?"

"Not quite, perhaps," said Mrs. Melville. "He seemed puzzled about it. Of course it is not a good match——"

"He wouldn't care about that, if she was contented," said Charlie.

Mrs. Melville had not much to say. They walked on together, farther and farther into the shades of the park, Charlie making his indignant protest over and over again.

"And you couldn't speak to her?"

"No, indeed I couldn't."

"I should have thought that a woman

like you could say anything to a girl she had known always."

"Ah, but the circumstances—impossible," said Mrs. Melville. "No, Charlie, we must leave it; we can do nothing."

This decision by no means satisfied her son. It hardly satisfied herself, for she was quite aware of her responsibility; but it seemed to be the right one, after all. They walked on in the direction of the woods, Charlie talking, his mother listening sadly; she could not stop him, and perhaps felt that it was best for everyone that he should be allowed to talk.

The wives of the Squire and the Rector had long finished their tea, from which Charlie had rushed away in sudden silence when Mrs. Dodd proclaimed her news. His wife asked one or two questions in a cool sort of way, and then changed the subject.

After waiting a long time for Mrs. Melville's promised return, Mrs. Dodd found it advisable to go home. Her hostess was dull, and had yawned several times; conversation flagged. Mr. Dodd, too, had not yet heard the confirmation of the last piece of village gossip.

On one of those hot afternoons, a few days after this, Mrs. Melville walked to the Farm, and was shown into Alexia's drawing-room, where she was writing a letter. The visit was an effort to Mrs. Melville. It was paid to please Charlie, but also to quiet her own conscience, for she could not leave Alexia without a word of sympathy or kindness on such an occasion as this. Curiosity, perhaps, was also mixed with Mrs. Melville's motives; and she had a plan on foot, which she thought wise, though Charlie had suggested it. In fact, though she trusted her son, she hardly liked to go away from Redwood, leaving him and Maud with that innocent disturber so near their gates. They were going away after a few weeks. And Maud, though she hardly mentioned Alexia now, looked a little sulky, and watched her husband with eyes that made Mrs. Melville uneasy. So when Charlie said—"Mother, take her to Whitby with you. Find out what she really means, and make her break it off:" his mother thought that the first part of this plan might be worth trying. As to the second, no: she could only wish that Alexia might be married as soon as possible; but she was very cautious with Charlie, and did not tell him that.

Mrs. Melville had never been in Alexia's house since the day of that painful con-

versation in the winter. Alexia had looked shadowy enough then, that winter afternoon in the firelight; but she was much more changed, now, from the happy, spirited girl who used to rule Mr. Page and his household. As she got up from her writing-table to receive Mrs. Melville, her visitor thought she had never seen a young face so worn, so hardened; and, in spite of all the awkwardness, her heart ached for the girl. She pressed her hand kindly, and was going to kiss her, but Alexia seemed utterly unconscious of her intention, and was not kissed.

"You must let me wish you happiness, Alexia," said Mrs. Melville, still holding her hand. She could not be quite snubbed by a child like this.

"Thank you very much," said Alexia, without a smile; and Mrs. Melville began to feel a little angry with her. Nothing, she reflected, had absolutely forced the girl to engage herself to young Rowley. As she had been rash enough to do it, she must have courage and good manners enough to take the consequences. So Mrs. Melville asked one or two questions about Edmund and his family, which Alexia, thus put upon her mettle, answered fully and with perfect coolness. It was evident that she had no idea of being disloyal to Edmund, or of keeping any of their arrangements a secret from the world. Finding that she had this courage, Mrs. Melville forgave her, and began to admire her again. In words, however, she admired the beautiful roses and other flowers with which Alexia had filled her room. Then she made friends with a dog that ran in, and went on talking of the merest trifles, not being able now to make up her mind about asking Alexia to go to Whitby. Perhaps she would have given it up, but for a long stolen look at Alexia's face as she leaned over the table and arranged some falling roses. The young face was so wonderfully pretty, with the faint flush that had come into it now; the delicate profile had such a curious distinction, and the slight lines of pain were so sweet, as well as sad, that Mrs. Melville in her heart did not wonder at Charlie, and felt that she herself owed a good deal of compensation.

"I am going away very soon, Alexia," she said, after a moment's silence.

"Are you? Oh yes, my father said he thought you were going to the sea. And he was so afraid you would not come back any more," Alexia said gently, still occupied with her roses.

"I suppose I shall not live here any more. Of course I am not wanted."

"We want you, and so does everybody else in Redwood."

"You are very kind to me, my dear," said Mrs. Melville, with the slightest uncertainty in her voice—but Alexia did not look at her. "I shall be sorry to leave you and your father, and other people too—but you are not going to stay here yourself, you see."

"For a great many years," said Alexia, and then she looked at Mrs. Melville and smiled for the first time, a sad little twilight smile. "I don't know when my father can do without me—never, I think," she said.

"Ah yes, he will accept his fate, you will find," said Mrs. Melville. "Fathers and mothers are very unselfish people."

"I don't want him to be unselfish," Alexia murmured, half to herself.

"Well, but I was going to talk about the present, not the future," said Mrs. Melville. "I never look on very far, unless it is necessary. I am going away in about a fortnight—to Whitby, I think, for a few weeks, and I have been thinking, Alexia—will you be very kind and nice, and go with me?"

The girl looked up now in astonishment, and after one quick, enquiring glance turned her head away again, conscious of the deep flush that was mounting slowly to her hair.

"I shall be alone, you know," said Mrs. Melville, and then she regretted the unnecessary words, for of course Alexia must never know of Charlie's confidences. "I should like to have you," she went on rather hastily, "and I think a breath of sea air would do you good. All this hot weather has been tiring, and you are looking pale."

She was not at all prepared for what happened next. The brave, cool, high-spirited young mistress of the Farm lost her dignity for once; her pride, her self-respect, vanished like smoke, certainly for the first time in public; she was on the floor at Mrs. Melville's feet, kissed her hands once, and then broke into a fit of passionate crying, with her face hidden against Mrs. Melville's knees. Those were scorching tears, and the sobs were more strained, more painful, because of the days of high-strung excitement that had gone before. The pain and shame of having given away was an added agony.

Mrs. Melville sat quite still, looking down

at the girl crouching there. She was very sorry that this had happened, and as much surprised as Alexia herself. She was in a disagreeable position; her blue eyes were troubled, her clear brows frowning; but, to do her justice, though she felt very much for herself, she felt still more for Alexia, and acknowledged in her mind that Charlie had been only too right in all he said. This child did care for him, and her accepting the other man had been a very desperate little action, caused no doubt by that talk in the lane. It was indeed a most painful business. Mrs. Melville was terribly puzzled what to say or do. One thing, however, was plain; that affair in the winter had gone very much deeper with Alexia than anyone could have imagined; this girl who knelt here crying was nearly broken-hearted, and Mrs. Melville herself had done it all. She must console the girl, and certainly could not lecture her, for she could read the whole story plainly enough now. She laid her hand on the dark soft curls, and stroked them for a few moments, without speaking, while Alexia struggled hard to conquer her sobs, and was filled now with burning shame. One could not lie there with hidden eyes for ever, and how would it be possible to look up and face Mrs. Melville again?

At last Mrs. Melville spoke. "My dear," she said, in her softest, most musical tones, "you really must not do this."

"Oh, I beg your pardon—I am such a fool," muttered Alexia with catching breath; and then she suddenly sprang up, and sitting down by the table, shaded her eyes with her hand.

"I don't think you are at all well," said Mrs. Melville. "You ought to go to some bracing place, and Whitty will be the very thing for you." But as she spoke she knew very well that Alexia would not go to Whitty.

"You are most kind," said Alexia, as she leaned over the table, her voice still very tremulous. "It is so good of you to think of it, but I am going away—almost directly. I am going to Devonshire again for a few weeks."

"Devonshire?"

"To stay at Edmund's home," said Alexia very low, and Mrs. Melville felt a sudden twinge of pity for Edmund.

She sat there and tried to talk, for a few minutes longer. Then she thought it would be kinder and wiser to leave the girl alone, as perfect openness between them was impossible. She was a tall woman, and she

looked down into Alexia's eyes as she said "Good-bye." She thought what lovely eyes they were, dark and soft and eloquent, the eyelids still a little reddened, and the lashes wet with tears.

"Kiss me, child," she said; and for a moment she held Alexia tight in her arms.

Alexia was quite calm now; she looked up, and wondered what Mrs. Melville would say if she knew everything. Perhaps, after all, she might have said what she did say, turning back from the door, when she was nearly gone.

"Alexia, there is one gift I would pray for beyond all others, for everyone I love. Do you know what it is? Courage."

"Yes, I am a coward," thought Alexia. But she only bent her head and smiled.

NEXT OF KIN.

A STORY IN THREE CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER III.

MURIEL LAKE and her brother were standing together by the easel which held Muriel's just completed painting of the Cathedral aisle. Muriel's face was flushed with honest pride; so was her brother's.

"You are a brick, Muriel," was the Post Office clerk's commendation of his sister's success. "Your sketch is a real gem. No wonder you have sold it already. What a pity it is that Nature didn't fit me up with the same sort of brains she has bestowed on you!"

"Pray don't deplore that, my dear Tom," replied Muriel, "or I shall think you are fishing for compliments. I feel inclined to lament that my earnings are so uncertain and casual, and that my contributions to housekeeping are so spasmodic and unsatisfactory, while yours are as safe as the Bank of England; and I am so provoked when I calculate my gains to see that there is no prospect of our sending mother out of this cold damp place for the winter. In a favourable climate she might pick up her strength. I don't believe she ever will here."

"That's a dismal view of the matter, Muriel," said Tom, slowly; "but I'm afraid it is true. Do you know," he continued, "I have more than half a mind to get Hedley's opinion."

"Hedley," repeated Muriel; "is that your new doctor-friend?"

"Yes; that fellow I told you was lecturing at the Institute. He's a sound, good fellow, and if I could pin my faith on any doctor, I could on him."

"Why? Has he been doing anything very marvellous in the way of cures?"

"Nothing miraculous that I have heard of. I believe he is looked up to in his profession; but it is the manner of the man that carries me away. He's such a trustworthy soul."

"Well, if you have such confidence in him, and as we are so uneasy about mother's health, let us get his advice. Only, Tom, we shall never persuade her into the extravagance of seeing a doctor when she is not suffering from any specific illness."

"I know that," replied Tom; "but don't you see that's just where it all comes in. I shall ask Hedley here as my friend, for I want you and him to know one another; and I shall prime him to make a professional use of his visit, by which means, perhaps, we shall find ourselves curing the mother, without having had any argument with her over the thin end of the wedge."

"And do you know anything about this Mr. Hedley, Tom—who he is and where comes from?"

"Oh, do listen to her!" exclaimed Tom. "Is she going over in a body to Mrs. Grundy, that she must ask for a man's credentials before she makes up her mind to be introduced to him? Why, Muriel, success has inflated you!"

"Not in the least, Tom," replied Muriel composedly. "I am merely curious to hear about your friend; if you know anything of his antecedents?"

"Oh, yes; I know lots about him. He is perfectly unreserved in manner. He was born in Australia, and came to England to be educated as a doctor. I don't think he has any idea of going back to Colonial life, for he has no ties out there. His grandfather, or his grandmother, or one of his progenitors, was a Carchester person."

"Is that the reason he has come to settle here?"

"I should not think so. At least I am quite sure it is not; for he has told me that he is, as far as he knows, the last survivor of his family; which ought to work on your feelings, so that you make him warmly welcome."

"No doubt I shall do that, especially if his medical skill inspires me with a faith in him like yours. And indeed," added Muriel, speaking more seriously, "I hope you will have him here soon, for, when I see mother getting thinner and paler every day, my heart sinks within me, and I feel very dreary."

This was how John Hedley came to be introduced to the Lake household; and though his visits there did not magically restore to Mrs. Lake her exhausted strength, which nothing but remedies far beyond her means could give back, these visits made a great difference to the family life.

For this young man who (it must be candidly owned) had the smallest possible income and no hope for the future except in his own unaided exertions; this unknown doctor of no family fell madly in love with Muriel Lake; proposed to her as soon as he dared; and was accepted. The engagement was to be a long one—indeinitely long; but for all its trial of uncertain delay, Muriel Lake looked brighter than ever as she worked at her painting in the rare gleams of wintry sunshine, and the shadows that came over her face were brought there, not by the remoteness of her own hopes, but by the ever-pressing need of finding funds to send her fragile mother out of the reach of the wild north-east winds, that swept the downs in the cruel January frosts.

For John Hedley was a man of whose love a girl might justly be proud. He was large-hearted and generous, a man of earnest thoughts, high ideas, and indomitable perseverance, and withal of a genial simplicity of manner, which stood out in the clearer relief because of the depth and intensity of his moral qualities. It was this sympathy of candour and of single-heartedness that had first drawn him to Muriel, and the similarity of their aims and hopes riveted the bonds that joined them. If this story were a record of their love-making, it would have plenteous material to work upon.

As it is, the young doctor's passion for Muriel must yield the place to the old verger's admiration of her, which had steadily grown from the day on which he had first looked over her shoulder and passed judgment on her skill.

Muriel had followed up her successful sketch by a series of views of the Cathedral interior, and, while she worked, Peter had not neglected his opportunity of cultivating her acquaintance, and, as time went on, of confiding to her—what he had told to no one besides—his loneliness and weariness, and his unsuccessful search of some one to fill the void of his life.

At last he began to entertain an idea, which, so to speak, took all the wind out of the sails of these hypothetical relatives, and he allowed himself, on the strength of it, to face the conviction that no kith or

kin remained to him. This idea had burst suddenly upon him one Sunday afternoon, when the Cathedral was crowded to listen to a sermon preached by the famous Dean Longwynd, of Birmingham. The eloquence of the Dean had attracted Miss Lake among many others, and she had been installed by her devoted admirer in a much more advantageous seat than that which he had seen fit to allot to Mrs. Monypenny for the modest fee of half a sovereign. Muriel sat near the pulpit, and when Peter—after he had, mace in hand, conducted the preacher up the choir—sat down on his accustomed perch below the pulpit, his eye could rest fondly on the rounded cheek and bright eyes of his protégée, while one withered hand held his mace, and the other crept involuntarily towards his waistcoat pocket, where Mrs. Monypenny's half-sovereign reposed in very good company. He felt sure that that sweet-faced girl was not rich; he was quite connoisseur enough of ladies' dress to know that hers was remarkably inexpensive, and always the same; by other signs and tokens, too, he had read the secret of Muriel's exchequer. He was not, he acknowledged to himself, a liberal man, yet he was moved by a strong desire to give her anything she might need. He might even—but the supposition was too wild. He scarcely dared formulate it in his mind. *Could* he give up his long-cherished dream of kith and kin, and alter his will? He quite trembled with excitement. The Dean's stream of eloquence flowed on over his head, but the loud, stern tones did not arrest his attention, nor did the low, pathetic tones move him. He seemed to be passing into a kind of hazy dream, as he sat watching the slender figure and well-poised head in the dark oak seat before him. Then her face, and all the faces, the seats, the pillars and screens, and the floor seemed to melt and mingle into a mist which closed round him and oppressed him. A noise, as of loud surging seas swelled up behind him, covering the voice of the preacher as the mist had veiled his sight. He tried to cry out, but he could only gasp—to stir, but his limbs were as heavy as lead. Then, just as the Dean's voice was modulated to its lowest audible tones, and while two thousand pairs of ears were straining to catch his solemn utterances, there was a loud clatter and a feeble cry, as from Peter's helpless hand his heavy mace fell crashing to the floor, startling the congregation, and rousing the old man

from his semi-unconsciousness to a state of dizzy confusion and bewilderment. Before he had recovered himself someone had stepped forward, handed him his fallen insignia of office, and, laying a cool, firm hand on his, had said softly: "Don't be frightened, you had fallen asleep." By that time he was sufficiently collected to see Miss Lake, with a very pretty blush on her face and neck, resume her seat.

To the disturbed congregation the incident was just as trivial as it was annoying, but to Peter it seemed as if it was the determining sequel to his previous sudden thought; and from that day he looked upon Muriel as the heiress to his property, and as the substitute who represented all his absent and lost ones.

A few days after this incident, Muriel missed his accustomed visits to her easel, and when nearly a week had passed without his reappearance, she enquired for him among the black-gowned brotherhood whom he called his "colleaguys," and she heard that the poor old verger was ill, or at least seriously ailing. Kind-hearted Muriel at once asked her way to his house, and, following the narrow alleys behind the Cathedral, knocked at his door, and walked in upon his dreary solitude. He was crouching over the fire in the twilight, which was gathering earlier and more quickly in his cheerless room than outside. He scarcely turned his head as she entered, but when he heard the sound of her voice he started eagerly, and, making an ineffectual effort to rise, cried:

"Dear heart, dear heart! to think of the pretty creetur coming to see a poor old, worn-out fellow like me, and me thinking it was only her as waits upon me opening the door. Take a chair, Missy, do; I'm that quakin' and achin' that I can't get up to hand it to you. Bless you!" he ejaculated fervently; "bless your pretty face!"

"I'm sorry you are so poorly," said Muriel kindly. "I heard about it from the other vergers, and so, as I know you live alone, I thought I'd come and see if you are in need of anything."

"Dear, dear heart! To think o' that!" said Peter again. "No, Missy, thank'ee kindly. I wants for nothing but a new head, a new body, and new limbs, which I'm not likely to get;" and he chuckled at his grim joke. "As to bein' all alone, it's lonesome like, but it's best for me; for they're such a rascally lot about here, I'm never easy as long as there's anyone pokin' about the premises."

"Surely you don't wait upon yourself?" asked Muriel.

"Not altogether, Missy," he replied, shaking his head slowly. "Not so much as I should like to. You see I'm old and helpless, and I must have someone in to help me; but I can't trust 'em. They rob me and cheat me; they're such a good-for-nothing lot."

"I'm sorry to hear that," said Muriel sympathetically, though she felt a strong inclination to smile.

"Since my poor wife's death, eleven years ago," continued Peter, "I've had but a poor time of it with 'em. I don't know which is the least to be trusted, the women or the gals. When I've got a woman to clean up for me, I fancy the women are the worst, for they're so grasping, and so inquisitive, and so domineering; and when I get a gal, I fancy they're the worst, for they're so flighty, and so gossippy, and so idle. They're baggages, all on 'em; that's what I call 'em, baggages! But they'll have to be very sly indeed if they mean to cheat me."

"And what does the doctor say of your illness?" asked Muriel, when the old man had finished his tirade.

"The doctor says nothing about my complaint," replied Peter, with an important air.

"Indeed!" pursued Muriel. "Doesn't he say when you may expect to be about again?"

"No," replied Peter, with his slow head-shake. "He has said nothing, because he ha'n't been asked to give his opinion, you see. I don't want no doctors pottering about me, and running me up long bills for their physics and stuff. I'm suffering from something as no doctors' drugs can cure. They can cut off broken legs and useless arms, and give folks artificial ones instead; but they can't cut twenty or thirty years off a man's age, and give him a new constitution to work upon; so I shan't trouble the doctors with my case."

"Still, a doctor might do you some good," said Muriel hopefully. Her trust in doctors, or, rather, in the doctor, had greatly grown and increased of late.

"I don't think it, Missy," replied Peter obstinately. "I don't think it. It would be more the other way with me and the doctor when we made up our accounts."

"Well," said Muriel, a faint blush flickering into her cheeks. "I wish you would let me ask a doctor, who is a good, kind friend of mine, to come and see you.

Just let me have my own way about it," she went on coaxingly. "I don't like you to be ill all alone without proper care; and if you can't afford to pay him I'll make it all right."

The old man stretched out his hand towards her with his favourite exclamation: "Dear heart, dear heart! To think of that!"

"Then I may tell the doctor to come to see you," said Muriel, rising to go.

"Yes; you may tell him if you like," said Peter. "I can't say you nay; and as to payin' him, you're wonderful kind" (liberality was indeed a virtue in his eyes), "but I can afford to pay him myself. I can afford it as well as anyone; but I look on it as so much money thrown away. Anyhow, you'll come and see me again? Your visits will do me a sight more good than any doctor's."

Accordingly, John Hedley went, at Muriel's bidding, to prescribe for Mr. Peter Brown. He found that worthy somewhat grim and impenetrable, half willing to receive him, as having come with an excellent introduction, half suspicious of him as a medical cormorant who only sought a pretext for sending in a long bill of extortionate charges. However, John's honest, unpretending manner so far gained Peter's confidence, that he consented to have a bottle of "stuff" and to allow the doctor to call again. The "stuff" didn't do him much good; indeed, how should it? For he had well described his malady when he had told Muriel, in homely language, that he was "confectus annis." Nevertheless, as it was very dull work sitting by the fire with no one to speak to, the doctor's visits were a cheery break in the day's monotony—particularly welcome, because the doctor was so ready to listen to the praises of Muriel Lake's beauty and perfection.

In those long, solitary musings beside his fire, and in his sleepless nights, the old man had thought a great deal about the will he wished to make in Muriel's favour. His visionary kinsfolk were now banished from his mind, or only remembered with a hope that none of them would appear to balk his latest intention; and he resolutely suppressed any occasional twinge of remorse that whispered to him of a possible injustice in gratifying this new impulse. Meanwhile, days passed on; he was always too ill and weak to take the necessary steps unaided; and as he was invincibly determined that no Carchester

lawyer should know any of his secrets before death made them public property, he fell on the expedient of asking John Hedley's help, under strict seal of secrecy.

So it came about that one evening John, little dreaming he was elected to such an honour, walked down to the Cathedral precincts. For some reason or other he was feeling low-spirited, and his mind gave a gloomy shade to whatever his thoughts turned upon. Patient and persevering as he was, he could not always have hopefulness at his beck and call. The net total of his external circumstances was not a very cheering sum. Want of means, of social position, of family advantages, cramped him on all sides, to which troubles came an additional load in the knowledge that Muriel must work so hard and so ineffectually to supply her mother's needs. It was not always easy to him to consider his prospects with equanimity, and to realise how long was the vista which lay between him and the day he should call his love his wife.

This being his state of mind, he was not in the choicest mood to receive a confidence; but that evening Peter, feeling his faculties to be unusually bright and clear—brighter, clearer than they had been for weeks—resolved to broach the momentous subject.

"Doctor," he began, leaning forward and keenly scanning the honest face beside him, "I'm a very old man, and I'm not long for this world. That's quite true, ain't it?"

John Hedley, from mere habit, tried to give a comforting rejoinder. "You're old, certainly," he said; "there's no denying that; "but——"

"Oh, it ain't no use to say 'but,'" interrupted Peter brusquely. "I can feel inwardly what's comin' on me. I don't want any man's butts and maybes. I haven't much time before me, and I've got a lot to settle before I go, which, if it ain't thought about and settled soon, it won't be in my power to have it as I wish;" and the old man shook his head quite vindictively at John Hedley as he spoke.

"Very true," replied John, thus reprimanded, "only I should not have put it so harshly myself."

"And now," continued Peter, his manner becoming a shade more conciliatory, "I've found you a very obligin' young man, and pretty well for straightforwardness."

"Thank you," said the other gravely.

"And so I'm going to ask you to do a bit of very private writing for me, for I'm that shaky I can't hold my pen nohow, though

I've tried several times so as to be independent."

"I'll write for you with pleasure," said John cordially. "Is it to ask some of your relations to come and look after you now you are ill?"

"No," replied Peter shortly, not wishing to revert to the subject of relations. "I've got no one belongin' to me in the world. I want a letter written to my lawyer about my will."

John Hedley was rather astonished at this high-sounding announcement from an old man, whom he had looked on as very nearly a pauper; but he repressed his surprise, and merely asked where he should find a pen. His quiet acceptance of the object of the letter was rather mortifying to Peter, who had intended to produce quite an effect on the young man whom he had chosen for his confidant. He had many times rehearsed the scene, and the doctor's amazement had always been a very important feature in it. It was rather a blow to his self-importance that John Hedley merely asked for a pen and ink.

"You knew I had a bit of property to will and devise at my decease, eh?" he said, sharply eyeing his companion.

"No," replied John innocently. "If I fancied anything, it was that you were almost destitute."

"Umph," said the old man with a knowing nod, "perhaps I'm better off than some folks as make a deal of show with their carriages and servants."

"Very likely," said John, who was due at the little house in Bristol Terrace when he left the sick verger; "and now what shall I say in the letter?"

"Stop a bit," replied Peter, who, having opened his lips did not mean to close them upon half-confidences, "I want to say a mort o' things before we come to the letter, that is, if you have the time to listen."

"I can spare half-an-hour," said John generously. This was magnanimous, if you reckon the self-denial implied.

Peter looked round cautiously before he began his confidences, as if he were afraid of chance listeners; and when he spoke, it was in so low a tone that John was obliged to draw up closer in order to catch all he said.

"I've been a savin' man all my life," began the verger, "and a careful man, as my father was before me. He left me a few hundreds, and I've gone on adding to it ever since. I'm worth a good bit now. How much should you think?"

"I haven't a notion," replied the other, whose particular aversion was avarice in any form.

"Give a guess," said Peter, with his scrutinising eyes fixed on John Hedley's.

"I really couldn't," was the reply.

The old man saw that there was no curiosity in the face he was scanning. He was determined to bring surprise into it.

"What should you say to £9,600 odd well invested, and £70 a-year in house rents?" he asked triumphantly.

"It's a good sum," answered John Hedley. But his face looked colder still. At the moment he felt nothing but repulsion at this revelation of miserliness, and the grim contrast it offered to his own needs.

"Yes, it is a tidy sum," said Peter, not a little disappointed by this reception of his confidence, "a very tidy sum, and I'm going to settle what shall become of it when I'm dead and gone. I'm a lone old man, doctor, you see. My children died long ago, and my old wife followed them, and I've no one I care for of my own blood. I used to think that my children and grandchildren should benefit by my careful ways; but, dear heart, dear heart, who can tell how we shall be taken, and how we shall be left?"

John Hedley's face was softening.

"I had a brother once," pursued the old man, when he had paused to take breath; "he was a good bit older than me, and very racketty—very racketty. At last he ran away to Australia and sent no word of himself—never a word, at least we never got a word, so I had all my father's savings. He broke my mother's heart; she was a weakly creature, and she broke her heart after him."

Then he stopped. He seemed to lose himself for a while, until John Hedley recalled him by saying:

"And have you never heard anything of your lost brother?"

"No," replied Peter, recollecting himself, "I've done what I could to trace him. I thought perhaps there might be some one belongin' to him who might be the better for all I have saved, but nothing came of all the lookin', and the lawyers, and the rest of it."

"Perhaps," suggested John, "your brother died and left no 'family.'"

"That's what I think," returned Peter. "He must ha' died, and so it's no use to look any longer. I did once think I'd leave the money to charities, but lately I've changed my mind—I've changed my

mind," he repeated, lowering his voice still more, "and I'll tell you what I mean to do, and then you can write to yon lawyer and tell him all about it. He must have a new will made, and send a clerk down here for me to sign it, and you can witness it."

"Very well," said John, hoping that his detention was nearly over, "I'll do all that."

"Well, then," said Peter, trembling with excitement, "I'm going to leave all as belongs to me—all, to that young lady I spoken of so often to you;" and he added slyly as he saw John's surprise, "perhaps you may be the better for that some day, if my old eyes don't deceive me."

"Have you thought the matter well over?" asked John. "You would not do such a thing without due consideration."

"Oh, I've considered and considered till my mind's more than made up. I shall be wronging no one. If that advertisement was to be answered, I should have had the answer by now. It was worded very plain. Depend upon it, there was no one to answer to it. Nay, I'll show it to you," he continued, "and you shall judge for yourself whether it wasn't as plain as a pikestaff."

So saying he drew from the shelf beside him an old copy of "The Standard," and laid his finger on the lines addressed to Josiah Brown or his direct heirs.

John took the paper absently. He was bewildered by the strangeness of the old man's confidence. The notion of Muriel being heiress to £10,000 sent a convulsion through the order of things which had before seemed established around him. His point of view had to adjust itself to a new horizon, which contained a great many hitherto strange and now unwelcome possibilities. Muriel a rich woman! His pride bristled with the bare notion that he might be tempted to be glad for his own sake, and his love sickened with an inconsistent and insane dread of a possible gulf wider than poverty that might open between them.

"There it is," repeated Peter, "can't you see it?"

He read the words with Peter's sharp eyes upon him. He read them mechanically more than once before he understood their sense, and then more than once again, with a changed and quickened expression that did not escape his companion. Finally he laid the paper down, and passed his hand over his eyes as if to clear his sight.

"Well," queried Peter, "it's plain enough for anything, isn't it?"

"Quite," replied the doctor laconically. Then he dipped his pen in the ink, and looked at Peter for instructions.

The old man did not speak.

"I'm waiting to write the letter to your lawyers," he said, and his voice had a curious, constrained sound, as if he spoke with effort. But still the other kept silence with his ferret-like eyes fixed on his companion's face.

"Young man," he said at last suddenly, with solemnity, "you know something of Josiah Brown; your face looks as if you had seen a ghost."

"I!" exclaimed John, the blood rushing back to his face; "what makes you think that?"

"Well, do you, or do you not?" asked Peter, in the tone of a man who means to have an answer. "I ought to know if there is anything to be told. It'll make less confusion afterwards. You ain't got no right to see me leavin' all I'm worth to that young lady, pretty as she is and good as she is, if my own flesh and blood stands in need;" and all Peter's sense of family ties revived within him. "It wouldn't be no ways fair."

John paused; he was weighing Muriel's needs against other needs and desires. "I don't think," at last he said, "you'll have any answer whatever to this advertisement."

"But how can you tell that?" asked Peter still more persistently, "unless you know all about my kin, which you've no right to keep it to yourself."

This was quite right. John Hedley felt he was not justified in concealing what his honest face had unwittingly let the old man suspect; but all he answered was: "I assure you, on my word of honour, that you'll wrong no one I know anything of, if you leave every penny you have to Miss Lake."

"Doctor," said Peter, with great irritation, "I thought I was judge enough of faces to make no mistakes about honest men, but it seems I have not added you up right. I ain't goin' to rest until I know what you're hidin' from me, and you shan't persuade me to leave what ought to go elsewhere to your sweetheart. That's plain speakin', and you can understand it."

John Hedley's face grew first red, and then very pale; he was too simple and single-hearted to have seen that reading of his confusion.

"You should be careful, my good friend, how you insult a man with such words as

those," he said, rising. "I will wish you good evening. Settle your affairs without my help, since you mistrust me; but, be certain that, if honesty had required me to tell you anything whatever, I should not have concealed it for an instant, least of all that my future wife might benefit by your hoarded money."

He spoke angrily, with his hand on the latch; yet, as he glanced back at the infirm figure on the hearth, he felt a thrill of that pity which is nearest to love for the suspicious old miser, whom the last few minutes had invested with a new importance in his eyes.

"Doctor, doctor," cried the quavering voice after him, "are you going to deny an old man the last chance he has of foregathering with his own flesh and blood. Come back here," he went on imperiously, "come and look me in the face, and make no mysteries; for, though I don't know your name, nor where you come from, nor anything else about you, it is borne in upon me that you are the one I have been looking for, and had given up. Tell me the plain truth."

Thus adjured, John Hedley turned back, and once more sat down beside the old man's chair.

"There are no means," he said quietly, "of proving satisfactorily a relationship, which the last few minutes have suggested to me may exist between us; nothing but my own supposition. Had there been, I should not have felt justified in trying to keep you in the dark. However, as you insist on knowing why I changed colour on reading just now, for the first time, your advertisement, I will tell you the little there is to tell. My mother's father was a native of Carchester, his name was Josiah Brown. He had lived a wild, roving life in Australia in his early manhood, but married and settled down in later life. My mother, his only child, he named Patience after his own mother; she also is dead. Now, all this may be mere coincidence, or it may be that you are really my grandfather's brother. As I said, it would be out of my power to find proof. Pray forgive me if my impatience just now pained you, or if I have raised expectations by my unguarded surprise."

"Dear heart, dear heart!" gasped Peter, shivering with excitement. "To think how things come about, and how they work out! Why, it's quite clear he was Josiah. Who else could he ha' been? Tell me that!"

"It seems a natural conclusion," answered John, with forced calmness, "but that is a long way from being quite clear. I know little of the ways of lawyers, but I hardly think they would give credence to such a story."

Peter did not attempt to answer; he passed his trembling hands across his swimming eyes, and slowly moved his head from side to side.

"Dear heart! dear heart!" was all he could say. "I'll just get to bed and think it over. Come and tell me about it again to-morrow. Come, and we'll talk it over. Dear heart, dear heart! to think o' this! Good night to you. Good night, boy."

After this John Hedley went up to Bristol Terrace with a very strong impression that he was asleep and dreaming, and that presently he should wake and find himself by the fire, in his easy-chair, with his book slipping out of his hands on to the floor.

Past midnight, when he was preparing, after a long reverie, to go to bed, he was summoned by the night-bell.

"It's old Master Brown, down by the Cathedral, as is took much worse," said the woman who stood at the door. "It's my belief he's goin' fast, and that now't can do him any good; but he keeps on callin' for the doctor, so I came just not to moither the old man in his death struggle. Otherwise it ain't no good your coming."

John hurried out at once, and, outstripping the messenger, stood in a few minutes by the dying bed of the old man.

"Is he come?" gasped Peter, as he heard the sound of footsteps.

"Yes; I am here," answered John, bending over the pallid face and fast fading eyes, and taking in his firm clasp the hand the old man tried to hold out to him.

The woman thought the doctor was feeling his pulse.

"There ain't much life left in him," she said in the loud, distinct whisper which women of her class always employ in a sick-room.

"Send her away," murmured the dying man; and when this was done he made one last effort to collect his thoughts and to utter them. "You must have the money, my lad," he said, drawing John's hand down to his panting bosom. "I'm sure you are the right one. Your face has been looking at me all night, and I can see Josiah's face in it. It's honest money, and you needn't despise it. I wanted to benefit that sweet lassie, but I can't rob my own

kin. Snaggs and Taip has my will. You'll go to them, won't you?"

"Yes, yes," returned John, greatly moved. "Thank you for your good will to me."

"Come a bit closer," said Peter more faintly. "It's a great comfort not to die alone. I shall have plenty of company in a few minutes—all I've cared about—but I had no one here. God bless you and her, my boy."

John lifted the dying head, that the few remaining breaths might be less laboured, and the old verger passed to his long rest leaning on the bosom of his long-sought next of kin.

John and Muriel were married much sooner than they had dared to hope when they first pledged their word to one another. Part of Peter's long-hoarded wealth went to buy a country practice on the Devonshire coast, where Mrs. Lake has most marvellously recovered her health and strength, and where Doctor and Mrs. Hedley are extremely popular, and as happy as the day is long.

HIGHWAYS AND BY-WAYS.

THERE is plenty of interest to be got out of a public highway, not only from its passengers and vehicles, but from a contemplation of the road itself in its various moods and conditions—whether, like some dark and sullen river, it reflects the lines of gaslights in quivering gleams, or echoes joyously in bright sunshine to the tread of hurrying feet. But perhaps the most interesting epoch of the road's existence is when it almost ceases to exist, and is broken up to be relaid and renewed; especially when the renewal is of a thoroughgoing character—stone or macadam exchanged for wood or asphalt.

It is when our more distinguished fellow-creatures have taken leave of the pleasures and politics of the town, that these operations are to be seen at their best.

The big houses are shut up. On the doorstep where once the lordly flunkies used to tower, and whence Lady Violet and the Honourable Miss Myrtle would daintily descend, now Mary and Susan flirt openly with the policeman, while cook, among the faded shrubs in the balcony overhead, waves her handkerchief to the passing guardsman.

But while solitude on board wages reigns in the long lines of mansions, the road below is the scene of labour and animation. Great piles of wooden blocks form a barri-

cade across the thoroughfare and protect the rear of the working party, while a band of pioneers in front attack the adamant crust of the existing macadam with sledge-hammer and pickaxe. Others level the bed of the road and deposit the blocks of wood in long rows ready for the hand of the setter—the setter ready of hand and swift with the gleaming axe. Another man sets the strings, which strings are laths left between each row of blocks, to be presently pulled up, while a man with a broom sweeps dry cement into the crevices. Then follows Aquarius with a water-bucket, leaving a layer of wet cement behind him, which Gemini, with each a huge broom, sweep into every cranny, while Libra comes after in the shape of a long metal gauge to make all square and fair.

The details of the scene are continually changing, for there is no settled opinion on the subject of paving. As many as there are vestries are the different processes employed, and we are still a long way from perfection in any one of them. Asphalte, which is excellent in dry weather, is execrable when wet; and both asphalte and wood are terrible in frost, when it is a piteous sight to see the poor horses slipping at every stride, and falling in all directions. The old stones, the manner of which we have almost forgotten—the cubes of granite that stout paviers used to batter at with their huge wooden monkeys, standing in a row and beating time—the old stones gave a better foothold, and the relief to human brains from the deafening roar of the streets is purchased by some increase of suffering to the horses.

As well as the making of old ways a good deal of new work is going on, in the way of streets that have just left the builders' hands. London is continually marching into the country, impelled, as it were, by a resistless impulse towards expansion. This progress has recently been checked, no doubt; but it had previously for many years gone on in a gradually increasing ratio. The extension of London for the past dozen years has averaged nearly fifty miles of new streets every year, and the culminating period was reached in 1881, when eighty-six miles of new streets were added to the beat of the Metropolitan police.

The process of street-making is a simple one. The line of road and causeway is laid down by the builder, under the supervision of the surveyor of the local authority, and the builder usually puts down

the heavy granite sets which form the kerb of the footway. The gas and water pipes have been laid in the preliminary operations, and a row of gas lamps is not long in following the first appearance of human settlers on the scene. Then generally follows a period of dirt and disorganisation in the new street. The roadway is ploughed up into ruts; the rain forms huge pools of liquid mud; in the hot summer days clouds of dust sweep along loaded with particles of organic matter; for no scavenger visits the street, no water-carts. The street is not yet taken over by the vestry or local board, and none of its officials, except the rate-collector, pays a visit to the devoted spot, which becomes a convenient receptacle for dead cats and dogs and refuse of every kind. This kind of purgatory lasts frequently for several years. And then one day an army of contractor's men appears upon the scene. Piles of flag-stones are reared here and there, which have come from quarries among the hills of Lancashire and Yorkshire, and the stone-cutters are at work chipping them to the exact measurement required. Meantime the bed of the roadway is formed with rough stones and brickbats, which a few hours' pressure from the steam roller reduces to something like the profile of a road. The side channels are formed of granite blocks, supplied most likely from the rough and rugged hills of Cornwall, or it may be from the granite city in the North, or the quarries of the farthest Orcades. The crossings, too, are formed of the same material, and then, with cartloads of broken stones and continual application of the steam roller, the road may be considered made.

But let us get off the stones if we can; stones that were once typical of the streets of London, which have ceased to be paved with gold even in the imagination of the veriest yokel, since pitch pine and bitumen have come into fashion; let us away into the country and see what road-makers are doing there. Our distinguished friends who are visiting each other, at lordly castles and baronial halls, have not escaped from the miseries of road-mending. The heaps of stones which old men in the parish uniform have been assiduously cracking all the year are now spread pell-mell over the roads, to be beaten down and made smooth by the more or less delicate hoofs of horses of every degree. Anything is better than mud, and it is possible to get along if but slowly, over a newly macadamised road.

Macadam himself, indeed, would be justly indignant at hearing his name applied to such a heterogeneous collection of sharp stones. It was one of his maxims that no stone should be put upon a road, if that stone were too big to be popped into a man's mouth; but, though Gargantuan mouths may be met with sometimes, there are stones on our road that would be more than a mouthful for the biggest of them. And here the steam-roller is rarely at hand to reduce the rough stones into order.

In contrast with our rough-and-ready system of public roads we may take a glance at the Roman method, that left behind it roads which are in many cases still in existence, and which, in other instances, were destroyed, not by wear and tear—for with ordinary repairs these roads are imperishable—but of malice aforethought, for the sake of the excellent gravel and other materials they contained. There was a simple uniformity about the Roman method which gave excellent results, although, in the absence of any detailed survey of the country—the roads were necessarily carried out with a too rigid directness. The workmen employed were the legionaries and the people of the country, who grumbled and complained much of the compulsory service. The overseers were the centurions and sub-officers of the legion, with no instruments, save their own arms and legs—no theodolites, no levels, but just a rod for measuring and a chain to mark a line.

First, the width of the road was paced out, either twelve or twenty-four paces, according to the importance of the thoroughfare, and the direction fixed by a line of soldiers at intervals, dressed with military precision. Then a plough was borrowed from a neighbouring field, and a furrow traced on each side of the proposed road. Between these furrows the top soil was removed till a smooth and firm foundation was obtained. Over this was spread a thin layer of rough cement, in which were laid large flat stones, placed one upon the other for the space of ten inches, and joined together with cement intimately and firmly. The cement employed owed its excellence to the method in which it was mixed, the lime being thoroughly mingled with pounded tile and brick, and not slaked till just before it was wanted for use; and it presently hardened into a solid mass more durable than the stone which it united. Over this solid foundation was laid a second course of broken stones about the diameter of the palm of the hand: with these were mixed

broken pots, tiles, and bricks, which aided to bind and make solid the mass. Upon this was placed a layer of sand and chalk, and over all a coating of six inches of gravel. The whole construction was three feet in thickness, and defined like our modern roads by granite kerbs with drains and culverts, and nearly always with a raised causeway at the side for foot passengers. The streams that might be met with were generally crossed by a ford, the bed of the stream being carefully widened and paved, a device which has given a name to the many Stratfords that are to be found in the "Gazetteer" of the present day. Where the road ran through low-lying land it was generally raised on an embankment; and, as the Roman roads were for many centuries after the Norman Conquest the chief means of communication, this feature of theirs probably caused them to be known as the high street, or more formally the King's high street or the King's highway.

But there are many existing roads which owe their origin to a period long before the Roman invasion; trackways which were never adopted into the Roman itineraries, and which are known by various local names as port-ways, salt-ways, and so on; others have survived in the form of bridle-roads; while of the innumerable footpaths that intersect the fields, passing from one little settlement to another, most are of an antiquity far beyond the present system of land tenure.

The earliest road-book that has been preserved to the present day is a Roman itinerary, designed evidently for the use of military officers, giving the routes and distances from one military station to another, over most parts of the Roman empire, including Britain. From internal evidence it is pretty certain that this itinerary was compiled in the reign of the Emperor Antoninus Pius, and thus the name generally applied to it is Antonine's Itinerary. This gives us the route from the Roman wall in Cumberland to the coast of Kent, as well as the ways between many important towns, and is the main source of our knowledge of the localities of Roman Britain.

Another valuable guide is in the form of a map or tablet, containing in a compressed and conventional form a chart of the various roads of the empire branching out from Rome; but, unfortunately, giving but few details as to the roads of Britain. The archæologists of the last century were much excited by the alleged discovery among

certain Danish archives of a veritable guide to the whole of Britain, apparently compiled by a mediæval monk, one Richard of Cirencester, from a Roman original, and showing roads and stations all over Britain, hitherto unknown or only guessed at. But modern criticism has demolished Richard of Cirencester, at least that part of him which concerns Roman topography, and has stigmatised his treatise as a forgery cleverly constructed by its alleged discoverer, one Bertram. With the collapse of Richard many laborious and learned treatises, founded upon his topography, fell to pieces, such as those of Dr. Whitaker of Manchester, of whom De Quincey says that he wrote his histories entirely in the subjunctive mood.

Anyhow the dim light we have upon the roads of Roman Britain, falls into almost total darkness during many following ages. The purely military roads no doubt fell into disuse during the Saxon domination, and only the four great thoroughfares of the kingdom had any national care bestowed upon them. But these, and especially Watling Street, the great highway from north to south, were kept in some kind of repair. There were waywardens even in those days, and the bridges the Romans had built were probably kept in repair. For while the devout Saxons exempted ecclesiastical lands from ordinary taxation, there were three services from which even Churchmen could not escape—the *trinoda necessitas*, as it was called by the legist of the period—that is, building forts, repairing bridges, and supplying men for the national army. Some kind of protection, too, was afforded for wayfarers; lands were held on the condition of affording armed men to guard the way; while under the laws of Edward the Confessor, the King's peace extended over the great highways, and the blood money of a man killed on the highway was proportionately raised. Sometimes a powerful Abbot would take the roads adjoining his monastery under his charge, sometimes a municipal town would be charged with the guardianship of the King's highway. This was the case at Nottingham, where the town had charge of the road as well as the river, and where any who ploughed or dug a ditch within two perches of the King's highway forfeited eight pounds to the King. There are similar penalties to be found in the ancient laws of Wales, which are equally derived, no doubt, from the Roman municipal jurisprudence.

Then, with the advent of the Normans, more attention was paid to the roads of the kingdom, the conquerors' laws directing that each hundred shall have its waywardens, who should be responsible for the safety of wayfarers. But it is not till the year A.D. 1285 that any distinct enactment is found as to the care of the roads themselves, and then it is only to enjoin the lords of the soil to enlarge the ways where bushes, woods, or ditches encroach upon the highways, in order to prevent robberies. Indeed, as long as travelling on horseback and the conveyance of goods on pack animals prevailed, the public necessity for well-metalled roads was not evident. With wide open spaces of unenclosed lands, it was more pleasant and easy to amble over the turf than to pound along a hard road; and indeed, it is not till great people begin to ride in coaches that we find the governing power busying itself about the roads.

Possibly we owe the beginning of our highway legislation to the haughty indolence of Philip of Spain, who preferred to loll in a gilt coach rather than take to the saddle. Anyway, it was soon after the Spanish marriage that the first general law as to highways appears in the statute book. This enacts that two surveyors shall be chosen in each parish, and that the inhabitants shall provide labourers, carriages, tools, etc., for four days in each year to work upon the roads under the direction of the surveyor.

That this enactment was received without much opposition shows pretty clearly that it imposed no more than people were already accustomed to. In fact, the system of forced labour on the roads had been in use from the days of Roman legislation. But it is doubtful whether any good effect was produced upon the roads. In fact, for the couple of centuries immediately following this enactment, the roads were never probably in worse condition.

At the same time there was a general and not unnatural feeling in country parishes that those who used the roads—the great people going to and fro, the courtiers, the couriers, and the merchants—ought to bear the burden of repairing them. And this feeling in time found expression in legislation. In the time of Charles the Second, restrictions were laid on the weight of carriages and their contents by limiting the number of cattle by which they might be drawn; power was given to raise an assessment for the repairs

of the roads; and the plan of imposing tolls began to be adopted.

From this time we begin to hear of Turnpikes, and as time went on, Turnpike Acts were passed, and turnpike roads began to be talked about. With increased traffic and better roads the stage waggon replaced the packhorse in the conveyance of merchandise—the huge tilted-waggon that survived till railway times, with its six or eight sleek horses, the smart waggoner riding his cob by the side of it, flourishing his long cart-whip, as the road wound through undulating ground with cornfields and pastures, still mostly unenclosed, and by-ways branching off with way-posts, at the junction pointing to some village whose spire shows over the hillsides.

In the year 1767 the system of collecting tolls was extended to the great roads in all directions, and the customary statute labour was appropriated entirely to the cross, or country roads. This date marks the beginning of the era of stage-coaches, and the full development of an organised system of posting from stage to stage along the public roads. From this time the roads of England began to rouse the wonder and envy of other nations. In France especially, just before the revolutionary era, the roads were execrable, and the few public conveyances clumsy and badly horsed. Everything had to give way to the equipages of the grand seigneurs, and the starving peasantry were dragged from their sloppy fields to draw the gilded coach of the Marquis or Count out of the quagmires of the public road.

At the present time the public highways of France are, in management and order, greatly superior to our own, but at that date they were at least a century behind; and this although most of our improved modes of locomotion had been originally adopted from French models. The coach, however, seems to have come to us from the steppes—its model, the light waggon such as even now conveys the traveller in most parts of Russia. Herberstein, writing in the sixteenth century, speaks of coaches under the name of "cotchien," or "kolyshi wägnen," and adds: "They are so called after a village ten miles distant from Buda, Kotsee, Kotch, now Kitser. They are drawn by three horses abreast; they carry four persons along with the driver; and it is indeed a very agreeable conveyance, so that anyone can convey his bedclothes, eatables, and drinkables, and other conveniences, provided the load be not a heavy one."

The modern coach, however, retains no characteristic of its presumed model, the cotch waggon, except the central pole, which, in all properly constructed coaches, unites the framework of the two pairs of wheels, and gives stability to the whole structure.

And yet, efficient as were our roads in the old coaching days, the system of their management was a thing of shreds and patches, controlled here by local authorities, there by turnpike trustees, under the authority of a complicated network of Acts of Parliament. But the era of the coach-and-four corresponded with a period of great energy and capacity among the country gentry. The Pitts, and statesmen of their school, almost created the landed gentry as an active and overpowering element; and the Justice Shallow, of Shakespeare's time—and long after—was transformed into a keen and able local administrator, with a shrewd notion of his own class interests, but also with a strong feeling of loyal devotion to the State. His younger sons went abroad, and helped to win our Indian and Colonial Empire; the Squire himself, and the young heir, stopped at home to rule the Bench and manage the roads.

The first blast of the railway whistle foreboded the downfall of turnpikes and stage-coaches. As soon as a line of railway was completed the coaches were at once withdrawn; posting almost ceased; the great ways were deserted; the toll-gates rusted on their hinges. Often enough money had been borrowed for the making or improvement of the turnpike roads; the interest remained unpaid, or was only partly paid. There was no surplus anyhow for the repair of the roads, which fell into a bad condition all over the country. At the same time the high tolls and heavy license duties which had been borne with difficulty when the world in general travelled by road, now proved almost prohibitory of the minor public conveyances from town to town. It had been otherwise in the coaching days. Little Peddlington had its daily coach to Slowcombe Minor; and if the enterprise did not bring wealth to its proprietors, it paid expenses and proved a public convenience. Soon it was found that no public conveyance was possible, except to the nearest railway station. And thus it is to the present day, although tolls are now fast disappearing, and most of the fiscal duties have been modified.

The turnpike system has lasted long after the life was fairly out of it, and as yet no efficient control of the highways has been effected. The liability of a parish to keep its roads in repair is ruefully accepted by those concerned; and, by 25 and 26 Vict., magistrates in Quarter Sessions were empowered to form highway districts of an aggregation of parishes, rural and urban; and generally throughout the country these districts have been formed, with surveyors and a governing board for each district. But each wheel of the machine is independent of the other, and the general result is that the state of the roads, all over the country, is as various and uncertain as can well be imagined.

A new interest has now been brought to the question by the growth of the wheel-world. The bicycle and the tricycle now penetrate to every corner of the land; and upon the state of the roads depends the well-being of every tourist on wheels. There are consuls and vice-consuls in every direction who are appointed by the great touring club, and who make it unpleasant sometimes for the lagging highwayman. The old-fashioned agriculturist has naturally little sympathy with these new invaders of his seclusion. "Why should the likes of we pay highway rates for the likes of them runaway wheel gentry?" asks Farmer Hodge, as he listens imperturbably to the bell and whistle of the cyclist who is trying to get past his broad-wheeled waggon.

It may be worth while to cross the Channel, and see how our near neighbours deal with their public roads. There we shall find the neat and complete organisation characteristic of the nation. The roads are all classed according to their degree—national roads, which are at the charge of the State; departmental roads, which are borne upon the budgets of the departments; and vicinal ways, which are kept up at the charge of the commune or township. The classification is almost identical with that of Imperial Rome, and was no doubt purposely so modelled. The whole of the roads, of whatever degree, are under the management of the Department of Ponts et Chaussées.

Almost familiar figure on the French roads is the "cantonnier," who, like the plate-layer on an English railway, is charged with keeping in repair a certain limited stretch of roads. On his own strip of road the cantonnier is constantly at work, whenever the weather permits, and, as he is paid only for the hours he works, he makes as

much fair weather as possible. Frequently he is an old soldier, and one recalls that taking picture, "My Old Regiment," where the cantonnier, quitting his stone-breaking for a moment, salutes the standard of the dragoons, his old comrades, who are filing over the little bridge. The cantonnier is but poorly paid, and rarely makes his two francs a day, but he has probably a cottage close by with a "cour," a saving wife, with no family but her chickens and her goat, or perhaps even a cow. Always where the cantonnier is at work you see his iron stake driven into the ground with a little tin box hanging from it, which contains his documents, his schedule of work, and so on, which will be presently visé by his immediate superior, the "agent voyer," who is constantly on the move throughout his district, with his own documents always ready to be visé by somebody else.

With all this care and supervision, the roads of France are in a state of general and uniform efficiency. Many of the great roads were laid out under the decrees of the First Napoleon; but, during the Restoration and the reign of the Citizen King, the roads were a good deal neglected. During the Second Empire, on the contrary, great improvements were made in the roads all over the country. The main strength of Imperialism was among the peasants and small cultivators, who were quite alive to the importance of good roads, and were not ungrateful when public money was spent in making them. And if small farming is to flourish, and local markets to be supplied, good roads are as indispensable here as there.

VICTIMS.

By THEO GIFT.

Author of "*Lil Lorimer*," "*An Alibi and its Price*,"
Etc., Etc.

CHAPTER XX.—MENHIR DAHUT.

It was a fine breezy afternoon in the early part of April, when a young Englishman—an artist apparently, for he carried a sketching-block and paint-box suspended by a strap round his shoulders—set out to walk from a little village in the west of Brittany. He had left his vehicle at the one small hostelry which the hamlet boasted, and, declining the offer of a guide, had asked his way to one of the sights of the neighbourhood, a menhir, some two or three miles distant, which, from its lofty stature and its position on the highest part

of an open heath, served as a landmark to vessels far out at sea.

His way brought him at last to one of the Calvarys so common in these parts, which was placed at a bend in the lane just where the latter forked into three, making him doubtful which of the narrow, devious paths to pursue. A woman was kneeling at prayer in the road beneath it, and the young man lifted his hat, and stood reverently aside till she had finished, his eyes wandering from the tall, black, wooden cross, with its solemn, pathetic burden reared high above the delicate green flutter of half-formed leaves and clusters of snowy blackthorn in the hedge-row behind, to the homely, white-capped figure with its string of beads trickling rapidly through the brown, hard fingers; and the pair of goats, presumably her property, who were slaking their thirst at a tiny stream which gushed out of the steep, primrose-studded bank, and ran away in a succession of miniature, glittering pools across the lane below.

Presently the woman, having finished her prayers, or becoming aware of the stranger's observation, rose up, putting her beads into the pocket of her blue linen apron, and the young man came forward and asked her his way. He spoke very bad French, with a strong English accent, and she, as it appeared, spoke no French at all, nothing but her native Breton; but by dint of frequent repetitions of the words "Menhir-Dahut," and much expenditure of finger-pointing, they arrived at last at a knowledge of each other's meaning, and, having received his directions, the traveller set off again at a brisker step than before.

It was a longer walk than he had anticipated; the deep, stony lanes, with their high banks bossed with gnarled tree-roots and crowned with dainty fringing of budding green, seemed to him interminable. Now and then there was a break, an open patch, a stretch of barren heath relieved by an occasional tall fir-tree; a tiny hamlet to this side or that, some score or less of grey, weather-stained cottages with an old church crumbling into ruin; and all about a flutter of rosy almond-blossoms, of swaying daffodils, and the gurgling of hidden streams crossed by mossy stones and overhung by slender, golden-budded palms glittering in the cool sunlight. Everywhere, on every bit of rising ground, through every break in the hedgerows, the sea was visible, a misty stripe beyond a wide stretch of flat, desolate country, broken now and then by

the tawny glimmer of a salt marsh, or by an occasional group of those strange, prehistoric monoliths, the menhirs so characteristic of this part of Brittany, looking at this distance like fossil human beings of gigantic size holding converse together.

Of actual living specimens of humanity the young man saw very few anywhere, and these seemed a stern, sombre-looking race: the men—with their wild-looking eyes and straight, dark hair floating over their shoulders, their enormous black hats and many-buttoned jackets—having a curious air of half-savage mediævalism about them; while the women seemed mere beasts of burden, brown-skinned, patient creatures, labouring with stiff, bent shoulders over hoe or spade in the newly-ploughed fields, or wheeling heavy barrows of turf or manure along the deeply-rutted roads.

Very soon, however, the stranger left even these primitive specimens of civilisation behind, and emerged on to a wide expanse of heath, brown and naked-looking, broken only by a few scattered fir-trees or a clump of lichen-crusts on rocks at rare intervals, but enamelled at this season with minute spring blossoms and emerald mosses, joyous with the song of larks, and sweet with the strong salt breeze which swept over it from that wide bay beyond the lower level of land of which the black rocks of Pen'marche form one distant point.

Here at last, right in front of him, as it seemed, rose the object of which he was in search—a tall, upright monolith of grey stone, twenty feet high at least, outlined as sharply against the pale-blue sky as in that time, hundreds of years ago, when the hands which placed it there and which crumbled into dust long before the age of history began, first chiselled its sides into rough angles and scored grotesque patterns over its dusky face. At its feet, broken into three huge fragments, lay a second menhir, partly bedded in the turf and partly heaped together so as to form a sort of natural penthouse. All around, to right, to left, and behind him, the heath stretched away in long, rolling undulations bare and barren enough, save for its brief covering of thin spring greenness, and for the clumps of ragged furze bushes spotted here and there with sparse gold blossoms. In front it took a downward slope, giving to view not only the low-lying line of flat coast-land beyond, but beyond that again a vast semi-circular space of vague, shimmery

ocean, blue as the sky above it, cleft at one extremity by the ragged, ink-black rocks of the point, or "torche," of Pen'marche, against whose cruel jaws the waves, even at this distance, could be seen rearing themselves in cataracts of cream-white foam; and dotted on the far horizon by the islands of Karek-hir and La Charette, glittering like sparks of fire in the low sunlight.

A grand view in its breadth and loneliness; but either the traveller was disappointed in it, or he had come in search of something else but the picturesque after all; for after one hasty glance at it, and scarcely even that at the great menhir, to reach which, when he first caught sight of it, he had redoubled his pace, he turned his back on both, and devoted himself to eagerly scanning the undulating ridges of heath in one direction with an expression of anxious impatience which changed, however, to one of positively radiant delight, when suddenly two figures rose above the crest of the rising ground some couple of hundred yards distant, and came slowly towards him in the track of the westering sun.

They were those of a young woman and a boy, the latter dressed in ordinary peasant costume and carrying a thick stick in his hand; the former wearing a broad-brimmed felt hat with a curling feather, and wrapped in a long fur-lined cloak, which she held closely round her as if for warmth. It fell from her hands, however, and the ends were swept backwards by the strong breeze as she caught sight of the solitary male figure standing in the shadow of the great menhir; and in the same moment the boy also pointed to it, saying something to her which she answered in a way that had the effect of making him stop short and seat himself on a jutting fragment of rock, from which he had a good view of the country around. She herself made no stop, however, beyond that first, half involuntary one; but went forward, slowly at first, and then more swiftly, and in another moment was clasped and held in the grip of two strong arms, while, between the kisses which he fairly rained upon her white, agitated face, Marstland—for it was he, and no artist—almost sobbed out:

"My Vera, my poor, poor little darling! At last!"

Vera did not make any reply. Perhaps she had not expected so passionate a greeting, and was frightened by it, for she trembled excessively, and the face which lay on

his breast was so deadly pale that he thought she was going to faint; but she made no effort to repel him or free herself, and only after a minute or so gave utterance to a long sighing, "Oh! oh!" so expressive of past pain and trouble, and present half-fearful relief, that it brought tears into her lover's eyes.

In truth she was greatly altered since he had last seen her; altered even since that visit to the Convent of the Augustinians at Quimper only six weeks previously. It had been a sad and troubled face which greeted the sisters then, unduly pale for one so young, and quite devoid of that sweet, and almost expressionless tranquillity which till lately had been its chief characteristic; but now the pallor was ghastly with a dull red spot in the centre of each cheek, while the soft curves of the latter and of the round chin had sharpened visibly, and the pupils of the large grey eyes were dilated with a piteous expression, half hopelessness, half desperation, which went to Marstland's heart, and made him hold her closer still with almost incoherent words of tenderness and caressing.

"My poor, poor little darling!" he kept saying pitifully, "how you have suffered, and—Heaven forgive me!—for me, for your truth to me! Oh, Vera, I never loved you so much as at this moment; and yet, when I see what my love has brought on you, I could almost wish for your sake we had never met."

"Do you? Ah! so do I sometimes; but—not now," said Vera simply. She had recovered composure enough to draw herself a little away, so that, though his arms were still round her, she could stand alone and look up at him; but that only made the weary sadness of her face more apparent, and she did not resist when her lover took off his great-coat, and folding it into a cushion for her, made her sit down on the soft turf under the lee of the fallen menhir, and lean against him while they talked. "It did not seem possible that I should find you here," she said softly. "It has been getting more and more hopeless every day of late, so that I sometimes thought all your planning and trouble would be no use; but now that you have come—oh! it is quite different now. Perhaps you will save me after all."

"Of course I have come, and of course I shall save you," Marstland said, the deep, strong tones of his voice contrasting strangely with those feeble, fluttering ones, scarcely more than a whisper, in which

Vera spoke. "Did you doubt me, love, that you were not sure of that? Didn't you know that my only reason for not trying to see you sooner, to write oftener, was the fear of bringing fresh peril and trouble on you; that, except for the form of running over to Guernsey for a day or so now and again to visit the lodgings I took there more than a fortnight ago, I have never been further from you than Quimper or Morlaix; and when I left the island yesterday evening, after making all the final preparations for our marriage, I told my landlady to make her rooms extra bright and neat for the day after to-morrow, as when I next returned to them I should bring my wife with me. She will not be sorry to find herself there, my little wife, will she, Vera?"

For a minute Vera did not answer. She did not even blush; only looked up at him with an expression of almost awed wonder and admiration; but after an instant this was quenched in the frightened, crushed look, which seemed to have settled like a mask on her young features, and she said very low and fearfully:

"They say that we are all to start for Paris the day after to-morrow, in order that we may keep my birthday there."

"I know," said Marstland smiling, "only unfortunately I mean you to keep it with me instead. It is disagreeable that they should have taken up the other idea, and so obliged us to hurry matters; for of course I should have liked to have waited till the day on which you do become of 'full age,' as I have already described you; but it is their fault for driving us to it, and you will have your birthday present of a plain gold ring a day before the anniversary, that's all. Let me try it on now, my darling one, and see if it fits."

He took it out of his waistcoat pocket as he spoke, keeping one arm round her the while, his face full of colour, fire, and excitement; but no answering blush came to Vera's cheek. All the sweet pink roses which used to flush face and throat at the slightest provocation seemed to have faded with her now, and she only said in the same low, tremulous tone:

"They will find out, and come after us."

"As they please," Marstland answered sternly. "It will be a shorter journey for them than it would be if they were to follow us to England, should they feel disposed to take so much trouble for the sake of bringing you their forgiveness; and it will be no use their coming for anything

else. You will belong to me then, and, once that is the case, no one shall ever be allowed to say a harsh word to you again. Be sure of that!"

"But if they—if they take me away!" Vera whispered, her lips paling with the words.

"My own love! how can they? They suspect nothing at present, or you would not be here now; and, unless anything unforeseen were to happen, I have made all my plans far too carefully to be thwarted. Bénéite tells me that it will not be difficult for you to leave your room unheard, that it is at some distance from your parents' apartments, and that she will be waiting for you outside the garden door, which is never fastened. I wanted to be there, but she would not let me. She said the dogs would be sure to make a noise, and of course we must run no useless risks; but I shall be ready for you in the lane at the bottom of the orchard with a strong, light carriage, and one of the best horses to be had for love or money in the neighbourhood. We will drive to Quimper, catch the early morning express there for Morlaix, and once there we shall be met by my friend's steam yacht, which will take us across to Guernsey quicker than any one else would be likely to follow us, even if they started only five minutes later. After that, you know, there is nothing more for us to do but to walk up to the church and be married! It will be in the afternoon, but I have made all the needful arrangements for that; fortunately afternoon and evening marriages are too common there for one to excite any notice, and it will be no use for any one to follow us then. You will be my wife, and no one can take you from me; and if your mother is a religious woman, if they either of them have any care for your good name, I shouldn't think they would wish to do so. You will be safe enough, my precious one, if you are only willing to do the one thing that will make you so—an immensely great thing, but I have no choice save to ask it of you—to trust yourself to me."

"Leah said I might trust you," Vera answered simply, "and unless you take me away—you make it all seem easy when you speak; but at other times when I think how strong they are, it does not seem possible; and then——"

"There is no 'then,' Vera," said Marstland, putting additional firmness into his voice, so as to reassure her. "You have only to believe that, to rest your faith in

me—before Heaven you may, my child—as entirely as though, till the moment when we stand together at the altar I were your father or your brother; and it will be easy. I have taken every pains to make it so.”

Vera looked up suddenly.

“Will Leah be there?” she asked. “Once—in London—she promised that, when the time came, she would be my bridesmaid; that she would be—there with me. I thought perhaps,”—her lips quivering a little—“that she would have managed to go over to Guernsey too.”

“With me?” asked Marstrand laughing. “My own darling! even on the score of propriety alone, I’m afraid that would be hardly possible.”

“But, if it is proper for me to go with you—and she said she could trust you, too?”

“Only you see you are going to be my wife, and she is not. No, no, you innocent child, a man does not bring one young lady to help him to run away with another; and, as it happens, Leah doesn’t even know what is taking place, or that I am not in London at the present moment.”

“Leah doesn’t know!” Vera repeated, a look of such dismay coming into her face, that he regretted having spoken. “Oh! I thought—I made sure you would have told her—that it was she who was advising you. I thought if she felt sure it would be safe——” She stopped short, the tears rushing into her eyes, and Marstrand, bitterly annoyed with himself, drew her closer to him and tried his best to soothe her.

“My dear love, it will be safe for you. It does not need Leah’s assurance to make it so; though you would certainly have that too if you could ask her. My only reason for not telling her of our plans was that we agreed, you know, to keep them a profound secret, and I could scarcely have made her an exception to the rule without doing so by the Professor also. You know what friends she and her father are in every sense of the word.”

“But when I begged you to keep it a secret, I said, ‘except from the Josephses,’” Vera answered. “And the Professor was always so kind, he might even have helped you.”

“No; he would not have done that,” said Marstrand, frowning a little. “He is kind—I don’t want to prejudice you against him, Vera—but in this matter he has not been so kind as he might have

been. It was he who would not let Leah write to you after she got your mother’s letter; and he seemed inclined to make a jest of the affair—not to believe that our affection for each other was as deep as it is. The fact is, he’s an excellent old fellow, but just a little narrow-minded and worldly-wise, as old fellows are apt to be; and I expect he thought it was the proper thing for one paternal authority to appear to support another.”

“Ah! he too thinks it wrong to go against one’s parents, then,” said Vera, so sadly that Marstrand wished more than ever that the Josephses’ name had not come up.

“Not when parents are cruel and tyrannical enough to want to force one into wrong-doing themselves,” he answered briskly. “Why, Vera, think for yourself how differently he treats his children! what perfect liberty they enjoy! Why, I don’t believe he had even spoken to little Lucas till Naomi came home from a dance one day and said she was engaged to him; and I am quite sure he, and Leah, and the whole family will be only too glad to hear that we are married. Indeed, he said himself that he should be the first to come and see you when you were my wife.”

“Did he really?”

Vera looked a little reassured, and a faint tinge of colour came back to her cheek.

“Of course he did; and we’ll telegraph to them the moment the ceremony is over, so that you may have their congratulations as soon as may be. I will write to your parents, too, and tell them that you are safe, and well, and married to me, so that they will not be dragging the ponds for you at any rate. I will even ask their forgiveness for you, if it will please you, love; though, when I look at your sweet face, and see what they have been making you suffer, I can’t promise to forgive them.”

Vera looked up at him with the same mixture of awed admiration and wonder as before.

“You speak as if I—as if I belonged to you already,” she said innocently; “but you forget I do belong to them still. I am their child, you know; and I suppose it is natural that papa—the Count lent him money, you know—that he should expect me to help him to show his gratitude this way, since he wishes it. I might even have done it—I don’t know—if I had never met you, or if you had not kept on caring for me; but now—now that I see

you again—I feel that I could not. I never could. Even the convent would be better."

"And, now that you have seen me, Vera, it shall be neither the Count nor the convent," said Marstland, kissing her, "though our scraps of letters have been so scrappy that I don't yet know how you can have got involved in this way; still less what can have ripened the idea of this iniquitous marriage so suddenly, or induced you to write me that dreadful little note, which I think I may destroy now, though the reading it nearly drove me mad at the time." And he took out of his pocket a folded sheet of paper and spread it before her. It was so blotted that you could scarcely read the words as they ran.

"DEAR GEORGE,

"This is only to say good-bye. It is no, no use! The Count has come back, and they are going to make me marry him in a month. I have tried all I can, but they will not listen. They make it seem as if I were something wicked; as if I had promised! But I never did promise; only I am so weak, I don't how to resist. Oh, forgive me! Indeed I love you. I have loved you all along. I hope I shall die soon.

"Your loving
"VERA."

Vera blushed deeply.

"I think I should have died," she said; "I felt so wretched, so helpless, and you and Leah were so far away. Ah, you don't know what it is to have no one near you; to be all alone against everybody. One could be made to do anything. And I had been thinking (he was away so long, you know) that it might all pass over; that perhaps he would forget me, or find someone else. It was his sisters who gave me the first fright."

"His sisters! How!"

"They were staying at a convent in Quimper, and they came over one day to see us without warning. They were very kind, very nice; but they talked as if it were all settled; as if I were engaged to their brother. And the next day, when I was sent to visit them and their aunt, the Mother Superior at the convent, it was the same thing. She—the Mère Supérieure—even gave me little counsels about my duty as a Christian wife, and presented me with a religious book, which she begged me to study for the good of my soul. I did not

take it. I told her mamma did not allow me to read those sorts of things—Popish books, you know—but I think they saw there was something else, that I was very unhappy. Perhaps they told him. Anyhow, it was only three days later that papa said to me: 'Well, little one, I congratulate you. That scoundrel who murdered our good friend's steward is to be sent to the galleys, it seems, and de Maily announces that he is free at last to put his business on one side, and come back to Finisterre to prepare for his marriage with my daughter. What about the trousseau, eh? It is to be hoped it will not take long; for this fiancé of thine has grown impatient, and will only give us a month at the outside.' A month! That was all; and, when I flew to mamma, she said the same. She would not even hear me when I begged and entreated. She told me I must be mad; that it had all been settled for months; that I had consented, accepted his ring, and gone as his fiancée to visit his relations; I, who only did what I had been ordered to do, nothing more! But when I reminded mamma of that, she would not listen. She said I was wilful, and perverse, and ungrateful; that but for her I would have been married and the whole business done with months ago; and then she sent me away, and I did not see her all next day or the one after. Joanna said I had made her really ill, and wouldn't let me go to her. It was then I began to despair, and I wrote to you. What could I do?"

Marstland drew her nearer to him. He had not the heart to say, "You should have stood out firmly and from the beginning, or not at all. You should never have made any sham of yielding or submission, unless you had meant to do both in reality." The words might be on his lips, but one look at the frail, drooping figure, the piteous, childish face, silenced them and every thought of criticism; and he only said very pitifully:

"My poor little love, what indeed! But, Vera, I was not long in coming to you, was I? You felt better when you got my letter?"

"Oh yes! When Bénéite put it in my hand, and I knew that you were at Loctudy, it seemed as if—as if an angel had come down from heaven to free me. The Count had been calling on us that day. He brought me another ring, and he would put it on my finger and kiss my hand. I felt sick, almost suffocating. I even longed

that I might hide myself in the convent like Alphonsine; but I dared not say anything because papa was there looking at us, and all the while the Count kept close to me, and kept stooping down to stare into my face, as if—as if I were something of his already. He even said he could wish for once that he was a Protestant, so that he need not wait till after Easter week for the marriage. You know”—her voice drooping to the old terrified whisper—“it is actually fixed for Monday week now: the first possible day.”

“Yes,” said Maratland gaily, “but I also know that you will be Mrs. George Maratland long before that; and that if your Count ever comes close enough to stare at you again in the way—confound him!—that you describe, he will get a sound thrashing from your husband. Cheer up, my sweet one. You have seen your last of him now, for you tell me he is in Paris at present, and though the arrangement that you should follow him, and this infernal marriage take place from there, has obliged us to hurry our proceedings more than we wanted, I don’t know—now that I have seen you—that I am sorry for it. A few formalities, more or less, what do they matter once you are saved? And this man’s being away makes it all the easier.”

“Yes, if he had been at Mailly I could not have met you here to-day,” said Vera, shuddering. “Look there, do you see that dark line of fir-tops yonder? That is the boundary of his property. Oh! think if he had been riding across the heath from there and had seen us!”

Maratland laughed fearlessly.

“But he is in Paris, and no one, save Bénéite and P’tit-Jean, who is keeping watch so virtuously there, even suspects that I am not in England!”

“Ah, no, thank heaven! Bénéite says she knows it is wicked, and so she will not even tell Catharine that she has been seeing you or helping to arrange for us. She says it would disturb Catharine’s soul; but she has made up her mind that her own soul is not so important as Catharine’s body; and till you gave her so much money she was always troubled by thinking that if anything happened to her, her poor sister would have to go to the ‘asile des pauvres.’”

“And I would have given double the

money rather than lose her help,” said Maratland. “Indeed, we could have done nothing without it. Her facilities for going between us, and her sharp wits, have been invaluable. I only hope the lad yonder is equally to be depended on.”

“Oh, P’tit-Jean would do anything he was paid for,” said Vera simply. “All the Breton men are avaricious; but he is quite a little miser. He hides his money in a hole in the ground, and counts it every day. No, I do not think anyone suspects you now. It is fortunate, for I should not have liked to disobey a command of mamma’s or tell an actual falsehood; and at present I am really doing what I am told in going out for a long walk every day. Dr. Dupré ordered it on account of my looking so thin and pale, and though I would have liked to have looked still paler and uglier if it would have made the Count dislike me, papa insisted that I should obey; and as mamma’s rheumatism will not let her walk, and Joanna hates exercise, P’tit-Jean is desired to go with me instead. But oh! I must be going back now. It is a long walk, and I dare not be late. I have stayed too long already.”

She rose to her feet with trembling haste as she spoke, and Maratland—loth as he was to let her go—was fain to own that she was right. Yet with all his heart he longed that he could carry her off then and there. He had never before realised the extent of her weakness, of her defective moral judgment, of her utter impotence for self-defence; and as he saw the little life and colour which had come into her face fade from it again when he took his supporting arm from her, he dreaded even the chance that a single day might bring, and would have given all he had that it was that night, and not the one after, which was fixed for their flight. What he could do to cheer her by the tenderest caresses, the bravest, most hopeful words, he did; but his heart sank within him none the less as, standing within the shadow of the great menhir—for she would not let him come out from it while she was in sight, lest some one at a distance should spy their two figures together—he watched the slender, girlish form wending its way, with slow steps and downbent head, across the blossoming moor and through the golden mist of the setting sunbeams.

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

A Weekly Journal
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PRICE TWOPENCE.

ALEXIA.

BY ELEANOR C. PRICE,
Author of "Gerald."

CHAPTER IX.

ONE evening in winter, when three years and a half had gone by since Charles Melville's marriage, his mother, in her London house, was sitting alone by the fire, waiting for him. He was coming to her from Cannes for a few days, on his way to America. Cannes, it seemed, was no longer to be borne, and he was going to try a different kind of winter, leaving Maud to her pet climate, her friends and her amusements, all of which were either odious or indifferent to him.

His mother's thoughts were sad enough, as she sat expecting him. She had long ceased to hope for anything from Charlie; her ambitions were dead; how they had ever been born was now a mystery. To restore old Redwood and live there, to go into Parliament, to lift up his father's old respected name again: Miss Radcliffe's money was to have helped Charlie to all this, in his mother's mind: but Miss Radcliffe's own inclinations, and Charlie's weakness, had not been taken into account at all. One almost wonders how Mrs. Melville could have been so sanguine; and she wondered at herself now.

Charlie's life hardly seemed to be worth living, either from his own point of view or other people's. He did not get into scrapes like George, they were not in his line. But he smoked and dawdled his life away; and trained dogs and played with them; and quarrelled with his wife, and sulked, and slowly came round again; and cared for nothing, and admired nothing; and thought a good deal of his meals, and gave immense trouble to his servants, and was very kind

and generous to them, so that they liked him much better than their mistress, who was neither. He was not singular in any way; there are hundreds of young men like him; harmless, yet mischievous. One wonders what they were sent into the world for.

Only one peculiarity Charles Melville had; he did not flirt. Of course it was plain that he did not care for his wife; but he never seemed in the least attracted by other women; in fact, he was shy and rather rough in his manner with them. A bear still, as his mother used to call him when he was a boy.

Redwood Manor was deserted. Mr. and Mrs. Dodd lamented and blamed loudly, for as the years went on, Charlie's visits to his old home were always shorter and farther between, and his wife hated the place, and never went there at all. The house was shut up, not even let—"such extravagance, such selfishness!" said Mrs. Dodd. And William Page, who kept everything going at Redwood, grieved silently. He was too loyal to join in the Rectory chorus.

Sometimes business took him to London, and he always called on Mrs. Melville, and had a long talk with her. He had paid her one of these visits that very afternoon, happier than usual in his mind, and rather full of his own affairs. Some of his talk helped to make Mrs. Melville sad, as she sat thinking, and waiting for Charlie; old times, scenes left behind, came back vividly, and brought sharp pangs of regret; yet she had quite understood Mr. Page, and sympathised with him, when he said cheerfully that perhaps all had been for the best.

More than once, in the course of those years, she had asked Alexia to stay with her; but there had always been some

excuse; the girl had never come. Perhaps she was right and wise, but Mrs. Melville had felt a little hurt, and had not asked her again. She had heard no particular news of her till her father's visit to-day, and had sometimes wondered whether that engagement of hers would ever end in a marriage. She knew all about it now.

At last Charlie arrived, very late of course and very hungry, but in unusually good spirits. He was delighted to have left Cannes behind, all its people and all its amusements, and was full of hearty wishes that he might never see them again. He was evidently proud of having wrenched himself away, and told his mother that he meant to go all round the world, and to visit lots of old haunts and old acquaintances of his sailor days. As to coming back again—"some time—never!" he said with a laugh, which did not sound very happy.

"Never to Cannes," he said, explaining himself. "Three winters are enough to sicken anybody."

"And what about Maud?" asked Mrs. Melville.

"She won't live anywhere else. Let people alone, let them be happy. Don't think she wants me, mother. She and I understand each other to that extent. She's very glad I'm gone."

Mrs. Melville knew it was no use harping on that subject, and she gave it up accordingly, and went on asking Charlie about his plans. It seemed a good thing, and quite new, that he should have any plans at all.

"Any news from Redwood?" asked Charlie. "Have you seen old Page lately?"

"He was here to-day, oddly enough," said Mrs. Melville. "I told him what was going to become of you, and he said he wished—" then she checked herself, looking a little doubtfully at Charlie.

"What did he wish?"

"Only something about seeing you down there. But I don't think you are really wanted, and of course you haven't time."

"Well, not much—and there's nothing to do," said Charlie. "One can leave it all to him. Did he say anything about Alexia?"

"Yes, he did," said Mrs. Melville. "She is going to be married at last. Next week, next Thursday. So of course dear Mr. Page's head is full of that, and he seems quite happy about it. I must get her a wedding present. I wonder what it had better be. Something useful, I suppose."

"Oh no, hang it, mother," said Charlie, who had received the news with a grunt. "Useful! What do you mean? Teapots, or knives and forks? Give her a bracelet, or something pretty that she can wear."

"Men are so silly," laughed Mrs. Melville. "If I know Alexia, she would like something useful for her little house."

"Oh bother, I know her better than you do," said Charlie. "The fellow is a parson now, isn't he?"

"Yes; he was ordained last autumn. He has got a very good curacy, and the promise of a nice little living somewhere in Devonshire, I think."

Charlie seemed curious, and his mother had to tell him all she knew about the wedding, which was a good deal, for Mr. Page had been very full of it. When Charlie wished his mother goodnight, he said: "I think I shall go down to Redwood before I start. You see I don't know when I may be there again."

Mrs. Melville turned round upon him suddenly. "Charlie, I think you had much better keep as far away from the place as possible."

He looked at her and laughed. "I shall interfere with nobody. I have no wish to cause any rows," he said.

On the following Wednesday, when Edmund Rowley, boyish-looking and unchanged, except by his dress, travelled down from London to Redwood, he was at first not at all aware that the Squire was his companion in the carriage. Charlie had grown a good deal older in those three years; he was darker and heavier, his moustache was very long, and he had lost his old simplicity of look, though his manner and speech were as direct as ever. He recognised Edmund, and soon claimed acquaintance with him, asking about Alexia, and sending one or two messages to her, with a sort of rough friendliness.

"I mean to come and see you turned off to-morrow," he said. "Don't tell Miss Page—she might think I hadn't any business—though to be sure, if I was in the church a dozen times over, she wouldn't be likely to see me."

The innocent Edmund said that he was sure Miss Page would be delighted to see any of her old friends. Charlie thanked him, and relapsed into silence. He sat in his corner grimly watching the slender young curate who took upon himself to say what would or would not delight Alexia.

Alexia! Good heavens! and this fool of a boy! Charlie gave himself a great twist, and looked out of the window: his eyes were growing too angry: he felt he must not sit looking at Edmund as if he wanted to murder him.

Edmund had a little green book of poems in his hand. He sometimes read a few lines, and then gazed dreamily out of his own window. There was a slight flush on his pale face; any unprejudiced person would have said it was a good face, clever, calm, and steadfast, and just now unusually happy.

Charlie only saw the happiness, and was unreasonably enraged. He sat brooding over things in his own mind, with a sort of dull wonder about Edmund. How could the fellow read that book, when he was going to marry Alexia to-morrow! And by what miracle had Alexia stuck to him all this time! Perhaps she cared for him now. Hardly, unless she herself was changed beyond recognition. There was nothing in her nature, as Charlie knew it, that could respond to anything in that young man yonder. Well, after all, other marriages were just as odd; but Charlie thought—or thought he thought—that he would have liked Alexia's marriage to be happy.

As they were nearing Redwood, he moved into a seat nearer Edmund, and said to him, "I suppose I knew Miss Page long before you did."

"She is my cousin, you know," said Edmund, rather surprised.

"Ah, I forgot. But had you seen her before that year you were at Redwood—the year she was thrown out hunting?"

Edmund smiled a little. "No," he said.

"Will she keep up her riding?"

"I'm afraid we shall have no horses," said Edmund, quietly. "As to hunting, she wouldn't of course wish to keep that up."

"Why not?" said Charlie: but he did not wait for an answer. "I have known her ever since she was a child," he went on. "And there is not a luckier man in England than you are, I hope you know."

"I do know, thank you," said Edmund.

"I could tell you something you don't know, though," said Charlie, "for she has never told you, or anybody else."

"Then probably it doesn't matter about my knowing it," said Edmund, looking up with the same smile on his face, a good, nice, pleasant smile, the peaceful confidence of which, however, was not exactly soothing to his companion.

Mr. Melville gave himself another twist, and stared up at the lamp.

"No, it doesn't matter at all," he said. "It matters to nobody, and I don't know why I should tell you. Miss Page refused me once, years ago, before you had ever seen her."

"Did she?" said Edmund. He changed colour, he was immensely startled. Charles Melville's words seemed to bring a strange shock with them. A sudden shiver ran through him, and he looked at Charlie with horror and dread. Yet what was there to be afraid of, after all! The Squire had been married for years, and Alexia belonged to him. The Squire was a very odd fellow to mention it, but Edmund reflected that he felt all the prouder of Alexia for what she had done.

Almost directly after this revelation, the train stopped at Redwood. In the confusion of getting out, Edmund lost sight of the Squire, and did not see him again, for Mr. Page was waiting in the dogcart outside, and drove him away at once. The porters and the bystanders stared at him as he passed through the station, and it occurred to his sensitive mind that nobody thought him good enough for Alexia. He felt nervous, and not perfectly happy, as he drove off with Mr. Page. When they were half-way to the Farm, he said he had travelled down with Mr. Melville.

"I knew he was coming," said Mr. Page. "Martin told me he had had orders to meet him. I wish he had stopped away till after to-morrow, for he will want to talk business with me. I told Mrs. Melville the day: she might have told him."

"He talks of being at the church to-morrow," said Edmund.

Mr. Page was silent for a minute or two.

"Well, it can't be helped," he said at last.

"He said I was not to tell Alexia," Edmund went on. "I said I was sure she would be delighted to see him."

"Bravo," muttered Mr. Page under his wrapper. He whipped his horse gently, and then looked at his future son-in-law rather anxiously. "At the same time, Edmund, if I were you, I wouldn't tell her. I knew this morning that he was coming down, but I have not mentioned it. She is rather a nervous young woman, and she has quite enough already to fuss and fidget her. She might—she might think he ought to be asked to the house," said Mr. Page falsely, "and I don't want him."

Edmund accepted this quietly. He did

not intend to repeat to his uncle, or to any one, what Charles Melville had just told him. Still it was rather queer. If Alexia had shown her good sense and taste by refusing the man, why should she or her father care about his doings now? What difference could he make to them? "But he is their great man, of course," Edmund reflected. "They are awfully loyal, I suppose."

"He seems a queer sort of man," he said to his uncle. "I should think he could be very disagreeable. Those big, ruffianish sort men are a sort I don't like."

"He is not a ruffian," said Mr. Page rather drily.

Poor Edmund! He arrived at his bride's house with a lurking uneasiness at his heart. It hung about him all the evening, and he could hardly forget it or shake it off, even when he was alone with Alexia, and she was showing him all the lovely presents she had had. The prettiest silver things from Mrs. Melville, and next them in its own little case was a diamond ring, with a sheet of paper lying beside it, on which "From an old friend," was scrawled in very bad writing.

"Who gave you that, Alexia?" said Edmund. His arm was round her, and it tightened a little as he spoke.

"The Squire," she answered rather quickly. "Mr. Melville. Wasn't it good of him? You know—we used to be together a great deal when we were children."

"Yes, I know," said Edmund; and he let her hurry him on as she liked to the other presents, not seeing or listening much, though she did not notice his absence of mind.

He himself did not know what was the matter with him, for certainly there had been nothing to rouse any jealousy or suspicion in his mind. What Charlie Melville told him had happened so long ago, before he had ever seen Alexia; and all through their long engagement she had been perfectly good and sweet to him; his good angel, his encouragement, the hope and the comfort of his life. This evening she was perhaps more nervous and excited than he had ever seen her: but that was surely natural, on the eve of her wedding-day. Her eyes and cheeks were shining with almost feverish brightness, and presently, holding up some trifle to Edmund, she found that he was not looking at the presents at all, but at her.

"How lovely you are!" he said in a low voice.

"You silly boy!" she said, with a sad, quick smile, and she let him kiss her, and draw her away from the table into the deep window of the quaint old room.

A great fire was blazing so fiercely up the chimney that the light of the candles was pale: the shutters were still open, and they could stand behind the red curtains and look out into the still winter twilight, over which a glow had stolen, though the sun had long set. There was a frosty glimmer over the grass of garden and fields; the stars were beginning to shine in a blue, misty sky. Alexia stood with Edmund and looked out. What her thoughts were, who can say! She had made up her mind long ago, and had not changed it; yet there was something awful in this last evening of freedom, and Edmund little knew how bravely she was trying to crush down old recollections, scenes and figures from the past, or what made her tremble slightly as she leaned against his arm.

"I hope you mean always to be very kind to me, Eddy?" she said to him.

How could she say so! What did she mean! And the young fellow went on in low broken words, trying to tell her something of what he felt now, and of what he meant the future to be.

"Ah yes; I know! I'm not good enough for you," she murmured in answer. "You will have to forgive me if I disappoint you."

Edmund's happiness, which had quite come back to him now, lasted very little longer, for presently his two sisters, who were staying there, bounced into the room, and then there was a question about dinner-time, and Mr. and Mrs. Dodd.

"The Dodds coming to dinner!" said Edmund in consternation.

"We couldn't do less, as they took you in," said Alexia. "Yes, it's quite time for you to go there now, and make yourself very agreeable, and come back with them at seven o'clock."

His sisters joined in chorus, and Mr. Page came to hurry him off, and so Edmund went reluctantly. Somehow he could not bear to let Alexia out of his sight that evening.

CHRONICLES OF SCOTTISH COUNTIES.

THE BORDER COUNTIES. PART V.

If there were any doubt as to whether Peebles should be included among the Border Counties, that doubt would be removed

by recalling its ancient and alternative name of Tweeddale; for the old towers that are so thickly scattered along the banks of Tweed are distinctly Border towers, built for defence and refuge against English invasions, and the beacon-fire that was lighted at Berwick when the English Warden's riders were out and the note of war was heard along the Borders, was repeated from tower to tower all along Tweedside,

And soon a score of fires, I ween,
From height, and hill, and cliff were seen,
till the alarm reached the inmost recesses
of the valley, and died away among the
lonely hills where the waters of Tweed first
come to light.

Nowhere are these Border towers more thickly set than in Peebles county, where twenty or more may be counted within a space of as many miles, towers that are placed alternately on either side of the stream, and always within sight of each other. These forts differ from the lonely peels that formed the residences of the chiefs of the Border clans, as they are built on a regular plan, and form a complete line of communication. They were built partly by the aid of the Crown and partly by the contributions of the inhabitants of the district, as so many public refuges to which the cattle of the neighbourhood could be driven, and made secure in time of invasion. The huge square tower with its corner turrets projecting like lanterns with quaint extinguisher tops, were safe against surprise, although not capable of sustaining a regular siege. The ground-floor formed a huge stable, where horses, sheep, and cattle were huddled closely together when the beacon-fires had alarmed all the dwellers in the dale. The floor above formed an open hall, where tables were spread alike for gentle and simple, and where the latter at night spread themselves to sleep; while the floor above, divided into numerous chambers, formed the sleeping places of those of higher degree. The battlements were manned by the archers and spearsmen of the dale, while from the loopholed turrets musket and culverin were levelled against the foe.

Of all these Border towers that of Neidpath, near Peebles, is the most characteristic and best preserved. It stands upon a height over the northern bank of the river embosomed among the soft green hills that give their characteristic charm to the valley.

... Sheltered places, bosoms, nooks, and bays,
And the pure mountains, and the gentle Tweed,
And the green silent pastures.

Tradition, which is rarely at fault in such matters, gives Neidpath Castle a semi-mythic origin in the familiar legend of the two sisters who built both the castle and Tweed bridge at Peebles, probably in one night, and with one hammer, which they threw from one to the other, the distance being little over a mile, and therefore well within their powers. From Neidpath come the Frasers—a somewhat sinister and ill-omened race, as witness Simon Fraser, Lord of Lovat, whose ungainly proportions, and cunning, sensual features are familiar in Hogarth's sketch, made when the unlucky lord was lying under sentence of death in the Tower for his share in the doings of 1745. But Simon, the last of the Frasers of Neidpath, who had done wonders against the English on Roslin Moor, died as long ago as the days of Bruce, leaving only two daughters. Matter-of-fact people say that these were the two sisters who built castle and bridge; and one of these sisters brought Neidpath Castle in her marriage portion to the family of Hay of Yester. The Hays held Neidpath for centuries, and their crest, a goat's head, may be still seen carved on the gateway of the castle. During the civil wars John Hay, the second Earl of Tweeddale, garrisoned his castle of Neidpath for the young King Charles, when, having swallowed the solemn league and covenant, he ruled for a time as King of Scotland. And when the royal cause was lost at Worcester fight Neidpath still held out, and surrendered only to General Monk's overwhelming forces—the last of the Scottish castles to hold out for the King.

Loyalty to the Crown cost the lords of Tweeddale dear, and the impoverished owner of Neidpath being compelled to sell the estate, the Duke of Queensberry became the purchaser, and settled it upon his second son, who was created Earl of March. And it was while this branch of the house of Douglas occupied the castle that an incident is said to have occurred which made a strong impression upon popular imagination, and which forms the subject of one of Scott's minor poems. According to the story, one of the daughters of the Earl of March and young Scott of Tushielaw, in Ettrick Forest, had formed a mutual attachment; but the pride of the Douglasses forbade any sanction to such a mésalliance, and the young man went abroad, while the young lady pined at home and finally fell into a consumption. Then the father relented, and

begged that the cadet of Tushielaw might be recalled. On the day of her lover's expected return the poor girl, borne up by joyful expectation, persuaded her friends to carry her to the town of Peebles, through which her lover must pass on his way home.

A gloomy old mansion in Peebles of heavy quadrangular form was the town house of the Douglas family. The building still stands there, but a good deal altered, and converted into the "Chambers' Institute." And here, in an open balcony, the love-stricken maiden took her place, hungering for the first glance of joyful recognition. Far away she heard the clatter of the horse's hoofs; love had sharpened her faculties, but, alas, she had not realised how much she was altered from the blooming maid he had left.

He came—he passed—a heedless gaze
As o'er some stranger glancing,
Her welcome spoke, in faltering phrase,
Lost in his courser's prancing.

The poor child fell back into the arms of her attendants; she could no more, her heart was broken, and life's feeble thread was snapped.

The old castle is still partly occupied as a keeper's house, and is in a creditable state of repair, with its dungeons and draw-well beneath, and its fine open battlements with a sweet view of fair Tweeddale therefrom. But one of the chief glories of Neidpath, its fine surrounding grove,

A noble horde,
A brotherhood of venerable trees,

was levelled early in the present century by the obnoxious old Q., to whom we have alluded in the article upon Dumfries—an act which earned a poet's malison from Wordsworth, in the sonnet beginning :

Degenerate Douglas! oh, th' unworthy lord!

There is still some sport to be had by the fisherman, without elaborate pains or heavy cost, among the pleasant hills of Peebles, in the innumerable burns and streams, swift and sparkling, which hurry down to join the Tweed. The earlier course of the Tweed itself, when it leaves its first home among the moors, is through a simple and yet charming valley, with but a narrow strip of pasture and cultivated land on either side of the stream, but abounding with homesteads and habitations. There the salmon spawns on the gravelly beds, and the brown-speckled trout lurks under every bush and stump; but we are too near the capital of Scotland and its great commercial city in the west, and the competition of

the rods along Tweedside is too fierce, to give much chance of sport to the casual wayfarer.

The extreme link to the westward of the line of castles along the river is Drumelzier, once the seat of the Tweedies, a family no longer of the first rank, but of such an ancient origin, that a legend assigns the beginning of the race to some not altogether human agency. A kind of river-god—an impersonation of the Tweed itself—allied himself in a rather irregular way with one of the daughters of the land, and the result of the union was a mortal who took his name from his father—of the Tweed, Tweedie, and afterwards founded a family which was of note in its day.

At the other end of the chain—as far as Peebles is concerned—is the old house of Traquair, with a tower of remote antiquity adjoining the more modern mansion. It was a house frequently visited by Kings and Princes, both English and Scotch. Last of these royal visitors was Queen Mary, with her husband Darnley, a few months before the murder of the latter, when for the last time Ettrick Forest echoed the horn and cry of hounds as the royal hunt swept past. But there was no sport, the deer had disappeared with the hardy Borderers, who had loved to drive them, and the royal pair returned from their expedition wearied and dissatisfied with it and with each other. The bed-chambers and dressing-rooms then occupied by the Queen are still shown at Traquair.

No one leaves Traquair without asking for the bush—the Bush aboon Traquair, celebrated in the ballad :

My vows and sighs, like silent air,
Unheeded, never move her;
The bonnie Bush aboon Traquair,
'Twas there I first did love her.

But here there is nothing to be seen, "save some auld skrunts o' birk," some rugged birch trees on the brow of the hill; the sentiment only is there, the human sympathy which breathes over these quiet scenes, where the loves and sorrows of other days seem to have found a resting-place.

The traditions of the neighbourhood are of curiously mingled origin, and the names of places and streams are often of undecipherable mystery as to their origin. Gael, and Scot, and Cymry seemed to have mingled their races without any bitter antagonism, and Scandinavian rovers to have settled among them without exterminating their neighbours. Here was

no wealth to tempt cupidity; no gilded shrines or store of gold and jewels; the struggle for existence was against the forces of nature, a struggle which develops all the best qualities of humanity. And hence, perhaps, from this diversity of blood and strictness of training come the peculiar richness in capacity and energy of these Border races.

Not far from Peebles town stands Cademuir Hill, the site, according to tradition—confirmed by the Gaelic name, originally Cadhmohr—of a great battle fought in early days, but between what contending tribes, or with what result, it is impossible to guess. The name is also presented in a popular jingle, which sums up the attractions of the neighbourhood :

Cademuir cakes,
Bonnington lakes,
Crookston and the Wrae,
Hungry, Hungry Hundleshope,
And scaw'd Bell's Brae.

And among these "hungry Hundleshope" is entitled to some pre-eminence, as connected with a name now of universal interest. In the fourteenth century the local historian records that hungry Hundleshope passed from the Turnbulls—a race, it will be remembered, that "no power could awe"—to the Gledstones, hitherto of Gledstones and Cocklaw. Now, the gled is surely the raven; and a little further south the rocky eyrie of the bird that seems the emblem of solitude and desolation would have been called Ravenscrag, and the resulting surname would have had a more romantic resonance. Anyhow, the lairds of these barren domains became known as Gladstones, and were the ancestors of the veteran statesman of to-day.

An earlier statesman, of a different type, has left his mark in the county in the stately ruins of an unfinished castle. The Regent Morton was the builder, who had shared in all the tragic events of his time; who had assisted in the murder of Rizzio, at Holyrood; and who was privy to, if he did not take an actual share in, the destruction of Darnley at Kirk-in-the-Field. For nearly ten years the Earl of Morton had been undisputed master of Scotland, and, supported by the power of the English Queen, scarcely anything seemed to be beyond his grasp. But the ambition of the Douglas was for riches rather than honour; and all his opportunities as a ruler had been discounted for so much ready money. He accumulated an immense hoard, the disposal of

which still remains a mystery. Some have thought that his treasure lay concealed in the vaults of his strong castle of Dalkeith; others that he had constructed a secret treasure chamber among the foundations of his new and magnificent palace of Drochels, in Peeblesshire. Anyhow, the secret has never been discovered. His wealth did not enrich his heirs; and it is difficult to credit the statement of the historian of the Douglas family, who intimates that the money was devoted to the support of political exiles from Scotland.

From the time that Morton resigned the Regency, and King James and the favourites who guided him assumed the management of affairs, the Earl devoted himself to building on a large scale. He would have a magnificent lodging at Stirling; he would build a palace in Peebles finer than Linlithgow and more stately than Holyrood. But, before these buildings were completed, his enemies sprung upon him the accusation of complicity in the murder of Darnley. He had his pardon under the Great Seal for all crimes he might have committed against the King; but here he had left a vulnerable point, and his condemnation followed as a matter of course; and, in the words of old Pennecuik "his unfortunate and inexorable death execute by the Maiden at the Cross of Edinburgh"—hoist with his own petard, for Morton himself had introduced the Maiden, a rude kind of guillotine, as the instrument of execution, of which he had made good use in his time; having borrowed the idea, it is said, from the burgesses of Halifax, in Yorkshire, where he had seen the machine at work on one of his journeys from Scotland to London.

But if Morton's enemies expected to share in the confiscated treasures of his Viceroyalty, they were disappointed. He went to the scaffold in the guise of poverty, having borrowed money from a friend to give the usual gratuities expected from noblemen taking leave of the world. And possibly the hoard is still in existence, as promising an object for treasure-seekers as the galleons in Vigo Bay or the riches of Treasure Island.

Having mentioned old Pennecuik in this connection, a few words are due to the worthy physician who essayed to write a history of his native county, the most notable event in which seems to be a great gipsy fight in 1677, between the Fawes—who now write themselves Faa—and the Shawes. The battle was fought at Rom-

manos, an estate which Pennecuik himself inherited from his mother, descended from the old family of Rommanos, who gave their name to the place. The name suggests again whether these Rommanos were not themselves of gipsy origin, who had settled down, and partly severed their connection with the old wandering race. Anyhow, the place seems to have been a great resort of the tribe, and here met the Fawes and the Shawes as friends and allies, having arranged to fall upon the rival families of the Baillies and the Browns at Harestanes, and beat them out of the country side.

But, luckily for the Baillies and their friends, the allies quarrelled among themselves, and a great fight ensued, women as well as men joining in the fray and bearing themselves as valiantly. The Fawes, it seems, got the worst of it, and Sandie Fawe and his wife were killed—for which acts of prowess Robin Shawe and his three sons were hanged at the Grass Market.

The gipsies have always mustered strongly about Tweeddale, where the country, wild and yet not desolate, well watered, and once abounding in wild game, afforded many eligible camping places. On one of the wild moors among the hills the Black Dwarf reared his lonely hut, and somewhere in the county flowed St. Ronan's Well. A mineral spring at Inverleithen bears the name of the Saint—Inverleithen which seems marked out by natural features for a health resort, while all about it there are traces of a large ancient population, probably Celtic, among whom the virtues of the holy well were no doubt already famous. There is a fine British fort upon the neighbouring hill, and Celtic traditions have still survived in the neighbourhood. The grave of the great enchanter Merlin is still pointed out on a neck of land where the Powsail joins the Tweed. And there is an old prophecy, which Dr. Pennecuik claims to have been fulfilled, in the lines :

When Tweed and Powsail meet at Merlin's grave,
Scotland and England that day as King shall have.

As the enchanter's burial-place is a good height above the level of the stream, no one looked to see the prophecy fulfilled. But, according to Pennecuik, on the day of the coronation of James the Sixth of Scotland as King of England, a sudden and heavy flood came on, and for a time the waters of the two streams encompassed the wizard's grave, a thing which had never happened before within memory of man, and which is never likely to happen again.

Another legend describes the meeting of the Wizard Merlin and Saint Mungo from the Western Isles, the patron saint of Glasgow, upon the hills by Drumelzier, where the old enchanter, with his lore of the ancient Druids, and his knowledge derived from the stars, exchanges experiences in a friendly way with the wonder-working priest from the land of the saints.

Evidences, too, of a more intimate connection with the land of Erin are the golden torques which have been found in the neighbourhood — recalling the days of Erin :

Ere her faithless sons betray'd her
When Malachi wore the collar of gold,
Which he won from her proud invader.

Ireland is rich in such relics, which are much less common in Scotland, and hence these finds in Peeblesshire are worthy of some attention.

Famous too, in local annals, is the Crook Inn, a lonely house, once the only refuge for travellers in a long tract of dreary road on the way between Edinburgh and Dumfries. Here the river Tweed is but a moorland streamlet, and a landmark on the opposite bank, called Hearthstane, has given rise to the popular saying which excites the wonder and incredulity of the bairns—Tweed rins between Crook and Hearthstane—the crook being the pothook in Scottish phraseology—a dark saying that calls up a vision of a broad river invading the ingle and rushing in a foaming torrent over the fire-back.

While in the neighbourhood of Tweedmuir we may recall a striking incident connected with the rebels of '45—an incident which has given the name of Maclanan's Leap, to a steep, grassy glissade among the hills. A party of English soldiers were conveying some Highland prisoners towards Carlisle and the Harribee, when near Tweed's Cross a halt was called at the edge of a grassy, but almost perpendicular height, for a moment's rest. One of the prisoners resting on the ground wrapped himself in his plaid, and, placing his head between his legs—a feat possible to schoolboys and acrobats—launched himself over the ledge, and rolled down the hill, bounding from ledge to ledge like a ball. Long as was the descent the bottom was found at last, and uncoiling his plaid the Highlander picked himself up and took to his heels, and was soon lost to sight in the valley where none of the escort durst follow him.

There is only one town in Peebles,

although here and there some ancient burgh may be discovered in the likeness of a lonely hamlet, such as Lynton, a village of weavers, shoemakers, and mechanics, which calls itself a burgh of royalty—not to be confounded with a royal burgh, and which retains evidence of former importance in a yearly market—not to be mentioned as a fair, but a market, beginning on the second Wednesday in June, Old Style—a style still retained at Linton Mereat long after the rest of the world had sacrificed its eleven days and conformed to the papistical calendar. This market is continued for four Wednesdays after, and is still much resorted to by shepherds, farmers, and sheep. Then there is Eddlestone, with its tryst for black cattle and servants in the autumn, and with that the roll of the chief places of Peebles is well-nigh complete.

In the isthmus between Eddlestone Water and the Tweed lies the town of Peebles, a grave and ancient royal burgh of some dignity, if of no great population or extent. Above the town the hitherto narrow vale of Tweed broadens out into a wide and fertile plain, fit site for a town which, at some distant date, has no doubt been the capital of some petty kingdom. With its main street of solid, substantial houses of blue whinstone, Peebles has no great aspect of antiquity; but the new town even dates from the sixteenth century, and the old town, now the poorer quarter, dates as a settlement from remote antiquity; although, burnt and spoiled over and over again in Border wars, it presents no particular features of interest. The two towns are divided by Cuddie Water, and the new part was fortified with walls and towers, of which there are yet some remains, to protect it from the English. Eleven churches or chapels were in existence in the fourteenth century—the most important of which was the Cross Church, of which the tower still remains; a church dedicated to St. Nicholas and the Holy-wood, for the “holy ruid of Peblis” was as celebrated in its way as that of Edinburgh. Seventy red friars in the adjoining convent served the Church of Holy Cross, and from far and wide people flocked to the town both for fun and devotion.

“The Thrie Tailles of the Thrie Merry Priests of Peebles,” is a title that excites curiosity and expectation; but alas! the tailles do not answer to their title, and tell us nothing about the old folk of the town.

It is otherwise with the ancient poem of “Peebles to the Play,” which gives a humorous account of the great annual gathering at Peebles:

At Beltane when ilk body bounis
To Peebles to the Play.

The Beltane Fair is still kept up on the first Wednesday in May; but the old sports and merriment have long ago vanished. The Beltane, however, was no ordinary fair, but a festival of high antiquity kept up by the country people, faithful everywhere to early pagan rites,

By firth and forest forth they found,
for what they felt was their own especial
feast day,

All the wenches of the west
Were up ere the cock crew.
For reeling there might no man rest,
For garray and for glew.

With fun, and pranks, and practical jokes lads and lasses gathered on the way and marched into the town, where the townsfolk were gathered more as spectators than as actors in the play. They all feasted together at the tavern house, and having settled the lawin—

Ilk man twa and ane happenie
To pay there we were wout.

And after a free fight, which ended in some of the company passing the rest of the day in the stocks, the piper was sent for, and all ends amicably in a dance, and then, when the day was done, they wended their way home, hallooing to each other through the gloom, after the fashion of holiday makers in all ages.

Such is the simple framework of “Peebles at the Play,” and if it be the work of King James the First, as seems highly probable, it says much for the monarch’s knowledge of the humbler classes of his subjects, and his sympathy with their lot.

But the Beltane of Peebles reminds us strangely of a similar festival in Cornwall—Helston Fary, as it is called—which still survives, with a good deal of its old joyous freedom, and one passage in the King’s poem seems to bring the two festivals nearer together.

Hop, Calye and Cardronow,
Gather it out thick fold!
With hey and how, rohumbelow
The young folk were full bold.

The refrain of the Cornish song is “jollyrubleho!” a piece of gibberish which no man understandeth, but which some Celtic scholar might perhaps resolve with a little pains into its original meaning.

THE CHILDREN'S HOLIDAY.

I WONDER how many—or perhaps I should rather say, how few—of us are now pursuing the even tenor of our way, in office, counting-house, or quiet domestic life, with hearts unthrilled by thoughts of the change to sweet country scenes, or bright sea-side town, which a month or two more will bring us! Who does not feel his heart beat faster—who does not feel his face grow brighter, as he watches the sweet summer evenings lengthen out, the bright summer sun rise higher in the heavens, knowing that every day brings him nearer to that much-needed, much longed-for holiday? Hardly safe is it to let his mind dwell upon it while it is yet in the far distance. But now—now it is so near that he allows himself to revel in the thought of it as he will; the season of refreshing is at hand.

Ah! and it is just because I know how many are longing for a change from the "dull unlovely streets" of London, from the dust, the din, the roar, of City life, to the sweet, cool lanes, the breezy downs, the shady woods, or shimmering waters, which have been to them but a tender memory since last summer;—it is just because I know all this, that I venture to plead my cause, feeling sure that longing hearts will also be softened hearts.

It is for the children I plead—the children, many of them sick and weakly, who spend their lives in the narrow, dirty, dismal streets which are the only dwelling-places attainable to our London poor; for whom the country does not even exist, save perhaps on one happy day in the year, when a few scores of them are carted out of London by their Sunday school-teachers, and given a three hours' glimpse, say, of what the country is like. Think of their homes, and then of ours, and ask yourselves the question: which of us it is, after all, who needs the holiday most?

I do not know that I can show how the matter appears to those who really know the homes of these poor children, much better than by mentioning the case of a young lady, well known to me, who for several successive years has given up the summer trip which she had been accustomed to take, and has spent the money which it would have cost upon taking a house at the seaside, and bringing down to it six or eight little children, to whom

the sea-breezes seem as medicine and food in one.

We cannot all do such a thing as this—I do not say that we should be called upon to do it even if we could. But I do think that there is scarcely one of us who cannot do something towards securing a holiday for someone besides himself or herself; and I do think also that we shall be not only able, but willing and glad to do, what in us lies, if once it is put before us. Last year there were many generous responses to the appeals made by the Committee of the Country Holidays Fund; but subscriptions are much needed again this year, and it is earnestly hoped that the work may be extended, there being still many parts of London where such a thing as a country holiday is almost unknown. Surely the children will not appeal to us in vain.

Probably most of us have some little idea already as to how the work of the Committee is carried on; so that I need not do more than explain very briefly that the plan is to secure a fortnight's country air for such children as are found to be—not so much actual invalids, nor even convalescents—but pale and delicate, and evidently wanting in healthy surroundings. There are working committees of ladies and gentlemen, in different parts of London, who make it their business to enquire carefully into the cases, and to find out what the parents can contribute—for it is a wise rule of the Society that, save in very exceptional cases, the friends of the children shall take part of the cost of the wished-for holiday upon themselves. That they are willing and glad to do this is proved by the fact that, out of very nearly four thousand pounds spent last year upon the children by the Committee, over twenty-six per cent. was paid by the parents themselves.

The little band of children who have the good fortune to be selected are sent down into the country, and placed in the charge of the country visitor, a lady or gentleman who undertakes to find cottage-homes where the little ones are boarded out for about five shillings a week, and looked after, as I can testify, as though they were the cottagers' own. Of course there are good and bad among cottagers, as in every other class; but I am bound to say that I have been fairly astonished at the attachment which has sprung up between the children and their hosts and hostesses; at the anxiety which the poor women have shown at their little charges' want of appe-

tite, and the little luxuries which they have bought to tempt them; at the genuine sorrow exhibited on both sides when the day of parting came. Letters and little presents pass not unfrequently between the London and the country homes; and I know there is an earnest desire on both sides that the delightful holiday may come again this year, and that each poor hostess may have "her two" again. During last summer, I had about seventy of these little holiday-makers under my charge; and many are the warm-hearted letters which both I and the poor people have received from children and parents. I venture to quote one, which accompanied a box containing three little china ornaments for myself, and a book for the little girl in the house where the children had lodged.

"Nov. 24th, 1885.

"MISS —

"I hope you will pardon me for being so bold as to send you this, but I hope you will be pleased to accept it in the same spirit in which it is sent. It is a slight token of our gratitude for your care and kindness to our little girl while at —. I do not think they ever enjoyed themselves so much as they did the fortnight they were there. Walley will take care we do not forget it, for I do not think there has been two hours pass when he is awake, or scarcely a subject started by any of us but what — is brought into it one way or another. The other day he began to write a history of his journey in the country. Please to give the little packet to Alice — with Walley's and Lucy's love, and accept the same yourself from them. And we remain,

"Yours very truly,

"HENRY & ELIZABETH —."

But there was no need after all for such letters as these—no need even to ask the children whether they were enjoying themselves; one look at their faces was enough. I do not say that there were none who moped just a little for the first day or two, and one unfortunate little pair seemed so unhappy away from "mother," that we thought it best to let them go home before their time; but on the whole they were in the maddest, merriest spirits; the ecstasies of the boys especially knowing no bounds. They could not stop in bed those light summer mornings, but would be up and away by four o'clock, roaming in fields and meadows, and coming back to breakfast hungry as hunters and brown as berries. The only difficulty was to make them

understand that the rights of private property must be respected in country as well as in town. Everything seemed so free and open that they (like George Macdonald's "Sir Gibbie") could not at first take in the fact that among the many things which they for the first time saw growing, some might be picked and others not; that the currants and peas in the garden belonged to some one, just as much as did those in the London greengrocers'.

"My! here's red currants growin' on trees!" a delighted voice would shout; and in the twinkling of an eye the pockets would be filled, a hand being presently thrust in to pull some out, with an innocent, "Have some, miss! Oh, they are good!"

Then they would run among the corn—why not? It looked just like long grass, and no one ever told them they mustn't run in that. Only the farmers seemed to make a good bit of fuss about it somehow; and a narrow escape which two of them had of being shot for rabbits made them mend their ways as to this. Another time some of them were invited into the rectory garden, where there was a tempting piece of water; and the next thing was that the rector's family was somewhat scandalised by beholding four little naked figures careering wildly round the pond, preparatory to taking a plunge in the cool water. Poor boys! those ecstasies of anticipation were ill-judged, for the plunge was promptly prohibited, and the clothes ordered on again.

The girls took their holiday more soberly, of course; but for them, too, there were delightful times when a ride in one of the great farm-waggons was offered them, and a party of pale-cheeked but beaming-eyed children came jolting up the rough country lanes behind the strong farm-horses. Every one took notice of them. The men offered them rides, as I have said; the children took them for walks, to gather flowers; the neighbours asked them in to tea. Their life was a constant round of pleasures, such as they had hardly dreamed of at home.

And for the good it did them—well, one had only to look at their faces when they left, and remember what they were when they came. It is a "change of air" in more ways than one. In two or three cases mothers have at first failed to recognise their own children, when the rosy-cheeked band trooped on to the London platform. "I never wake up at home but what I have the headache," one little girl said to me: "but," and her face brightened.

"I've never had the headache but twice since I came here, and then it didn't stop long." Many another, who has come down looking utterly languid and listless, and as if nothing could rouse her to interest or enjoyment, has gone back to her home veritably a "new creature."

I must not forget to mention that they seldom, if ever, return empty-handed. Boxes of eggs, butter, plums, bunches of flowers and corn; walking-sticks, cut and peeled by some country friend; pots of pansies and double-daisies;—these and numberless other treasures are clasped in their arms as they stand waiting for the train to bear them homewards. Some of these things may be bought with the few pence their parents have given them to spend, but more are presents from the cottagers, to them, or to the Florrie or Jimmy at home of whom they have so often talked. Then the train comes up, the children are stowed away in the carriage, and the holiday is over; only to live fresh and green in the memories of the little ones, to be talked over and rejoiced over, until the poor, toilworn parents almost feel as if they had seen the place for themselves.

"There is no fear," writes one mother, "of our forgetting Charlie's visit, for there's never an hour passes but we hear something about the country; and whatever is being talked about he manages to bring it round to the wonderful things he heard and saw this summer."

Is there need to say more? I think not. I think we shall all feel that those who help to carry on this work are doing good, useful, and delightful service—delightful both to giver and to receiver. I think we shall each one of us ask ourselves, cannot I do something, be it ever so small, to secure a holiday for some little London child this summer? The sum needed is not very large after all. It has been estimated that every guinea subscribed last year by the public paid for nearly five weeks of holiday life, so that I am well within the mark in saying that a donation of ten shillings (sent to the secretary, Miss Neuman, 10, Buckingham-street, Strand, W.C.) will satisfy the eager longings for another country holiday with which some little heart is nearly bursting. Sure I am that the holiday to which so many of us are looking forward will be all the sweeter for the thought of the little ones to whom our gladly given shillings are bringing new life, new health, new happiness.

POT-POURRI.

The blue jars in the window,
The big bowls in the hall,
Hold that sweet old-time perfume
That we Pot-pourri call.
We cannot tell who made it,
Nor where the flowers did grow,
For those who picked them left us
Full fifty years ago!

Yet, when at scented evening
I stand beside the bowl,
And watch my roses fading
As night mists upward fall,
I seem to see their spirits
Stand silent there below,
Who made Pot-pourri for us
Full fifty years ago!

I watch them, youth and maidens,
About the garden glide;
I see them cull the flowers
There growing side by side;
I hear their soft love whispers,
I almost seem to know
The faces dead and buried
Some fifty years ago!

I smile to think how fleeting
Are all our joys, our pain;
How swiftly sunshine passes,
How quickly dries the rain.
For they, too, loved and suffered,
And bore their own death-blow,
Those pretty lads and lasses
Dead fifty years ago!

Yet their dead roses whisper
Of sweetness e'en in death:
This lovely perfumed odour
Has outlived Love's hot breath:
And sweet can be our evening,
And, if we wish it so,
Can last e'en like Pot-pourri
Made fifty years ago!

THE PASSION-FLOWER OF TALVERE.

ONE of the most interesting pages of the story of every country is that which tells of the rise and fall of its nobility; for therein lie the romance, the annals of love and gallantry, so much more indicative of the national progress or decay than the mere record of political or diplomatic influence. "The Romance of the English Peerage" will be read with some emotion when the pages of Smollett, Hume, and Lingard are thrown aside as dry and uninviting. The romantic records of the French noblesse are but little known in this country. They are, nevertheless, even more replete with moving incident and thrilling love adventure than our own. Throughout the whole of France there is not a feudal castle, however gloomy and fiercely threatening in aspect, but has its legend of tenderness and love; not the daintiest little castel, with its quaint carvings and coquettish devices, but has its tale of frantic jealousy and bloodthirsty revenge; while others, again, amongst the old castellated mansions,

frowning and forbidding as they appear, have been the scene of many an idyll. Of these last is the Château de Talvère, which stands almost at the gates of Lunéville. It is a ruinous old pile, scarcely in worse state, however, than when the two sole remaining members of the Talvère family—the fair young daughter and her aged grandmother—were forced to seek refuge within its gray old walls. Early youth and extreme old age, alone and unprotected, being compelled to the strictest seclusion in order to avoid the persecution which had fallen upon every individual of their race—their only aim tranquillity, their only security oblivion.

When Stanislas Leczinski was named King of Lorraine, by the favour of Louis the Fourteenth, there were a number of heads to be cut off, and a number of brave souls to be consigned to a living tomb in the dungeons of the fortress of Lunéville before he could sit comfortably on his throne. So had it fared with the Count de Talvère, who had presumed to designate King Stanislas as “minion, foreigner, and invader,” and who had consequently had his head stuck high, one fine morning, on the battlements of the fort, to feed the ravens and scare the crows; while his estates and fortune served much the same purpose, feeding the parasites of the King, and scaring other patriots from their allegiance by the example of such merciless confiscation.

Of all the family of the Count de Talvère none remained but the aged Countess, his mother, and the lovely Hélène, a maiden of sixteen, his only daughter. They had been suffered to remain at the château, whose domain was now confined to a small patch of orchard and garden, and from this the two unhappy inmates of the château were compelled to maintain themselves entirely. Upon such a diet as this obligation entailed, it can be no wonder that the poor old lady should have grown thinner and thinner—until at length the wood-cutters and charcoal-burners, who passed the château on their way from work, would be scared into the belief that they had beheld the ghost of that wicked Countess de Talvère, who had been executed at Bar more than half a century before. Far different, however, was the effect of the cruel edict of confiscation (which in those days always implied starvation likewise) upon the beautiful Hélène, the present sharer of all this destitution,

the future heiress to all this decay. She seemed to thrive upon the scanty fare of the château. She was plump and rosy, as though she had been nurtured in luxury; merry and light-hearted, as though she had never known a sorrow; scarcely conscious of the privation amid which she was living; happy in the enjoyment of the air, the sunshine, and the flowers, and in the love and devotion of the old Countess de Talvère.

It was a sight to behold this girl of such wondrous beauty, leading at early dawn the solitary cow, on which depended the nourishment of the family at Talvère, along the narrow paths of the garden and orchard, pausing while the poor animal stayed to nibble the scanty herbage beneath the hedge, and plying with nimble fingers all the while the thread depending from the distaff fastened to her girdle, while carolling forth in the sweetest voice man ever heard some old, quaint ditty, some tender love song of olden times, unknown to other damsels of her age, and caught from a former generation through the quavering accents of her aged grandmother. It was a sight to behold her stay now and then in her walk to caress the patient animal, while standing on tiptoe to whisper words of endearment into her ears.

And so thought the young cavalier, who was riding alone one morning at break of day to join the royal hunt, down the mossy path beside the ruined wall of the château, when, attracted by the song and the tender speeches which ensued, he rose in his stirrups to gaze over the stone coping of the wall. If the refined gallant of the Court of Lunéville had been startled and perplexed at the exquisite delicacy of voice and execution of the song which he had imagined to proceed from the lips of some peasant girl at her early labour, how much more was he startled and perplexed at the sight of the fantastic figure which presented itself to his gaze! Amid all the poverty and privation suffered at the château, the necessity of their display in sordid attire had not yet arrived. The old Countess had retained the splendid wardrobe she had owned in the days of her glory, and the sole delight of her life was in the fashioning and furbishing the quaintly-cut vestments which she had worn in her own youth, to suit the face and figure of Hélène. Well might the young horseman be surprised when he saw before him this maiden of such strange beauty,

attired in a costume of which he had read and heard and gazed upon in pictures, but which he had never before beheld, occupied in work familiar to his mind as connected only with the humblest drudgery of peasant life. It seemed as if some fairy apparition had suddenly risen from the earth to bewilder his senses. Everything seemed unreal and intangible in the scene. The fresh loveliness of the little maiden, with her delicate pink and white complexion, the sparkling eyes, the rosy lips and golden hair, the soft, sweet voice, all spoke of the warmth and power of youth and life; the costume of a bygone generation, of old age, of moth and mould, of oblivion and the grave; the occupation of the rudest poverty and toil; the dress, apart from its cut and fashion, of wealth and distinction, from the richness of the materials of which it was composed. The petticoat was of brocaded satin, the embroidered *juste-au-corps* of ruby velvet, the open robe of brocatelle; faded and out of date all might be, but without spot or blemish. All was so strange and unearthly that the fairy tales of Madame d'Aulnoy, the fashionable reading at the Court of Lunéville, crowded on his memory, and for a moment he remained convinced that the beauteous form on which he gazed must of necessity be that of the Princess Graciosa; that the lime blossoms which fell in thick showers from the boughs as the cow disturbed them in her slow advance, were thrown by the hand of her fairy godmother from the clouds; and that the daisies and buttercups which bent beneath the maiden's feet were real pearls and topazes, spread on the path by the same powerful protectress.

If such were the impressions conveyed to the brain of the young cavalier, it is no wonder that he found himself suddenly transformed from Honoré de Bellegarde into Prince Percinet, for the sake of this beauteous, and no doubt heavily oppressed and captive Graciosa, held in durance vile by the wicked arts of the Duchess of Grognona.

It was some time before he recovered from the shock produced by the bright vision which had thus suddenly burst upon his sight, and there is no knowing how much longer he might have remained entranced, had it not been that the maiden, on finding the sunbeams beginning to pierce the branches of the acacia trees beneath which she stood, attempted to lead her charge towards the thicker shade of the cedar which stood at some little distance.

She started on perceiving the shadow which lay on the path in the grass before her, and then looking up and beholding the young cavalier, gave such a bound of surprise that the rope by which the cow was held slipped from her grasp, the distaff dropped from her hand, and she remained gazing as if thunderstruck at the stranger, whose head and shoulders were visible above the wall, as supported by the stirrups he stood above his tall steed, while, unable to bear that dazzling gaze, he began to stammer out some excuse for intruding thus upon her privacy.

Honoré de Bellegarde was, for the first time in his life, attacked with timidity, and would have turned away on the instant, had not his hand just at that moment unconsciously come in contact with the little silver drinking horn which was carried at every huntsman's belt in that day. His brain suddenly cleared, and he framed an impromptu demand to give a colouring to the apparent impertinence of which he had been guilty.

"Fair damsel, I have been out ever since the dawn, and have lost my way. Can you spare me a drop of milk to assuage my thirst?"

The perfect self-possession and innate good-breeding of the maiden caused him even more surprise than aught which had gone before. Without the smallest embarrassment she answered sweetly—one single word, it is true, but spoken audibly and with the most enchanting smile, "*Volontiers, Monsieur.*" Jumping upon a stone, she raised her arm to take the drinking-horn, and without more ado, ran to the corner of the orchard, where stood the pail wherein she had milked the cow a short while before, but which old Hubert, the sole domestic of the *château*, would never suffer her to raise. Having filled the dainty little vessel, she ran back again and handed it to the stranger, looking on in wonder while he drank, little dreaming that whatever had remained of common sense or presence of mind had been completely obliterated by the grace of her movement. The young man was fain to prolong the draught in order to regain sufficient mastery over himself to make the attempt he had meditated from the first, to solve the mystery of this strange existence behind the walls of the *Château de Talvère*, which he had passed scores of times on his hunting expeditions, and had always deemed uninhabited. But when he came to make the trial, he felt

that the task would have been impossible had he not been aided by the maiden herself, who, without undue boldness, and yet without the smallest reticence or disguise, told him every circumstance of her history, while he remained completely dumbfounded with astonishment. She was wondering all the while at the interest which could make him thus listen with such patience to the story of one who was to him a perfect stranger.

Count Honoré de Bellegarde did not join the royal hunt that day, but returned to Lunéville at a slow and thoughtful pace. He returned a wiser man in the new sensations inspired in his bosom by the love which had sprung up thus without warning or preamble. His mind was tossed to and fro in a complete tempest of emotion. His instinct told him at once that this was no common adventure, no passing sentiment to be thrown aside and soon forgotten. He knew that the fair girl had spoken truth, that she was indeed of noble blood and lofty lineage in spite of her rustic surroundings; and he resolved to return next day to the Château de Talvère with a view of getting up a petition to the King for restoration of the property of the Talvères to the remaining members of the family.

But "l'homme propose, et Dieu dispose." On arriving at the palace he found, to his dismay, that the King had issued orders for the removal of the Court to Nancy, according to the policy he had adopted of dividing the benefits conferred by the residence of a Court, an alternate sojourn in the two great cities of his kingdom, Nancy and Lunéville possessing a royal palace in each, and changing the seat of government at certain intervals.

Everybody noticed the alteration by the temper of Honoré de Bellegarde. From the merriest youth about the Court, he had grown taciturn and reserved, flying the company of those to whom he had been most attached, and seeking the solitude he had formerly so much detested. The courtiers rallied him on the change, and declared that he had been rattling the dice-box with disastrous effect at Lunéville; but King Stanislas, although the wisest philosopher of his day, had himself felt the attacks of the blind god too often not to recognise his wound in another, and so he said to himself, "The boy is in love; if he confide in me, I will help him in his trouble."

The hours seemed weeks to Honoré de

Bellegarde, during the sojourn at Nancy, and yet when the order for return was issued, the poor youth was assailed by every kind of pain. Would the beautiful maiden of Talvère still be found at the château? Was it not all a dream? Might not the whole affair be nothing more than a freak of some one of the madcap ladies of Lunéville, who had chosen to seek retirement and disguise in order to escape the pursuit of some unfortunate lover? There was no supposition, however foolish or impossible, that did not pass through his fevered brain during the night of his return to his old quarters in the Palace at Lunéville, until at length, as the dawn drew nigh, unable any longer to bear the state of irritation and impatience into which he had worked himself, he once more mounted his steed and set off alone to the Château de Talvère.

The morning was heavenly, the green glades through which he passed were all glistening with dew, the birds were just awakening in the branches, and the under-wood was just beginning to be stirred by the wild game with which the forest abounded. His heart beat violently as he drew near to the château. The old grey turrets seemed more sad and joyless than ever, amid the gleeful awakening of nature. Not a sound was heard within the orchard, no joyous carolling greeted the ear of the youth as he listened with eager expectation. In vain he stretched himself to the utmost, as he stood upright in the stirrups and looked out from the back of his tall steed through the breach in the ruined wall, as he had done once before. He beheld no lovely girl, no fairy princess. The lime blossoms fell no more in a shower upon the ground, the daisies and the buttercups had disappeared, choked by the long grass which had been suffered to grow rank and wild beneath the trees.

For a moment did Monsieur de Bellegarde stand thus listless and inanimate, straining his sight and stretching his neck to gaze into the enclosure. The long, rambling building lay in one mass of peaks and points and bows and buttresses, surmounted with weathercocks innumerable, as is the custom with these ancient châteaux, but not a soul was visible. He looked up at each window in turn; not a human form appeared at any of the latticed panes; but with a lover's instinct, he could tell at once which was the chamber where, perhaps at that moment, was slumbering the object of his thoughts. He knew it by

the rose-covered balcony and the long, trailing tendrils of the passion-flower, which, trained from the sturdy stem planted against the wall, had entwined themselves round the delicate tracery of the ironwork, whence the bright, starry blossoms drooped and swung in the breeze, now visible, now hidden from sight as the leaves were blown hither and thither in the morning air.

He was just turning away in bitter disappointment, half chilled at the silence and solitude of the place, when he was startled by a low, moaning sob, which seemed to burst from the very heart of some sorrow-stricken individual close to the spot where he was stationed. The sound came from close beneath the wall, and he felt as if he were guilty of an act of meanness in thus intruding upon the sacred privacy of grief; so he coughed aloud, and then jerked his horse's rein so sharply that the animal snorted and made the curb chain jingle.

On the instant a shrill scream echoed through the silence of the woods, presently a light form bounded with fawn-like agility upon the moss-covered stone, and the woe-begone countenance of the fair Princess Graciosa filled the hollow rent in the wall, so close to that of the bashful Prince Percinet that he blushed deep as scarlet and actually turned aside, unable to bear the burning gaze which burst so suddenly upon him. But alas for poor Graciosa! Her eyes were red with weeping, and her bosom heaved with convulsive sobs, while down her sweet face the tears were coursing each other, and trickling into the golden ringlets which hung loose upon her neck. Ah! surely that horrid Duchess Grognona had been at her wicked tricks again! It required some little effort on the part of the Count de Bellegarde, to encourage him to enquire concerning the cause of the despair by which the little maiden seemed to be thus overcome.

There was no embarrassment, no reticence in the answer which gushed out quite spontaneously amid the sobs which could not be controlled. "Ah, monsieur! what shall we do? I cannot give you any milk this morning. What will become of us? La Rouge, our dear La Rouge is dead! We have no milk to drink, and shall soon have no more bread to eat. Grand'mère is ill, and we have not a sou wherewith to buy food. Old Hubert is gone to the furnace with a barrow full of clover to sell to the Superintendent's wife, for her goat, and I am all alone!"

The image of her own loneliness was more than the little maiden could bear, and she burst into a paroxysm of grief, hiding her face in both her hands, while Monsieur de Bellegarde remained aghast, unprepared for the avowal of such misery as this. He felt a sore perplexity concerning the form his condolence ought to take. But as he looked round in his embarrassment, his eye was caught by the thousand blossoms of the passion-flower as they balanced to and fro in the wind, and, love lending him that readiness of resource he never refused to his votaries, made him exclaim eagerly:

"Nay, but, Mademoiselle, it was not for milk I came this morning, but for one of the passion-flowers which blossom above your balcony. The flower which grows in such abundance here at Talvère is so precious at Lunéville, that—would you believe it!—the ladies of the Court are compelled to pay a double louis d'or for a single blossom, and King Stanislas, who loves no other flower, never looks kindly on any of the courtiers who do not bear a sprig of it at mass on gala days. As it happens that this very day there is to be a grand Te Deum at the Cathedral in honour of His Majesty's return from Nancy, I rode hither with the humble hope that you would allow me to purchase one of those flowers to place in my vest to please him."

The little maiden dried her eyes in a moment in order to open them wider with the greater ease, and then she smiled so sweetly that the abject terror he had felt all the time he had been speaking vanished in a moment, and when she nodded acquiescence and exclaimed—"Ah, Monsieur, 'tis Providence has sent you here," and jumped lightly down and ran across the grass to gather the flowers he had asked for—he prayed that the words might prove prophetic of the good fortune in store. In the twinkling of an eye did the maiden return with the loveliest of the blossoms of the passion-flower, and, without the smallest shyness, without any of that grimacing hesitation a Court lady would have assumed, did this child of nature hand it over the wall to the cavalier. Strange to say, however, he durst not offer her the piece of gold he had drawn from his purse as price of the flower, but laid it on the wall, where it caught the rays of the morning sun, and glittered like a star just fallen from the skies. But when the action was accomplished, a sudden panic seized him at the boldness of which he had given proof, and he hurried away with

almost uncourteous abruptness. But he might have spared himself all unpleasant doubt. *Hélène de Talvère* was a child of nature as we have said before.

She believed every word of the strange gentleman's speech, and treasured it up like gospel. She seized the gold piece with childish glee, and laughed joyously.

"Oh, let me run at once and show this to dear *grand'mère*!" she exclaimed; and, without so much as thanking the gentleman for his custom or even noticing his abrupt departure, ran swiftly towards the door of the *château*.

As the Count turned the angle of the wall his attention was aroused by the sound of voices in discussion. The harsh tones of scolding and reproach mingled with the soft accent of his lovely *Graciosa* in gentle expostulation, and he could just catch a glimpse of a little wizened female figure, with high-crowned cap and cross-handled crutch, which, he felt sure, must be that of the horrible *Duchess Grognona*. He was too far off to seize the purport of her shrill words, but he was sure that he saw her with one hand raise her crutch with a menacing gesture towards him, while with the other she threw the gold piece out into space. Then the wailing sobs of the poor girl fell once more upon his stricken ear, until, driven forward by the old lady, the girl entered the hall door, which closed behind them and all was silent again.

"That must be the old *Countess de Talvère*, a great lady in her day," murmured he as he urged his horse to the trot, "but she reminds me woefully of the *Duchess Grognona* notwithstanding."

An hour or two later in the morning a vision, more strange than that which a few weeks before had burst upon the sight of *Count Honoré de Bellegarde*, might have been seen gliding across the orchard of the *Château de Talvère*, and stealing through the gate which led out by short cuts and by-paths to the high road to *Lunéville*. It was *Hélène de Talvère*, attired in the quaint costume we have already seen, but enveloped in a large cloak, and her face concealed by the old-fashioned hood and wimple which had been forgotten by the maidens of her own time. On her arm hung a large basket filled up with long branches of the passion-flower, which, according to the gentleman who had paid that early visit to *Talvère*, would be purchased at such exorbitant price in *Lunéville*.

She hastened along the way she remembered to have traversed with old *Hubert*,

when upon rare occasions he had suffered her to accompany him to market, and arrived in the city just as the Cathedral bells were beginning to ring out the *Te Deum* peal, always reserved for the grandest festivities of the church. The grand place to which she hurried was filled to overflowing; crowds from the back streets and by-lanes, crowds from the suburbs and the country, all were hastening to see other crowds of aristocratic personages attendant on the King's High Mass, as this ceremony was called. Well was it for the poor child that every individual of that immense multitude was bent on making way to the front, in order to catch the best view of the royal procession, which had entered the building by the canon's door and was to leave it by the great gate, so that no one paid the smallest attention to her, but suffered her to glide stealthily through the different groups until she arrived at the flight of marble steps, and took her station outside the iron balustrade by which they are protected.

Here she remained, patiently waiting until the gate should open for the King and the Court to pass through. She knew well enough that none of the bourgeois and artisans, of whom the crowd was composed, could afford to purchase her passion-flowers at a double-louis apiece, so she gathered her long, dark cloak of Lyons cloth closely around her, and hiding her basket beneath it, took out her beads, and bending low, went steadily through the whole rosary, imploring the Virgin to grant a blessing on her endeavour to save *grand'mère* from the penury amid which she had languished so long, and likewise most particularly to bless the kind young gentleman whose suggestion had put her in the way of accomplishing her desire. How could she dream that at that very moment another prayer was rising to Heaven from the *Count de Bellegarde*, in thanksgiving for the King's consent to restore the estates of her family to *Hélène de Talvère*, and His Majesty's promise to assist his favourite in his desire to obtain the hand of the now great heiress. So fervent was she in her invocation, so long did she linger over the prayer, that the crash of the great *Te Deum* bell, announcing that mass was over, burst forth before she had concluded. The shock of the vibration aroused her to consciousness of her situation; and when the great doors of the Cathedral were thrown open, and the congregation, all composed

of the lords and ladies attendant on the King, streamed forth in proud procession, preceded by their halberdiers, and followed by their pages, she started up, and throwing aside the long cloak, stood forth in all her beauty and her singular attire, holding the basket, filled to the very brim with the passion-flower, in sight of the richly dressed company, not one of whom seemed to be provided with a single blossom, so rare was evidently her merchandise at Lunéville. It was clear that the cavalier had spoken truth, and the conviction filled her with a joyful hope. And so she grew bold enough to call aloud, in her own sweet voice: "Who'll buy my passion-flower? Only a double-louis the blossom! All bright and freshly gathered, and well worth the money!" There must have been magic in the words, for scarcely were they uttered when a loud shout, whether of admiration or derision she could not tell, burst out from the bystanders, and mingled its shrill echoes with the thundering notes of the organ which came rolling majestically through the open door, and the clanging of the bells from the Cathedral tower.

So uncertain was the little maiden with regard to the meaning of the shout which had greeted her first appeal, that she repeated it in a tone yet more clear and confident. This time there could be no mistake as to the effect produced, for there arose from the portion of the multitude within hearing of the call such a sharp, discordant howl of laughter that it made her turn pale as ashes, and tremble from head to foot. "Look at her! Who is she?" was the cry. "Look at her strange dress! She must surely be some maniac escaped from the asylum at Sainte Barbe, with her trumpery flowers, too, at a double-louis apiece, forsooth!" "Nay, nay, don't you see? It is some masquerading farce she has come out to play upon us, poor; ignorant folk that we are! Rely on it, she is one of the stage-girls from the King's Playhouse; perhaps the Coraline herself in disguise, playing off some merry jest on one of her gallants." "Yes; that is the most likely thing," cried another. "And is it not a shame that one of these vile creatures should dare to appear, with her masquerading tricks, before the very portals of God's house? Seize her! Hand her over to the Maréchaussée! Let her be whipped by the hangman for the base sacrilege!" And then the women raised their shrill, spiteful voices in chorus. "Ah, yes, that will be a pleasant jest, to see her

change her tawdry player's robes for the gray serge dress of the penitent, and all her fine golden locks shaved close to her head, and burnt in the fire where the irons are heating to brand her as the accursed sacrilegious sinner she must be." And at the words a hundred rude hands were raised aloft to seize the poor innocent maiden; a thousand rude voices arose in loud protestation against the foul attempt at ribaldry in such a holy place; and there is no knowing what might have happened had not the procession just then come to a halt in consequence of the tumult.

The group of pages who walked before the King, bearing on velvet cushions his royal crown and sword of state, had stood up aghast upon the steps, arrested by the confusion, gazing through the iron railings at the desperate condition of the poor maiden, whose coif and pinnars had been torn off, and whose dress, all disordered as it was, still served for theme of the rude jibes of the multitude, while the flowers on which she had reckoned for grandmère's sustenance were being tossed abroad and trampled by the crowd. Presently appeared in due order at the portal the royal dais, borne by four gentlemen of the Court whom the King most delighted to honour, and beneath it the placid and benign countenance of the King himself, looking down with wonder on the scene below.

Of course, the progress even of this most solemn group of all was stayed upon the threshold, for the crowd was now pressing so closely at the bottom of the steps, that all advance was impossible. Suddenly, to the astonishment of all, one of the gentlemen bearing the royal canopy uttered a loud cry of anguish and dismay, and was seen to shift the handle of the pole which, by virtue of his office, he was appointed to support, into his neighbour's grasp, and forgetful of all etiquette, to rush down the steps towards the spot where the poor girl was struggling amongst her assailants.

He was very young, it is true, and new to the office, or he would perhaps have been more impressed with the solemn responsibility conferred upon him by favour of the King. He was conspicuous moreover from the passion-flower which was hanging pendent among the folds of his lace cravat, over his embroidered white-satin vest, because he was the only one of the whole company whose bosom was thus adorned, although he was the very man who had told the poor girl that very morning that such was of necessity to be worn by everyone. The sight

of the flower was like a beam of Heaven, and salvation to Hélène de Talvère. With a piteous cry she stretched forth her arms to the wearer, whose face flushed and then grew pale as death, and who, rushing forward to the iron bars, to which she was clinging, seized her by the waist and lifted her over the balustrade as though her form had not weighed more than a feather in his grasp.

He loosened not his hold till he had deposited her, all panting and half-insensible at His Majesty's feet, where by instinct she remained kneeling in humility. He did but pause to whisper a few words of explanation in answer to the look of astonishment with which the King was gazing on the scene. His Majesty started and listened with a benignant smile, and then he raised the girl to her feet and motioned to the procession to move on, and in the sight of all the people she walked beside him beneath the royal canopy.

It was not long after this event that another gay procession, likewise graced with the presence of royalty, was seen wending its way over the sanded pavement of the Grand'Place, preceded by heralds-at-arms bearing the banners of the two most ancient houses of Lorraine. As before, the whole population of Lunéville was abroad to witness the marriage of Honoré, now created "Prince de Bellegarde," on this occasion, with Hélène, the great heiress of the restored domains and fiefs belonging to the Château de Talvère; and the bride, although reinstated in her rights, and in spite of the schooling of grand'mère, must still have preserved some of the rustic independence acquired by her solitary life at the chateau, for she resolutely rejected the myrtle and the orange blossom, which were of old established custom, for her wedding wreath, but stood at the altar crowned with the twining blossoms of the pale and star-like Passion Flower.

And her descendants to this very day bear the flower in their coat-of-arms, according to the license granted at her prayer, by King Stanislas Leczinski, King of Lorraine.

VICTIMS.

By THEO GIFT.

Author of "*Lil Lorimer*," "*An Alibi and its Price*,"
Etc., Etc.

CHAPTER XXI.

"SHE'S O'ER THE BORDER AND AWA'."

THE moon was getting low in the western heavens, and the stars, yet glimmering in

a windy sky, had that wan look which seems to come over them before the approach of day, when, on the night but one following that tryst under the Menhir-Dahut, Vera rose from the foot of her bed on which she had for some time been seated, and, creeping on tip-toe to the window, drew the curtains aside and looked out. There was no sign of dawn yet, and not a sound was to be heard anywhere; not the crow of a restless cock from the yard at the back; not even the low boom and murmur of the distant sea. It was the stillest hour in the whole twenty-four, that which just precedes the dawn and seems to have a weird significance, in its very silence, the hush of awe-struck Nature waiting speechless and breathless till the birth-struggle is over and the baby Day leaps into life from its dead mother Night; but the moon, which was nearly at its full at present and had risen late, gave light enough to see anything by, and, as Vera pulled aside the curtain, the white rays fell on the face of the watch in her hand, and showed that the hands pointed to twenty-five minutes past three.

Twenty-five minutes! And at half-past, Bénéite was to be at the garden-door waiting for her, waiting (perhaps she was there even now) to see her safely into her lover's arms. Vera was quite ready. He need not after all have been so much afraid of her resolution failing at the last moment; though, had she been one degree less timid, it might, perhaps, have done so. But with cowardly people, one terror sometimes drives out another, and, between her dread of the Count; of the journey to the great, unknown city, where she was to be delivered over to him; and of the marriage which seemed to her at this moment like being plunged into a dark abyss from whence she should never come out alive; all minor fears, such as entrusting herself at this hour of the night to Marstland's care, and journeying with him over land and sea, became slight and shadowy in comparison.

Perhaps if he had been anywise different from what he was to her; if his passion had been less strong in its self-control; his caresses and tenderness less marked by the reverence for her innocent trust which never deserted him; his cheerful confidence and buoyancy flawed by any touch of pettiness, jealousy, or uncertainty; it would have been otherwise with her. She had no skill in argument, no obstinate reliance on her own judgment. When her mother reminded her that she knew no-

thing really of Marstland, and insinuated that he had betrayed her best friend's affection for the sake of possible advantages on her side, or when Joanna stigmatised him as a thoughtless and dissolute hospital student, she was not prepared to deny the possibility of their being right, heartbreaking as such a possibility might be. But on the other hand, her faith, so easy to shake, was equally easy to re-establish; and one word from Leah, one look from Marstland's brave, true eyes, one touch even from the strong hand which seemed to swallow up and enfold her slender, feeble fingers in its protecting clasp, was enough to sweep away every shadow of doubt and mistrust which might have been instilled into her.

She had had many of both during the past fortnight, but they had not been of her lover, or of her own prudence in agreeing to the plan he proposed. His original one had indeed been very different; that, namely, of coming boldly to Les Châtaigniers, asking her again of her father on the strength of their tried and proved affection for one another; and in the event of a refusal, telling him plainly that he should now leave the issue in the hands of the girl alone, and daring the old man to force her, with the knowledge of her affection for him, into marriage with another. But the audacity of this course had nearly frightened Vera out of her feeble wits, and she deprecated it in such imploring terms, pointing out the tempest of anger which would be brought down on her in consequence, and the impossibility of holding her own in any struggle with her father while under the latter's roof, that he had been obliged to propose an elopement and secret marriage as the only remaining resource, and had made all his plans accordingly.

These had been at first very simple; to run off with Vera to Quimper, or the next nearest town which boasted of an English Protestant chaplain, and persuade him to marry them: a project which, to the ordinary young Englishman's mind, with its cheerful and absolute ignorance of foreign laws and customs, appeared as feasible as it was happy; but when he had hinted at it, just before leaving England, to a young friend of his, a fellow hospital student, whose life and reputation he had once been the means of saving, the latter had assured him that the measure was by no means so practicable as he supposed. He, too, was rather vague about it; but he had a brother who lived half the year

in France, and with whom he stayed at times, and he was positive that the marriage laws of that country were so framed as to make it almost impossible to contract a clandestine union, that would be in any-wise legal, with one of its citizens.

"And I suppose you want it to be legal?" said the young man.

Marstland swore, with somewhat unnecessary indignation, that he did.

"And if you had to do it at all you'd want to do it in a hurry? Oh, well then you'd better not attempt it, for I'm quite sure—I've heard one of their lawyers talking about it at Sam's dinner-table—that it would be no use. The parson hasn't anything really to say to it over there, you know. He's merely an ornamental part of the business, like the icing on the cake. The real thing is all done by the civil functionary—the 'maire,' you know, and entails all manner of awkward things, a residence or domiciliation, as they call it, of—I don't know how long—something like six months, I think—attestations of consent of parents and grand-parents, and the Lord knows who; certificates of birth or of 'notoriété,' to show you're both of full age; and the whole thing as public and spun out as possible, so as to give the relations every chance of interfering if they want to—"

"Oh, but—hang it all, Harry!" Marstland interposed, "if the clergyman consented; and I should tell him she was a Protestant, and being forced—"

"My dear fellow, he couldn't consent! All this civil business has got to come before he lifts a finger in the matter; and if he were to go through his ceremony in advance he'd be liable to prosecution and something awful in the way of fines. You'll not get any parson to risk that." And then he went on to suggest, while Marstland was pitching brushes and combs and clean linen into his portmanteau, that if it did come to a flitting the best plan would be to run over to Jersey or Guernsey and get married there by licence in the ordinary way; also that his brother, who was a wealthy ship-owner and lived at St. Malo, had a lovely steam yacht, one of the best-going boats out, which he kept for his own use, but which the young man felt certain he would put at Marstland's disposal for the adventure without a moment's question.

"He feels the debt of gratitude we all owe you as much as I do," he said, and Marstland thanked him warmly.

Vera let him make all his arrangements

without asking or caring to hear any details of them. A pencilled line sent through Bénoite now and again, to let her know that he was near and keeping watch over her, and a whispered word from the same active friend that she had seen him, and that he sent this or that message, had been all and more than she asked to keep up her spirits and enable her to maintain a quiet and submissive demeanour during that trying fortnight when, with visits from the Count and preparations for her marriage with him going on, she almost lost at times all belief in the possibility of escape, and perhaps lulled suspicion the more by the passiveness with which she appeared to have resigned herself to the fate before her.

That happy, hazardous tryst, however, under the great Menhir worked a vast change in her, and the last day at home was easier to get through than any other had been, and was rendered still more so by the fact that any agitation or excitement which she might show would be easily explained by the natural emotion of a young girl bidding adieu for ever to her maiden life and the home which, except for that brief visit to England, she had never quitted before.

Her mother, too, had been unusually tender with her all day, and though this circumstance might, with many girls, have made the leaving her harder instead of more easy, poor little Vera's curiously defective touch in anything involving refinements of delicacy or conscience, led her to feel in this unwonted gentleness only a sort of tacit retraction of Madame St. Laurent's late severity, an unexpressed condonation of her intended rebellion; and when her mother answered her faltering "Good night" and kiss with an affectionate "God bless you, my dear," the girl was emboldened to put her arms round her neck and say:

"Mamma, you will never be very angry with me any more, will you? You will forgive me when—when I am married for anything that I have done to vex you?"

Madame St. Laurent held her in a sudden tight clasp.

"You are not married yet!" she said hoarsely. "Child, don't you know I would like to keep you with me for ever if I could, and let you vex me every day of your life! There" (suddenly recollecting herself) "go to bed, my dear. You've never done anything wrong to speak of, and, if you had, you're all I have in the world, and you're

good enough now. Go to bed and have a good rest. I've told Joanna she's not to call you till eight o'clock to-morrow."

Half-past three! The minute hand of the watch had reached the figure VI at last, and obedient to the instant Vera stood up and, drawing the heavy folds of the cloak she had on closely around her, crossed the room, and softly, softly opened the door. She carried her shoes in one hand and a tiny bag in the other. A larger one, containing a change of clothes and a few little treasures—presents from her mother and the Josephses—Bénoite had removed earlier in the day; and her flat velvet bérét was in her pocket, so that, if by any unlucky chance she were overheard and stopped on her way downstairs she might not have the air of being dressed for out-of-doors.

But no one stopped her. The whole house was hushed and silent as the grave. Even the wooden gallery did not creak beneath her little stockinged feet; and the staircase was of stone. Who should hear her? It was not till some time afterwards that Madame St. Laurent even remembered how, lying awake at her husband's side, anxious and perturbed about the morrow's journey and all that was to follow it, she had heard a faint rustling sound—almost too soft to be audible, and gone the next moment—outside the door, and had thought it might be the cat seeking admittance; but, for fear of disturbing monsieur had foreborne to rise and see. She little guessed that it was Vera, her own child, who, on the eve of leaving her for ever, had deliberately stopped, ere passing her door, to breathe a voiceless farewell to her.

"Good-bye, mamma, and forgive me. I cannot help it, indeed; and you said you would not keep angry. Good-bye!" Vera whispered, and then glided past and was gone; the one little scruple which might have disturbed her conscience quieted and at rest. She had not left her mother without bidding her farewell.

And meanwhile Madame St. Laurent, having forgotten the cat, was turning round to sleep again with a more comfortable feeling respecting her daughter than she had had for a long time. That meek petition earlier in the evening from the girl whose confidence she had repulsed, whose hopes she had blighted, and whom she was practically selling into a marriage from which her whole soul revolted, had come to her also like a kind of unspoken absolution from the victim; a

tacit assurance that she had not alienated altogether the affections most precious to her in life. If she had done so it would have broken her heart; but, like Vera again, she said to herself that she could not help it. The circumstances were wretched; but it was not she who had made them. It was her husband's will, and her first duty was to him. And, after all, the marriage was an excellent one for any girl; a magnificent one, indeed, for her daughter, and the granddaughter of John Higgs, the baker!

The garden-door was on the latch. It opened without a sound; and as Vera stepped out into the cold night air her hand was instantly clasped in that of Bénéite, who was watching for her, and who exclaimed in a whisper husky with excitement:

"Heaven be thanked, you have come! Almost I began to think that you had been stopped—that you were afraid! How my heart has beat! But, come, come quickly. He is waiting us in the lane, and with such a horse! Holy saints! but he must have paid a fortune for the hire. Your English are princes indeed!"

They were gliding along under the shadow of a line of shrubs as she spoke, and all that Vera answered was "Hush!" It was a comfort to feel Bénéite's warm hand on hers; but at that moment she felt as if even the lowest whisper must be audible in her parents' room. She hardly dared to draw a long breath herself till they had skirted the orchard and reached a little gate in the wall, outside which something dark and shapeless was standing in the shadow of a big elm tree. Another shadow detached itself from it, however, the moment they appeared in sight, and came forward quickly into the moonbeams, and next instant Vera felt her hands clasped in both her lover's, and heard his whispered:

"Heaven bless you for this, my own darling! How shall I ever repay you?"

There was not a moment to lose after that. The driver was already on his seat; and it seemed to Vera but a lightning flash before she was lifted to hers, and her lover had swung himself up beside her, and was bending down to shake Bénéite's hand with a pressure through which the chink of coins was distinctly audible.

"Tell him to drive like the wind when once he gets past the corner of the lane; and a thousand thanks, my good friend, for all you have done for us," the young surgeon whispered excitedly, and Bénéite answered in the same tone:

"Alas! it was for Catharine's sake, and may the Lord forgive me for it if I have done wrong! But be good to mademoiselle, Monsieur; be good to her and our Lady will intercede for me. Farewell, mademoiselle; may you be happy!"

Vera smiled faintly. It was all she could do, for speech seemed impossible to her. Even when Marstland exclaimed:

"But where is your hat, my child?" she only fumbled vaguely in her pocket, and let him take the *berêt* out and put it on for her; and when, drawing his arm round her to support her back, he whispered tenderly:

"You are not afraid, are you, darling! Remember, I am only your big, faithful brother at present, and in a few hours we shall be husband and wife, and no one will be able to separate us." She gave him no answer beyond a vague, gentle smile. He knew well enough it was not a negative.

Indeed, on the whole her stillness and silence were as reassuring as they were surprising to him. Knowing her extreme timidity he had feared that she would be greatly agitated, would perhaps cry—it was a terrible idea, but not an unnatural one, considering that she was a young girl and an only child, leaving home and parents for ever—perhaps repent of her resolution as soon as they started, and entreat him to release her or take him back, thus putting him into a moral dilemma; for how could he run away with her against her will (and yet would she not curse him later if he obeyed her?)—the mere thought of it turned him cold.

But as it was, Vera seemed even calmer than he. He could not see her face indeed, for it was in shadow; but she rested tranquilly against him just as he had placed her, and did not even turn her head for a farewell look at the steep roof, the white walls, and curious corner tower with its funnel-shaped roof, of *Les Châtaigniers* as they stood out for the last time in the moonlight before being hidden behind a belt of trees. Possibly she did not realize then that she was bidding adieu to them for ever; that never in this life was she to look on her childhood's home again; but Marstland thanked her in his heart for the unselfishness which, as he thought, would not pain him by manifesting even a natural regret, and loved her all the better for it.

It startled him the more, therefore, when suddenly as they were bowling along a piece of broad, hard road she started forward with a low cry, and he felt her trembling all over.

"My darling, what is it?" he asked with a hurried look behind, as the thought that they were being pursued rose instantly to his mind; but there was nothing to be seen or heard there, and Vera was pointing in another direction.

"Look!" she whispered excitedly. "Maily! Don't you see it? That pile of buildings, black against the whitish patch of sky over there; and something moving on the top! That's the flag flying; so he is back. He must have come back yesterday, and they never told me. Oh! I thought at least he was in Paris."

"He probably came back to escort you there," said Marstland with his cheery laugh. "Well, he'll have had his journey for his pains, and will learn the end of his wooing a little earlier, that's all. Sweet one, don't tremble so. What matter if he is there? We shall soon be far enough away."

"But he will follow us. He will bring papa with him, and follow us," Vera said, still whispering and with pallid lips. "Perhaps, if papa had been alone he might not have thought it worth while; but the Count never gives up anything—never. He will make papa come with him. They will take me back . . ." Her lips would not go on, and her eyes had filled to brimming. Marstland held her closer, and spoke in his deepest and strongest tones.

"They will do no such thing, while I am alive to hold you from them and protect you. Listen, Vera; do you remember your own legend of St. Tryphine, and how the tyrant, Commorre, paid for daring to lay his hands on her when she fled from him?"

"He killed her!" Vera said, in a low, awestruck voice, her eyes still wandering to where that minute black speck waved against the sky, as though it were the Count's hand beckoning to her.

"He was killed, himself!" said Marstland sternly; "and, Vera, mark my words, I have grudge enough against this man already for his unmanly persecution of you, and the cowardly way in which he has used his hold over your parents to further it; but who, once you are mine—as you will be in a few hours more—if he ever presumes to force himself into your presence again, or to touch so much as the tip of your finger, I will shoot him as I would a dog. Don't waste another thought on him. He will trouble you no more."

And even with the words the stately, far-off pile and waving black speck seemed

to sink behind the horizon, swallowed up behind the fast-rolling wheels of their vehicle, and Vera leant her head against her lover's shoulder with a long, quivering sigh of gratitude and relief.

The whole journey was like a dream to her; the hour, the speed at which they travelled—for, fortunately, the roads were unusually good that season, and the driver a man who knew every inch of them by day as well as night—the way in which they seemed to swallow up the country as they passed, trees, hedgerows, patches of moorland, cottages, which rushed up at them out of the darkness, swept by and vanished again as if they had never been; the gradual waning of the moonlight, the keener morning air and growing brightness in the eastern sky; Pont l'Abbé which they rattled through without drawing rein, while Vera held her head low and drew her cloak over her face; though the little town was even faster asleep than usual and never showed a light at its quaint casements, or so much as a wayfarer in its narrow, ill-paved streets.

At Loat-dero, however, a tiny hamlet about two miles further, a halt was suddenly called in front of a rustic "cabaret," where people were evidently watching for them; for a fresh horse was brought out from the stable the moment they stopped; and, while it was being put into the shafts, the innkeeper's wife came out with a couple of cups of strong, hot coffee and some rolls of bread, warm from the oven, with which Marstland served Vera, adding a few drops of brandy from his flask to the coffee, and insisting on her doing full justice both to it and the food; though, in her dread of being overtaken, she had already begun to tremble and turn pale at the mere idea of delay. It was well that he insisted, for, after being awake all night and having had nothing since dinner the evening before, she was already feeling dizzy and exhausted; and they did not again stop or draw rein until they arrived at Quimper, just five minutes before the departure of the early morning train, having done the fifteen miles between there and Les Châtaigniers in a little over two hours.

What Marstland paid for that drive only he and the driver knew. As for Vera, her one thought was to be in the train and off again. She scarcely breathed, and looked as if she was going to faint during the few moments of waiting.

But no one interrupted them there, and the dream began again as soon as they

were in the railway carriage and flying northward. Indeed, between fatigue after the long, rattling drive and relief at feeling, for the first time, secure from immediate capture, it became a real one, and she actually slept after awhile, her head drooping wearily on her lover's shoulder, while he sat supporting her with reverent care, and gazing down on her sweet, pale, young face with a passion of love, tenderness, and admiration which it required all his self-control to repress, lest he should disturb her by so much as a movement.

He did not forget his promise to her even then, however, and no brother could have been gentler or more careful in his treatment of the weary girl. Nay, he would not even once allow himself to kiss the lips so near his own, though Vera was sleeping too soundly to know of it, and would not have cared had she done so. She roused up when they paused at Châteaulin, but only enough to open her eyes and gaze out with dreamy curiosity at the grey old town and ruined castle perched on a green hill above them, the sleepy river running like a broad silver band through flat meadows fringed with poplars, and the orchards all a snow of white-pear blossoms, and shining brightly in the morning sunlight; but she fell asleep again almost directly afterwards, and Marstland gently drew her back into her former position, and wrapped her cloak more warmly round her. It was the sweetest moment in his life to him.

They breakfasted at Landernau, and it was still early in the morning when they reached Morlaix, and traversing the well-thronged streets of that busy, bustling town, with its magnificent modern buildings crowding out those curious carved houses dating from the fourteenth century, which are still the delight of every painter's heart, found themselves with brief delay at the wharf, a little below which the steam yacht, belonging to Marstland's friend, was lying at anchor. Here again, they were being watched for, and within five minutes of their stepping on board, steam had been got up, the anchor was weighed, and they were gliding swiftly down the river to the open sea.

"Safe at last, darling!" Marstland said, pressing Vera's hands triumphantly in his as they stood together on the deck, look-

ing back at the receding shore. "Why, ten to one they are only now finding out your departure at Les Châteaux; and at any rate we shall be securely married long before they can have discovered which way we have gone, or taken steps to follow, if indeed they are foolish enough to do so;" and then he turned to the rough, jolly-looking Englishman, who was in command of the yacht, and asked him what prospect they had of a quick voyage.

"Best y'could have," the man answered tersely. "There's a good stiff sou'-west breeze outside as'd take y' over to Guernsey if y' was only in a sailin' boat, an' did'n't know how to steer her. Mister Dampier, he wired me 'twas a matter of life or death, and I warent to spare puttin' on steam an' sail both if needed; but he might ha' wired the weather also to judge by the look on it. You're in luck, sir, an' a body 'ould be in a hurry to die as couldn't wait till you got there!"

"Especially as it is a case of marrying with us, not dying, eh Vera, darling!" Marstland said in an under tone to the girl, and was rewarded by the first natural, girlish blush that he had seen on her cheek that day. She looked quite lovely for a moment, standing there on the white deck, with her long cloak falling round her, and the bright colour of her hair relieved against the dark-blue background of sea; but after a minute her eyes filled, and she said a little wistfully, but with odd simplicity:

"If only I could be sure mamma would not be scolded for it! I'm afraid anyhow it will look very bad and unseemly to her, but I said goodbye to her, and asked her to forgive me, before I came away. She did not hear me, she was asleep, but I said it all the same."

"My poor little gentle darling, it is you who have to forgive," Marstland answered warmly. He had only seen Madame St. Laurent on that one unpropitious occasion when she stood between him and her weeping daughter, and he had no pity to spare for her or her husband. His one feeling at present was a joyous triumph in having so successfully outwitted their cold-blooded tyranny.

Certainly, never had an elopement been more boldly planned, or more happily carried through.

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

A Weekly Journal

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

ALEXIA.

BY ELEANOR C. PRICE,

Author of "Gerald."

CHAPTER X.

MARTIN, the bailiff, a wiry, clever old man, who lived with his wife and son in a corner of the Manor House, drove down himself that afternoon to meet the Squire. He had always been fond of Mr. Charlie, and of late years had been much disappointed in him, disapproving highly of his marriage with Miss Radcliffe. As they drove through Redwood he made some remark about the wedding the next day.

"Ah, I suppose so. I came down with Mr. Rowley," said Charlie. "Is it a smart affair?"

"No, sir, quiet, from all I can hear," said Martin. "But I hears nothing. I ain't given to scandal-mongering."

"I know you're not, Martin," said Charlie. "Stop. I'll get out at the church, and you can drive on. Tell them to light a fire in the den."

In the blue cold twilight the church door stood open, at the end of a flagged path shaded by leafless lime trees. An arch of evergreens had been set up over the gate, and there was a glimmer of light inside the church.

"There's been a grand turn-out," said Martin, with a sort of grin.

"It's a grand occasion," said the Squire. He walked slowly up the path, while Martin rattled away, and presently stood inside the door. It was a heavy, dark old church, the nave still blocked up with pews. In the choir were the seats of the scornful, finely carved, and the school-children's benches behind them. There were two or three heavy old monuments, and the usual aspect of the church was damp and dismal,

but just now it was loaded with Christmas decorations, texts in frosted letters, crosses and triangles on red cloth, stuck here and there, evergreen wreaths twining pillars and pulpit. Yards of red stuff had been laid down from the porch to the altar steps, where the bride was to walk and stand to-morrow. The good woman who had been arranging all this was now poking away at a stove in some remote corner, having left her candle burning in one of pews. It flickered in the air, and made strange moving lights and shadows in the church. Half a pillar would flash forward, and draw back into darkness again, with a weird effect: the blue misty light of the outside world gleamed in at the windows.

Charlie Melville, wrapped in his great travelling coat, walked up the aisle and stood for a few minutes in the chancel. He hardly knew why he was there, and seemed to walk in a dream. But there he stood, and stared about him, while the flickering lights caught his fair hair. Presently a deep sigh, almost a groan, escaped him, and at the same moment he became aware that the vestry door stood half-open, and that a round, anxious face was looking through.

Charlie made a step backwards, startled and disgusted: he had no idea that the Rector was in the vestry; and that Mr. Dodd should have a notion of his state of mind was the very least desirable thing. In another moment he recollected that Mr. Dodd had seen enough already, and instead of retreating, he strode forward into the vestry, where Mr. Dodd was looking over his register, arranging pens and ink for the next day.

"Preparations?" said Charlie; and he shook hands with the Rector, who stared at him with round eyes.

"A—I had no idea that you were at

Redwood," exclaimed Mr. Dodd with some hesitation.

"Just come down on business. I'm off to America next week," and then Charlie answered patiently enquiries after his mother and his wife, and ended by saying that the church looked splendid—all Mrs. Dodd's doing, he supposed.

"Christmas, you know," nodded the Rector, still with a suspicious stare. "And the decorations come in very nicely for our wedding."

"Ah—one likes to see the old church look well," said Charlie.

"You don't often see it at all now," said the Rector. "And shall you be here to-morrow? Of course Mr. Page will be delighted. Mrs. Dodd and I dine there to-night. Young Rowley is staying with us. I shall tell Mr. Page he will have another guest," said Charlie's pastor, with the air which this stray sheep of his thought vulgar impertinence.

"Thanks. I shall be much obliged if you will do no such thing," said Charlie. "I particularly don't want the Pages to know that I am here. I hate weddings. After all the fuss is over I shall have a talk with Mr. Page."

"Very well, very well; just as you please," said Mr. Dodd; and with a short farewell Charlie left the vestry and marched off down the church.

He took a short cut across the park to his lonely old house. It looked intensely sad with its many shuttered windows, the new part standing white and square and solid on a broad terrace, with a great stone portico and pillars; the old part, red, uneven, timbered, gabled, half-hidden in ivy on which a frosty mist was already gathering, stretching round towards the yew hedges, and long walks, and old walls of the garden. In the centre gable one latticed window, unshuttered, was shining red and cheerful through the ivy. Mrs. Martin had lighted the fire in Charlie's den. His dinner was ready in the library, where he generally lived when he came to Redwood now. He finished it off in very quick time, though Mrs. Martin, who was a good cook, had done her best, and then went along the winding passages and up the old polished staircase to the den.

There he hunted round the room, and collected a few shabby treasures, dusty, moth-eaten, faded—a certain small case of humming-birds, a drawer of foreign butterflies, two or three old scrap-books, a blue velvet smoking-cap, which a girl's fingers had

embroidered—these, with a few more sad relics, he laid out in a row on the table, and looked at them one by one. Then he pulled up the old armchair, where the hare in startled hopelessness still gazed after the tortoise, and sat down in front of the fire and smoked a few cigarettes, staring at the blaze all the time in a sort of gloomy dream.

In this way he occupied the evening till nearly ten o'clock. Then he roused himself, went downstairs, got his hat and coat, and went out into the brilliant star-shine.

All the world was white with frost now; the blue steely glimmer of twilight was intensified. There was a deep, profound stillness, the grass and leaves crackled under Charlie's feet as he walked across the park. Presently he turned into the road, and strolled down, keeping rather in the shadow of the hedges, till he found himself opposite the Old Farm. Here there was no stillness; lights were flashing everywhere; red gleams seemed to make their way through curtains, through chinks of shutters; the dogs, kept awake by the unusual bustle, were barking in the yard, and merry music came sounding out across the garden. Sometimes Charlie, standing perfectly still at the gate, could hear peals of laughter, which told him how happy they all were, how Alexia's troubles were all over now, how she was thoroughly contented with her fate, and thankful, not sorry for the past. He smiled to himself rather bitterly, and thought it did not take much to console a woman. He almost felt as if he hated Alexia, as another scream of girlish laughter rang across the garden; but still he stood there, leaning on the gate, as if it had been summer, quite unable to go away, yet resolving that he would go back to town by the first train in the morning, for he knew now that the sight of her marriage would be more than he could bear. Four years ago—why, the feeling he had for Alexia then was not worth calling love. This agony—this wrong, hopeless, terrible passion, was a very different thing. If he had felt like this then, she would never have refused him. No doubt it was all very contemptible—he despised himself—his mother had been right when she advised him not to go down to Redwood. Life was an awful thing, Charlie meditated. Here he was, not fifty yards from Alexia, and yet seas and mountains were nothing to the worlds of impossibility between her and him.

He stood there till the door in the deep

porch opened, and a whole wave of light, warmth, happiness, seemed to roll out across the garden. Mr. and Mrs. Dodd came out; they were going to walk home under the stars. Mrs. Dodd's voice sounded quite sweet and musical as she wished Mr. Page good-night.

"Now, Mr. Rowley!" said Mr. Dodd; and when they had nearly reached the gate, the dark slender figure of the bridegroom overtook them. They all walked away together down the road, while Charlie moved a few steps the other way: no one saw him, or dreamed that he was there.

Very soon the Old Farm was quiet after these guests were gone; the dogs fell asleep, the doors and windows were darkened. Then came out a square of light in one of the gables by the porch. Charlie knew very well whose room that was: he had looked up at the window often and anxiously enough, four years ago. Now he stood, and gazed, and watched perhaps for an hour or more, while a shadow now and then crossed the square of light. Then at last it too was darkened, and he turned away and tramped home to the Manor.

Martin was sitting up for him, and a good fire was still burning in the den. Charlie sat over it smoking and warming himself, for the romance of the evening had been freezing work after all. Then, before he went to bed, he made such a blaze in that old chimney as it had never known before, for he piled up a great fire and threw all his old treasures on the top of it, humming-birds, butterflies, with their drawers and cases, scrap-books, even the blue velvet smoking-cap. They caught fire and flamed, roaring up the chimney, and Charlie, having made his sacrifice, went off to his own room and left them blazing.

CHAPTER XL

EDMUND ROWLEY'S sisters, like himself, worshipped Alexia, and could not see or imagine any fault in her. His mother, though fond of her, was not quite so enthusiastic. She was a most straightforward woman, but also narrow-minded, and not always sympathetic. She had a certain standard for people's feelings and manners at special occasions in their lives. She expected a good deal, and on the whole she was not satisfied with Alexia's behaviour the night before her wedding. When following events astonished everybody else, Mrs. Rowley drew herself up and said she was not surprised. Nor was Mr. Page, though he did not confess it; but he had

reasons which, at that time at least, were quite hidden from his sister. Her penetration was so much the more remarkable.

Alexia was certainly a little odd that evening, Mrs. Rowley thought. Marriage was a solemn thing: and here was the girl chattering all kinds of nonsense, sending Mr. Dodd into fits of laughter, laughing herself as if a serious thought had never crossed her brain, so that Mrs. Dodd opened her eyes and smiled condescendingly, and Edmund looked a little wondering, and his mother looked graver and crosser every minute. Mr. Page looked on placidly, without saying much; but he was watching Alexia all the time; none of her jokes, none of her changing humours, were lost on him. For her behaviour was made odder still, in her aunt's eyes, by a sudden fit now and then of silence and absence. She would sit looking at nothing, while her cousins laughed and chattered on; somebody would speak to her, and she would not answer for a minute or two. These shadows of thoughtfulness might have pleased Mrs. Rowley, but she was not so easily satisfied. She wanted a gentle consistency, not running into any foolish extremes, and that night Alexia was not quite herself, and could not give it her.

There was something a little odd too, when Mr. and Mrs. Dodd were gone, in the hurried, half-dreamy good-night that Alexia wished them all, not listening to her aunt's appropriate remarks, or to the affectionate raptures of the girls, but going straight away to her own room and locking the door.

"I suppose Alexia will be down again presently, William," said Mrs. Rowley, when all the young people were gone, sitting upright on the old sofa by the drawing-room fire.

"No, I don't suppose she will," said Mr. Page. "She said good-night: she is tired: I hope she will go to bed at once."

"One would have thought——" said Mrs. Rowley—she paused, and then went on, as he waited patiently, "I expected that you and she would have a good deal to say to each other, this last evening."

William Page stood on the hearthrug, looking quietly straight before him, and stroking his face.

"I don't know what," he said presently. "We understand each other. She knew I wanted her to go to bed."

"But on such an occasion," persisted Mrs. Rowley with a forbearing smile, "a father might wish to give his child some good advice."

"Oh no," he said. "Alex does very well without advice from me."

"Dear me!" exclaimed Mrs. Rowley: but she perceived that it was best to say no more, and she went to bed soon after in a disapproving frame of mind.

William was weak. He had been weak about his wife; he was just as weak about his daughter, and had certainly brought her up in a foolish spirit of wilful independence. How about Edmund's happiness? His mother felt anxious, and was inclined to go herself to Alexia's room with a small store of good advice, taking up the responsibility her father shirked. But she gave up this plan, thinking that William might be annoyed, and reminding herself, for she was a kind and just woman at heart, of all Alexia's sweetness during the three years of the engagement. After all, it was impossible not to love her, though she might puzzle and provoke one sometimes; and Edmund's mother lay down in charity with Alexia.

I suppose people who believe much in magnetism will not find it hard to understand that Alexia had been visited several times that evening, and finally driven to her room, by a feeling of intense and awful misery, of terror and despair, by a thronging crowd of old thoughts and recollections, which she had honestly done her very best to get rid of and escape from altogether. It was too cruel and terrible of them to come back now, "a midnight host of spectres pale"—now, when it was too late to listen to them, when their very presence was becoming sinful. Ah! it had nearly always been that, in one way: and the struggle had gone on bravely for years. Sometimes the victory had seemed to be quite gained; the old feeling was asleep, if not dead, and Charlie's name was no more to her than any other man's. She had great power over her own heart and mind, like every woman who is worth much, and there were things which she would not remember or think of. For months she would resolve and fight successfully, never consciously letting herself be disloyal in one thought to Edmund: then would come a day or a night of failure, when the battle must be fought over again from the beginning. Often at these times she had nearly written to him to break off their engagement; but she conquered in the fight again, and the old love went to sleep, and she felt quite sure that this time it would die. Why should it come back again to-night, of all nights in a lifetime, and with a wild

strength which frightened and maddened her, so that she crouched down on the sofa in her room, and, with clenched hands, and brow pressed hard against the cushions, found herself panting out words in spite of herself—"Charlie—Charlie—I love you—I wish I was dead! Oh! why can't I die!" Mrs. Rowley, it seems, was not quite unjustified in her fears for her son's happiness.

For two hours, perhaps, Alexia lay there in this strain of nervous agony, without movement, except a shiver now and then. Her brain was on fire, and all the past came back with a new vividness. There was a bright light upon it all now, and it showed her, as she had never seen it before, the one great mistake that was ruining her poor little life. That mistake, made in a moment of excitement, of self-distrust and cowardice, into what depths might it not plunge her now! Would there be any help, could there ever have been, in pledging her whole life and affection to one man, when it was too awfully plain to herself that they were for ever given to another? No; by that worse than foolish engagement she had made everything ten times harder, by making herself false. Through these last miserable years—this moment of truth showed what they had really been—she had been living in a lie; and now, to-morrow, in a few hours, she was going to bind herself to live in it for ever. No; she could not and would not do it. It was not yet too late. There, alone in her room with the dying fire, she saw at last what was right, and thought it would be easy to do it. As for sleeping to-night, of course that was impossible. She would get up very early in the morning, and go to her father; he was sure to be early too. He would understand; he would help her; she knew in her heart that he had never been deceived, like other people, and had never been really glad of her engagement. He would be on her side; he would tell them all, and make it easy for her. Of course everybody would be angry, but what did that matter! Oh for freedom and peace again, to belong to herself, and to no one else in the world! Why, what a madness it had been, to think of escaping from danger by chaining herself in a prison. What an unworthy cowardice, what a mean suspicion of herself and Charlie! In this "foundering of the ship," for so it was to poor little Alexia, she blamed herself for everything she had ever done, and told herself that she had been false and cowardly

from the beginning. Why, why, should wrong ever have seemed right, and right wrong! Going back four years, a life-time ago, yet as near as yesterday, she told herself that she ought to have been true to Charlie then. After all, their lives and hearts were their own; she had no reason to doubt him then, and she knew that with her whole soul she belonged to him. It was all her doing. Cowardice, again, had put on the mask of unselfishness, and when his mother asked her to give him up, she had done it without a struggle. And here were the consequences: both their lives turned into a miserable lie! However, it was no use going back so far: what was done could not be undone. No; but what was still undone need not be done. She need not be false to herself for ever; she could yet be true, and free. Not happy herself, or making others happy; but at least she need not carry lies into the future, by submitting quietly to the fate that was so near, and pretending to give away what did not belong to her. "Free, free, I shall be free!" she could say to herself now, and in the calm of this new resolution she fell asleep there on the sofa, her light evening dress all crushed and crumpled, and her wild curls buried in the pillow.

After some time she woke suddenly, with a start, and sat up shivering, for the fire was nearly out, and she had gone to sleep without anything to cover her.

All the excitement had passed away now; she was her ordinary, straightforward, sensible self again; the storm was over, and the wild dreams were almost forgotten. For the first few moments she sat still, feeling a little strange and vague. Something had happened, or was going to happen, she hardly knew what: then the tall old clock downstairs struck two, its solemn bell resounding through the house, and she remembered that this was the morning of her wedding day. She was going to light a candle, thinking that she might as well undress and go to bed now; but then, clearly and quietly, and from quite a different point of view, she began thinking of that resolution made before she fell asleep, and she did not move at once, but sat on in the darkness with her head upon her hands, thinking this thought out. For there was another point of view. Last night she had seen things solely from her own; this morning she remembered that there was some one else to be considered, another human being with a heart and soul, as well as herself, a creature who per-

fectly trusted her, whose whole world she was, and to whose love and faithfulness she was going to give a mortal wound. It certainly was with a thrill of shame and pain that she confessed it to herself—in that glorious plan of escape, that brave resolution to do right and to be free, she had quite forgotten to think what Edmund might feel.

This was a case of conscience indeed, and Edmund's claim advanced itself with overwhelming strength. If you can only save your own life by killing another person, whose trust in you is perfect—why! Was it the doing of a selfish or of a generous nature, to have gone to her lover for refuge and safety, to have accepted all he had to give, and then, when the time came for keeping her promises, to draw back, to say she must live free, or not at all, to throw back his love and trust in his face, telling him that she had changed her mind?—for the real reason was not a reason that could be told. This would surely be the meanest thing she had ever done, this escape from the consequences of her own actions—buying peace and freedom for herself at the cost of Edmund's happiness. No; if she could do nothing else that was brave, she could carry out her sacrifice, and could at least be outwardly true to him. In her waking senses, cold, tired, and calm, she knew that there was no real need to fear the future. "I will be faithful; I will not be a wicked woman; and, if I can help it, I will never think of Charlie again."

She said these words on her knees: and then she said her prayers, which she had forgotten at night, and a sort of quiet happiness came over her. Poor Alexia! Which of her resolutions was the right one, after all?

WHAT IT MUST COME TO.

ONE by one the historic châteaux of France are passing into the hands of the rich bourgeoisie. As the English traveller journeys through the country, guide-book in hand, this fact naturally escapes his observation. He sees a splendid old pile from the railway, and identifies it with the description given by Murray; he obtains sight of a famous bit of architecture in another, a celebrated garden belonging to a third; and there the matter ends. Of the social transformation that has come over these palatial dwellings of the olden time, he learns nothing. Only those who live in France among French

people realise history as it is being written there under their own eyes.

Last autumn I happened to be the guest of a country gentleman residing on his own estate in the Angoumois. Perhaps I should use the definition gentleman farmer, since M. Hervé attended to the business of farming upwards of a thousand acres himself, went regularly to market, kept his own accounts, and dispensed altogether with the services of steward or bailiff. Busy as he was, however, and rural as were his tastes, he yet found time to show me all that was most worth seeing in the neighbourhood; he was also, like most of his country people, full of local information. Under his roof I wanted, therefore, neither guide-book nor departmental geography. Everything a stranger wanted to know he could tell me.

"I propose, this afternoon," he said one day at déjeuner, "to drive you to Château Roman; quite the most curious thing to be seen in our department."

"Château Roman? Château Roman?" I asked. "The place has surely some other name, for neither our English Murray, nor your own Joanne, so much as makes the slightest allusion to such a place."

"The fact is," my host continued, as he quietly cut up a turkey no larger than a spring chicken—why we keep our turkeys till they are as big as sheep, I cannot conceive—"the fact is—I hope you like truffles?—Château Roman was formerly known as Château Chabot-Charny, so called after that noble family—permit me, a glass of Sauterne—who gave so many steadfast adherents to the Protestant cause in France. The last of the house dying without issue, the château changed owners many times, finally passing into the hands of a rich speculator—allow me, a little salad?—and he has turned it into a fabrique de romans, a novel manufactory."

"A novel manufactory?" I cried, dropping knife and fork.

"Certainly," he said, "a veritable fabrique de romans. We have a great variety of manufactures in these parts, indeed, I may say, throughout the entire country. Pill factories, picture factories—shoes, shirts, spectacles, you can hardly mention an article, either for use or ornament, that we do not now make by machinery in France. Machine-made work is not only cheaper, more expeditious than anything of the kind to be turned out by hand, it is so superior, so undeniably superior."

My host, though the most practical man

in the world, could yet thoroughly appreciate a joke when it came in his way. I see at once, therefore, that he was not making fun of me now. He went on quite naturally, "The name may sound odd to you, perhaps—une fabrique de romans! Yes, I admit that when one hears of it for the first time one might suppose the whole thing to be a hoax. But reflect for a moment. There is nothing in the least laughable about the matter. Books of other kinds have long since been made by machinery—diaries, almanacks, catechisms, manuals of devotion, cookery-books, song-books, dictionaries, and works of reference of various sorts. Newspapers, too, up to a certain point, may be said to be manufactured. Youths are now regularly apprenticed to the journalistic trade as to any other. Where, then, is the incongruity? Machine-made novels are not only cheaper than hand-made, but better adapted to the requirements of the age. I certainly prefer them myself. As I say, then, we will drive this afternoon and look over the whole concern."

"Then Château Roman is an appropriate name," I said.

"Above all, a name easy to remember! In these days of telegraph, telephone, and all the rest of it, a colossal undertaking like that of this fabrique de romans must not only be à propos, but unmistakably, named. Now, out of the scores of places, the names of which begin with Château in France, there is none that could possibly be confused with Château Roman. The name, too, speaks for the thing. Any fool must know what it means. Jean," here my host turned to the dexterous young fellow waiting at table, a rustic, yet clever and handy, "Jean, the pony carriage and the mare, if you please, at half-past one o'clock to go to Château Roman."

Château Roman forms a striking object as the traveller speeds by railway through the heart of the Angoumois. High above the dark river tumbling over its rocky bed, high above old-world tower, hanging gardens and smiling valley, high above frowning granite peak and rich chestnut woods, it rises in all its primitive massiveness and splendour. The vast pile is built of the dark grey limestone of the district, shining with a metallic lustre in the bright September sunshine, and with its lofty towers surmounted by pinnacles, its obliques and ramparts, still recalls the

gloomly fortified castle of the Middle Ages. A cradle of tragedy, rather than comedy, it looked, whence should issue novels as terrible as any invention of human fancy.

"You observe that, as far as possible, the historic aspect of the place has been preserved," my host said. "To do that was a patriotic duty; but my neighbour, the enterprising director, felt it incumbent upon him to show such respect to the exterior only. Inside—the place was fast falling to ruin, so that it was absolutely necessary to do something—you will find all modern, lightsome, airy. The outlook at the back too, where a part of the old wall has been pulled down, is quite charming. You can see over half the department."

We drove on for another mile or so under the overarching plane trees, then the road took a sudden bend, and we were making straight for the portcullis.

"You will wonder, I dare say," my host said, "that the head of such a concern as this should not be a lady. My countrywomen, as all the world knows, are largely gifted with the administrative faculty. Unfortunately, however, few of them have as yet that amount of general knowledge, above all, that literary experience necessary in the directors of a *fabrique de romans*, a novel manufactory. The physical as well as mental strain also, involved in the management of so complicated a business, would overtax the powers of most women. Now in the person of Monsieur Quarante—but here we are."

The mere shell of the frowning portcullis was of course all that was left. The vast courtyard was open, and we drove straight across to the *conciergerie* or porter's lodge. Immediately a couple of employés came running out, and from the attention we received I could easily see how well my host stood in general estimation hereabouts.

"I have brought a friend to look over the establishment," he said to the man at the mare's head. "Can we see Monsieur the director, think you?"

"Monsieur the director won't refuse you," replied the man, "but he is overwhelmed with business just now."

"Trade is pretty brisk, then?" asked M. Hervé, as he watched the pair of grooms take out the carriage.

"Brisker than ever," answered the other. "If everything sold like novels, we should hear of no more honest folk wanting bread in France."

The mare was then led to the stables, and we betook ourselves to the director's office, I meantime glancing to the right and to the left, above and below.

The interior of the quadrangle presented a striking contrast to the façade. Whilst the latter had been preserved in all its pristine picturesqueness and splendour, within everything had been sacrificed to utility, agreeableness, and health. In fact, only the shell of the mediæval château remained. Its appearance inside was that of any ordinary manufactory. Bureaux of the various departments, post office, offices of telegraph and telephone, occupied the ground floor; above, the large, lofty, well-ventilated ateliers showed a busy, yet quiet multitude at work. The one feature indeed distinguishing this factory from any other was the absence of deafening noises. Neither mill-wheel, steam engine, nor hammer grated harshly on the ear, there was only the sound of people moving about and hushed voices.

"Good day, M. Hervé, my respects to you," said the cheerful, bustling, as it seemed to me, somewhat overdone director. "So you have brought this gentleman to see over the manufactory? Nothing easier! I only wish I had more time at your disposal."

M. Hervé placed his hand on the other's shoulder with that almost affectionate cordiality which is permitted in France.

"Come, no ceremony among old friends. If you are really occupied, let us be consigned to one of your clerks."

"No such thing, not for worlds; on no account whatever," was the hearty answer. "I regret that I cannot show your friend over every department, but I will conduct you to the most important. Sit down, gentlemen; have the goodness to sit down for five minutes, two minutes, one minute, then I will be ready."

We sat down. M. Quarante, with extraordinary expedition, then opened half-a-dozen telegrams just brought in, pencilled a word on each, numbered them for transmission to their respective departments, and dismissed the porter. Next he drew forth a telegram form, and sat for a moment, with pen behind his ear, in deep thought. Finally he rose, laid an impatient hand on the paper.

"Everything in the ordinary line of business is easy enough," he said, looking half-distracted. "It is these accidents, these unexpected dilemmas, that are so difficult to cope with—conceive, for instance, the awkwardness of the situation.

We have just turned out an order for the country, and, as requested, each story was to have a quiet murder in it—nothing horrible, you know; horrors are not in fashion just now. But as ill-luck would have it, a real murder of most audacious nature has happened in those parts, and people are so nervous that they won't read anything to remind them of it; they won't have anything in the murder way at all. So our thirty serials are shunted till Heaven knows when, and I must supply thirty more within four-and-twenty hours."

"I presume," my host said, kindly interviewing the director for my benefit, "I presume you do a good stroke of business with the country newspapers?"

"The very thews and sinews of war, sir; but for the country newspapers our hands would be thrown out of work like the silk-weavers at Lyons. Newspapers have increased enormously of late years. Nowadays, thanks to the division of parties, every little town has half-a-dozen, and each has its own serial story."

"Do financial and other crises affect your business much?" asked my host again, on the alert to obtain information for me.

"Not in the least. There was the war with Prussia and the siege of Paris, for instance. One might have supposed that when people had neither bite nor sup, and the enemy was at their very doors, they would not have felt much interest in novels. Quite the contrary. The more depressed and miserable folks were, the more avidity they showed for fiction. On my word, it was as much as we could do to supply the demand."

"In the way of exports, now?" inquired M. Hervé.

"Ah! there you hit another nail on the head. Our export trade is, after all, what really keeps us going. You see, Germany cuts into our home manufactures in cutlery, woollen stuffs, toys. Belgium undersells us in the matter of ironware and machinery. We cannot compete, or anything like compete, with English cotton goods, hardware, comestibles of all kinds; but confound them all—a thousand pardons, sir—I defy them all to hurt our novel trade. We do a good deal with Russia (a special manufacture that), the Argentine Republic, Buenos Ayres, the Brazils, Cochin China, and Zanzibar. These countries stand first; but small steady orders come in from various parts of the world. The Steam Navigation Companies come to us, especially at certain seasons of the year, and then—bless my

soul, I was very near forgetting Japan! We do more with Japan every year. Then I was very near forgetting that, too, the religious orders are excellent customers. You see, priests and monks cannot read their breviary all day long; they may be as pious as Thomas Aquinas himself, but they must amuse themselves sometimes. Again, the hospitals, lunatic asylums, and prisons, you would never believe how many novels sick people, crazy people, and thieves and murderers read! Of course, the more we manufacture the cheaper we can do it."

"You hinted just now at a special manufacture for the Russian market?" asked my host. "Is it indiscreet to ask an explanation of that remark?"

"By no means, not in the very least," was the reply. "I am entirely at your service. Well, Russia, you see, is in a very critical condition just now. People may not write about certain subjects; anything in the way of revolutionary doctrine is tabooed. But in our novels we may plot as much as we please; and we do plot with a vengeance, I can tell you. You understand then, we give a flavouring of Socialism in the article made up for the Russian market."

"And—humph—I imagine from what I have read of them, that your novels are highly moral?" added M. Hervé.

"That they are, I warrant you. The fact is, let folks say what they will, bad morals, as far as novels are concerned, are no longer the fashion in France. I say nothing of Paris, I speak of the country in general. I am a husband and father myself, and, if novel manufacturing meant the propagation of vice, I should set to work to fabricate pills or chassépôts instead. I don't say there is no wickedness, levity, or crime in our novels. Would they read like real life without? But we punish them, sir, soundly too, as I am sorry to say they are seldom punished in reality; whilst as to the virtuous, they live like our forefathers in Paradise! This is one reason why people like our novels. Justice is dealt all round. Well, now for our survey."

He dashed off his reply to the telegram before alluded to; with equal expedition wrote a couple of orders for transmission to two departments; dispatched all three, then led us to a commodious lift-room.

"Do all your hands live on the premises?" asked M. Hervé, when we had taken our seats.

"All, without exception. Of course the most rigid supervision is exercised. The

slightest infringement of decorum, the breaking of a single rule entails summary dismissal. We are now then in the ladies' department," he said, as we were landed on the second storey. "Yonder is the bureau of the directress, here the ateliers. Number One is the millinery department."

We both expressed so much astonishment at this latter piece of information that our guide felt bound to explain himself.

"I suppose it strikes few people how essential is a knowledge of millinery in the manufacture of a novel! But the truth is that readers, especially country readers, and those of little general instruction, delight in nothing so much as to be told what people wear! The heroine's dress, upon important occasions, is often the really most interesting feature about her, and who so fit to describe ladies' dresses as ladies themselves? Given situation, age, complexion, nationality, epoch, and there you are! Note, too, the inevitable superiority of the machine-made novel in this respect. We get the thing done by an expert, whilst novelists on their own account, of the female sex, may be dowdies, and, therefore, quite incapable of turning out a well-dressed woman on paper; if of the other, they are sure to make absurd blunders."

He opened the door of the atelier, and we glanced in without disturbing its occupants. It was a vast, well-lighted, airy apartment, in aspect not unlike the reading-room of a provincial library. In the centre was a large table covered with illustrated magazines, fashion books, and society journals; whilst around, placed at intervals of a yard or two, and shut off one from the other by a screen, were a score of small tables. At each sat a lady, neatly dressed in black, busily writing. For the most part these writers were middle-aged, and of that elegant yet staid appearance we find in the assistants of large shops in Paris. Handsome bookshelves, filled with works of reference, occupied every bit of available wall space. Not a sound was heard but the scratching of a pen, or the turning over of leaves. The director closed the door gently, and we walked on a few steps.

"Every indulgence is shown our hands out of working hours, but absolute silence is obligatory inside the atelier," he said. "You see, my countrywomen are so fond of discussion, and naturally so sociable that, if this rule were once relaxed, the place would become a perfect Babel. We now come to another field given up to the sex, that is, the love-making department."

"Is this invariably the case?" asked my host, looking extremely interested. Being a bachelor and a prodigious novel-reader, his fancy was tickled by this last piece of information.

"Invariably," rejoined M. Quarante. "You see, ladies love this sort of thing, and the younger they are, and the less they know about it, the better they do their work. It stands to reason. Take myself, for instance, on the treadmill of business from morning till night, with daughters to provide for, sons to start in life, how on earth could I sit down to write a love scene for a novel? Now, these young ladies—all the hands in this department are young—are naturally romantic, and it is the easiest thing in the world for them to imagine one love scene after another. It is wonderful how well they do it! At least so our customers say. Of course, I consult the general taste in everything."

He opened the door of the second atelier and revealed to us much the same scene as before. Except in one particular. All the occupants of the writing-tables here were young, and some very pretty.

"Mon Dieu!" whispered my host, "I should like to go round this room; mightn't we do it on tiptoe, now?"

The good-natured director smiled compliance, and all three, speaking only in whispers, and on tiptoe, so that our creaking boots might not disturb the fair workers, slowly made the circuit of the room. M. Hervé lagged behind sadly. By the time we were at the farther end he was only in the middle, and when we had reached the door again he had only just turned the corner. Indeed, so fascinated was he by the spectacle, that our conductor had all the difficulty in the world to get him out of the room again.

The young ladies, I must say, behaved remarkably well under the trying ordeal. They plied their pens as if unaware of our intrusion, away they scribbled automatically, more like writing machines than creatures of flesh and blood. Only one turned her head!

"A very handsome girl, that, in the corner," observed M. Hervé, when at last we had succeeded in getting him out of the atelier. The girl he spoke of was the one who had turned her head.

"Handsome or ugly, it is all one to us," replied M. Quarante coolly. "Good looks here, moreover, are less of a snare than you might suppose. Many of our male hands are married, and, as I said before, nothing

in the shape of light conduct is permitted for a moment."

"From what class do you recruit these young ladies?" I ventured to ask.

"As a rule they are certificated students, daughters of middle-class parents who, provided with their diploma, have to make their own way in the world. They generally quit us to join the staff of a newspaper or to take a Professorship of Belles Lettres at some lycée for girls. The training they get here is invaluable to them in after life. Then—only time presses too much for me to show you all—there is the geographical or picturesque department. That also we hand over to the ladies. People in novels, you see, like people in real life, must live somewhere, and it is very desirable that their place of abode should be accurately described. Descriptions of Touraine, for instance, must in a novel read like Touraine, not Auvergne or the Jura Mountains; towns, rivers, geological formation—how important, how necessary is extreme accuracy here! Our ladies have every facility, gazetteers, maps, works of travel, and often—that they like immensely—we despatch them on a journey to some especial place in order to describe it from personal observation. These hands are extremely well paid. Music again: the musical section is entirely given up to the fair sex. It seldom happens that a novel can be called complete without some music in it; a musical party is wanted, or details of some vocalist's débüt, and so on, and so on. All this we get done by trained specialists, often pupils of the Conservatoire. Again, the subject of etiquette forms a separate department, managed by a small staff of experienced ladies: not young these, mostly retired actresses—as we say in France, of a certain age. In a dramatic country like our own, where the peasants and the smallest roturier, are constantly rising in the social scale, where the little shopkeeper of to-day may be the great personage of to-morrow, novels would be nowhere unless they are authorities on the subject of etiquette. Our country readers delight in nothing so much as elaborate accounts of dinner-parties, dances, ceremonies, and social entertainments of all kinds, so we put in as many as possible, and omit nothing in the way of information that may be useful. Once more, there is what is called æsthetics—in other words, artistic furniture, upholstery, the proper arrangement of a room. This, like etiquette, is a very popular theme in novels; so useful, you see, to self-made

people who are going into a big house and don't know how to furnish it, any more than to behave in it when they get there. Would you like to see this last-named department?"

"Humph—I suppose—may I ask—are these ladies young?" asked M. Hervé.

"Of various ages, middle-aged, most of them; retired teachers with an aptitude for literature. They have a most valuable library of reference, and in their way are very learned. We get much praised for the descriptions of interiors in our novels. Well, as you don't seem specially anxious to see the ladies at work, we will take the lift and go a storey higher."

"Here," began M. Quarante, as we alighted on the third storey, "are three highly-important departments, the legal, the medical, and the police. I should rather say two, since the detection of crime comes within the scope of law and medicine. We have first-rate men for this work, and a pleasant time they have of it, I assure you. Much easier to get clients through law-suits, cure them of mortal diseases, track down thieves, murderers, and revolutionists on paper here than in real life! And what blunders novelists on their own account make when they attempt such matters! Readers who want accuracy must come to us."

My host did not testify any lively interest in M. Quarante's first-rate men, nor, in truth, was there anything remarkable about their appearance. They looked very cheerful over their work, as well they might. Many a briefless barrister and struggling medical man would thankfully exchange the realities of his profession for the easy tasks of the Château Roman.

"We used, in former days, to do a good deal in the poison way," said our conductor as we continued our survey; "the fashion is, however, changed, and readers now prefer to see people in novels die a natural death. Duelling, however, is still in high favour, and here our medical writers come in very handy. They know where the ball will prove fatal, and where it won't. Well, next for philosophy and literature. We have much more need of these now than formerly. Our customers like to be told in their stories what the learned read, and how they talk. Of course we don't treat all novels alike. Some contain no philosophy or literature properly speaking, but all make mention of books. We always allude to the libraries when describing our country houses, and are very particular as to the

books named. Immorality, atheism, vulgarity, we will have nothing to do with. Then, little conversations about books—country folks delight in that sort of thing; it is really a kind of education for them. You see, there are many points to consider in the manufacture of a novel."

The philosophic and literary staff of the establishment was small. We only found half-a-dozen gentlemen plying their pens in the service of these important subjects. The next department, however, was like a bee-hive.

"Ah!" cried our director, "I was very nearly forgetting one of the most important sections of all, that of Nomenclature. No one who has not himself gone into the business would believe the trouble that names give in novels; Christian names, surnames, names of places, names of residences. Where you consider that each novel requires thirty or more names, and that we manufacture dozens in a week, you will not wonder at seeing so many employes at work here."

"On what principle do you select your names?" asked M. Hervé.

He had been a little absent since that glimpse of the handsome girl in the corner, but was now recovering animation.

"At the head of this department," replied M. Quarante, "we have an experienced critic and littérateur, who is supposed to be cognisant of every novel that has ever been written in the polite languages of Europe—"

"Heavens!" cried M. Hervé, "what a capacious memory that man must have!"

"It is the business of this gentleman's subordinates," continued our director, "to furnish him with a list of all the Christian and surnames proposed for every novel put in hand. He just glances down the column and strikes out all that are hackneyed or commonplace."

"And the names of the stories themselves?" I ventured to enquire.

"That is not so difficult a matter as at first sight you might imagine. The same official sees to it. In nine cases out of ten the name of the hero, heroine, or place in which either resides will suffice. If this expedient fails, the first and last chapters of the book are skimmed, and some phrase extracted that will do duty as a title. People are not over particular as to titles of novels. After all, call it what you will, it is a novel we give them. They know that well enough."

"There is one other question I should

like to put if not impertinent," said my host. "You show us the ingredients and the kitchen, but where is the head cook? Who puts the story together?"

"Ah! the plot. I have been expecting that question all along. Oddly enough, this part of the business gives us the least trouble of any. Plots, in the accepted sense of the word, are no longer obligatory; they may indeed be said to be out of date altogether, as far as the domestic novel is concerned. Take hand-made novels for instance. A girl shilly-shallies with a man she cares about through one volume; marries another she doesn't care about in a second; is miserable in a third. There is your plot. That is the true American style. Of course we sometimes get large orders for sensational stories. People like them in winter, when trade is dull or during a cholera epidemic. Creepy stories then enliven their spirits. Well, you will smile when I inform you that I concoct the plots myself."

"Heavens!" again ejaculated M. Hervé.

"I am in the position of a bonnet manufacturer," pursued the director. "A bonnet manufacturer could not make a bonnet to save his life. He does not in the least know how he should feel in a bonnet, or why one bonnet pleases and another does not. That is precisely my case. I could not write a novel if my very existence depended upon it. I can't conceive how people feel who care for novels or who write them, but I know what will sell and what won't. What I do is this: I just keep my eyes open, read the newspapers, glance at the reviews, jot down in a note-book any uncommon incident I read or hear of, and in this way accumulate an enormous, an inexhaustible supply of raw material. Then once a week I talk over matters with my literary staff, and they put a certain number of novels in hand. Sometimes we turn out a hundred a week."

"Is it possible?" asked M. Hervé, "and each unlike the other?"

"No, I won't say that. Novel readers are not so over-particular as to require that. I often wonder seeing how much one story is like another, why readers should not take a novel as they do a husband or a wife, for once and for all, and read it over and over again as long as they live. It would really be the same thing in the end, although, fortunately for us, they do not think so."

We had now descended to the ground floor and re-entered the director's bureau.

"This is the raw material I spoke of just now," he said, pointing to a little library of albums in glass bookshelves. "Here you will see every incident we can possibly need arranged alphabetically."

He took down a volume at random and as he turned over the pages read the heads of the subjects therein treated: "Marriages, a marriage in a prison—ah! that is a newspaper cutting. Marriage of a French officer in Algeria and a Moorish girl (by the way, we do a good deal in Algeria and make up a special article for the colony), that was a fact I heard of. Marriage followed by divorce within four-and-twenty hours—extract from a trial that. Marriage on a death-bed—the incident happened in this very village; and so on, and so on. Now I take down another volume. Wills! ah, where would novel manufacturers be without wills? This volume is entirely made up of newspaper cuttings on the subject of wills, and a very curious collection it is; we are constantly having recourse to it. Again, the next volume I open is devoted to Law-suits; you observe many of the extracts here are made in writing. People are very fond of going to law in France, and everybody has heard of a dozen cases in his own family."

He ran his eye along the shelf, and added: "Murders, Accidents, Duels, Quarrels, Polish Counts—and so on, and so on—well, you have here an epitome of modern French fiction. And of course we add to our stock-in-trade every day."

My friend now glanced at me, as much as to say, was my curiosity satisfied? It really seemed to me as if we had interviewed the obliging director long enough. Yet I ventured to put one question more.

"And your opinion, Monsieur le Directeur, as to the respective merits of the two articles—the machine-made versus the hand-made article?"

"You have it, sir, in a few words. The advantage is altogether on our side. In former days, when novel-writing was confined to men and women of genius, it was all very well, but the spread of education and literature has altered this. People sit down to write novels nowadays, who are no more fitted for the task than the King of the Cannibal Islands. They do it for money, just as we do. What is the result? We can turn out a very superior article at a fraction of the cost, grammar irreproachable, facts all correct, incidents true to nature, morals attended to, and everything

made to hang properly together. Beside which—mark the fact—as we are not paid like the individual writer, by the piece, we make our stories as short as we please. Not a line is added just for the sake of making them longer."

"There is a great deal in that," said I.

"To tell you plain truth," put in my host, "that is why I have long since given up the hand-made for the machine-made novels. The padding in the former became at last insupportable to me. But good day, good day, M. le Directeur, a thousand thanks for your kind reception."

"I only regret that I have not more time to give you," said M. Quarante as he accompanied us to the door of his bureau. "Ah, what a charming afternoon for a drive! I envy you, gentlemen, who read novels instead of having to fabricate them. Au revoir, au revoir!"

"Âme de Voltaire," ejaculated M. Hervé, as we drove off. "Who would have thought that the making of a novel was so elaborate a process! Well, thank heaven, if geniuses have died out, we shall never suffer from a dearth of fiction, thanks to Château Roman!"

OGRES.

TIME was when the little boys and girls of this country believed in Jack the Giant Killer, Tom Thumb, Puss in Boots, the Sleeping Beauty in the Wood, Jack and the Beanstalk, Little Red Riding-hood, and in Ogres. But that time has passed, and the little children, instead of being fed in their tender years on the sweet pap of fairy lore, are fed on the stronger food of the three Rs in the School Board, and on the "ologies" of science when the School Board relaxes its hold upon them, and consigns them to the drudgeries of everyday life. All the dramatic personae of the fairy world are defunct or discredited in their minds, and even Harlequin and Columbine appeal in vain to the matured and sober taste of the young disciples of the Gradgrind school in this age and country, although they still hold their ground among the young people of other European nations. Even America knows not the impossible but charming personages of Fairyland, though the little men and women across the great Atlantic still retain, until they reach the venerable age of eight or nine, a faint belief, as Christmas and New Year approach, and for a few days

after their arrival, in a certain benevolent and bountiful Santa Claus, bearer of a marvellous stocking filled with chocolate-creams, and other goodies and knick-knacks, to reward them for having come into a world from which all, or nearly all, the poetry has departed.

"Ogres" are now seldom mentioned, though the word remains in popular parlance to describe a greedy and ruthless oppressor and tyrant. During the time of the First Napoleon—especially when he threatened the invasion of England—it was the custom to call that grim and too victorious potentate the "Corsican Ogre." The original idea of an ogre was that of a ravenous man-eating giant, which Napoleon the First indubitably was in a metaphorical sense; for he consumed thousands of men on the bloody battle-fields with which his name and exploits are inseparably associated. If he did not actually eat them himself, he made them vicariously the food of the powder which he so lavishly exploded all over Europe. Happily England, where he would have greatly enjoyed to have sacrificed to his lust of dominion a few thousands of our people, was exempted from his tender mercies, thanks to the brave and enthusiastic volunteers of the time, who kept the sacred soil inviolate, and would have made short work of the invader and his legions if they had but set foot upon it, and—

Found the full strength of them
Graves the full length of them.

The old Keltic, or Welsh giants, Cormoran and Blunderbore, were the beau ideals of the ogre in the minds of English children in past ages. The exclamation—

Fah! fee! fi! fo! fum!
I smell the blood of an Englishman,
Let him be living or let him be dead,
I'll grind his bones to make my bread—

has long been consecrated in the fairy mythology of the British Isles, to the remembrance of the Great Cormoran's exploits, happily ended, according to the long accredited tradition, by the sharp sword of the redoubtable little hero "Jack." The giant-killer seems to have been an Englishman, and to typify the pluck and daring of the race from which he sprang, and of which, though little, he was so great an ornament.

Etymologists, who are for the most part a very feeble folk, who seldom take the pains to think, and, whenever they do think are more likely to think wrongly than rightly. and who, finding an error in

existence, do their very best to perpetuate and extend it—are not by any means agreed upon the origin and first meaning of the word "ogre." Some of them derive it from the "ogurs," who are represented as a desperately savage horde of Asiatic people, who were said to have overrun a great part of Europe in the fifth century; others derive it from "Orcus," a man-eating monster, celebrated by Boiardo and Ariosto, forgetting, in their very superior wisdom, that "ogres" were the subject of fairy stories many centuries before the birth of either of these Italian worthies. Other equally learned pundits trace the ancient word to "Orco," one of the surnames of Pluto; or to "orcus," hell, the supposed place of his abode.

M. Littré, the author of the best French dictionary that has yet appeared, and infinitely superior to that much vaunted one which the world owes to the French Academy, and which was published more than a century ago—informs the learned that "ogre" is an Etruscan word, and that all philologists are in error who think it was derived from the Hungarian, and that ogre has any relation, either in fact or language, with Hungary. Worcester, in his American-English Dictionary, is not in agreement with any of his predecessors or contemporaries on the subject, and derives the word from one "Oegir," a giant in Scandinavian mythology. Jamieson, in his Scottish Dictionary, differs from everybody else, and describes an "ogre" and an "ogress" as giants with large fiery eyes, who fed upon children, and derived their names from the Icelandic "uggir," fear, terror, dismay,—a word of the same root, he thinks, as the English "ug" and "ugly." Other pundits remain committed on the subject, in the persons of Messrs. Noel and Charpentier, authors of an "Etymological, Critical, Historical, Anecdotal, and Literary Dictionary of the French Language." These gentlemen think that "ogre" may be derivable from the Greek "agrios," "savage," and add that in French familiar discourse, "ogre" signifies a great eater and devourer of victuals, not necessarily of children. To eat like an ogre is to eat greedily, and they quote from M. Boiste the following sentence: "How many things, how many books, how many events of all kinds are necessary to appease the hunger of that devouring ogre, the curiosity of the public!"

Who shall decide when so many learned doctors are found to disagree?

As the English and French languages do not help to a solution of the difficulty I shall try the German as a last resource, especially as the "ogres" are well known in the fairy mythology of the Fatherland. The German language, however, has not adopted the name, and renders it by "wehr-wolf"—the "loup-garou" of the French—the man-wolf and "lycanthrope" of the English, and by "menschenfresser," man-eater, and "kinderfresser," child-eater—that is to say, a "cannibal."

As the "ogres" took their rise in the imagination of our Celtic or British ancestors, the Kymri and the Gael, it might be well, before giving up the hunt after the origin of the word as altogether hopeless, to look into the Welsh and the Gaelic for a clue to the meaning. Possibly we may not look altogether in vain. In the modern Welsh—the ancient Kymric—we find that "ocri" signifies money, inordinate profit, forty or fifty per cent. interest on money lent—"ocriad," a usurer, a money lender, and "ocra," to practise usury. If there be any being in the shape of a man more akin in his nature, his practice, and his greediness, or more apt, ready, and willing to devour his creditor and all his substance than a professional money-lender, whether he be Jew or Christian, the world has yet to discover him. Perhaps, however, this is not the true derivation of the word, though it must be confessed that the explanation fits admirably, and I shall therefore try again the closely-related language, the Keltic-Gaelic, to find if possible a more satisfactory origin for the mysterious word, which has puzzled for hundreds of years so many erudite enquirers. I find that in the Gaelic spoken in the Highlands of Scotland and Ireland, "Ocras" signifies hunger, and "Ocrasah," hungry, greedy, famished. This, at all events, is a very near, as well as remarkable approach to the character of the fabulous monster of the fairy tales. I also find that in the same venerable language "Og" signifies young, "Og-fhear" or "Ogear" a young man, and "Oigrìdh" young folk.

Can it be that after all the awe-inspiring word was originally a very innocent one, and was first used by loving and over-anxious mothers to their innocent and inexperienced young daughters, to bid them beware of the "Orgeas," or young men, who went about like roaring lions in search of young virgins to ruin and devour, and that "Ogre" was only another name for a gay and heartless Lothario? I strongly incline

to the belief that this is the true key to unlock the mystery, and if any etymologist, philologist, or dictionary-maker can suggest a better, I shall be glad to have a hint of his discovery.

A MINING DISASTER.

A COMPLETE STORY.

THE sharp clangour of ironed clogs beating heavily on the pavement filled the keen frosty air. The shrill steam-whistles at the collieries and the parish church clock had just announced the hour of five a.m., yet many of the thoroughfares of Coalborough were alive with hurrying forms. With the exception of the street-lamps it was pitch-dark, for there was neither star nor moon visible, and the time was mid-November. Standing under a lamp-post one might have noticed that the faces of the men and lads who hurried past were strangely sallow, and many of them had bent backs and bowed legs. The majority of the men slouched along with sullen looks on their unintelligent faces, as though they bitterly resented the fate which forced them from home on such a cold morning. The lads were much merrier than their elders. Little dots of humanity of ten and eleven trudged on their way, some of them whistling, others singing, and all of them with hands buried deep in their breeches' pockets and necks and ears swathed in rough woollen comforters. Here and there were to be seen early factory girls, their clean, long aprons seeming snowy white in the faint light.

Yet one miner at least went to work that morning with a bright face and a glad heart. This was Simon Broome, the man of whom this narrative is to treat. Simon was one of those strong-minded men to be found often enough amongst Lancashire pitmen. In a thousand miners there is perhaps one intelligent man; in five thousand there is one who is clever. Simon Broome was a miner out of five thousand. Going into the mines at nine, he had passed twenty years there; and when he entered his thirtieth year he was probably the cleverest pitman in Lancashire. Yet his natural ability, added to his wide experience of mining matters, had not profited him in a material sense. He had been a steady youth and sober man, always loving a book better than pigeon flies, dog fights, and wrestling matches. Whilst men of infinitely inferior ability—some of whom were unable to pen their

own names—had attained to official position as underlookers and managers, he still remained a hewer of the coal. His small progress was due to himself alone, as the following incident will show.

At twenty-five Simon had wooed and won a pretty schoolmistress, and just a week after his marriage he had lost his bosom friend, Jack Grant, who was crushed shapeless by a fall of roof in the mine where they both worked. At the inquest held on the body of his friend, Simon had the bad taste to disregard all the unwritten laws obtaining generally at such enquiries, and tell the truth. He proved that the mass of roof which killed poor Jack had long been known to be unsafe; that the various officials had been told time and again of its dangerous condition, yet persistently neglected to take steps to make it safe. Prior to the inquest the manager hinted that he had a good place empty, and that it was no use making a bad job worse. Simon preferred to tell the truth. He told it, sparing none, and what resulted? A jury, composed of tailors, grocers, shoe-sellers, and so forth, returned a verdict of accidental death, and no one to blame.

After this Simon's troubles began. When his married life was a fortnight old he found himself out of employment. Young, able, strong, and hopeful, his dismissal had caused him but little apprehension at first. His conduct at the inquest had attracted to him the attention and censure of the local mine-owners and officials. He found work at other pits, but he always got "bad places." He was subjected to all sorts of petty annoyances by the officials, and his earnings were too small to keep him and his comfortably. He bore his trials with a quiet dignity, striving manfully to live down the prejudice against him. But his pretty wife was delicate, children came, and the octopus arms of debt began to coil round him. At length the climax came. Although he had never smoked in his life, a pipe was found in his jacket pocket one day down the pit. He was summoned before the magistrates—one of whom was part owner of the pit in which Jack Grant was killed—and he was ordered to pay a fine of twenty shillings and costs, or suffer a month's imprisonment.

The fine was paid somehow, and then Simon, swayed by his wife, moved to Coalborough, to escape the persecution which had driven him from his native place, and obtain peaceful employment. Honest hard-

working, and capable, possessing industrious habits and ambitious to rise, he found himself entering his thirtieth year in a strange town, almost moneyless, with a delicate wife and a couple of children dependent on him. The bitter curses that formed themselves in this poor fellow's brain obtained no utterance. He bore himself as a man should.

Coalborough is the centre of the Lancashire coal-field. There pits are deep and numerous. On the very day of his arrival in the town, Simon obtained employment. The following morning we saw him on his way to work, happy that he was in employment again, and hopeful that a few months of steady labour would set him on his feet once more.

A quarter of an hour's steady walking brought Simon to the Dutton Heath Collieries. Going to the lamp shop he obtained a lamp, then he made his way to the bank of the Arley Mine pit, where he was to work. The pit-bank was crowded with miners waiting to descend, and Simon sat on the edge of a full "tub," as the small pit waggons are called, until his turn came. An old grey-bearded pitman was seated on another "tub" close by, and from him Simon learned what price the miners were paid for each ton of coal sent to bank, and how much per yard was paid for driving "strett" places—"strett" being a Lancashire miner's synonym for "narrow."

Suddenly the banksman shouted "Anny moor gooin deawn?" and Simon, with the few others remaining on the pit-brow gathered into the cage. "Le' down!" cried the banksman, and, with the rapidity of a falling body, the big iron cage shot down into the pit's black depths.

After stepping out of the cage at the bottom, Simon paused a moment, and a miner standing by came forward, saying: "Yo're o new un, a con see. Come this road and get your lamp examined."

Simon followed the man into the cabin, where the firemen were inspecting the lamps to see that no wires were broken in the gauzes and that each was securely locked. When Simon's lamp was examined and locked, the man, who had spoken before and who appeared to be an official of some sort, said: "Did th' gaffer say whetür yo' wur gooin'?"

"He said I was to go up the Britannia jig on the south side," replied Simon.

"Oh! Ah know wheeür yo' meeün. Hi! Bob Davies, show this chap that empty place next to Sam Cleck's." Turning to

Simon: "Gooä wi' this chap, he'll show yo' t' road."

Bob Davies turned out to be the old miner Simon had conversed with on the pit-bank, and they set off together along a level, going in that direction for half a mile or so, then they turned to the right and ascended an incline, or "jig," for several hundreds of yards more, and when at last Simon reached his working place the perspiration was rolling down his face, for the way along which he had travelled was so low as to necessitate much stooping.

Flinging off his outer garments Simon rested a minute or two to cool himself; then he rose and began to examine his new place as an incoming tenant examines a new habitation.

The Arley seam at Dutton Heath Collieries was worked on the "pillar and strett" system. In this method narrow headings are first driven to the boundaries, and then the rest of the coal is cleared out, working back towards the shaft, leaving the goaf behind. Simon's place was a "pillar," and along one side of his place stretched the old goaf. Lifting his lamp to the roof to see if it were safe and free from "breaks," he was astonished to see the light flare suddenly up.

"Gas!" he cried, and pulled down the flame of his lamp until there only remained a faint spot of light on the wick. Then there showed inside the gauze a long, pale blue luminous vapour, or "cap," as the miners termed it. Gently moving his lamp downwards the blue vapour disappeared, showing that the "firedamp" hung in a stratum about a foot thick along the roof. But moving towards the goaf he discovered that the "firedamp" thickened till it reached the floor of the mine, and the dangerous gas extended far back into the old "waste," where the extraction of the coal had caused the roof to subside in great masses.

The finding of the "firedamp" hardly caused Simon's pulse to quicken. He was fully aware of what would have happened had a single wire in the meshes of the gauze of his Davy lamp been broken. There was sufficient gas there to have destroyed every life in the mine had it been ignited, and a defective lamp, or even a perfect Davy in the hands of an inexperienced person might have caused a terrible explosion.

In every mine there are officials termed "firemen," whose duty it is to examine all working places prior to the miners entering them. When a place is found to

be unsafe through the existence of "firedamp" or other cause, it is the "fireman's" business to place a danger signal at the entrance to such place to prevent anyone entering it. Simon's first thought was, "Why had this precaution not been taken?" Then he asked himself if the "fireman" had examined that particular place on the previous night as he ought to have done. It would be an easy matter to prove this, for when a "fireman" visits a place to examine it he writes with chalk on some prominent spot the day of the month and his name or initials, to show he has been there.

Looking about the place Simon found a piece of board, on which were scrawled several dates and a man's name—"Ben Yetton." But the latest date was November the seventh, and it was now the sixteenth of that month; therefore, it was quite plain that this place had not been visited by the "fireman" for more than a week. Probably the place had been empty since the seventh of November, and the "fireman" had not troubled himself to examine a place in which no one was working. But Simon thought that this incident spoke clearly as to the character of the system of management in vogue at Dutton Heath Collieries.

About twenty yards further on Simon could hear another collier working, and to this man he went. As Simon approached the miner laid down his pick, saying: "Is it thee that's gooin' t' start in' new place?"

"I should start, but there's a bit o' gas in it, an' I don't like workin' among it."

"Tha'll soon get used to workin' in it, tha stops heer. Th' owd sink is choke full of gas, but it doesn't matter as long as it keeps away fro' t' face. Tha'll find some o'er tha yed if tha'll look."

Simon lifted his lamp to the roof, and again the gauze was filled with a pale blue vapour. Dropping his lamp to the floor, Simon said, "It seems to make middlin' o' gas."

"It makes a good deal, an' no mistake 'nough to leet up every shop in Coaltra. That their owd goaf aback o' thee is just meet like a gasometer. There'll be a rumpus some o' these days, if they don't mind."

"Don't they try to shift it?" Simon queried.

"Not um; they ne'er bother abeawt it. They care nowt abeawt a bit o' gas heer, lad."

"It's not safe allus hangin' there," re-

joined Simon. "When a faw o' roof comes it's certain to sweep the gas afoor it, and then if there's anny bad gauzes abeawt there'll be an explosion, sure enough. I don't like th' thowt o' bein' roasted wick; does tha'?"

"Not me; but we shall hev to tek sawr chance, I reckon," the miner replied philosophically, and he resumed his work.

"There'd be a bother, I think, if th' inspector happened to come and found men workin' so close to this gas. Th' manager would get fined, or sent to prison."

"Howd tha noise, mon!" the miner cried angrily. "The inspector, eh? What good are inspectors to us? I've bin workin' int' pit for thirty hears an' neer gotten a glint o' one o' 'em. Hast e'er seen anny o' 'em tha'sel'?"

"I've seen one once, when a mate o' mine was kilt," Simon replied.

"That's just it. Stable door's locked after the hawse is stown," the miner retorted fiercely, and he smote the coal with all his might to work off his passion. Then Simon returned to his own place.

Two or three weeks passed, and Simon's earliest impression as to the inefficiency of the management of the mine was verified. Through conversing with various miners who worked in different parts of the pit he learned that "firedamp" existed in many places, that the air-ways were in an awful condition through being neglected, and that blasting was permitted even in places where "firedamp" was common. No miner in the whole pit-set understood the danger, which was being incurred continually, better than Simon Broome did. Yet was he loth either to complain to the manager or other officials, or quit the mine altogether. He had suffered so much from outspokenness already that he longed for peace. He did not like leaving the pit, because his place had proved a good one. He was working regularly, and earning on an average forty shillings a week.

But the huge volumes of explosive gas lurking continually in the goaf filled his mind with incessant fears. Most of the miners seemed so habituated to the company of "firedamp" as to pay no heed to its presence; still there were others who feared the peril they were daily facing, and who, like Simon, did not like quitting the pit altogether on account of the good wages they were obtaining. And matters got worse instead of improving. Several of the miners urged Simon to write an anonymous letter to the Inspector of Mines for the dis-

trict, calling his attention to the dangerous condition of the mine; but he refrained from taking this step, because he held the belief entertained by miners generally that mine-owners and mine-inspectors were in collusion, and he knew of cases where men who had reported dangerous places had been forced to leave the district, as no one would employ them.

For the fearful condition of the Dutton Heath Arley Mine the managemental staff were not solely to blame. Most of the other pits belonging to the same owner were in the same neglected condition as the pit in which Simon worked, but being less gaseous they were of course safer. The owner of the Dutton Heath Collieries was Jonathan Bowles. He had been a pitman in his youth, and twenty years of industrious and adroit knavery had made him a mine-owner. To the outer public Mr. Bowles was a model man, and newspaper scribblers and amateur lecturers pointed him out as a sample of what might be achieved by perseverance and honesty. Only Bowles's workmen knew how hard and exacting he could be. To gain favour in Jonathan Bowles's sight there was only one way for the officials he employed at his pits. To raise plenty of coal cheaply was the one thing he desired, and the officials were told by the manager to cut down expenses as much as possible. Consequently everything went to the bad.

At last an unfortunate accident brought matters to a climax. Two poor fellows were burned to death by a small explosion of gas caused by a blown-out shot. This determined Simon and a few others who worked near him to leave the pit without delay.

They were carrying out their tools when they were met by the manager, a coarse, stubborn-headed fellow, named Dick Sampson, who, when he saw the men carrying their tools, exclaimed:

"Where are you taking those to?"

"Home," replied Simon, as the others were silent.

"And who gave you permission to leave without notice?"

"I think notice is not needed," Simon again replied firmly.

"Why?" asked Sampson, furious with anger.

"Because the pit isn't fit for a dog to be in, and you know it. There will be two hundred instead of two men burned to cinders before long if the pit isn't managed better."

"What's wrong?" Sampson cried, almost mad with rage.

"There's nothing right," Simon retorted. "I've been here three weeks, and there's been gas in my place every day I've worked, and in these men's places the gas has been nearly as bad. Yet, according to the reports made out daily by the 'firemen,' each working place in the pit was free from gas and in good working order."

"How do you know what reports the firemen make out?"

"The reports lie on the cabin table every morning, and I have glanced over them whilst having my lamp examined. I think you had better let us go without any more bother. I am afraid of my life every day, and will stay here no longer."

"If you don't take back your tools, and serve me with fourteen days' notice properly, I'll stop all your wages and summon you for neglect of work. Don't make fools of yourselves. I tell you the pit is as safe as can be—safe enough to use naked lights. I'll show you whether I think it is dangerous or not."

Without another word Sampson unscrewed his lamp, pulled a pipe from his pocket, lit it, and began to smoke. Simon and the other miners stared at the manager in speechless amazement. Scarcely fifty yards away was the spot where the two miners had been scorched to death only two days before, and the tobacco was glowing like a live coal. It was the act of a madman, imperilling every life in the mine, and was done out of sheer bravado. Doubtless Sampson thought his action would convince the miners that the mine was safe, and cause them to return. The naked light was beside the manager. Had a fall of roof occurred at that moment in any of the adjoining goaves a large volume of "firedamp" would have been swept on to the flame, and two hundred persons would have been destroyed instantly.

Simon Broome seemed turned to stone when he saw Sampson unlock his lamp and begin to smoke. But his stupefaction was of short duration. Then, without a word, he sprang forward, trampled out the naked light, and sent the pipe flying yards away, leaving the broken stem fast between Sampson's teeth. With a hoarse yell of rage the manager leapt at Simon, they closed, and rolled on the floor fighting like wild animals. Then the miners tore Simon from off Sampson and hurried him away.

The following morning the men belonging to the Arley Mine refused to go to

work, alleging that the pit was unsafe, and they declined to resume work until the mine had been examined by the Government Inspector, Mr. Shalford. The miners had been influenced to this decision by Simon Broome. So the pit lay idle for a couple of days, and the inspector was urged to visit the mine. On the afternoon of the second day a telegram came to the manager from Mr. Shalford, saying he was coming down on the 3.25 train.

Mr. Jonathan Bowles was waiting at the station with his carriage when the inspector arrived, and the coal-owner drove Mr. Shalford straight to the Arley Mine pit. Then the inspector, Mr. Bowles, and Sampson the manager, descended together. In half-an-hour they returned, and Mr. Shalford declared the mine quite safe, after which proceeding he went to dine with his friend, the owner of Dutton Heath Collieries.

The following morning the mine resumed work. On the afternoon of the day Simon Broome received two summonses, one for assaulting the manager of Dutton Heath Collieries, the other for neglect of work. Both cases were tried the same day, and each case was decided against Simon. None of the miners who had witnessed the affair between Sampson and Broome dared to give evidence against the manager, fearing persecution; and it was useless for Simon to plead that he had done his work without due notice because the mine was unsafe, when the magistrate had before them a declaration signed by the Government Inspector of Mines, stating the mine to be quite safe.

So Simon was ordered to pay fines and costs amounting in the whole to five pounds, with the option of two months imprisonment. The money could not be raised in time, and he had to go to prison.

Simon Broome's term of imprisonment would expire in a couple of days, and the town of Coalborough was stirred to its heart with excitement. Not, however, because the poor unfortunate miner was soon to regain his liberty, but because the election of a parliamentary representative was to take place on the morrow. The old member had died, and the candidates for the vacant seat were Mr. Jonathan Bowles, mine-owner, and Mr. Robert Robinson, cotton-spinner. The two candidates were the richest men in Coalborough, and each was determined to win, no matter at what cost. On the day of the election,

every one of Bowles's pits were idle, and all the mine officials, from "firemen" to manager had to canvass for their employer. Beer ran like water that day in Coalborough. To confirmed toppers it seemed like a glimpse of Paradise. Before night came, every one of Jonathan Bowles's officials were tipsy, for his return was certain. Yet two of these drunken officials had to go to work that night. These were Jonas Smith and Sammy Jones, both "firemen" at the Arley Mine pit. Their business was to see that the mine was all right and ready for the workmen in the morning.

Just after the poll had been declared in favour of their employer, these two "firemen" were seen staggering towards their work. Early next morning the shock of a terrible explosion was heard throughout the town. The Dutton Heath Arley Mine had exploded, and swept to eternity two hundred and ten poor souls, and amongst the doomed was the hot-headed manager, Dick Sampson.

Of course, the Government Inspector and the mining engineers soon formulated a theory to account for the terrible disaster. There had been a sudden outburst of gas, which had been ignited by a "blown-out" shot. But the miners of the district entertained a different belief. They believed that the two "firemen" fell asleep, being drunk, and did not wake till morning, thus failing to make their usual examination of the mine, and in the morning some poor fellow had walked into an accumulation of "firedamp," with a naked light probably, and sent himself and two hundred others to a premature tomb.

The terrible disaster struck sorrow to the heart of the nation. A wave of generous sympathy spread over the land. In a few weeks a score of thousands of pounds was collected for the bereaved. A so-called searching inquiry into the causes of the calamity was instituted. The Home Office sent down a legal gentleman to watch the case, and an independent engineer was deputed to examine the mine and report on it. But as this independent engineer depended for his livelihood on coal-owners, he was not likely to report unfavourably on the mine. What mine-owner would have employed him again had he stated that the mine was in a deplorable state, and that the explosion was due to bad management?

At the inquiry the inspector said he had been down the pit a few weeks before the explosion, and found it safe. In reality,

he was down the pit half an hour, and never left the pit bottom.

When Simon heard their sad intelligence his feelings were terrible. It was maddening to think that he had been sent to prison for leaving the doomed pit. The magistrates had ignored his plea, but his truth had been terribly vindicated. A few months afterwards he went to America, where he is now a prosperous citizen.

VICTIMS.

By THEO GIFT.

*Author of "Lil Lorimer," "An Alibi and its Price,"
Etc., Etc.*

CHAPTER XXII.

THE TELEGRAM FROM LEAH.

AND the voyage was like a new phase in the dream. Fortunately Vera was not at all sea-sick, though Marstrand, fearing that she might be, had taken the precaution to brace her against it with champagne and biscuits before starting; but either this acted as a preventive, or excitement and the fear of being overtaken took away all other sensations, and she passed the time walking up and down, leaning on her lover's arm; or, when the motion of the boat did not permit that, sitting in a kind of cushioned nest which he made for her, her hand fast clasped in his, and her slender form wrapped round with a multitude of cloaks and shawls to protect her from the cold breeze, while he talked to her and built a thousand pleasant castles in the air of all the things they would do and enjoy together once they were united.

Vera was still very nervous, however. Her eyes kept that curious, dilated expression which Marstrand had noticed in them during their moorland tryst, and no persuasions that he could use would induce her to go and rest on one of the sofas in the cabin below, or even to turn her face from its straining gaze in the direction of the steamers, where every far-off sail, nay, even the white flash of a gull's wing, dipping on some distant wave, seemed to her like a pursuing craft gaining already on their path.

Marstrand was very gentle with her. No brother, indeed, could have been more so; and though he had plenty of disturbing thoughts to agitate his own mind—the news of his sudden marriage to be broken and explained to his family, the wedded home yet to be established, the professional duties which he was even then ne-

glecting—one look into his betrothed's eyes, or at the nervous tension of the lines in her small, pale face, decided him on keeping them well hidden in his own mind rather than on attempting to lighten them by discussing them with her.

He had gone about the preparations for his runaway marriage with all the impetuous lightheartedness characteristic of him, trampling down every difficulty as it rose by his indomitable energy and the lavish use he made of his money, and ready to run any amount of risks for Vera's sake, and to set her free from the tyranny which was forcing her into a fate she abhorred; but for her sake, also, he was anxious to do so in such a way that not the slightest slur should rest upon her, and that therefore as few laws and conventionalities as possible should be broken in the performance.

He had done his best, as he thought, so far. Some of his original arrangements, indeed, had had to be put on one side and altered owing to the pressure of circumstances; and some of his precautions, which had seemed to him at first to be inspired by quite superhuman wisdom, struck him now, when the fruition of his hopes appeared so easily and so unexpectedly near, as not so wise after all; and he even began to regret a little that his high sense of chivalry had caused him to adhere with such scrupulous fidelity to Vera's entreaty that he would not endanger the success of their plans by any word or hint which could draw suspicion on them. He would have liked now to have been able to ask advice as to one or two trifling particulars, but after all they were but trifles. Even that little matter of the age, what was it but a question of a few hours more or less—a mere technicality. And even now, if he chose to make the sacrifice, or if Vera was making herself at all anxious or unhappy about it, he could obviate it altogether by delaying his happiness those few hours; postponing the wedding till the earliest possible hour on the following morning, and leaving his betrothed for the night in the care of his own landlady, while he himself went to the nearest hotel, or kept guard outside the house which would contain his jewel. He didn't like the idea. No man as much in love as Marstland would be likely to do so. He thought it a detestable one, and practically uncalled for; but when Vera had put herself into his hands with such meek, implicit trust, he felt that he was doubly

bound to show himself worthy of it by foregoing every thought or desire of his own rather than burden her with one unnecessary anxiety, one extra cause of nervousness. At first he said to himself, "Well, if she expresses a wish for it I will agree; but he knew in his heart that it was virtually impossible for a girl to express such a wish for herself; and so, after a tough inward struggle, he made the suggestion himself, and was immensely relieved by the look of startled dismay with which Vera regarded it. The promptness of the negative was delightful to him; though had he been a little less passionately in love there might have been something painfully suggestive of a narrow and even childish intelligence in the reasons with which she backed it.

"Oh, no, no, please!" she said, shrinking from him with a look of rather shocked propriety. "That would be staying a whole night away from home first; and I could not; it would not be proper or—nice unless we were married; and mamma would never forgive it, I know. She would be ashamed of me all her life afterwards. She told me so."

"She told you so, dearest!" Marstland repeated, staring.

Vera nodded, her young face very grave and prim.

"Yes, it was not about us, you know, it was—some time ago. One of the English people who have settled on the other side of Quimper, and whom we had met at the chaplain's, wanted to make friends with us. She had two daughters with her, nice-looking girls, and I thought how pleasant it would be, but mamma did not seem pleased. She was very cold, and said that she was afraid that the distance was too great for visiting; and when they wanted me to stay with them for a few days so that I might be at a dance they were going to give, she declined, saying papa would not allow me to go to a dance without him; but next day she and Joanna were talking about it, and they said that at a water picnic two years before another of this lady's daughters had got separated from the rest of the party with the gentleman she was engaged to, and did not come home till next morning. They had gone to explore a little island on the river, but the boat got loose and drifted away; and, though there was a fisherman's hut on the island, and an old woman in it who was very kind to the poor girl, her husband and sons were away for the night fishing,

so the two had to wait till their return got to land. They were married quite little while afterwards, but mamma said made a great deal of talk, and was ought to ruin the girl's reputation for ; and that she should never have got it or have forgiven either the girl or her band if she had been Mrs. Deloraine. at was why she would not even let me ow the younger sisters. She told me so, you see," lifting her gray eyes with a ide of gentle reproach in them, "it ould be quite impossible for me to do the ry same thing with you, even if we were rried next day."

"I see, my darling," said Marstland, ll content with the decision arrived at, ough rather amused that the sacrifice he d strung himself up to make for the ke of Vera's good name should be nega- ed on the same score. "All the same, ere waan't the very slightest real harm wrong doing in the accident you de- ribe, and I should have thought the tber who treated it as anything but an cident infinitely more disgusting than en the vulgar outside gossips, who make talk of everything, whether there is a use for it or not. Who, in the name of eaven, should a girl trust to take care of r in any emergency if not the man who going to be her husband? But you feel at, yourself, love," his face lighting with idden pleasure, "for if you did not trust e you would not be sitting beside me w."

"Oh, but this is quite different!" said era, with a smile naive enough to disarm yone. "We are only out for a few hours y the sea as we might have been on the hames at Weybridge. I think even amma would say there is not much to oose between a river and the Channel; d you know when Naomi Lucas scolded e for going with you then, she said it ould have been quite another thing if we ad been an engaged couple, and—and we re engaged now."

"Thanks to Naomi's scolding, bless her r it, and your dear, little tender heart, ve!" said Marstland, lifting the hand hich he held to his lips for a momentary ress, which it was to be hoped the man t the wheel did not see. He could not elp adding, however, in a tone of some- hat dry irony:

"Your mother, Vera, seems to have de- oted herself to the study of that one text n the Bible, 'Refrain from all appearance f evil.' Does it ever occur to her, do you

think, that there is something in the world of equal or greater importance: real evil, for instance?"

Vera looked puzzled.

"I—don't know," she said simply; "I know she thinks girls should never do any- thing that is at all particular—I mean that does not look well. That is why I made you promise not to say a word to anyone but the Josephses about my going away with you. I thought if no one knew of it—if it were kept quite a secret——"

"As it has been, Vera," Marstland inter- rupted, glad now to be able to say so. "Even my own sister need never be aware, unless you wish it, that we have not been married in the most orthodox and fashion- able manner."

Vera smiled.

"That is what I wanted to be able to tell mamma. I wanted her to see I had been careful this time. It is different with papa. He will never forgive me in any case; but it would be too dreadful if she did not either, for indeed, I am sure it is only to please him that she wants me to marry the Count; and, as she never actually forbade me to marry you, or even made me promise not to do so, it isn't as if I were breaking my word to her or set- ting her at defiance, is it? Oh, I couldn't have done that in any case! I felt I couldn't when you and Leah wrote, and wanted me to speak out and say plainly it was not possible for me to do as they wished. How can one resist one's own parents? I would rather have died. Indeed, I hoped I should, until—until you came."

"My poor little darling!" said Marst- land compassionately. As once before when she spoke in a similar way, he did not know how else to answer her or what to do save stroke the slender hand he held in both of his. To his mind of course it was just the want of courage to be plain-spoken from the very beginning, which had got poor Vera into the complication from which he was determined at all risks to deliver her; but that, in doing so, he and she were not guilty of resisting her parents and setting them at defiance seemed to him an idea as absurd as that other one that, so long as people had not given you a formal order or exacted a formal promise from you, you were not guilty of deception in doing something by stealth which they tacitly relied on your not doing. For himself, Marstland hated deception in the general way from the very depths of his soul; but

there were occasions, as he argued, when any and every deception, however distasteful to you, becomes a necessary and unavoidable evil. Who, for instance, would blame a man who, taken prisoner and condemned to death or torture by some wily savage, manages to trick his barbarous captor by some "ruse," and make his escape through the aid of it? Yet who, for all that, would argue that the trick was not a trick, because there had been no formal parole; or extol the "higher honour" of a person who would take refuge from a direct lie in an equivocation or a "suppressio veri"? If either were needed, Marstrand preferred the direct lie for himself; but he could only feel an infinite pity and tenderness for the poor little girl whose feeble arguments to the contrary were unfolded to him with such pathetic simplicity: an intense hatred and anger against those who had warped her natural candour by educating it down to the level of such low, pettifogging morality—the common morality (let us boast of our national truthfulness as we please) of the small British tradesman, who would not have false weights for the world, but weighs out his pound of well-damped sugar in the thickest paper procurable; or, having stamped a basket of eggs as "new laid," when they first came in, passes them off as such to a customer a fortnight later, before going prayers to his family with bland, self-conscious rectitude, or attend a Bible meeting at the chapel of which he is an earnest and professing member. Poor Vera could not at all understand why her lover should exclaim with such sudden, almost passionate vehemence:

"Love, in another couple of hours you and I will be man and wife. Promise me one thing first, sweetheart, promise it now, that when we are married you will never put a mask on any act or thought of yours for fear of anyone in the world—of me least of all! Do what you please in every way; you will please me best by doing so; but do it for love only—love of what you yourself think right and best, love even of me, if you will; but not for fear; never fear any more."

Vera laughed a little tremulously.

"George, you should have married Leah," she said. "You and she talk in just the same way; but then she is never afraid of anybody, and I—Oh! it is different with me. How should I know how to judge what is right and best? Mamma says I cannot. Indeed I would rather do as I am told—when I can."

The sun was getting low, but it was still a bright and lovely afternoon when, after a capital passage, they dropped anchor in the harbour of St. Peter-le-port, and the old dream-feeling came back to Vera with a rush as she found herself standing on the pier in a strange town, a strange island, all round her the friendly accents of the English tongue blending with those of France, and of a patois as barbarous as that of her own Brittany—on one side the broad blue sea crested with foam and spreading itself like a shield between her and her unkind relatives; and on the other the clustered red-roofed houses of St. Peter's crowding up a steep hillside in picturesque confusion, and all embowered and embloomed with the fresh green leaves, the pink and white blossoms of spring; all glowing and saturated with golden sunshine and sweet salt air.

She had gone down into the cabin just before they anchored and, by aid of the portmanteau packed for her by Benedic before leaving, had changed her heavy dress and cloak for a light walking costume, refreshed herself with a good wash, and arranged her hair (by Marstrand's special request) in such a way as to make herself look as venerable as possible. He told her laughing, that the result was quite as pally successful, and that he felt as if he were going to be married to his grandmother; but both their hearts were now beating too fast for common speech; and between an awed sense of dangers happily over, and of the all-important ceremony before them, it was almost in silence that they walked up to the church where it was to be performed.

Not a very long or imposing performance! Not in the least like what either Vera or her lover had fancied their bride would have been. There was not even one in the church at that quiet hour of the afternoon save themselves, the curate who was to officiate, and who did so as respectfully as possible—having left a game of lawn tennis for the purpose—and the pew-opener and clerk, who acted as witnesses; and, though Vera would have betrayed herself a dozen times over to any one with half a suspicion of the facts of the case, by the way in which she trembled, started, and turned her frightened gaze from Marstrand to the door at every slightest sound, he on the other hand was as cool and composed in demeanour as a soldier on parade, and gave his answers in a tone so firm and deep as to steady for the moment even Vera's

fluttering nerves. She only made one mistake. Her lover had thought it better in the first instance to give her name in its Anglicised rendering of St. Lawrence in order to avoid any possible question as to her different nationality; but Vera, as was natural enough, forgot all about this when the time came to sign her name, and was on the point of writing it with a "t" as usual, when a sharp cough from her watchful bridegroom recalled her to herself, and she finished the word in the mode they had arranged.

It was all over then. She was married, though she did not realise it in the least, and the formal congratulations of the curate ere he hurried away to fling off his surplice and return to the lawn tennis court, only made her lift her head in a kind of bewildered appeal to Marstrand; and then the intense pride and happiness shining in his, and those three words whispered as he kissed her trembling lips, "My precious wife!" brought the blood into her cheeks for the first time in a glow so deep that she was glad to turn away even from him to hide it.

It was only a few minutes' walk from the church to Marstrand's lodgings, a quaint little cottage, one of a row built on the side of a steep bit of hill, and separated from the dusty road by a high bank and stone wall, the latter enclosing a tiny strip of garden, bright at present with all manner of spring flowers; but, now that the fear of being overtaken had temporarily fallen into abeyance, the long strain on Vera's nerves and muscles began to show itself, and after they had entered the house, at the door of which the landlady was waiting to welcome them, and had passed into the little parlour, where supper was already partly laid out, she turned from the seat into which Marstrand would have put her, and burst into a flood of nervous tears, repeating again and again that she wanted Leah. Leah had promised she would always be her friend, would stand by her when she was married. Oh! was he sure Leah would not have come if he had asked her? Was he sure he had not asked her, because he knew she would be shocked to hear what they had done!

Marstrand soothed her as gently and wisely as possible. He saw that the poor child was utterly overdone, and remembering all that she had gone through in the last twenty-four hours for him, felt that it would be selfish and unmanly not to moderate his own transports until she was calmed and

rested. Again and again he assured her that he had only not taken Leah into his confidence from a dislike to compromising other people in a matter so important to himself; that he was perfectly certain, however, of her sympathy and pleasure when she should get the news of their happiness, and that perhaps Vera would have a proof of both sooner than she expected.

He said this smilingly, for in truth he had not waited for the wedding to be over to send off the tidings to Leah, but, wishing to give his little bride a pleasant surprise, had telegraphed to her friend on the morning of the previous day, telling her what he was going to do and when the marriage would take place, and begging her to send them a congratulatory telegram in answer addressed to the lodgings where they now were. He thought it quite probable, therefore, that the answer was even now waiting them in the bed-room, where the landlady had told him he would find a bundle of letters and papers, and though he did not say so to Vera for fear lest, in her hysterical state, a disappointment should only make her worse, he had no sooner soothed and reasoned her into calmness, and seen her lying back in the most comfortable arm-chair the room afforded, than he went off to the other room with a light heart to look for what he expected.

There sure enough was a yellow envelope, addressed to him, however, not to Vera; and as he tore it eagerly open, and scanned the contents, he congratulated himself on his caution on having said nothing about it beforehand. It certainly contained nothing of reassurance for Vera; but what could it mean?

This was what it said:

"Telegram received. Have you taken legal advice? If not, and still time to delay, entreat you to do so first. The marriage as proposed would not be valid. For Vera's sake don't be rash. Bring her here if necessary, or will go to her. Father writing you now. Very anxious."

Marstrand read the bewildering words again and again, the flush of excitement and happiness on his sunburnt face paling horribly as he did so. What could she mean? How could the marriage not be valid? True, there was that little matter of the age; but, little as he knew of law, he knew that, though the having certified falsely on this point might possibly get him into trouble, it could not, by the laws of England, invalidate the marriage itself, once the latter was regularly performed.

Was it merely an outburst of feminine ignorance and nervousness about such matters? But he knew Leah to be neither nervous nor ill-informed, and she had further said her father was writing to him. What rashness could they convict him of, he who had been so careful? Well, whatever it was, till he knew it, Vera was as safe in his hands as she could be in theirs; and as to the marriage, he was ready to repeat it twenty times over if needful. Of one thing only was he thankful; that he had not taken the telegram downstairs before opening it. He began tearing it in pieces at the mere thought.

But though he so far controlled his anxiety as to go back to his bride the next minute, and show her a calm and cheerful countenance, which was more reassuring to her than even his previous petting, he was very far from feeling calm in himself; and as they sat down to their first tête-à-tête meal—Vera opposite to him, her cheeks lovely with timid blushes, her sweet eyes expressing penitence in every glance for the tears they had just been shedding—his heart was sorely divided between passionate love and admiration for her and a frantic desire to find out whether he had made any mistake which could be twisted to her injury. He did not show it. He laughed, talked, jested, told her funny stories about his past life, and made pleasant plans for their future one: the theatres they would go to; the sights she must see; the visitor's room, which was to be called Leah's; the houseboat which they were always to keep for a holiday-home on the Thames; but at last his self-control gave out, and as soon as the meal was finished and cleared away he told Vera to lie down on the sofa and rest, while he ran to the post office (it was only just in the next street), and sent off the promised telegram to Leah to tell her of their marriage.

It was fortunate that he said this frankly, for only the prospect of hearing from her friend could have reconciled Vera to that of being left alone, even for ten minutes. She began to tremble a little even at the idea, and that made him the more averse to leave her; and he delayed some minutes shaking up cushions for her, bringing wraps to cover her, cautioning the landlady to let no one in to disturb her during his brief absence, and coming back twice over to say one more last word

or press a parting kiss on her sweet, soft lips. Nay, even then he could not hurry away, but at the foot of the steep little flight of stone steps leading down to the road turned again for a backward look, and so caught a view of his young wife's fair, pale face framed in the shadowy casement and wafting him a faint little farewell smile over the bright beds of tulips and crocuses, the sweet-smelling hyacinths, and red-gold wallflowers which filled the little garden. He kissed his hand to her twice with passionate fervour, and then ran off like the wind to the telegraph office, where it did not take long to dispatch the following message:

"Yours only this moment to hand. Married a couple of hours ago. What do you mean by not valid? Please wire at once. Cannot wait for letter. Trust me to care for her."

It had gone off, and he was already on his homeward way, when he remembered that such a message would not bring the congratulatory one Vera was expecting, and he turned back and sent off a second, and shorter:

"Telegraph kind message to her separately. Her fond love to you. She must not mind."

But this had caused a longer delay than he had bargained for; for in the meantime some other person had come into the office and had to be attended to; and when Marstrand at last succeeded in getting his business transacted, he was in too great hurry even to return by the way he had come. The post office was in a street running parallel with that in which the lodgings were situated, but at a higher level. There was a piece of waste ground at the side, and it occurred to him that in climbing up this and crossing a large square (the gates of which he could see standing open) belonging to some sort of factory, he would find himself in his own road almost at the gate of the lodgings in a couple of minutes. He started off accordingly, and, having entered the yard in question, was dashing across it, when his foot caught in one of the numerous bundles of iron rods which strewed the place in conjunction with pieces of timber, casks, and other litter. He was a spring to avoid it, came down on something like a piece of wooden flooring which gave way beneath him, and fell headlong.

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CONTENTS OF PART 212.

No. 918.	PAGE
Alexia, Chapter XII.....	457
Chronicles of Scottish Counties.—The Counties of Galloway. Part I.....	460
Heligoland, In Three Parts. Part I.....	466
Treasure, A Poem.....	470
Some More About Doctors.....	470
Victims, Chapter XXIII. A Bridal Evening.....	475
No. 919.	
Alexia, Chapter XIII.....	481
Heligoland, In Three Parts. Part II.....	484
The Busy Bee.....	488
Thy Voice, A Poem.....	494
Daisy, A Story in Five Chapters, Chapters I, II.....	494
Victims, Chapter XXIV. "He has deceived you"....	498

No. 920.	PAGE
Alexia, Chapter XIV.....	503
Heligoland, In Three Parts. Part III.....	503
Thought-Reading.....	511
Daisy, A Story in Five Chapters, Chapters III, IV, V.....	517
Victims, Chapter XXV. Robbed.....	523

No. 921.	
Alexia, Chapter XV.....	529
Chronicles of Scottish Counties. The Counties of Galloway. Part II.....	531
Unsuccessful Men.....	539
Some Famous Plays, IV. Sheridan's "Rivals" and "School for Scandal." In Two Parts. Part I.....	541
Victims, Chapter XXVI. A Stern Chase.....	547

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THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR.

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

A Weekly Journal
CONDUCTED BY
CHARLES DICKENS

NO. 918. NEW SERIES.

SATURDAY, JULY 3, 1886.

PRICE TWOPENCE

ALEXIA.

BY ELEANOR C. PRICE,

Author of "Gerald."

CHAPTER XII.

ALEXIA was now so wide awake that she awoke for the morning. What was the use of undressing and going to bed, when she was quite sure not to sleep? Still one need not be shivering with cold; so she drew a shawl round her, and set to work to make the fire burn up again. When the first little flame flickered up, she left it and went to the window, simply from restlessness, to see whether the stars were shining. But there was a frosty mist on the window, and she could see nothing, though it appeared to her that the world outside was red, as if with the first flush of dawn.

That was impossible; but the impression was so strangely strong that she opened the window and looked out, drawing her shawl closely round her. It was freezing hard, and there was a mist upon the ground, but up above she could see the stars in dark blue space. Opposite, beyond the park trees, which loomed in great dark masses, there was certainly an extraordinary redness, which seemed to beat upon the air, rising and falling again, paling and deepening, while the whole atmosphere was full of an odd, smoky smell. And there was no wind, but yet the silence of the night was breathed through by a sort of low roar.

The dimness of the world seemed to invade Alexia's brain, wide awake as she was, and for a few moments she really thought that all this must be fancy. But when came something which could not deceive her; the quick, clattering noise of a galloping horse, coming down the park road towards the Farm.

She knew that sound much too well to be mistaken; and then the red glimmer and the smoky smell had their meaning indeed. In two seconds Alexia was out of her room, and had run down the passage to her father's door, which was close to the head of the stairs.

"What is it?" said Mr. Page, in answer to her knock; and Alexia, opening the door, found the room full of cheerful light, and her father dressed, reading by the fire. His night, it seemed, was not more restful than her own.

"Father—the Manor is on fire!" she cried in a shrill wild voice: something choked her, and she could not speak without pain.

Mr. Page turned round in his chair and stared at her, thinking that this was some sort of nightmare dream.

"Why, Alex, my dear——" he began, but then they both heard the horse's hoofs clatter into the yard, and the rider was knocking sharply and loudly on the back door.

"It's Martin. I heard him coming. He wants you. He's going to fetch the engines," Alexia cried again; and Mr. Page snatched up a candle and hurried downstairs.

"Dress yourself: we may want something," he called back to her from the lowest step.

Alexia went back to her room, tore off her evening dress, and dragged on the old dark-blue one, soft and warm, which she had worn the day before. She snatched a hat and a woollen shawl; forgot her thin shoes altogether; and once more went out of her room, where the window was still open, and the red glimmer was rising to a great glare in the sky, and the smoky smell was flowing in, and filling all the house.

Every one was awake now; the frightened

servants were running downstairs; the men were hurrying out of the yard, carrying ladders and buckets. Alexia's two cousins had run into their mother's room, and as she passed the door a great chattering was going on there, and she might have heard her own name many times repeated, for they were arguing whether she had better be waked or not. Mrs. Rowley said decidedly no; but the girls thought it impossible that anything could happen without Alexia. Their arguments did not trouble their cousin: she went straight out of the front door, through the garden, across the road to the very shortest cut across the park. She did not feel the freezing air, or the cold soaking grass, but ran on along the little dark path, as easy to find by night as by day, knowing all the landmarks so well. But she could not, anyhow, have missed the way with that awful glare to guide her, and the roar of flames in her ears. She was a little delayed in thick shady places, and caught her foot in a root now and then, and fell, and scrambled up again, losing her hat quite unconsciously in one of these small accidents; but very few minutes had passed since her leaving the Farm, when she came out of the shadows of the park, and climbed up a familiar corner of the sunk fence into the garden, and there stood still for a minute under an old drooping laburnum tree, with the Manor House in full view at last.

It was the old part of the house that was on fire: the new part, with its pillars, away to the right, gleamed out red from the world of profound darkness to which that lurid smother of smoke and flame made an awful centre. Here there were no stars to be seen; the atmosphere was thick and red all round, and full of a great noise of roaring and crackling, only broken through now and then by a crash of beams or tiles falling, by the hoarse shouts of men who were running with buckets, hoisting ladders, dragging along great wet cloths and rick-sheets to cover the newer part of the roof, and perhaps check the fire on its way. There were black figures on the roof, climbing in and out of the windows, every now and then came a smashing of glass. The whole village seemed to have turned out already: as Alexia stood there, more and more men came running across the lawn, and she could hear her father's voice shouting to some of them.

The sight, the smell, the noise of the fire were at first so madly exciting to

Alexia that she forgot what had brought her there, flying across from the Farm. Certainly she had had a purpose; she had not come there to stare at the fire like a fool. After a minute of this wild confusion, she took her head between her hands, and made herself think. Yes, she remembered it all now. Every turn, every corner; she knew what she wanted to save, and where it was, in its own old place on the little oak table under the window. Evidently there was no time to be lost: in fact, it looked very much as if the room was on fire already. Alexia hurried on across one side of the lawn, her brain full of confused, half-formed thoughts—that for her father's sake, she ought not to risk her life for such a little thing—no, she must not do that—but if one could save that old treasure, and only be a little burnt and disfigured—the pain wouldn't matter, nor the disfigurement—and then came a great leap of joy at her heart—now, at any rate, after this, they won't make me be married to-day!

When she was quite close to the burning house, her brain throbbing with the noise, drawing in at every breath the hot scorching air, all the confusion disappeared from her mind; she was firm and quiet, and knew exactly what she had to do.

At the end of the house, on this side, there was a door from the lawn into the garden beyond, shaded by a great yew hedge. The door was open, and Alexia slipped through into the garden, where everything was quieter, for the fire was most furious in front of the house. The old gables here stood up dark against the red light behind them, not yet themselves invaded by the flames. Down in the corner, in the shadow of the hedge, there was a door, and Alexia had hoped to find this open; she thought that Martin might have gone out that way. But no; it was safely fastened. Then she looked at the window beside it, and remembered that long ago the bolt used to be broken, and Charlie used to climb in and out that way. It was not to be reached from the ground, except by climbing up the ivy. Alexia had done it too when she was a child, and it seemed to her that she could do it still. But not muffled in a shawl—so she flung her shawl on the ground, and clinging to the old twisted stems, hurting her hands on their rough coat, she pulled herself up to the window sill. There she sat in a moment, and the old window slid up easily enough, and she had tumbled over into the

darkness inside. She knew the room well; tools and boxes and all sorts of lumber used to be kept there. Charlie and she used to visit it often, in search of materials for some of their works. Once inside, the room seemed to Alexia strangely still: there was a dull roar in her ears, and the passage outside was unnaturally light; but she would hardly have known that she was in a burning house, and this was very encouraging. She ran along the passage, turned into another passage—there was noise and light enough now—but she was at the foot of a back staircase, which would bring her up into the gallery where she wished to be, running along to another staircase past the door of Charlie's den.

It was all very well planned, and Alexia reached the top of those stairs quite safely, though she was deafened by noise and half stifled by smoke, for the whole of the wing in front of her was burning; but she did not exactly realise that. Yet she had a sort of consciousness, as she hurried along the dark old polished corridor, that at any moment the heat that surrounded her might burst out of the floor or the wainscot in flame. Still, she thought there would be time, and she reached the door of the den, seized the handle and opened it. She was met by a great roaring wave of smoke and flames, which poured out to meet her into the gallery. With a quick instinct she flung the skirt of her dress over her head and turned to rush back the way she had come, but the fire had burst through the old dry panelling, and the gallery was now a sea of flame. There was still another way; the stairs which led to the new part of the house. It was running into fresh danger, for the fire was chiefly on that side, but she ran on that way, and reached the head of the stairs safely. There was a great roar and glare of fire all round; flames shooting under doors, beams crashing down, but at the moment the old stairs seemed safe, and two or three men were rushing up them as Alexia reached their head. The next instant three or four of the top steps disappeared, there was a great crash, a blinding cloud of smoke and flame rose up where they had been. But even in that instant, and in all that uncertain glare, Alexia had been seen by the first of those men on the stairs, and while his companions turned and hurried down, expecting the whole staircase to give way in a moment, he stood and shouted at the top of his strong voice—"Alexia—Alexia!"

At the moment, the other men thought that the Squire had gone mad suddenly, and one of them ran up again and seized him by the arm. "For God's sake, sir, come down: it isn't safe."

But Charlie shook him off and shouted again: "Alexia!"

"Charlie, Charlie, save me!" she cried out to him from the other side of the fire.

"I can't get to you," he answered. "I can't reach you. Cover up your head, somehow, and jump down here to me. Jump straight through—I shall catch you: don't be afraid."

After that Alexia remembered nothing, and certainly she did not know that she did jump, and that Charlie caught her in his arms, and ran downstairs with her, while a minute after the rest of the staircase fell in, and a great barrier of fire rose between Alexia and the poor relics she had tried so hard to reach—ashes long ago themselves, and the cause of all the mischief.

In after days Alexia could hardly believe that the events of that night were not one long strange dream, springing in some mysterious way out of her accident in the hunting-field years before. For when she came to herself she was out of the burning house, and there was a great quietness, and a wonderful safety and comfort. She was being carried along in the starlight, under branches of tall trees, by strong arms that had carried her before. The peace was so great that she had not strength to give it up suddenly, but after a moment she dimly remembered a little more, and lifting her head, as well as she could in its strange position, she said under her breath: "I can walk now."

Charlie did not make any reply at once, but marched steadily on.

"You are not hurt?" he said presently, in a gruff voice.

"No. I can walk, really, please."

"What were you doing there?"

"I went to save the humming-birds," Alexia answered, for it was impossible not to tell the truth then.

Charlie gave a sort of laugh. "My dear, I burnt them last night, with a lot of other things," he said. "I suppose I set the chimney on fire."

"I didn't know you were here at all," she murmured.

"Didn't you? I came yesterday. Don't talk, you'll catch cold."

She did not speak again: it certainly was better not to talk, though not for the reason he gave. It would have been

better, perhaps, if he had let her walk home, at least along the road, and across the garden, and through the porch, and into the very house itself. For the first feeling of peace and safety could not last; it was terrible, after all, to be where she was for those few minutes, and she half-fainted again with exhaustion and excitement as he carried her into the hall, into a blaze of light and a bustle of women and clatter of voices—her aunt, her cousins, Mrs. Dodd, a dozen other women, all exclaiming and crying out at this marvellous end to their perplexities about Alexia.

Charlie laid her gently down on the old sofa in the hall, and as he lifted himself up, and turned away to face all the women, a little involuntary moan escaped from Alexia. He turned round instantly and bent over her again. "You are hurt!" he whispered.

"No, no!" she said, and she opened her eyes, and for a moment in the flare of the lamps they looked hard at each other. Then Charlie turned away more quickly than before.

"See to her, won't you," he said to Mrs. Dodd, the only woman there he knew. "It was very dangerous; she has had a great shock."

CHRONICLES OF SCOTTISH COUNTIES.

THE COUNTIES OF GALLOWAY. PART I.

IN crossing the River Nith by Dumfries Bridge we are reminded that here also flows a Border stream, which forms the boundary of a once independent state. For in Galloway we have the land of the Gael—a kind of little Ireland, colonised by a race akin perhaps to the Scots of Ulster, who spread themselves over the Lowlands. Modern historians have assigned the settlement of Galloway by emigrants from the sister island to a comparatively recent date, say the ninth century of our era, on the ground, insufficient as it appears to us, that its distinctive name does not appear in such early records as that of Bede the Venerable. In that case the Angles of Northumbria were on the ground before the Gaels. Edwin, the great Northumbrian King, whose rule was acknowledged during part of the seventh century from the Forth to the Trent, seems to have established settlements in the peninsula of Galloway as well as in the islands of the western coast, although his kingdom was soon

broken to pieces. The port of Kirkcubright must have remained under Northumbrian influences, till the sainted and ascetic apostle of Lindisfarne had finished his career upon earth. Then churches in all parts of the North were dedicated to his memory, and the little town on the Scottish Dee became known as Kirkcubert, or Cuthbert's church—in modern spelling Kirkcubright, and in Lowland pronunciation Kircoobrie. And then we are to credit an immigration or invasion of Gaels from the Green Island at a time when the Danes were first beginning to ravage the coasts; although it would be more reasonable to suppose that Galloway was settled and occupied at the same time as the Western Highlands and Islands, and by a kindred tribe; while in course of time they were cut off from their brethren, first by the establishment of the Roman dominion as far as the isthmus of the Forth and Clyde, and then by the intrusive British kingdom of Strathclyde.

Anyhow, at whatever period they came into the land, the Galwegians retained their ancient laws and customs and a separate existence as a state till long within the period of authentic historical records. They paid tribute willingly enough to the King of the Scots—the Can, as the royal due was called, of cheese, swine, and other animals—and they claimed as their right the arduous privilege of taking the lead of the King's army in battle. In the early Scotch wars the Galwegians played no inconsiderable part. They followed David into England when the contest betwixt Stephen and the Empress Maud was going on, and they bore the brunt of the great battle of the Standard, where the bones of St. Cuthbert himself were borne before the English host. Then the furious onslaught of the half-naked Gael bore down before it the serried ranks of the English spearmen, and only the deadly shafts of the archers saved the English army from destruction. Two of the highest chiefs of Galloway fell in the battle, and their followers then dispersed, and rallied not till they had reached their own native hills.

The next time we hear of the Galwegians they are following William the Lion into Northumberland—or leading him rather, for they were ever in the front, nimble and rapacious, plundering and destroying wherever they go. The King, it will be remembered, was surprised and captured by the English, and the men of Galloway returned home loaded with plunder,

but without their monarch. And they took advantage of his captivity to rise against the Norman barons, who had built castles and introduced feudal services and tenures into the country, and slaying all they could, drove the rest into flight. At the same time they made a clearance of the King's officers, his sheriffs, and serjeants, for they hated with a truly Irish intensity the cumbrous processes of feudal law and those who employed them. But they were faithful enough to their own lords; and the Scottish Kings with good policy enlisted the chief of Galloway among the official hierarchy by making him High Constable of Scotland.

The last of the native lords of Galloway died in 1234, leaving only two daughters as his lawful issue. It was altogether against Gaelic feeling and practice to acknowledge a woman as chief of the tribe. To be their leader in war, their champion and defender in peace, was an office that a woman was unfit to fill, and the Gaels besought the King, Alexander the Second, to give them a lord after their own heart—for they had fixed their affections upon a natural son of their late chief. But Alexander declared for the rights of inheritance, and marched an army into Galloway to support the cause of the daughters: and the Galwegians sullenly submitted to overmastering force. The daughters married Norman nobles, and their descendants, Baliol and Bruce, were eventually rival claimants for the crown of Scotland.

The heiress who brought her share of the hereditary lordship of Galloway into the family of Baliol, was a notable woman in her day—Devorgille, known in England as the Lady of Fotheringay, who married Baliol, the lord of Barnard Castle. She built the bridge of Dumfries over the Nith; she founded a convent at Dumfries, and another at Dundee, and her own especial abbey in her own country of Galloway, but within sight of the towers of Dumfries—the New Abbey, generally called Sweetheart Abbey. For here, Devorgille deposited, in its rich shrine, the heart of her husband, who died long years before her, and here she herself reposes, close beside it. Her fourth son was John Baliol, to whom King Edward, justly enough according to hereditary right, awarded the crown of Scotland. Some time before, Alexander Comyn had obtained another share of the lordship, with the office of Constable of Scotland, through his wife; and his descendant, the Red Comyn, was the enemy of Robert

Bruce, who was slain by the Bruce at Dumfries. The Bruce owed his Earldom of Carrick, in Ayrshire, to a much earlier arrangement between two brothers of the ancient line, who had quarrelled over their inheritance; the Scotch King having assigned to one of them the earldom in question, which once seems to have formed part of Galloway, in satisfaction of his claims.

The men of Galloway, however, were all for their hereditary lords, the Baliols and Comyns, and bitterly hostile to him of Carrick; and one of Bruce's famous adventures was a single-handed combat against a hundred or so of wild Gaels in some narrow pass or ford across a stream.

When John Baliol resigned the crown of Scotland, King Edward took Galloway into his own hands, and the inhabitants, being more favourable to Edward than to the Bruce, he found the country a convenient base of operations in his campaigns, collecting and storing supplies there, and loading his ships with grain, which he sent to Ireland as well as to England, to be ground into flour and brought back to supply his army. The Bruce did not forgive the complaisance of the men of Galloway, and, when the Iron Edward was dead, he invaded and laid waste the country; and his brother, Edward Bruce, eventually brought it into subjection to the Crown. But it was long ere the people forgot their hereditary lords, and, in 1347, Edward Baliol raised a force among them, and, aided by a few English knights headed by Percy and Nevil, ravaged the Lothians, and penetrated as far as Glasgow.

But the Scottish King took care to provide Galloway with another kind of lord. If the Baliol represented King Log, the Douglas, Archibald the Grim, hardest and fiercest of a race not wanting in those qualities, was an efficient representative of King Stork. Archibald built his huge strong castle of Thrave on an island in one of the lake-like broads of the River Dee, and, with a thousand men-at-arms always about him, he issued forth to carry dismay and ruin among the unhappy Galwegians. The Douglas thoroughly feudalised Galloway, just as Strongbow and his successors tried to feudalise Ireland. Like the Irish, the Galwegians held their lands by immemorial tribal custom. "Where are your charters?" shouted Archibald. Without parchment there was no property, and the cannie lawyers completed what Archibald had begun.

The last relic of Galwegian independence was a tax, which had once been rendered

to the chief by so many tributary townships — the lardner cow from twenty-seven parishes, driven to the lord's stronghold of Thrave, once a year, on St. Martin's Day — and this tribute was regularly received at Thrave Castle, even after all its other possessions had passed away from the family that held it. The Earls of Nithsdale, indeed, gathered their yearly twenty-seven cows till the fatal year of 1715, when the then Earl was concerned in the Jacobite rising. And, when the Earl was attainted and lost his lands and chattels, those cows, somehow, slipped through the fingers of the sequestrator. Anyhow, never more to Thrave Castle did the kye come hame.

With the practical extinction of Galloway as an independent unit of the kingdom begins the separate history of the counties comprising it. Till hereditary jurisdictions were abolished in 1747, Kirkcudbright was a stewartry, whose steward held the pleas of the Crown and kept a kind of viceregal state at Thrave Castle. But, as the royal state itself was often out at elbows, and the King as likely as any of his subjects to come to a bad end, the steward of a remote district, unless able to guard his head with his own hand, was likely to find his delegated authority of little avail. Thus, early in the sixteenth century, Gordon of Lochinvar slew the steward outright — one Dunbar of Mochrane — and was none the worse thought of by his neighbours, although a feud arose between the two families, which was finished on Flodden Field, when the son of the victim and the assassin were slain fighting side by side against the English.

A freely-fighting race were the Gordons of Lochinvar; and one of that ilk it was, who, with the Laird of Drumlanrig, slew Maclellan of Bombie at the door of St. Giles's Church in Edinburgh. In course of time the Gordons of Lochinvar became lords of Kenmure Castle, and one of the family was the Lord Kenmure who was beheaded on Tower Hill for his share in the rising of 1715. An ancestor of his was that jolly loyalist who raised a troop of horse for the King and rode at the head of it, always accompanied with a keg of brandy slung across the back of a trooper's saddle, which was known everywhere as Kenmure's drum.

If the chiefs of Galloway were often wild and eccentric, the commonalty had their share in these characteristics. The wealth of the country consisted chiefly in its cattle; and the small Galloway black cattle and the drovers, red-haired and

fiery, who took them to England for sale, were one as wild and unkempt as the other. The Galloway nags were also famous, and, according to tradition, were descended from Spanish barbs, which had swum ashore to the coast of Galloway from shipwrecked vessels of the Armada. But the Galloway nags were famous even before the days of the attempted Spanish invasion; and it is quite possible that the sires of these animals had been brought to Kirkcudbright by trading vessels from the coast of Spain or of Barbary.

For in early days Kirkcudbright town was a port of some little importance, with a foreign trade and with ships that often passed the Pillars of Hercules, and brought home the spoils of the East from the Levant. "Ane rich towne full of merchandise" was Kirkcaldy, according to Hector Boece, and as recently as the early part of the present century Kirkcaldy had some trade with the West Indies, and casks of rum and sugar, and negro servants from the plantations were not unknown upon its quays. A West Indian vessel hailing from Kirkcaldy was commanded by one Paul Jones, the son of the head gardener on the lovely grounds of the Earl of Selkirk, in St. Mary's Isle. Some difficulty with the carpenter of the ship, ending in the carpenter's violent death, was the cause, according to Paul's enemies, of Captain Jones deserting his native land and taking the side of the American colonists in their struggle with the mother country. How Paul Jones with his tiny squadron defied the naval power of England and insulted her flag along her own coasts, is familiar to every reader of Cooper or Allan Cunningham. But a curious incident was the visit of the captain to the scenes of his youth and his descent upon St. Mary's Isle, when the sailors cleared the Earl of Selkirk's residence of its plate, carrying off even the silver tea-pot from which the Countess was about to partake of her Bohea. In justice to Paul it must be said that he had not authorised the plunder, and he subsequently returned every article taken, including the silver tea-pot, which the Countess long preserved — tea-leaves and all — as a memorial of the event.

A story is in this connection told against the burghesses of Kirkcudbright, how after long and earnest deliberation, while the enemy's craft was lying in the bay, they summoned up resolution as night drew on to train a gun against the ship, and even to fire it off. Upon which, the rebel ship

making no reply, the townspeople came to the conclusion that they had disabled her; and to complete the good work and send her altogether to the bottom, they fired round after round, till the morning's dawn revealed the fact that the rebel had sailed silently away, and that the objective of this cannonade which seemed little the worse for its pounding, was a tall rock that stood forth from the middle of the bay.

Another unexpected rendezvous in the waters of Kirkcudbright was in 1689 or 1690, when the fleet of William of Orange on its way to Ireland cast anchor in the bay, and embarked some reinforcements recruited from the Cameronians of the West. This warlike display was in the same sequence of events as another surprise for the people of Kirkcaldy which had happened some hundred and twenty years before, when Queen Mary descended upon them as it were out of the clouds, and, after spending the night at Dundrennan Abbey, took a boat from the shore and crossed the Solway to that England which was to be her prison and her tomb.

Earlier still, another Queen, also in full tide of misfortune, had arrived unexpectedly at Kirkcudbright Quay; and this was Margaret of Anjou, a fugitive after the defeat of Towton, who had contrived to escape with four ships, and who threw herself with her husband upon the hospitality of the Scottish monarch. The Royal pair were inmates of Kirkcudbright Castle for some months—hardly the present building, a tall and gloomy fragment of a sixteenth-century mansion, but probably the feudal castle that preceded it.

The later Queen had far the better lodging, for the Abbey of Dundrennan, now a mere fragment, was charmingly situated among the hills, in its own peaceful, secluded valley. The main valley of the Dee is also full of charm, where the tide flows past Kirkcudbright, and for eight miles or so from the river mouth, until it meets the stream as it leaps over the rocks of Tunland. Here is the fine cascade, described by Alexander Montgomery in an early specimen of descriptive poetry.

With tumbling and rumbling
Among the rocks round,
Devalling and falling
Into a pit profound.

The estuary of the Dee abounds in the mussels which produce the British pearl, and probably was the scene of a pearl fishery in Roman times, when haughty Roman dames arrayed themselves in necklaces of

British pearls. The coast all round is singularly bold and rocky, with peaks and crags, and caverns hollowed out by the restless sea—such as Scott has depicted in "Guy Mannering." Dirk Hatteraick's cave is pointed out near the point where the estuaries of the Dee and the Cree converge, about six miles below Kirkcudbright, near the old Castle of Rueberry, and here, too, is the Gauger's Leap, where Frank Kennedy, the Revenue officer, was hurled over the cliff; for, although the author declares this incident to have been imaginary, his creations have impressed themselves on the popular imagination with greater force than actual events. The prototype of Dirk Hatteraick was, according to Scott's notes, actually well known on the coast of Galloway, one Yawkins, whose most dexterous exploit is thus described: "On one occasion he was landing his cargo at the Manxman's Lake, near Kirkcudbright, when two Revenue cutters, the "Pigmy" and the "Dwarf," hove in sight at once on different tacks, the one coming round by the Isles of Fleet, the other between the Point of Rueberry and the Muckle Row. The dauntless free-trader instantly weighed anchor, and bore down right between the luggers, so close that he tossed his hat on the deck of the one and his wig on that of the other, hoisted a cask to his maintop to show his occupation, and bore away under an extraordinary pressure of canvas without receiving injury."

The activity and success of the smugglers on the coast of Galloway was due to its convenient position with reference to the Isle of Man, which, as a kind of independent state, afforded a handy depôt for all kinds of contraband goods. When, in 1765, the lordship of the island was sold to the English Government, the occupation of the Galwegian smugglers was practically gone, as such smuggling as was still carried on could be more conveniently done on the eastern coast. The men of Galloway have no inherent love of the sea—showing their Gaelic blood in this—and prefer the most barren patch of land to the most prolific stretch of water; and thus there is no such thing as a real fishing village all along the coast, although its many indentations, its sheltered coves and river mouths seem to invite such settlements—rivers whose names are sweetly combined in the ancient verse:

The Ken, the Cree, the darling Dee
Were seen a' rowing sweet,
And just below did wimplin' flow
The Minnoch and the Fleet.

The name of Fleet, indeed, sounds strange in such company, and we wonder how it got there. Not from Ireland surely, and the only companion it has of the same name—except in Nottinghamshire, where any idle, half-choked watercourse is called a Fleet—is that celebrated and ink stream which flows somewhere below the paving-stones and printing offices of Fleet Street.

There is a pleasant, homely old village on the Scottish stream known as the Gatehouse of Fleet, which lies some half-dozen miles to the south of the railway station which bears its name. Then there is the River Urr to the eastward, flowing through a country of grey granite rocks and stern, forbidding features, with the village of Dalbeattie near its mouth—all grey granite too. But the river to follow, after all, is the Dee, with its sister stream, the Ken.

When we have passed above the Falls of Tunland, where the foundations of an ancient abbey may be discovered, that owed its endowments to the race of Douglas, the strong castle of the Douglasses is not far to seek—the huge square roofless tower of Thrave, stern and desolate, among barren moors and gloomy hills. Long ere the Douglasses came to the front, Thrave had been the stronghold of the Princes or Lords of Galloway, built upon an island twenty-two acres in extent, surrounded by the waters of the Dee. These island forts were favourite defences with the Gael—the island being sometimes artificially formed—a reminiscence, as it were, of the lake dwellings of an earlier time, if not of an earlier race, like the Cranoge of the Irish bogs; and remains of such island dwellings or forts are common enough among the abundant lochs and river broads of Galloway. The present Castle of Thrave, however, seems to have been principally the work of Archibald the Grim, whose connection with the chronicles of Galloway has already been alluded to.

A kind of ogre's castle was this of Thrave under the stern rule of the Douglasses, with dungeons, and chains, and an executioner always ready to do justice on enemies. Here it was that William the Earl brought in as prisoner the King's sheriff, the Tutor of Bombie as he was called—not in the educational line at all, but the feudal guardian of the Lord of Bombie—one Maclellan. The King had no power to protect his officer, or drag him from the stern grasp of the Douglas; but he sent the captain of his guard, Sir Patrick Gray, who was mother's brother to

Maclellan, with a letter, under his own hand, begging for the release of Maclellan.

The Douglas, guessing his errand, with a wanton refinement of cruelty, received Sir Patrick with such a show of hospitality that he would hear nothing of his message till he had dined in the hall, and in the meantime poor Maclellan was led out into the courtyard of the castle and forthwith beheaded. And when dinner was over, and Sir Patrick delivered the royalmissive, the Earl, with mock respect, declared that the King's will should be instantly obeyed, and led Sir Patrick to the courtyard, still reeking with the blood of the victim. "There lies your sister's son," he said to Sir Patrick, "only wanting the head. Such as he is, however, you are welcome to him." Sir Patrick, sick at heart, mounted his horse and rode away, turning, however, in the gateway to shake his fist at the fiendish Earl, and threaten him with future vengeance.

Barely did Sir Patrick escape the fury of the Douglas, and only owed his life to the swiftness of his horse, which distanced all pursuit. But Sir Patrick lived to be revenged, as he had promised; and in that strange scene in Stirling Castle, when the Douglas fell under the dagger of the King, Sir Patrick was at hand with his trusty war-axe to deal the coup de grâce to the cruel Earl.

The Castle of Thrave being the last stronghold to hold out for the Douglas family, James the Second resolved to conduct the siege in person. He marched into Galloway, and took up a position commanding the castle at the three thorns of the Carlingwork, where the town of Castle Douglas now stands. In Galloway the Castle of Thrave had long been regarded with fear and detestation, as the seat of extortion and rapacity, backed by an alien and hostile feudal power, and thus the arrival of the King in person to destroy the ogre's castle, was hailed with joy all over the country. If James's siege train was deficient in heavy artillery, the townsmen and skilled ironsmiths of the country were at hand to supply the defect. The chief townsmen of Kirkcudbright contributed each a gaud of iron, and a cannon-smith was soon found to build up a gun that should bring low the hated towers of Thrave. The smith was known as Brawny Kim, and with his seven sons set to work with the gauds of iron, and labouring night and day with brawny arms, they completed a monstrous

piece of ordnance, built of welded bars and rings—a gun whose muckle mouth was two feet in diameter; all the while to feed this muckle mouth, busy quarrymen and masons were at work on Bennan Hill, who rolled down the granite balls as fast as they were made. But one pill of the kind was enough. The first ball discharged from the monster crashed through the wall of the castle and carried off the hand of Lady Douglas, who had once been known as the Fair Maid of Galloway—a hand that had been given in wedlock to two brothers in succession. Thrave could stand no more of such discharges, and soon the lion of Douglas was displaced by the royal standard of Scotland.

Three cogent testimonies yet remain to the latter part of the history: first, the hole in the castle wall; secondly, a monstrous granite ball corresponding with tradition; and, thirdly, curiously enough, a signet ring bearing the cognizance of the Douglas family—a ring which may have belonged to the shattered hand of the Lady Douglas—was found some years ago among the ruins of the castle.

Kim—the brawny Kim, the veritable hero of the siege—was suitably rewarded by a grant of the lands of Mollance, part of the forfeited estate of the Douglasses. And the gun itself—although this is a point to be approached with much trepidation considering the learned controversies which have been fought over it—the gun was transported with all honour to Edinburgh, where it is still to be found, familiarly known as Mons—clearly a contraction of Mollance—Meg.

The name of Carlingwork, now superseded by the quasi-historical title of Castle Douglas, seems to point to other entrenchments raised by an unknown people. On partly draining Carlingwork Loch in the latter part of the eighteenth century, a work which enriched the owner from the deposits of marl which were found on its margin, a very ancient dam was discovered, formed of moss, and stones, and clay; its origin and purpose unknown even to tradition; but probably the work of a race whose favoured dwellings were among the waters of the lochs.

When the Douglasses were crushed and their vast possessions confiscated, Thrave Castle passed through various hands till just after Flodden Field, when, by favour of the royal widow, Margaret, one of the Maxwells, a line ever famous for success with the softer sex, got hold of stewardry

and castle, and the latter continued in the family till, as has already been told, the forfeiture of the Earl of Nithsdale, in 1715, put an end to the long succession.

Above Thrave, the River Dee expands into a long and winding loch, where it is joined by the River Ken, and on the banks is Kenmure Castle, the ancient seat of the Gordons. The castle stands on a bare and windy height, overlooking the meadows below and the loch in the distance, a curious and highly picturesque assemblage of old towers and gabled roofs of every period from mediæval times to the present. Popular imagination, impressed by the singular position of the castle, attributes its removal from the shores of the loch to supernatural agency, and some curious cable mouldings about the gateway, represent the ropes of sand which the enemy of mankind employed to bind his burden together. From this castle issued, in 1715, the Lord Kenmure of Burns's Jacobite ballad:

Oh, Kenmure's on a'nd awa', Willie!

with a handful of horsemen, to raise the country for the Pretender, an expedition which had a bitter ending on Tower Hill, where Lord Kenmure paid forfeit with his head; castle and estates being all escheated to the Crown, although they were returned some years afterwards, and still remain in possession of the same family.

Above Kenmure the country rises into the wild, picturesque, and hilly region of the Glenkens, which Galloway folk stoutly aver is not to be surpassed in beauty by any scene in bonnie Scotland. And so you reach Carsphairn, with surroundings of desolate and mountainous country, in the wildest part of which lies Loch Doon, where Edward Bruce held a castle on an island in the midst—a lake, the source of that bonnie Doon, whose "banks and braes" will ever be held in remembrance by the lovers of Scotch songs.

More famous summits are those of Criffel, that looks over the Solway to the mountains of Cumberland, and that often shares the same coverlid of clouds; and further to the west is Cairnmuir, with a local distich about it:

When cloudy Cairnmuir hath a hat,
Pilmour and Skairs laugh at that.

These last being two mountain burns or rivulets, the roaring of whose sudden floods is thus not inaptly typified; while a Skairs-burn warning is proverbial in the neighbourhood, as representing the entire absence of any notice beforehand.

Wherever you may go among the wilder

parts of Galloway you may find traces of the handiwork of the old Gaels, and perhaps of other races before them. Sometimes these are curious kilns marked with fire, attributed to the Picts, and said to have been employed in the brewing of that mysterious drink expressed from the heather, which has been already alluded to—the illicit stills of the period, in fact. Sometimes it is a holy well, once resorted to by crowds of pilgrims with merry-making and feasting and fighting, such as you read of at an Irish "station," as described by Carleton or Lover, but now purling forth deserted and uncared for. Hardly a hill-top but can show some prehistoric fort or some cairn, enclosing the remains of a mighty man of the olden time, or a cluster of rifled sepulchres of a forgotten race; or some rugged hill tower of a petty chieftain, a MacDonochy or a Dovenald, or MacDarold. People yet alive may have talked with those who remembered to have heard the Gaelic tongue spoken by the people of the Glenkens or the wild region on the confines of Ayrshire. But such human interest now exists altogether in the past. The Gael has departed from the land, and his cot and his cabin are only so many shapeless clusters of stones on the green hillside.

IN HELIGOLAND.

IN THREE PARTS. PART I.

THE month of June, 1864, was waning towards its close. On the 20th all England rang with the last exploit of the Confederate steamer "Alabama," which had been resting a few weeks in the sheltering port of Cherbourg, closely watched by the Federal man-of-war "Kearsage." On the night of the 18th her captain landed specie, papers, and 102 chronometers, representing the number of Northern States ships she had taken, sunk, or burned on the high seas during the past year, and placed them in charge of Messrs. Saunders and Otley. She had then gone outside the French harbour, till just beyond the three-mile radius, when the little flimsy blockade-runner, built by Laird, of Birkenhead, solely for speed, challenged the heavy corvette to mortal combat. The engagement was rendered more unequal still, by the fact of the 'cute Northerner having cleverly fastened his chain cables into a belt round her vital parts, rendering her practically an ironclad. After an hour's fierce fighting the "Alabama," which had been repeatedly

hulled at close range, went slowly down, all standing, colours flying, a few sails still aloft, men at their guns and actually firing till the water rose above them. As she sank out of sight, her crew, like a black cluster of bees on the surface, were rescued mainly by Mr. Lancaster, of the Royal Yacht Squadron steamer "Deerhound," who had hovered perilously near, foreseeing what the end must be. Captain Semmes and about forty officers and men were brought on board the yacht, while the "Kearsage's" boats saved the remainder. The "Deerhound," having Captain Semmes on board, for whose capture the United States had offered so large a reward, and fearful that he would be demanded of them as a prisoner of war, steamed quickly away for Cowes, and was out of signal distance before the "Kearsage," busily engaged in saving the drowning and wounded sailors, had found out that she was gone.

In June, 1864, the Austrians and Prussians combined were at war with Denmark, who had been bereft, one by one, of her richest provinces and fair Schleswig-Holstein, and were resting under the shadow of an armistice to gain breath, after a victorious campaign quite unprecedented in rapidity. Alsen, a valuable and fertile island in the Little Belt, had lastly succumbed to the allies, and the beating heart of England winced as blow after blow was struck at the overmatched country, feeling that nothing now would induce our rulers to interfere, short of poor Christian the Ninth being dragged from the throne he had so lately mounted. Denmark found England and her "family alliance" but a broken reed in 1864.

H.M.S. "Aurora," under Sir Leopold M'Clintock of Arctic fame, had been a witness on the 9th of May, from her anchorage off Heligoland, to the action between the Danes and Austrians, in which the Austrian frigate "Schwartzenberg" was partially dismasted, and the Danes victorious, their enemies being compelled, for the first time during the war, to retire before them with serious losses. These brave, hardy descendants of Odin and the great Norse sea-kings proved themselves to be in no way deteriorated. The plunder and dismemberment of Denmark in 1864 by Austria and Prussia had a parallel in 1807, when our gallant seamen (as one who was there has often told me), with shame at their hearts, seized the Danish fleet by order of the English Government, in order to fore-

stall the Emperor Napoleon in his intention of doing so! Great Britain descended to the most underhand proceedings during Mr. Canning's premiership, in hopes of concealing from the Danish Minister in London our nefarious intentions towards his country. Succeeding administrations must have been heartily ashamed of such piratical conduct, for of all those Danish ships "taken" into our service, the name of one only, the "Odin," survived to our own times, being borne by the fine paddle-frigate which penetrated, in the Russian War, to the very cradle-land of Odin and Freya, in the far North, leaving many of her gallant officers and crew, slain in the night attack on Gamlé Karleby, to rest in the ice waters of the Gulf of Bothnia, sewn up in a hammock with a shot at their feet. Denmark has small cause to love our nation, and yet, curiously enough, there is no lack of good feeling on either side, engendered, no doubt, by a common interest in the lovely and admirable mother of our future Kings, whom Denmark has given to us.

The Duke of Somerset ruled our navy in 1864 with wisdom, industry, and ability; and had just made his memorable after-dinner speech at the Royal Academy, when he told his then incredulous hearers that to admire our hideous new ironclads as much as the old "wooden walls" was a "mere education of the eye."

The armistice was at an end, and the belligerents just going at each other's throats again with renewed vigour. Such was the condition of affairs at home and abroad about the date before-mentioned. The "Wolf," one of our newest and smartest crack corvettes, lay at anchor at the Little Nore. She had just come in from her first cruise in the storm-beaten waters of the North Sea, and was spreading her drenched wings to dry in the warm rays of the first sun that had shone upon her for many a long day. About four p.m. a telegram arrived ordering her to proceed to sea at daybreak on the following morning, take the despatch vessel "Salamis" with her, to draw Baltic and North Sea charts, and to coal all night. This was delightful, and caused the wildest enthusiasm to pervade the ship. England was then no longer content quietly to look on, and see the ancient and warlike kingdom, the cradle of seamanship, who had given her beautiful daughter to our care, dismembered, conquered, and retained by her conquerors! Something was certainly to be done at last, of which this stirring order

was but the forerunner. Such was the naval opinion, shared in to a great extent by the press on the following day. All night long did the whirling and creaking of the cranes, and the monotonous voices of the tallymen, pierce the still air. Provisions were hastily put on board, ammunition hoisted in, and the "Wolf" sailed at the appointed time, to succeed Her Majesty's Ship "Aurora" in the delicate and interesting duty of observing, from a service point of view, the proceedings of the combined fleets of Austria and Prussia against Denmark, their luckless prey.

The Texel, in Holland, was to be the first port of call, then Heligoland, and it was even within the bounds of possibility that the Cattgat and the Belts might be visited. Arrived at the Texel next day, the Austrian squadron alone was found lying quietly at anchor, the men's clothes hung out to dry, boats hoisted out, and crews idling about in the sun, as if nothing particular had happened to them. It did not appear where the Prussian ships were lying in port, but in those days their navy had not assumed the importance it has since attained, and her men-of-war could be counted upon the fingers of one hand. Of their fleet the "Thetis," "Niobe," "Mosquito," and "Rover" were bought from the English. I remember the "Thetis" coming into the Cape in 1854, she and her captain being the sole representatives of the infant German navy.

The "Wolf's" guns were loaded with distant charges and shot, calculated to give a warm reception in case they were fired into by mistake for one of the belligerents. Looking into the Dutch harbour only for a few hours, to land mails and receive despatches, the corvette continued her voyage to Heligoland, where there was every appearance of her being stationed for some weeks. Now was my time to see that most interesting and rarely visited spot. I was certainly possessed of two little children under three at home, but they must be abandoned; so, without loss of time, my passage was taken in the Hamburg steamer, "Earl of Auckland," sailing from St. Katherine's Docks at twelve p.m. Going on board in good time, the usual chaos reigned till we had cast off and were heading down the river. At first we threaded our way slowly between closely packed tiers of ships, till a clear path lay before us, when on we went at a rattling pace, closely shaving many a homeward-bound ocean steamer, in the narrow reaches

of the Thames, by a yard or so. Among the "Earl of Auckland's" passengers were a gay party of pretty German girls, fresh from an educational tour in England, under the charge of a gaunt lady-professor of severe aspect, whose eyes were armed with two pairs of spectacles, one over the other, the better to supervise each look and word of her lively brood. They flew hither and thither, from port to starboard, intensely excited and voluble at each point of interest we neared. Woolwich, the Isle of Dogs, Greenwich, its Hospital and Observatory, were all recognised, and the occasion was even "improved" by their conscientious mentor, as we passed Barking Reach (then far from being the appalling nuisance it has since become) by a dissertation upon London sewage. She knew everything—that marvellous woman; and the pretty, short, curly hair, and pink-and-white complexions of her irrepressible charges, rendered them decidedly attractive objects in the near foreground.

The sun went down fiery-red into a black mass of cloud, which rolled towards us from the direction in which our course lay. "We shall have a dusting," opined an experienced voyager, and the night certainly did not belie the threatening appearances at sundown. What had seemed but a pleasant breeze between the sheltered mud banks of the Thames, developed into a hard fierce wind as we passed the Nore lightship and headed out for the North Sea. Night fell upon a miserable spectacle; not even the howling of the winds could drown the sea-sick groans of all our luckless German passengers, as each violent plunge of our poor little ship deposited them in a different place. The suffering appeared to be in exact proportion to the appalling quantity of food consumed at dinner on our first coming on board. My own miseries were as nothing compared to the despairing and frightened condition to which these poor people were reduced.

As the night wore on and a new day arose no passengers left their berths or went on deck; they would have been washed overboard unless possessing an unusually good pair of sea-legs, as great green seas thundered on the deck overhead every few minutes. At last the smelling lamps were extinguished, and a faint, gray, greenish light stole into the cabin; time seemed to stand still, and each half hour that chimed from the large saloon clock lengthened out into long hours. Towards eleven of the second night, when we seemed to have

been lying in those airless smelling berths for years, and every bone ached with the violence with which we had been flung to and fro, I noticed with intense thankfulness a gradual smoothing of the water and a sensible diminution in the furious plunges and rolls we had hitherto experienced. Soon the cheery voice of the captain, seeking to reassure his most miserable passengers, announced in a loud, clear tone, that was heard above the roaring of the wind and sea and the thumping of the engines, that "we had got hold of"—i.e. "sighted" the light-ship in the South Elbe Channel; that it was midnight, and we should get into Cuxhaven before daylight.

Never were words more thankfully received; we had, in reality, experienced a most unusually stormy passage, and were, one and all, ill and exhausted. I struggled up from my berth, and came on deck at half-past twelve, more dead than alive—most kindly aided by the captain, who had never laid down since we left England—and waited for the day; "wished for the day," we might have said, with St. Paul, when he, with no pilot on board, neared a strange country. How dismally that morning dawned, showing a handful of pale, dishevelled wretches, bereft of any sort of good looks they might previously have possessed! There was the poor lady-professor the colour of an orange, with blear, weary-looking eyes, still glaring through two pairs of spectacles. She was quite speechless. As to her lively pupils, could it be possible that these damp, straight-haired, ghastly young women, with creased, unkempt dresses, were the miserable remains of the pretty, pink, fresh complexions, and charming toilettes that came on board? It was too true. I had plucked up spirit to come on deck, thinking that perhaps I should find the "Wolf" there; but we passed in the gray mist through the whole of the Austrian fleet, lying with lower-yards and topmasts struck, plunging at their anchors even in this comparatively sheltered roadstead. I dimly made out the "Schwartzanberg," with her battered hull and jury-masts, but our captain assured me that no English man-of-war was there, and on we went up the broad Elbe. First the darkness gave place to a gray mist, very common, they told me, off the low sand-banks that lined the river. One by one the few stars that had ventured out high above the mist twinkled fainter and fainter, and were extinguished; then a sighing wind, the gale's faint legacy, and

the precursor of day, came softly up behind us, and caused the mist to flee before it; and lastly, the slumbering shores of Holstein stole out of the gloom, ghostly, with tall, black poplars, and many a quaint church steeple, adorned with its invariable stork's-nests, on the most exposed ridges and gables as in Holland.

On we went, faster as the light strengthened, threading our way most cleverly through labyrinths of sand-banks and low islands, till the welcome sun rose and gilded a thousand quiet homesteads, flat, and green, and comely with black and white cattle, grazing among the thick wet grass in enormous numbers. The Hanover and Schleswig-Holstein banks of the Elbe were charming, and looked prosperous and peaceful in the early morning, as if they had never heard of war in their midst, much less that even then, they were no more a Danish people, but a province of Germany. Glückstadt and Altona were handsome, thriving, populous places, Altona particularly so, and well worth "annexing," as the grasping conqueror knew full well. We moored amidst a forest of masts alongside the quay in Hamburg, about eight o'clock in the morning, having partially recovered our spirits, looks, and sea-legs.

Here I took the last remaining room at Wietzel's Hotel, and demanded a bath. I might as well have asked for the moon, and with about as much chance of obtaining it! Continuing the search for what I desired with a pertinacity essentially British, I gathered hopes of at last being washed. A pretty, stout, fresh-coloured Hamburg girl appeared at my door, bearing a small tin, such as is used for washing up cups and saucers—this was the only species of bath in the house! Consoled and refreshed in some measure with an excellent cup of coffee and delicious light brioche, I sallied forth to spy out the land. Nothing but shops—miles and miles of shops—was everybody in trade? I was recommended to go over to Altona in Schleswig-Holstein; it sounded an immense distance, say ten or twenty miles, but proved to be only just across a bridge over one of the numerous creeks of the Elbe, which intersects the city of Hamburg, and constitutes so serious a foe in years of flood. Half the town was nearly destroyed by inundation in 1855.

Altona is a primitive, quiet, old-world place, with long, straight rows of spreading trees on each side of the magnificent broad

roads, shading the ancient stately houses which line the streets. Here there are but few shops. A grand statue of Blücher, the great Prussian Field-Marshal, who was born in Altona, stands on a commanding site, and harmonised with squadrons of smart Prussian soldiers marching here and there, but guarding nothing in particular, at whom the population looked askance. They were their conquerors and future masters; but not at all welcome as yet. The Danes built this town on the Elbe, close to Hamburg, that it might rival the Free Port; but it has never succeeded in doing so, and, during the war in 1712, it was burned by the Swedes. Denmark then rebuilt it, and it now contains a population of more than 20,000 souls. Anything less like a conquered and oppressed town could not be imagined. Apathy and dulness reigned everywhere, nothing seemed to matter. Hamburg, on the contrary, is full of toiling hardworkers; it is the great outlet of Germany to the sea, and is governed by a burgomaster assisted by a senate. It is one of the three remaining Free Ports or Hanse Towns, founded by the Emperor Charlemagne in the ninth century. Hamburg entered into the North German Confederation in 1868; it must, therefore, be acknowledged that though still fondly and proudly calling itself a Free Port, even this, the greatest and most powerful of the Hanse Towns, has been obliged to succumb in a certain degree to Germany, contributing largely to the Government expenses, while, for the advantage of still retaining all its quaint old privileges as a Free Port, and, therefore, not subject to German custom dues, the once entirely independent city is obliged to pay yearly about £109,000 as tribute. Here, in the broad waters of the Elbe, lay huge seaworthy steamers of the North German Lloyd's and Hamburg Company's fleets blowing off steam, with the equivalent for a "Blue Peter" at the fore. Crowds of little river steamers, barges, and rowing boats, lay off, all crammed with people. I thought that some regattas were about to take place; but no, it was only the usual semi-weekly commotion, and the great ships were waiting to embark their thousands and thousands of German emigrants for conveyance to New York; homesick, heartsick creatures, whom the treaty of nations handed over to the conquerors, leaving no place for them in the old home; or men whom the fear of conscription, and consequent military service, drives into exile, together with their

flat-faced, cheerless-looking wives and solemn children. It was a melancholy spectacle to see them go off in the tug-boats, bidding an agonised farewell to the beloved Fatherland, never to be beheld again in all the long years to come, but still clinging with anxious and careful tenacity to the stolid babies, and enormous bundles and carpet-bags, stuffed to repletion, with which they were burdened. They would be far better off, if they only knew it, in the new country whither they were bound, and are the emigrants to be preferred before those of every other nation—sturdy, careful, healthy, law-abiding, and generally God-fearing as they are.

TREASURE.

THE flowers I planted in the flush of Spring,
Have budded, bloomed, and withered long ago ;
The grain my lavish fingers used to throw,
Long since was reaped for others' garnering ;
Yet I am rich amid my nature dearth ;
My gold is where the rainbow touches earth.

My wealth is molten of full many an ore,
Dug from the sacred caverns of the past ;
Stored where the Present's quiet light is cast ;
Piled in the Promise-land that lies before.
All blent together, all of priceless worth,
All hid just where the rainbow touches earth.

And Memory, Faith, and Hope its guardians are,
As holding Love's strong hand I make my way,
Knowing I near a little every day,
The one sure goal where, passing o'er the bar
I find, in all the glow of second birth,
My Treasure, where the rainbow touches earth.

SOME MORE ABOUT DOCTORS.

WE concluded our last article about "Some Famous Doctors"* with a brief account of Jenner, the discoverer of the cure of small-pox by vaccination. Since then the fame of the extraordinary cures which are being made by M. Pasteur, of Paris, in another branch of disease, by a process analogous to vaccination, renders it of interest to recall still further something of Edward Jenner. It is now nearly one hundred and forty years since this genuine human benefactor was born. His father was Vicar of Berkley, and he himself became a country medical practitioner of great skill and originality, apart from his connection with vaccination. He was an intimate personal friend of the John Hunter of whom we have already told something, and in his treatment of diseases owed much to what he learned from the great anatomist. He was, moreover, a close and sympathetic observer of nature, and it is recorded of

him that he anticipated Darwin's views on the important action of earthworms upon the soil. Sir Humphrey Davy has written that Jenner said "that earthworms, particularly about the time of the vernal equinox, were much under and along the surface of our moist meadow-lands; and wherever they move they leave a train of mucus behind them which becomes manure to the plant. In this respect they act, as the slug does, in furnishing materials for food to the vegetable kingdom; and under the surface they break the stiff clods in pieces, and finally divide the soil."

So informing and so witty, so vivacious and so true to life was Jenner's conversation, says Mr. Bettany, to whose interesting work we have already expressed our indebtedness, that the chance of sharing it was eagerly embraced, and his friends would ride many miles to accompany him on his way home from their houses, even at midnight. And he was something of a poet as well as an accomplished musician, composing and singing ballads, and playing the flute and violin.

Although Jenner was forty-nine years old before he made vaccination known to the world, the subject had attracted his attention when only a youthful apprentice to a country surgeon. He was convinced that the current methods of treating cow-pox and small-pox were capable of improvement, and he set himself to study the nature of the disease. But for many years after his opinions were made known to the medical faculty they were contemptuously scouted. He had first of all to prove, contrary to the prevalent belief, that what was called cow-pox was not a certain preventive of small-pox. Then he had to trace out the nature of the difference in the diseases to which cows are subject, and to ascertain which of them possessed the protective virtue against small-pox. After repeated failures he made the grand discovery that it is "only in a certain condition of the pustule that the virus is capable of imparting its protective power to the human constitution."

It was on the 14th May, 1796, that he first put his theory to the test, by transferring cow-pox by inoculation from one human being to the other. It was two years later, however, before his famous "Inquiry into the Causes and Effects of the Variolæ Vaccinæ" was published.

Henry Olive was the first London doctor to put the thing to the test, and he is

* See ALL THE YEAR ROUND, No. 893, January 9th, 1886. Vol. xxxvii. p. 444.

credited with performing the first successful vaccination in London. Other cases followed, and Lady Frances Morgan (afterwards Lady Ducie) was the first lady of rank to have a child vaccinated.

By 1799, in spite of many mistakes by injudicious practitioners, vaccination had largely spread and become known in Germany, Austria, Switzerland, and the United States. On the despatch of Sir Ralph Abercromby's expedition to Egypt his army was vaccinated, and with such good effects as to add materially to Jenner's growing triumph. Small-pox was at this time committing great ravages in India, and Jenner urged the Government to send out a number of vaccinated soldiers along with an accomplished surgeon; but the Government declined the experiment. Jenner was about to take steps himself in the matter, when news came of the successful introduction of vaccine matter into Bombay through the round-about way of successive transfer to Constantinople, to Bagdad, to Bussorah, and thence by sea to India. Thus rapidly did vaccination make the tour of the globe, and immortalise the name of Jenner in every clime.

All this took place in spite of the stubborn opposition of one branch of the medical profession and the blundering practice of another. We have mentioned in our last article some of the absurd charges which were hurled against the method; and such was the opposition in some quarters, that one doctor, who abandoned the old system of inoculation and adopted vaccination, found his income shrink in one year from £1,000 to £100. There is reason, therefore, for the suspicion that the reluctance of many practitioners to adopt the new practice was due to interested motives. And besides the scientific antagonism to vaccination, there was also at first a strong religious antagonism. It was declared as contrary to the will of Providence as to the laws of nature, and was denounced as sinful and diabolical, as well as dangerous! But truth is great and will prevail, and all nations upon the earth soon united in blessing the name of Jenner. We have already told something of the rewards and honours which fell to him, and we only recur to the matter now because of the moral it affords in view of the keen criticism to which M. Pasteur is being subjected. That in his efforts to protect mankind from the awful disorder, Hydrophobia, he may prove a second Jenner, is what all must hope, and what we are inclined to believe.

Abernethy was another of the pupils of the famous John Hunter, and was a Londoner born, although of Irish-Scottish descent. Even in his schooldays he was remarkable for the excitability and impatience which have formed the basis of so many anecdotes of his eccentricity. He himself wanted to be a lawyer, but his father apprenticed him to one of the surgeons of St. Bartholomew's Hospital. Very soon he began to get impatient at the empirical mode of treatment then too common, and began to investigate the causes of diseases on his own account. As showing the early bent of his mind towards dietetic treatment, he has recorded that when he was a boy he half ruined himself in buying oranges and other things in order to observe the effects of different kinds of diet on the kidneys. When only twenty-three years of age he was appointed Assistant Surgeon at St. Bartholomew's, and remained in connection with that hospital for a very long period. Then he started lecturing, and became in a manner the founder of the medical school at St. Bartholomew's. In his lectures he departed from the dry, orderly, orthodox manner, and combined illustrations from comparative anatomy with description. But while lecturing himself and attending to his duties in the hospital, he also attended Mr. Hunter's lectures and studied diligently. To do all this he had to rise at four in the morning, and thus it was that he became an old-looking man before he was fifty. It is said that in his early professional years he was so excessively shy, that he had often to retire to compose himself before he was able to begin a lecture. Possibly then the brusquerie of his later manner may have only been assumed to hide his natural shyness. Such at least is what Mr. Bettany suggests. When he got fairly started with his lecture, however, timidity disappeared, and his style is described as having been unique. He would enter the lecture-room with hands deep in trousers-pockets, body bent, slouching gait, blowing or whistling. Then he would throw himself on a chair, swing one leg over an arm of it, and begin in some abrupt fashion, like the following, which was the actual prelude of a wonderful discourse on gunshot wounds:

"The count was wounded in the arm; the bullet had sunk deep into the flesh; it was, however, extracted, and he is now in a fair way of recovery.' That will do very well for a novel, but it won't do for us, gentlemen: for 'Sir Ralph Abercromby

received a ball in the thick part of his thigh, and it buried itself deep, deep, and it got among important parts, and it couldn't be felt; but—surgeons, nothing daunted, groped, and groped and groped, and—Sir Ralph died!”

Abernethy was noted among other things for his mental abstraction. It is related of him that once, when he came forward to lecture he was received as usual with great applause, but seemed quite indifferent to it; he quietly cast his eyes over the assembly, and burst out in a tone of deep feeling with a “God help you all! What is to become of you?”

Macilwain, in his memoirs of the great surgeon, has left many records of his power as a lecturer, and of his peculiar ability to speak as if addressing each individual, and of bringing his discourse home to every one of his auditors. In private practice he had the reputation of being rough and hasty, but it is said that he was only so when annoyed—to judge by the number of anecdotes, that must have been pretty often. We have already given two or three; here are a few more.

An indolent and luxurious citizen came to him one day and said:

“Pray, Mr. Abernethy, what is a cure for gout?”

The answer was prompt and concise.

“Live upon sixpence a day, and earn it.”

The Duke of York went to consult him one day, and Abernethy, in his usual way, received him, whistling, with his hands in his pockets.

“I suppose,” said the astonished Duke, “you know who I am?”

“Suppose I do,” said Abernethy; “what of that?”

Then, after hearing the Duke's complaint his prescription was:

“Cut off the supplies, as the Duke of Wellington did in his campaigns, and the enemy will leave the citadel.”

Once he was so brusque with a lady patient, that she said:

“I had heard of your rudeness before; but I did not expect this.”

When he handed her the prescription she asked:

“What am I to do with this?”

“Anything you like,” he said; “put it in the fire if you please.”

The lady took him at his word, threw the prescription on the fire, laid down the fee, and walked off.

Sir Astley Cooper is said to have profited much by Abernethy's rudeness, receiving

many patients who were offended by the manner of the other. But to his hospital patients Abernethy was uniformly kind and gentle.

In illustration of this a story is told by Mr. Stowe, who accompanied him one day through the wards, where a poor Irishman jumped out of bed and threw himself at Abernethy's feet. Then he jumped up and flourished a limb, crying:

“That's the leg, yer honor! Glory be to God! Yer honor's the boy for doing it! May the heavens be your bed! Long life to yer honor!” etc.

This was a man who had been brought in with diseased ankle, for which amputation had been ordered. But Abernethy thought he could cure it; stopped the amputation, and put the man under constitutional treatment. The result was a perfect cure, and an ecstasy of thankfulness on the part of poor Pat. The opportunity was seized by Abernethy for giving a clinical lecture, every point of which was illustrated by Pat's emphatic “Thru, yer honor; divvel a lie in it.” Every reference to the leg brought out the member with a flourish from under the bed-clothes; and the whole affair was most comical. But while everybody was laughing at the Irishman on his knees before the great surgeon, Abernethy was composed. Bending down over the man he said with much earnestness: “I am glad your leg is doing well, but never kneel, except to your Maker.”

As so often happens, Abernethy preached better than he practised; that is to say, he did not always adopt the good advice he gave to his patients. Although so particular always in his dietetic prescriptions for others, it is suspected that he was rather an immoderate eater himself. He was very careless too in other respects, and would walk down from his house to the hospital in knee breeches and silk stockings through pouring rain, without any effort to protect himself. By the age of sixty he was very lame, thin, and old-looking, and died a few years later literally worn out.

A contemporary of Abernethy's, although some thirty years younger, was Marshall Hall, a name, perhaps, not extensively known outside the profession, and which, indeed, has grown in fame mostly since his death. He may be said to divide with Sir Charles Bell the honour of discovery as to the nervous system. But of Hall, Mr. Bettany says that he displayed a mind more minutely active and more distinctly medical in tone than Sir Charles Bell's,

while he also combined "a marvellous degree of detailed benevolence." Marshall Hall was the sixth son of a Nottinghamshire bleacher, who was also a strict and devout Wesleyan. Apprenticed first to a chemist at Newark, Marshall Hall was ultimately sent to study medicine and anatomy at Edinburgh. "I am determined," he said at this stage, "to be a great man." He was soon recognised at Edinburgh as a student of the first rank, and, after graduating, was appointed to a post in the Royal Infirmary of that city.

This was in 1812, and in the following year he began lecturing on the "Principles of Diagnosis." He attracted the students to himself by the kindness of his manner, and he ever presented to them an example of purity of life and conversation and constant cheerfulness, the result of his early home training. This pure-mindedness was a characteristic of him through life, and it is recorded that Marshall Hall never attached himself to any person of coarse mind or manners. In time he gravitated to London, published a book on "Diagnosis," visited the medical schools of Paris, Göttingen, and Berlin—walking alone from Paris to Göttingen, some six hundred miles, one November—and then commenced practice in Nottingham. His first work brought him fame and many compliments. This was followed by one, in 1820, on "Bilious and Nervous Affections"; then by one attacking the prevalent method of bleeding; then, in 1822, by one on "The Symptoms and History of Diseases." Marshall Hall was the determined enemy of the lancet, which he called "a minute instrument of mighty mischief;" and when, in 1826, he left Nottingham permanently for the larger field of London, he was greeted by Sir Henry Hallford, the President of the College of Physicians, as the "rising sun of the profession." After settling in London, Hall devoted himself to special research on the circulation of the blood. On this he wrote a book, regarding which an anecdote is told. The MS. was sent by stage-coach from time to time to the publishers, Messrs. Seeley, and one day a packet containing the only record of a large number of experiments was stolen from the coach. This was a serious loss, for it could only be repaired by a repetition of the long and laborious experiments; but it is said that Hall set about the work over again with most Christian equanimity. Hybernation formed a later subject of study, in the prosecution of

which he kept quite a menagerie in his house. It is interesting to know that so thoroughly humane and religious a man was convinced of the necessity of experiments on living animals, in order to discover truths of vital importance both to men and brutes. It was during experiments with a newt that Hall made his great discoveries on the reflex functions of the spinal cord, which marked the most important advance in the physiology of the nervous system which had yet been made. By Marshall Hall's discovery was now comprehended the nature of such acts as the involuntary closure of the eyelids, independent of will, for the purpose of preventing the admission of injurious matter, or of protecting the eye against injury. The processes of swallowing, choking, vomiting, coughing were now for the first time explained, and many cases of injury to the nervous system became more or less intelligible. In paralysis of the brain it was understood how the animal functions could be maintained, and how, in cases where the patient was unable by any exercise of the will to clench his hand, yet the stimulus of a rough stick on the sensory nerves of the palm of the hand was sufficient to bring about a forcible grasp, this being a reflex act in which the spinal cord was concerned. And thus many disorders which had heretofore baffled all efforts became remediable, and the work of years of patient research had their reward in practical usefulness. It is computed that Hall spent no fewer than thirty-five thousand hours in experiments connected with this subject. Shall we not therefore rightly regard Marshall Hall as one of the true benefactors of our species? He met with much opposition and obloquy during his lifetime, but patients gradually flowed in upon him. He acquired a large practice, and completed some remarkable cures; but his fame, as has been said, has grown more since his death. His latest gift to mankind was a system of restoring respiration to the apparently drowned, which is now universally adopted.

One of the pupils of Abernethy was the great practical surgeon now remembered as Sir Benjamin Brodie. Brodie was a son of a Wiltshire clergyman, an intimate friend of Charles James Fox, and was educated by his father along with his two brothers. Of these brothers, one became a distinguished barrister; the other, a banker, proprietor of a newspaper, and M.P. for Salisbury in three Parliaments.

The medical profession was chosen for Benjamin, and he was in due time sent to London to prosecute his studies. There he had the inestimable advantage of the lectures of Abernethy, and to that is attributed his choice of surgery for his vocation. But, unlike many medical men who have risen to fame and fortune by sheer force of merit, Brodie was exceptionally favoured by the enjoyment of a large and influential circle of friends, numbering some of the most eminent scientists of the day. He soon received an appointment as Assistant Surgeon at St. George's Hospital, and he at once plunged into a life of active professional work. For private practice he had little time, attending the hospital daily, and personally superintending everything. But, for nearly forty years he lectured regularly on surgery, while he published some valuable works on the action of poisons. His greatest work, however, was on the "Pathology and Surgery of Diseases of the Joints," a subject till then ill understood, to which he specially devoted himself. Before Brodie's day hundreds of limbs were annually sacrificed in the inability to distinguish between diseases of the tissues and local disorders of a neuralgic kind. To complain of pain in a limb was in those days to challenge amputation.

What Brodie did was to remedy all that, by introducing rational investigation and curative method. His income now grew with his fame as a successful surgeon, and in 1821 he was called in to attend George the Fourth, with whom he always remained a favourite. When William the Fourth ascended the throne Brodie was appointed Serjeant-Surgeon, and received a baronetcy. On Sir Astley Cooper's retirement, Sir Benjamin Brodie became the head of the profession, and his practice brought him in £10,000 a year—much of it from single guinea fees for consultations.

He became President of the Royal Medical and Chirurgical Society; then President of the Royal College of Surgeons; was first President of the newly-established General Medical Council; and afterwards for some time President of the Royal Society.

Finally, he has left one of the most delightful books of autobiography in the language. As the "Lancet" said of him, he was more distinguished as a physician-surgeon than as an operating surgeon—for his vocation was more to heal limbs than to remove them. He did not consider the

operative part of surgery its highest part, but he was none the less a steady and successful operator. Dr. Babington, who succeeded Brodie as President of the Royal Medical Society, wrote of him: "I never knew a more single-minded and upright character, one more free from affectation or presumption, who expected less deference or deserved more, who more completely impressed me with a belief that the main object of his efforts, and which was always uppermost in his mind, was, wholly irrespective of self, to benefit those by whom he was consulted."

Thomas Addison is a name which will always be famous in medical science, for it is a name attached to a disease which he discovered; but it has been well said, that his true fame rests upon his practical talent in diagnosing disease. He was a North-country man, born in 1793, near Lanercost Priory, and was educated at the Grammar School of Newcastle-on-Tyne. Then he went to Edinburgh University, and took his M.D. degree there, as so many of our most famous doctors have done. After some Continental travel, he settled in London. He devoted himself to the study of skin diseases and lung diseases; but the achievement for which he received most notice was the discovery of a disease in the small organs adjacent to the kidneys. This is known as "Addison's Disease." Addison was renowned as a teacher and lecturer, and had for pupils men like Dr. Golding Bird, Sir William Gull, and Dr. Wilks, of whom, however, we have not space to tell.

The mention of Addison leads to that of Bright, of whom it has been written that "no English physician—perhaps, indeed, none of any country—since the time of Harvey has effected not only so great an advance in the knowledge of particular diseases, but also so great a revolution in our habits of thought and methods of investigating morbid phenomena and tracing the etiology of disease." Richard Bright was the son of a Bristol banker, and was born in 1789. Like Addison, he studied at Edinburgh, and subsequently accompanied Sir George Mackenzie and Dr. (afterwards Sir Henry) Holland in a journey to Iceland. He contributed the "Notes on Botany and Zoology" to Mackenzie's work. Returning from Iceland, Bright began hospital work at Gay's Hospital in London, and attended Sir Astley Cooper's lectures. These attracted him to pathology and post-mortem observations,

and these again led him to that consideration of one of the morbid conditions of the kidneys which he did so much to elucidate. But prior to this discovery he returned to Edinburgh and completed his studies under the famous Gregory, of whom we told something in our last paper. Then he passed two terms at Cambridge, travelled on the Continent, attended medical lectures at Berlin and Vienna, and published a book of "Travels in Hungary." All this implies that he was well supplied with money, which was in fact the case. But the absence of pecuniary impetus did not dull his professional ardour, and when he returned to London he resumed his work with industry. In 1820 he began practice, and rapidly took a high position, but for six hours every day he continued for years to pursue his post-mortem investigations at Guy's. He was not simply a specialist in kidney-disease, but "a clinical physician of rare excellence;" but it is as the discoverer of the malady now known as "Bright's disease of the kidneys" that he is known—by name, at least—to doubtless all of our readers.

We have not nearly got through our list of "Famous Doctors," but space compels us to stop here. We can but hope that what we have said of some of the professors of the healing art, has shown that in the biographies of eminent doctors, there is both much interest and much instruction.

VICTIMS.

By THEO GIFT.

Author of "Lil Lorimer," "An Alibi and its Price,"
Etc., Etc.

CHAPTER XXIII. A BRIDAL EVENING.

VERA'S first act after the last glimpse of her husband's bright face had disappeared from view was not to return to the sofa where he had taken such pains to establish her, but to fly to the parlour door and lock it, then to draw as closely as she could the muslin curtains of the little window, and seat herself in the corner the most out of view from it. She had heard Marstland telling the landlady that his wife was not to be disturbed in his absence, and her own common sense told her that, without miraculous facilities of intelligence and transport, it would be impossible for those she had fled from to have followed so speedily on her track; but all the same she was no sooner alone, no sooner deprived

of the sustaining shield and protection of her husband's presence, than a gust of wild, unreasoning terror swept over her, and as she crouched in the duskiest corner of the small room she scarcely breathed, lest perchance the parents, or worse still the lover she had outwitted, should be even then spying through the window-pane in search of her.

Fortunately, however, this sort of day-nightmare was not of long duration. In little more than five minutes the landlady knocked at the door to enquire if she would like a cup of tea, or would rather wait till her good gentleman's return; and the very sound of the cheerful, obsequious English accents, of the matron name, so startlingly novel as to make her blush and falter before answering to it, and yet with something reassuring in its every syllable; nay, even the embarrassment of being found out in having locked herself in, did the girl good, and acted as a corrective to her foolish panic, which indeed had to be further thrust into the background by the necessity of satisfying the natural but inconvenient curiosity which the landlady was evidently feeling with regard to her new lodger.

Marstland had mentioned that he was expecting his wife to join him for the last week of his stay on the island, and had not only told the landlady, before starting on his final—so called—"painting excursion," the day and hour when he and Mrs. Marstland might be expected to arrive, but had given such minute directions as to the preparations to be made for her comfort, and taken so much personal trouble in the same matter, that Mrs. Nicholls had already come to the conclusion that he was a very devoted husband. The very moment, however, that she saw Vera enter the house leaning on his arm, something—that indefinable something which always betrays the new-made bridegroom and bride—convinced her that the wifehood of the lady was a fact (if fact at all) which did not date further back than a few hours at most, a prevision further confirmed by the girl's ill-suppressed nervousness and agitation, and the adoring tenderness with which Marstland evidently regarded her. At present, therefore, the good woman was simply burning with curiosity to find out "all about it," mingled with a certain amount of indignation against her male lodger for not having taken her into his confidence beforehand; and Vera had to

find replies to quite a host of questions, as, Was she very tired? Had she had a good passage across, and where was it she last came from? Not England, of course, or she would have got to the island early in the morning; and wasn't it a pity she couldn't have been with her husband for the whole of his holiday? They'd been having such lovely weather in Guernsey for the last fortnight, though for that matter the gentleman hadn't been there much himself; only for a day or two at a time, and then off again, for one of his boating excursions.

Vera made her answers so brief as to be baffling. She had come from France last, where she had been staying with relations. She was very tired, and she would not have any tea—not till her husband came back. She did not want anything at all at present; but she offered no comment whatever on any of the landlady's tentative remarks; and the good woman went away at last somewhat ill-pleased by the taciturnity of her pale, young tenant, but by no means shaken in her own conclusions.

"As if I didn't know the look of 'em, when the ring's that new on their finger that they can't keep from fidgetting of it the whole time!" she said to her husband, a meek little man who lived in the back kitchen, and cleaned the boots and knives: was "kep' a purpose," Mrs. Nicholls used to tell her lodgers. "And they always lets it out of themselves sooner or later, let 'em try to be as close as they will—young idjots!"

Vera went to the window and drew back the curtains again when Mrs. Nicholls was gone. Her foolish fears had abated, and she was beginning to feel ashamed of them. Had not Marstland told her that, once she was married, she was to have done with timidity; that, perfectly safe in his love and care, she was even to act as she pleased, with no rule beyond her own pleasure and her love for him? And was it showing that love, or trusting in his, to give way to tears, and complaints, and terrors at the very moment when, having just saved her from all real cause for any of the three, he had the most claim on her smiles and gratitude? And yet how patient he had been! How kind and generous! Certainly if Leah had been there she would have scolded her soundly, and told her he was a great deal too good to her. Well, so he was; but perhaps Leah would teach her to be braver and better some day. Leah would tell her

what to do, and show her how to be a good wife. She was always better with Leah, and meanwhile he should at least have the comfort of seeing her at the window when he came back, and having a smile to welcome him. She had a curious feeling of having gone back to those pleasant days in West Kensington, when she used to peep between the drawing-room Venetians for the first glimpse of him, as he came striding along the little gravel walk in lover's haste to make his daily call.

It was a lovely evening. The sun had set; the tulips had closed their cups of transparent ruby flame; the bunches of pale blue squills and purple crocuses which awhile ago had made the little garden gay, had faded to a dusky gray; but the sky was still full of clear apple-green colour, and over the sloping red roofs of the town she could see a dark blue line of sea, and breathe in the familiar salt smell of it, blended with a sweet and penetrating fragrance from the bed of hyacinths beneath her. It was all very still, very tranquil, an ideal bridal evening with a sort of delicious hush and peace brooding over it; and Vera, as she stood there, with her soft, white hands resting on the window-sill, and the ruddy colour of her hair gleaming through the muslin curtains, felt a new, half-wondering happiness stealing through her veins. She was one of those on whom all things of sense—sweet sounds, delicate odours, warm colours—had a peculiarly strong effect, subduing her for the time being to dreamy enjoyment and content, as they had done that evening at Weybridge, when Marstland first awakened to the knowledge that he loved her; and on that other day at Mailly, when, walking under the luscious fragrance of the magnolias, the Count persuaded himself that she would be well pleased to be mistress there when he should choose to summon her. And now, though her mind soon wandered away from the new-made husband she was expecting, to the parents she had so lately left for him, it was no longer with the abject terror of a hunted and desperate creature, but with the gentle, almost compassionate, regret of one who, safe at last from their persecution in the security of her husband's love, could even afford to be sorry for the anger, the mortification, and upset into which her disappearance must have thrown them.

When had they first discovered it? she

wondered. Probably not till Joanna came to call her at eight o'clock, at which hour she was far on her way towards the port from which she had embarked. And even now perhaps they did not know where she was or with whom she had gone; for Bénéite would never betray her, she felt sure; and even if P'tit-Jean were bullied into speaking out, what could he tell, save of the posting of certain letters and one meeting with a gentleman at the Menhir-Dahut? Well, Marstland had said he would write himself on the morrow, and tell them of the marriage, so they would not be left long in suspense; and he had further promised to try to find out the amount of the Comte de Mailly's loans to M. St. Laurent, and, at the cost even of stinting himself and his young wife, to enable the father of the latter to repay them.

"I've been left some more money of late, so I'm richer than I was; but in any case, I'd rather go in a shabby coat and live on bread and water than that your parents shouldn't have back the full price they sold you for," Marstland had said with bitter scorn; and Vera was feeling the comfort of the assurance now without any appreciation of the sarcasm. There was nothing humiliating to her in having been sold for a sum of money; rather, in her humble-mindedness, she wondered that she had been thought worth it; but as the bargain had been made and broken, it did not seem honest that her father should be the loser by it. If that were prevented, he might the more easily forgive her.

No thought of money compensation, however, mingled with that of her mother. Whatever Madame St. Laurent might have been to her—cold, unresponsive, severe—Vera never doubted her love. Her instincts (curiously defective on many points where a woman's are usually most keen) were as curiously correct wherever they existed at all. They had not deceived her when they allowed her to trust herself, her fair fame and maiden honour without question or misgiving, in George Marstland's hands; neither did they err in her conviction of her mother's secret dislike to the Count: and it was this conviction which cheered her now with the hope that once the Rubicon was passed and her marriage with the latter rendered impossible, Madame St. Laurent might before long relax the anger she would probably think it her duty to show at first, and not only consent to forgive them, but to make friends with her son-in-law and condescend to visit him and

her naughty little daughter in the latter's wedded home. Vera determined to ask Marstland when he returned, to let her insist some appeal to that effect in his letter; but with that thought came the question: Why had he not returned already? And she started at the idea of how long she had been standing there, lost in dreams which had made her forgetful of what she was watching for.

It must have been some little time at any rate, for the green in the sky had changed to a dusky sapphire blue, through which one or two stars were faintly twinkling. The red roofs had darkened into brown, and the line of sea into purple, while the breeze off the latter struck her with a sharper coolness, ruffling the hair of her forehead, and lent a keener pungency to the scent of the hyacinths in the little plot without. She was just beginning to wonder what time it could be, when the room door opened, and Mrs. Nicholls's voice said:

"Wouldn't you like?— why, dear me, ma'am, you're not all alone in the dark, are you, and the gentleman not back yet? Lor, I thought you was talking, or I'd ha' brought the lamp sooner." The girl turned round uneasily. Standing there, gazing outwards for so long, the gradually waning light had not struck her; but now she was startled to see that the room inside was almost dark, and there was a decided tremble in her voice as she answered:

"Mr. Marstland is longer gone than I thought he would be; but, perhaps, he has been delayed, or he miscalculated the distance. He was going to the post-office. It may be further off than he thought."

"Fur off!" said Mrs. Nicholls, smiling. She had the lamp in her hand, and put it on the table before adding, as she came to the window:

"Why, it's just down there! You see that big building with the high wall and great wooden gates on the opposite side of the road? Well, that's Le Geyt and Co.'s factory, and their ground runs down to it. Not that you could go through that way; but it ain't five minutes round by the road. He must ha' gone somewhere else."

Vera was looking pale.

"I—don't think he would. He only spoke of the post-office. It is——. How long is it since he went?" she asked tremulously.

"Well, not much short of an hour anyway," said Mrs. Nicholls. "But don't you worry yourself, ma'am. Most like he remembered something else he wanted, and

went after that. Gentlemen are rare ones for forgetting how the time goes; but, maybe, your 'usband's one of the punctual ones in general. You ought to know, as being a deal better acquainted with his 'abits than me, who've only lodged him a little over a fortnight."

The good woman looked keenly at Vera as she made this innocently sounding remark, and poor Vera fell straightway into the trap and betrayed herself by blushing crimson. She would have liked to say:

"Indeed, I know less of his habits than you, seeing that I have never even lodged in the same house with him before, and was only married to him two or three hours ago."

But she did not know whether Marstland would like her to be so confidential, so she only answered with a bad attempt at indifference:

"I am sure he didn't mean to be unpunctual; but perhaps, as you say, some other business has kept him, and he knew I was—at least he told me to be resting while he was gone."

"Which, far from it have you been doing, standing there watching for him," said Mrs. Nicholls, shaking her head in motherly fashion. "Well, I do wonder at his being so long; but sit you down now, ma'am, at any rate, and let me make you some tea. Most like he'll be in afore it's drawn, and then you can have it comfortably together. Do he like it strong or weak?"

"I don't know. Oh, strong, I think!" Vera said, blushing again as she tried to recollect some jesting criticism of Marstland's on Leah's tea in days gone by. She was longing to get rid of Mrs. Nicholls, that she might return to her watch at the window, now that every additional minute made his absence more unaccountable; and when the landlady reappeared with the tea she found the girl stretching her head out into the damp night air, and straining her eyes through the darkness for a glimpse of the husband who was nowhere visible.

"Don't see any sign of 'im yet, ma'am?" the good woman asked sympathetically, "and it's going on for nine, too! Well, I am surprised he ain't back, for in course it must be mortal lonesome for you, your first evening here and all."

"Our first evening anywhere together!" Vera's heart was saying, and the tears started to her eyes and ran suddenly over at the thought.

Mrs. Nicholls pulled forward the arm-chair persuasively.

"Come, ma'am, sit down and take your tea anyhow," she said, in a kindly, coaxing way. "I've seen for myself he was a restless sort of gent, which that taste for painting do seem to make 'em so, even if they aren't artists by trade. Why, you look tired out, you do, and as if you'd ought to be in bed this minute. I'll be bound you've been travelling the 'ole day."

"Yes, the whole day," said Vera, almost sobbing. (Had Marstland forgotten it that he left her alone so long?) "But don't—please don't draw down the blind," she added eagerly, as Mrs. Nicholls put up her hand to perform that office. "He—he will like to see the light when he comes, and he can't be long now, can he?"

The landlady looked dubious.

"Well, he couldn't if he'd gone to any of the shops, for they're mostly all shut by now. Has he any friends he might have dropped in on, ma'am?"

"Oh, I don't know, but he would not—I am certain he would not this evening," Vera said, with a plaintive stress on the "this," of which she was unconscious. "And he said he was only going to the post-office to send off a telegram: a telegram for me."

"Was it one as wanted an answer?" asked Mrs. Nicholls, "for if so, it's just possible he might be waiting for it, though, by the way, the office will be closing now too. Look 'ere, ma'am, if you're anyway uneasy would you like my 'usband just to step round and see if he's there; or if he met 'im on the way he might 'urry him!"

"Oh! if he would—if you would be so very kind!" Vera exclaimed with a gasp of relief; and Mrs. Nicholls, who was, herself, beginning to feel puzzled by her lodger's absence, departed, to order off her husband in search of him.

It seemed a long time to Vera, though in truth it was barely a quarter of an hour, before the good man came back; and her face was paler than ever, while the tea stood untasted at her side, when the landlady fluttered in again with the report. The post office was shut, but Nicholls had seen the telegraph clerk, who said Dr. Marstland had called there nearly two hours before. He had sent off a telegram and had gone away, but had returned in a minute and sent off a second one to the same person as the first. After that he had left in a desperate hurry, and she had seen no more of him.

In a desperate hurry! Well, that was natural enough in a man who had left his new-made wife alone in a strange home; the young wife who had borne so much for him already that day, and for weeks and months before. But, then, where could he have gone since? What could have happened to him? Poor Vera's nerves were so unstrung that she was weeping openly now as she asked the question, and Mrs. Nicholls could give her no answer. Happen to him! What could happen to a great, strong man on a fine spring evening in the quiet town of St. Peter-le-port? It was absurd to think of it; but after this she easily extracted from Vera that they had only been married that afternoon, and, once assured of that fact, became doubly sympathetic and excited on the subject of the bridegroom's incomprehensible absence: insisting on sending forth the long-suffering Nicholls to "look about" for him again, and remaining with the bride herself to keep her company and cheer her up a bit.

But Mr. Nicholls's "looking about" proved quite as fruitless as his wife's efforts at cheering, and Vera was ungratefully thankful when the smell of frizzling sausages below reminded the landlady at last of her own supper, and took her away for a brief period. But another hour had passed by then, and the girl was getting almost frantic with anxiety, and looked so ill and excited that Mrs. Nicholls had not the heart to delay long over her meal, but made haste to return to the work of consolation which hitherto had been so strikingly unsuccessful. It was a great relief to her, therefore, on going back, to find that a change had come over the forlorn young bride, and that she was looking quite calm, and almost cheerful.

"I don't think you need trouble, after all, Mrs. Nicholls," she said at once, and turning to the landlady with a little flush on her poor white face, a curious brightness in her tear-stained, weary eyes, "I—I have thought—it had not occurred to me before—but I have thought of someone—some people—whom he may have been obliged to see on very important business. They may keep him a long while—some time longer even yet—but I shall not mind so much now that I remember about them. See, I have drunk my tea, and—and I have drawn down the blind. I shall sit up till he comes, of course; but it is better other people should not be able to look in. And won't you fasten the front door now? It can be opened when he comes. But you

are not expecting anyone else? You would not let anyone else in to-night, would you?"

Mrs. Nicholls looked unfeignedly surprised. That the young wife had come to a sudden conclusion about her husband which, while diminishing her anxiety on his account, added a fresh one on her own, the landlady was shrewd enough to see; but what this conclusion was she found herself totally unable to divine; and Vera, whom grief and terror had broken down into confidence a few moments before, had grown suddenly reticent, and would not be beguiled into any further revelations.

How could she explain that, in the midst of her frenzied self-questionings as to the cause of her husband's absence, it had been suddenly borne in upon her that it must be connected in some way or other with her parents, or some emissary of theirs; that, in some unforeseen way, they had discovered the fact of her flight earlier than she had calculated for; that again, in some unforeseen way (but what did she know, after all, about trains or travelling facilities?) they had followed almost immediately on her track, had encountered Marstrand as he was returning from the post office, and were now being detained by him, perhaps prevented from following her to the place where she had taken refuge until he had persuaded them to do so in a spirit of kindness and forgiveness.

It was the wildest possible idea, but, once impressed upon Vera's mind, it satisfied her completely, and in such a way as to lessen her impatience for Marstrand's return. She loved him gratefully, worshipped him humbly, but she had not the slightest desire to stand at his side in the battle which he might even then be waging on her behalf. If she could have been of any assistance to him in it; or even if he had been of a nature to require any assistance, it might have been different, but her sense of her own abject helplessness was only equalled by the completeness of her confidence in his strength and resources. The man who had so successfully planned and carried out every detail of their elopement and marriage was not likely to have much difficulty now in dealing with her powerless if indignant relatives; and, such being the case, it was far better that she should not even be the spectator of a scene which could only put her to useless misery and suffering.

But Mrs. Nicholls would not hear of letting her sit up to open the door to her husband whenever he might be free to

return to her. If the young lady would do such a thing—which madness, Mrs. Nicholls said it would be, seeing that she looked like a ghost already—then the good woman must do the same, so as to bear her company; and it was in sheer despair of getting rid of her on any other terms, that Vera at last consented to go up to the bed-room prepared for her, and lighten her vigil by lying down at all events.

“My room is next door to you, so you’ve only to tap on the wall if you hears a knock or wants anything,” Mrs. Nicholls said; “and I shan’t so much as close an eye, ma’am, till he comes in, you be sure.”

And Vera smiled faintly, and thanked her; but, once shut into the neat little white bed-room, with its fresh chintz hangings and glasses of spring flowers, and all the little arrangements for her comfort and pleasure that Marstland had planned so lovingly beforehand, the poor, forsaken young bride had no thought of lying down. There was a large armchair near the window, and she seated herself in it, meaning to pass the rest of the time there in watchfulness and patience until he came; but she was very young, and very, very weary. She had had no sleep the night before, and had been travelling all day, a state of things which, in youth, when the body is still as much too strong for the mind as, in later life, the latter becomes for the former, is least of all conducive to watchfulness under any circumstances.

With all her efforts to keep wakeful and on the alert, her senses would lose themselves in fitful dozings, her head awayed and drooped backward, until it rested heavily against the cushioned back of the big chair; her eyes, tired and sore with weeping, hid themselves behind the wet fringes of their lashes; and soon not Mrs. Nicholls herself, snoring happily on the other side of the wall, was sleeping more soundly than the mysteriously deserted young wife in the bridal chamber where no bridegroom ever came to disturb her.

She woke with a violent start. How long or how late she had slept she had not the least idea, but that it was late she felt sure, for the room was full of the strong white light of day; and, on lifting the blind, she saw that, though it was raining hard, and the beautiful blue sea-line of the previous evening was changed to a dingy semi-circle of greyish slate colour, the town seemed all alive and stirring. Volumes of smoke were puffing up from the chimneys

of the big factory opposite; people were passing and repassing under their dripping umbrellas; while downstairs, in the house itself, Vera could hear so much movement and conversation going on, that the wonder was—not that it had woke her at last, but that she had slept as long as she had done. Mrs. Nicholls’ voice, raised and fluent, was distinctly audible, but mingled with it were one or two others, that of a man certainly, though whether belonging to Marstland, Mr. Nicholls, or whom, the girl could not, strain her ears as she might, determine.

She got too nervous and anxious at last to sit there listening any longer. If it was Marstland, as she hoped and trusted, if Mrs. Nicholls had let him in very late after all, it was natural enough (so the poor child thought in her innocent simplicity) that he should not like to come upstairs or disturb her sorely-needed rest; but how strange that the landlady also should not do so, should not hasten indeed to relieve the anxiety from which she knew her young lady lodger was suffering! She would ring the bell now, at any rate, and ask for information, and she was just rising to do so when stopped by the sound of footsteps coming up the stairs leading to her room. They were the footsteps of more than one person; but they were not heavy enough for a man’s, and she stood still with her heart fluttering fast, and a great sudden longing for Marstland, for the touch of his strong hand, the sound of his brave, tender voice, welling up in it, as the footsteps came to a pause outside her door. There was something said there in an undertone, Mrs. Nicholls’s it was but sounding subdued and even wistful, saying: “You won’t”—she could not hear what “if she’s still asleep;” but the answer, supposing there was any, was inaudible, and next moment the handle of the door turned, and Vera shrank back with a low, terrified cry.

She was standing face to face with her mother!

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

ALEXIA.

By ELEANOR C. PRICE,
Author of "Gerald."

CHAPTER XIII.

THAT was a day of great commotion at Redwood. The decorations about the church drooped in the frosty air unheeded: the village people, as they crowded to stare at the burning ruins of the old Manor, reminded each other mysteriously that this was to have been Miss Alexia's wedding day.

The engines had arrived in time, and had saved most of the house, though the old part was almost entirely burnt out. Charlie, ignorant, like every one else, of the ways of destiny, thought, with some bitterness, that this would be news to please his wife.

The only person seriously hurt by the fire was Alexia, who certainly, as her aunt and Mrs. Dodd agreed, had had no business there. Mentally, the person most hurt was Edmund, to whom this day had so fatally broken its promise. In the course of the day he fetched the doctor to see Alexia, and then hung about, waiting miserably for his verdict, and shrinking out of the way of his mother's severe face, and his sisters' sympathy.

"She's feverish; she's wandering a little," said the doctor when he came downstairs. "Must be kept perfectly quiet; room darkened, no excitement of any kind. No, certainly you had better not go near her. Why in the world was she allowed to go and look at the fire! The excitement has been too much for her; it is a serious shock to the system."

The doctor was in a great hurry. He was not at any time a sympathising sort of man, and in his treatment of sick people,

there was generally a touch of indignation. As a rule, it was people's own fault if they were ill, and he did not feel grateful to them, having already a larger practice than he could manage. He turned away abruptly from Edmund's anxious eyes. "I must go and see the mischief," he said, as he got into his carriage.

"You will find Mr. Page there," said Edmund.

"Ah! no doubt there is plenty to do still," said the doctor. "Pity! nice old house. Seems to have happened through some tomfoolery."

He drove off, and Edmund strolled back into the drawing-room. He made up a large fire, and hung over it for a few minutes; then went and stared with a white dismal face out of the window. He knew that everybody, the doctor, his uncle, his sisters, his mother, thought him more or less of a fool for moping about the house, instead of going off to the Manor and helping like other people. He could do Alexia no good by lingering near her sick-room—and there were miseries beyond that thought, which he could not at present face. He was shy and sensitive too, and he knew that crowds of people from all the country round had come to see the fire—he had seen them all day hurrying up the road. He thought he should be conspicuous—that they would all point him out to each other as the man who was to have been married to-day—and then that terrible bear of a Squire—could it have been only yesterday that he travelled down with him, and that he talked in such a queer way about Alexia! Then Edmund had heard his mother and Mrs. Dodd talking half in whispers, that morning, and he did not know what to think, or what to fear. Of one thing he did assure himself—he trusted Alexia, and therefore he ought to have been happy: but even that

one warm ray of light was almost obscured by the thick sooty smoke with which all the air outside and his own mind was filled. He took up his new volume of Tennyson, which he had been reading in the train the day before—but even poetry—perhaps a little to his credit—was no help or distraction now, and he soon threw the book away, and flung himself face downwards among Alexia's soft old cushions on the sofa. There he fell asleep, and slept perhaps for two hours, not waking till late in the afternoon, when the room was darkening into its always early twilight. There were people in the room now, and they were talking: at first Edmund was hardly roused enough to hear what they said. They had in fact been talking for some time, without waking him from his heavy, tired sleep. Mr. Page had come back from the Manor, tolerably worn out, and extremely anxious about Alexia. Mrs. Rowley had been answering his questions, perhaps betraying something of the irritation that was in her mind; and now her brother had told her something so startling that she could contain herself no longer.

"To this house! To-day, do you mean? Why, what room is there?" she exclaimed rather loudly; and these were the first words that Edmund woke to hear.

"Plenty of room; don't bother yourself," said Mr. Page in his quiet weary voice. "What could I do? He can't stay there; the whole house is in a dreadful mess."

"But why can't he go to the Rectory? They are such kind people, I'm sure they would take him in, though they are not very fond of him."

"It is better for him to come here," said Mr. Page. "However, nothing is settled yet; he will let me know by-and-by."

"Oh, of course he will come, if you have asked him," said Mrs. Rowley. "Perfectly inconsiderate—but these dreadful, selfish young men, with no principles—"

At this moment Edmund started up from the sofa, and walked rather unsteadily across to the door. His uncle, who had thrown himself into an armchair, hardly looked at him; his mother exclaimed with surprise, as she stood with a troubled face in the middle of the room, "You there, Edmund!"

"I've been asleep," said Edmund: he went out as once, shutting the door behind him.

"It is no use mincing matters, William," said Mrs. Rowley after a pause. "Mrs. Dodd and I were both equally shocked

and astonished, last night, at the scene Mr. Melville made, bringing Alexia home in his arms, in the very middle of the fire, when he ought to have had other things to think of. It was very extraordinary of her to go off there at all. Other people, besides myself, thought it showed a strange forgetfulness of what was due to—to us all. But allowing herself to be brought home like that—ah, my dear William, you may say she was unconscious, but she was not. They spoke to each other: she knew him quite well; she was as conscious as you or I. And I must say that his manner when he left her was very, very strange. I was not the only person who noticed it. Mrs. Dodd—she is a person of excellent sense, and I find she has never had any opinion of him. She says that there has always been something a little odd between him and Alexia—they were foolishly intimate as boy and girl—then it was plain that he did not like her engagement—and only yesterday Mr. Dodd caught him moaning about the church in a curious way, looking at the preparations for the wedding. Now of course it is no use thinking about the past, though for all our sakes I wish Alexia could have been more under Mrs. Dodd's influence—but now, at this moment, I must confess that all this frightens me rather. Mrs. Dodd tells me that Mr. and Mrs. Melville are on cool terms. Well, he has left his wife, and he appears here just in time to interrupt Alexia's wedding—and does it most effectually, by setting his house on fire"—Mrs. Rowley began to laugh excitedly—"and Alexia flies out in the middle of the night, without a word to anybody—well—and now, to crown all you have asked him to stay in your house. Of course Alexia is shut up in her room, but I don't see that that mends matters much—a man like that ought not to be here at all."

"I think, Sarah," said Mr. Page—he sat immovable in his chair, and once or twice passed his hand over his worn face—"you have listened too much to the scandal of an evil-tongued woman. I don't feel inclined to justify Alexia, for I know it is unnecessary—but I must remind you that when she went across to the Manor last night, she had no idea that Charles Melville was there."

"Are you quite sure of that?" asked Mrs. Rowley. "Her manner in the evening was very strange. Mrs. Dodd thought so too."

"Don't quote Mrs. Dodd, if you please,"

said her brother; "I tell you what I know. You have taken all this by the wrong handle—but I shall not argue with you now. If you had seen the place—the stairs, where Charles saved her life——" His voice trembled, and broke a little—"He carried her past me, and said he would take her home, and I, knowing that he was entirely to be trusted, did not go with him; and I knew that you were here, and thought that the child would have something like a mother's care. However, it doesn't matter," he said getting up suddenly, striking his hands on the arms of his chair. "Alexia has been too good to be lucky—Heaven bless her. Now I am exhausted, and I want something to eat."

"I am sorry to have vexed you, William," said Mrs. Rowley with tears in her eyes. "Of course I don't suppose that poor Alexia intentionally—but you have always been so indulgent, you see——"

"Let us drop the subject," said Mr. Page.

Just as he got up from his chair, Charles Melville came in at the gate, and as Mr. Page and Mrs. Rowley were crossing the hall to the dining-room, he came up to the front door. Mr. Page at once went forward to meet him with a hearty welcome—"Come in! very glad to see you," while Mrs. Rowley, in the dim background of the hall, stiffened all over with a sort of sick indignation. Come already! Well, this was more inconsiderately soon than even she had expected.

Charlie was a contrast now to the wild figure he had been at three o'clock in the morning, when Mrs. Rowley thought him the most dreadful-looking man she had ever seen. He was now brushed and smooth and civilised, though a strong smell of fire came into the house with him. His arm was in a sling, for he had burnt his hand, and his face looked worn and troubled.

"I am going to be an awful bother to you," he said in his pleasant voice, but with a curious gravity of look and tone. "I am so sorry, for you ought to have some rest."

"No bother at all," said Mr. Page. "Have you had any luncheon?"

"Yes. I don't want anything, thanks. I must leave all this business in your hands, that's the truth. Look here, I've had a telegram. My wife is very ill, and I must go back to Cannes at once, it seems. Two telegrams"—he said, pulling them out of his pocket. "One from my mother, to say

she will go with me. I am off now to catch the 5.30 train."

"I am very sorry, Charlie," said Mr. Page in his low, kind voice, as he looked at the telegrams. "This is quite unexpected."

"Yes, I always said Cannes was a beastly climate. And she was not half as well there as she pretended."

Mrs. Rowley had retired into the shadows of the passage; from there she saw the two men standing in the doorway, and heard all that they said. Charlie stood tall and upright against the light; her brother was stooping, more from fatigue than years. A few words on business passed quickly between them.

"In any case, I shall not be here again for some time," said the Squire. "I must leave it all in your hands, if you don't mind. Morton will see about the insurance people. Any rebuilding must be left alone at present—except what you think necessary. And you'll write to me, will you, Mr. Page? I should like to hear everything—and how is Miss Page now?"

"I have not seen her yet. They tell me she is rather feverish, and must be kept very quiet."

"It was a bad business for her—an awfully near shave," said Charlie. "It's a pleasant thought to go away with, how all your friends must be hating me."

"I have only remembered that you brought Alex safe out of the fire," said Mr. Page.

Charlie laughed. "Remember me to her when she is well enough," he said. "How long is the wedding likely to be put off, do you suppose?"

"I can't tell. Perhaps a few weeks. I know nothing about it," said Mr. Page rather impatiently; and his sister was not comforted by the thought that he was angry with her and all her belongings. He walked out with Charlie to the gate, and they stood there talking for a few minutes longer. Strangely enough, in all the trouble and confusion and anxiety, Charlie seemed to have got back his gentle, kindly, old ways, and to be a boy again, the boy that William Page and all the parish had liked and respected. After parting with him, his old friend came slowly and thoughtfully back to the house, still feeling Charlie's cordial grip of the hand, a sensation with more heart in it than he had felt for the last four years. No, Charlie had never been half so friendly, since the day that he told Mr. Page he loved Alexia. Well! one

may do everything for the best, and yet make mistakes after all! Mr. Page forgot how tired and hungry he was, and went softly at once upstairs to see Alexia.

He was not going to agitate her by mentioning Charlie, or telling her his news. He went into her room with several good resolutions of this kind, but only to find them all thrown away, for Alex did not even know him. She seemed half asleep, though her eyes were open; she moved her head constantly on the pillow, with little sad moans, sometimes saying a few words which he could not understand. There was nothing but dim firelight in the room, and Alexia's dark curls were hidden under a wet bandage.

Her father stood and watched her for a few minutes, with a terrible foreboding, which seemed to turn his heart to ice.

"She's very ill, Kate," he whispered at last, turning to one of Edmund's sisters, who was watching in the room.

"Yes, poor darling," said Kate. "The doctor said it was a serious shock to the nerves. She must be kept perfectly quiet, and not roused or agitated in any way, please, Uncle William. You must leave her to her nurses. We won't even let Edmund come in."

Kate meant to be very kind and practical, and not at all priggish; but she failed, like many other young women. I am afraid that at this moment a mad temptation came over her uncle to turn the whole family, sister, nieces, future son-in-law, out of the house, and to nurse Alexia with his own hands through this illness, whether it might end in life or death. But such a wild thought did not even find its way into looks; there was no change in his quiet face as he gazed down at Alexia, and he did not answer Kate with any sharpness, but turned away presently and left the room, moving more quietly than Kate herself could have moved, and muttering a few words, which were only these—"Anyhow, I should have missed her this afternoon."

HELIGOLAND.

IN THREE PARTS. PART II.

EVEN in Hamburg, full though it was of novelty and interest, it was dull work sight-seeing alone; besides, I had not slept for forty-eight hours or more. Accordingly, having had a light tea at a little round table under the trees, I was glad enough to retire to bed, vainly endeavouring in my best German—which, as I soon discovered,

bore no resemblance to the German spoken in Hamburg—to make the comely, sturdy-limbed chambermaid understand that my sheets were exceedingly damp; but I did succeed in getting a hot bottle to warm the bed, and passed my third sleepless night in a species of vapour-bath. The only course to be recommended under such circumstances is to strip the sheets off and sleep between the blankets, as I did.

Pretty early the next morning I went on board the Heligoland steamer from a wharf nearly opposite the hotel, providing myself with a lovely-looking basket of pink and white wax-like strawberries. I soon found them to be a miserable delusion, having no more flavour than a turnip—characteristic, I discovered, of Hanse Town strawberries. The weekly steamer was very full, taking bathers over to Heligoland, June being the commencement of their season; but a lovely fresh sunny day after the gale, with smooth water, made the wide Elbe a much more attractive river than when, in the dawning light of the preceding day, we had made our way through the seventy odd miles of dangerous sand-banks and countless islets that obstruct its course, rendering the navigation so hazardous and perplexing. The Bremen shore is certainly not attractive, and there was an air of desolation on its banks, absent entirely from the Holstein side. Brunsbüttel, a well-situated town, commanding the Holstein side of the entrance to the Elbe, will in years to come be an important fortified place, should Prince Bismarck's project for a ship canal from Kiel to Brunsbüttel become an accomplished fact. It is nearly a straight course from where the canal would end, passing to the northward of the Great Merk bank out through the south Gat, past the new work island belonging to Hamburg, and the South Elbe light vessel, when you are in the open sea, and free from all danger. The proposed canal should therefore, if made, prove a great highway for ships of heavy draught from the Baltic, instead of the long and anxious passage through the great Belt and round the Skaw.

Cuxhaven (which comprises a town and small tract of country belonging to Hamburg, and abstracted apparently at some period of its history from Bremen) is finely placed on the right bank of the Elbe; it is a clean, cheerful place, full of tall hotels and lodging-houses. The Austrian squadron still lay at anchor in the roads, composed of the "Kaiser," a beautiful two-decker of the old school, carrying the flag of Vice-

Admiral Wullersdorf; the "Schwartzenberg," a forty-four gun frigate, bearing signs in her battered hull, jury foremast, and generally dilapidated appearance, of the gallant fight she had made against the Danes off Heligoland, with the aged, tattered little flag of Rear-Admiral Tegetthoff at the mizen; the "Radetsky," also a wooden frigate; "Elizabeth," a paddle-steamer, and some small gun-boats. The "Schwartzenberg" was regarded by us all with the greatest enthusiasm, her many dangerous wounds being only just patched up till she could get into some friendly port to refit. She was indeed scarcely seaworthy.

Our steamer stopped nearly in the middle of the fleet, which was anchored in two lines. They had just fired a salute, and as the smoke rolled away I saw the "Wolf" outside them, whose salute of thirteen guns they had been returning. My eyes were still blinking and smarting from the gun-powder with which we were enveloped, when I saw a smart, well-known galley pulling towards us with ensign and pendant flying. I was soon discovered in my old brown gown, the miserable remains of a gale of wind and two days' sea-sickness. The "Wolf," had only just arrived from the Föhr Islands, had saluted the Hamburg flag flying at Cuxhaven, and that of the Austrian Vice-Admiral, and A—— had paid an especially interesting visit to the gallant and charming Admiral Tegetthoff in the absence of his senior admiral. Tegetthoff was keen, intelligent, valiant, and courteous. The fame that he afterwards attained was then in its infancy; but though vanquished in the action with the Danes, he had brought his crippled and wounded frigate out of the battle with flying colours.

Admiral Tegetthoff afterwards commanded at Lissa, in the first engagement of iron-clad versus wooden ships, and covered himself with glory, in marked contrast to the conduct of the Italian Admiral Persano.

It was to Tegetthoff that the Mexicans gave the dead body of their Emperor Maximilian, whom they had invited by an influential majority to rule over them, and then, in the day of adversity, most shamefully led out to be shot; and it was he who bore it over the sea to Vienna, where they laid the hero to rest, passing by the dead man's lovely villa of Miramar in the Adriatic, which it had been better for him and his beautiful consort (still reigning in

harmless imagination) had they never left. Tegetthoff died, deeply lamented, in 1871.

All those Austrian war-ships, lying so quietly at anchor in Cuxhaven, had something noticeable in their subsequent histories. The flag-ship "Kaiser" took a most prominent part in the battle of Lissa, but was so much damaged that she had to be run ashore to save her from sinking. The "Radetsky" was blown up by an accident in 1869, with a loss of 340 lives; and it was the "Elizabeth," under Tegetthoff, which bore the corpse of Maximilian home to the loving wife, who no longer watched and waited for his coming, but existed, carefully and affectionately guarded in the palace of Laeken where she was born, yet alive, but bereft of reason.

We were all so interested in the Austrian fleet and in the English corvette, that the signal for our steamer's departure on her voyage came only too soon. A few more words, a brief farewell—but not for long, as we hoped to meet at Heligoland in the course of a few days—and on we went past the treacherous sand-banks, in many cases hardly awash, that form a vast network for the protection of the great German river from foreign invasion, and also a breakwater from the fierce winds and mountainous waves of the stormy North Sea. These banks are, however, extremely dangerous to navigation during the oft-recurring fogs that settle down upon the low-lying shores of Holstein, many of them only being denoted in calm weather by a vast milky-white patch among the green water. Our captain mentioned that when going in and out of the North and South Elbe Channel with several other vessels, outward and inward bound, their fog signals were quite distracting; you could not possibly tell which way they were heading, and collisions and groundings were very frequent. The passage from Cuxhaven, a distance of about forty miles, is made in four hours or thereabouts, and you are out of sight of land nearly the whole time.

Arrived at Heligoland you steam into the small harbour, something the shape of a stocking, between a low-lying sandy dune and the main island, which at a distance looks like a high red sand-rock, but, seen closer, reveals vast sea-worn caves and undermined pillars, rising straight out of the sea, like Old Harry and His Wife at Studland, Dorset, but still linked to the island. You are put ashore on a low sand-spit, where among the houses, huddled closely together, a general odour of fish-curing pervades the

atmosphere. A long, winding flight of steps, somewhat resembling those at Clovelly, about 190 in number, conveys you in a very limp condition from the "Unterland" to the top of the "Oberland," which is as flat as a dining-table, without an undulation. These steps are worn by the busy feet of long generations into a rather unsafe condition, but they must be mounted *nolens volens*, as they are the sole means of communication with the fashionable part of the island. By the time I was half up, I longed for a grip of the tail of one of the clever little donkeys that mount the Clovelly steps so deftly; but there was no help for it, so on I went, conducted by my active and kindly host. Government House, whither I was bound—a low, sheltered, rambling, one-storeyed building—is firmly built on the land side, partly screened by a sturdy fence. Close to the garden stands a lighthouse, from the top of which coastguard men keep a bright look-out, landward and seaward.

A lovely view is obtained from here of the harbour, Sandy Island, the bathing establishment, nymphs disporting themselves (rendered unnecessarily unattractive, to say the least of it, by hideous bathing gowns), and the reef beyond, all lying far below, like a map. Till the year 1720 this sandy dune was connected with the main rock, but the fierce gales of that stormy winter broke down the link, or what the Heligolanders called "de waal," and about a mile of comparatively deep water now rolls between. A tradition still exists that Heligoland and Schleswig Holstein were in former times joined together, and that many hundred years ago people walked from Holstein to Heligoland across the sands in a day. Old maps that I have seen in the island, extend the position of Sandy Island landward very considerably; and judging by the rapidity with which the sand-dune has in 150 years been encroached upon, the low sand-banks and unnavigable tracts of shallow water lying to the east of Heligoland may well have been dry land not so many hundred years ago without any great stretch of imagination.

I had been most kindly and hospitably received by the Governor as I stepped ashore on the fishy little beach, and in his comfortable house was soon able to bath and feed—the first solid food I had tasted since leaving the Thames. The Governor had been many years in this cold northern isle. Speaking German like a native, suave,

courtly, and taking a keen and kindly interest in the minutest details connected with his tiny though most important Government, he was difficult indeed to replace, and his memory will live in the hearts and homes of these hard, rough Frieslanders for many long years to come.

Hardly had I bathed and rested before tremendous excitement began to be manifested in the supposed warlike intentions of the Austrian squadron, which had suddenly got under weigh and steamed out of Cuxhaven about two hours after we had passed through them. Night found these large ships, each drawing about twenty-five feet of water, hovering about in the direction of the Danish islands of Föhr, upon which possessions they had serious designs. Two old Heligoland salts, who were North Sea pilots, mounted to the very topmost point of the lighthouse armed with antedeluvian glasses that certainly did not improve their keen vision, opined that there was "no water in there for the two-decker," and she would certainly "take the ground." However, she did not, being no doubt well piloted. Late in the afternoon the "Wolf" was signalled from the lighthouse, and anchored in the North Bight off Heligoland, but in an exposed position; it was, however, convenient for getting under weigh suddenly, if any emergency arose. The holding ground in the North Bight is not good, and in north-west winds it is a very rough and dangerous anchorage, with a rolling, mountainous sea. During the two nights I was crossing in the steamer from England it blew so hard that the "Wolf," which was at anchor, had steam up, both anchors down, the sheet anchor ready, and a double-reefed spanker, when the weather-tide made, to keep her bow to the sea. A—went off in their best Heligoland boat, manned with six oars, treble-banked (i.e., eighteen men), who were only just able to pull her through the labouring sea, and put him on board; and this was in the height of summer. They spoke of the long winter gales as something terrible in strength and duration, rendering life on the island much like that on a stranded ship or a half-tide rock.

For the next three weeks most of the "Wolf's" time was spent in cruising between the island and the mainland, and especially in the vicinity of the Föhr Islands, which were actually in sight from the top of the Heligoland lighthouse. On one occasion the corvette hove to off the Seesand Beacon, the chief entrance to that

bewildering labyrinth of sand-banks surrounding Föhr. On becoming aware of her approach, the Danish commander, Hammer, a most gallant man, came out in a shallow-draught steamer to meet the "Wolf," full of hope that she had arrived with offers of succour, and was accordingly much downcast at no prospect being held out to him of assistance from England. He had plenty to do, having but six row gunboats to defend all these islands, together with about 300 men. But little chance remained, therefore, of his being able to defend them successfully against a powerful enemy in possession of the whole coast, with a squadron ready to pounce upon them from Cuxhaven hard by. Their chief security lay in the dangerous navigation surrounding the islands and the extreme shallowness of the water. In more peaceful times the Föhr Islands, easily accessible from either Hamburg or Kiel, would be for Englishmen a new and most interesting travelling ground; they have been, with Heligoland, the resort of multitudes of bathers from all parts of Austria and Germany for many years. There is a fine lighthouse on the northern island of Sylt, but I think it was unlighted during the war in 1864. The Germans showed their customary astuteness by just including this large island in their rectified frontier, as it is worth all the others put together.

Between the sea-going trips our diversions were cricket-matches between the two ships; luncheons on board the "Wolf" or her consort the "Salamis;" and in becoming violently excited when any movement was discerned among the combined squadrons. So long as they continued within sight all was well, but if they disappeared for a day or two the worst was anticipated. We had great hopes that the Danes would have come out to seek another engagement with the Austro-Prussian squadron, in which case we could have witnessed a glorious sea-fight in comfort and security from the top of the island lighthouse; but it appeared not to be convenient so far to meet our views, for, notwithstanding countless false alarms, no Deones (Friesian for Dames) were seen during our visit.

Heligoland, or in ancient spelling Helgoland, or Hertha Isle, had belonged to Denmark since the time of "Othere, the old sea captain who dwelt in Helgoland," in the reign of King Alfred of England; but in the general spoliation of this much-wronged country in the beginning of the

present century, it was taken from the Danes by England, and, together with the whole Danish fleet, converted to our own use. It was confirmed to us by the treaty of Kiel in 1814, since which time it has remained uninterruptedly in our possession, not, however, without many angry and covetous eyes being fixed upon it, and many negotiations and propositions for its exchange made by a long line of German Chancellors, ending in Prince Bismarck. Whenever the Germans have nothing particular on hand—no little or great wars, or annexations, or hoistings of their flag on other people's possessions—their newspapers break out into a tirade of abuse of England for keeping a firm grip on Heligoland, and affect to consider its possession a perpetual menace to themselves. But it is only quite of late days that any idea of fortifying this most valuable possession, and coaling station for a blockading squadron, has entered into the brain of our rulers. There is now a strong trained body of coastguard, with an officer and some heavy guns stationed here; and I always wondered how they conveyed the guns up the steps (190 in number, or thereabouts), unless by the naval operation termed, I believe, "parbuckling."

Heligoland measures about half-a-mile in length by a quarter in breadth, and is quite flat-topped, like a table. Sandy Island, about a mile to the east, besides being the bathing establishment, is the abode of countless rabbits. A few years ago they were so numerous that apprehensions were entertained as to whether they had not undermined the loose sand to such an extent that the next great gale might not be expected to wash the whole sand-dune away. Since then their numbers have been greatly reduced, and the houses and bathing machines are still above water, but have not much margin to boast of. Ill-informed newspaper correspondents, people in parliament, and others who have not been to Heligoland, usually confound this sandy dune with the main island, which is simply a firm, hard rock, and talk with anxiety about its speedy disappearance under the attacks of the rabbits! To seaward of the bathing establishment is a reef just awash; it is hard rock, and therefore forms a good breakwater, on which, in fine weather, quantities of seals are to be seen flopping lazily about on the rocks in the sun; they appear to be the easiest of prey, but we fired a 40-pounder Armstrong gun at them, hoping for a seal-

skin or two, but on the mere flash of the gun they dived so quickly that, though the "Salamis" made excellent practice, they were never once hit. There is a fixed population in Heligoland of about two thousand, but German and French visitors, often to the extent of about nine thousand, come here during the season for the fresh, salt breezes and excellent bathing. Fishermen, pilots, bird-skin and feather dressers, muff makers, together with lodging-house keepers, form the population, and not one Englishman, except the Governor, lives on the island. Their language, which is unwritten, is generally called Friesian, but is pronounced by the learned to be Anglo-Saxon; not so surprising, inasmuch as the neighbouring countries of Schleswig and Holstein were inhabited by Saxons, who were subdued by the Emperor Charlemagne in the beginning of the ninth century. Walking about on the short, lovely green turf, with which the top of the island is carpeted, and listening to the groups of people dotted about, all particularly lazy, it would never be supposed you were in an English colony. Not a single word of English is ever heard, and as Friesian German is the only language taught in the school, preached in the church, and spoken in the household, and as the island secretary, judge, chaplain, and the several doctors who come during the bathing season are all pure Germans, no progress in English manners and customs can be expected from year to year. Still there is a certain spirit of loyalty among them, and Heligolanders were met with in our army and navy during the war with Russia in 1854. The islanders always say that no defences are needed: nature has defended them in placing them upon a strong iron-bound, flat-topped rock, rising straight out of the sea, and, in case of the worst, the steps could be destroyed, and no one could possibly get at them. In such case, about a week, I suppose, would starve them out like rats in a hole, so dependent are they upon the outer world for supplies.

During the absences of the "Wolf," I retired to a nice clean lodging, bowered in roses and syringa, only dining at the Governor's, his gifted wife being absent with her boys in England. My landladies were some Heligoland sisters, who had never been on the mainland; extremely plain, but agreeable, and anxious to meet my views, if I could only properly have explained them. They understood no English, and my few words of German were insufficient to make

anything intelligible. I had recourse to the dictionary when much put to it, but except the bed, had nothing to complain of. I fear they found the "Kaptainin," which was my style and title among these good people, rather difficult to please. The bedstead was well enough, a sort of shallow box, well known to the traveller in Germany, but as the sheets, blankets, and counterpane were all cut to its exact size, like a doll's bed, it was rather afflicting to have nothing to tuck in, and to find all the bed-clothes on the floor in the morning. A German bed appeared to me a most comfortless arrangement.

THE BUSY BEE.

TILL the other day bee-keeping was as much cried up for cottagers as, this last year or two, jam-making has been for farmers. It was supposed to be a sure road to fortune; and it had this advantage, that it might be taken up by anybody, whether cottager or not, who happened to live in the country. Some people are sanguine enough to think they can easily make money by fowls. I knew a parson's family who were going to buy a new drawing-room carpet with the profits of their "Belgian hares." The hares were as complete a failure as was a goat which the same enterprising family once kept, and which, while it never gave any milk worth speaking of, was always breaking its tether and munching the shrubs. Fowls, too, although it is certainly possible to make them pay, involve an exasperating amount of trouble and care. But bees, when once you have started them, need not cost you a penny. Even if you have no garden they will fill themselves at your neighbours' expense, poaching as successfully as the pigeons do on the Nile fields; but with this difference—your bees are fed to the full and yet your neighbours are not a whit the poorer; whereas a flock of pigeons make short work with a field of peas or lentils. That is why, in feudal times, no one but the seigneur—that legalised poacher—was allowed to keep them, and the dove-cot, in many an English as well as French parish, shows where the manor-house used to stand. That is the great argument for bee-keeping—there is nothing but the initial cost. It's all the difference (say the bee-manias) between a horse and a tricycle. But bees have diseases. "Foul-brood" is only one out of many; and Virgil would not have written a whole Georgic about the care of them, had they not needed more attention than

the average cottager is likely to give. When I see bees thriving, year after year, in spite of trying seasons, I'm sure that the keeper has that fitness and patient tact, without which you can no more succeed as a honey-maker than a boy whose fingers are "all thumbs" can succeed as sculptor or wood-carver.

Even then, you won't make your fortune at the work. If any people have made fortunes out of bees, it is not the bee-keepers, but the bee-book writers; for, in this bookish age, for one who does or tries to do a thing, there are always at least a score who are not content till they have read up all about it. There is another way of making money out of bees, which to me is very annoying, because it has added a fresh horror to that already dreariest mode of enjoyment — the Agricultural Show. I mean keeping a bee tent. You are in an ill-temper, for you sent in a pet mare and foal, which your grumpy man, who doesn't hold with these "ere hexebitions," had displayed to such bad advantage that the judges never even looked at them. Your daughters have got you twice through the flower tent, and once through that where the butter and monster cabbages are shown; and now you hope it's all happily over, when Gertrude cries:

"Oh, papa, there's that mysterious little tent in the corner; we really must go in there."

And, as Aunt Tabby says the same, and you cannot afford to offend Aunt Tabby, there's nothing for it but to smother your discontent with things in general, and pilot your party, whilst affecting a cheerful air like a martyr smiling at the stake, across the big field, rubbing elbows with half your village, for now the cheaper price is begun and the outsiders are flocking in.

"Sixpence each," says a wheedling voice as you come up panting. You feel it's a "do"; but you're too late. Mabel, the impulsive, is already inside, flattening her tip-tilted nose against six square inches of glass, on the other side of which a few poor bees are listlessly struggling, apparently too languid to even protest against being made a show of. In you go, therefore, and the showman goes through his patter about the delights and profits of apiculture and the relative merits of Hollands of Waddon, and Isaac Hale of Horncastle, and Overton of Crawley, and Hole of Ledbury.

He tries very hard indeed to sell you his particular bee-keeping association's manual; but there you put down your foot. The

girls pout; but when they retire bookless, and are obliged to confess that the thing was "really not worth a penny a piece; not a quarter so good as what you can see any day at Covington Rectory; and that horrid man, instead of young Mr. Snugford, who explains it all so well, and lets the bees walk about him without seeming to mind it a bit," you feel quite triumphant.

After all, however, the girls are right and you are wrong. Their instinct tells them that more may be done with bees than, by a yearly destruction of many millions of lives, to get a fluid on whose colour and purity you can never reckon, and which sometimes turns out decidedly inferior both in taste and smell to the imitation honey of the ingenious Yankees.

In the hive, as well as in the dairy and elsewhere, we want not revolution, but reform. Here, too, we must go in for high-farming, if we would not indeed make our fortunes but hold our own in the race which is becoming every day severer. Apiculture really is a fine art, and, though a great deal of nonsense has been talked about it, and a great many vexatious fads proposed, as in the case of almost every art, still there was and is great room for improvement.

"We've always turned out good honey since my great-grandmother set up these butts," says a cottager; "and I don't hold with 'extractors,' or 'sectional supers,' or bell-glasses. I've never found the need of a 'dummy' to reduce the hive, any more than I have of a veil or a bee-dress to help me in handling the little creatures, or of 'phenolated soap' for disinfecting. I stand on the old paths."

"Yes, my good friend," you may reply, "you make good honey; but these new-fangled ways, some of them, will help you to make better, and to make it without that failure every now and then, which is more annoying in honey than in home-made bread. If, therefore, sir or madam, you wish to be a benefactor in your village you may, I think, invest in a good bee-book and lend it to those who are already bee-keepers."

Do not persuade anyone to set up hives who has never done it before. If you do, ten to one there will be a failure, and then it will be laid upon you and your new system, and you, who perhaps went halves towards buying the new hives, will be expected to pay for their misuse. Ought you, since example is better than precept, to keep bees yourself? That depends. If you succeed, you will have done a grand thing for the parish; but, if you fail, you not only expose your-

self to mortification, but you bring condemnation on every attempt at improvement, good, bad, or indifferent. Some people are born bee-keepers, even as some are born bird-tamers. I knew a nursemaid who had a wonderful way with birds. My boys would bring her a linnets or a thrush's nest, and she would manage to rear the young, getting up at impossible hours to feed them, and so handling them that, by the time they had got their feathers, they would come to her voice and walk up her arms, and otherwise comport themselves like Count Fosco's pets in the "Woman in White."

She was the sort of person to take bees in hand. For some it is as hopeless as it is for a parson, who is not musical, to start a choir. There may be plenty of good-will; but that does not provide the indispensable fitness. With bees, as with greater matters, "il faut payer de sa personne." But if you feel that you have got it in you to take the necessary trouble; if you like the work—really feel an interest in pulling out a bar-frame and seeing how the comb attached to it is going on—and have lissom fingers to help you in deftly helping nature where needful, then you may go in for apiculture, which, as distinguished from bee-keeping, means the adoption of some, at least, of the new methods of getting the honey and sparing the bees. A good many of the arrangements are chiefly valuable for those who care to study the bees as well to utilise to the utmost their industry. But this is a scientific age; and there is an increasing number of people to whom it is a real pleasure to handle a microscope, and to repeat for themselves the experiments which Dzierzon, in Silesia, and Schiemenz and Wolff in Germany, and Girard and Dufour in France, and Hyatt in America, and Mr. Cheshire among ourselves, are still at work upon. They have a great field; but it is not apiculture. Your high bee-farmers need only know how to use the extractor and to practise supering. All beyond that belongs to the scientist, who is willing to follow Mr. Cheshire (dreadful man) even in slaughtering his Queens just when they are in the most interesting condition, in order to clear up, by dissecting them, some disputed point about their internal organism. It is, no doubt, to some people very exciting to "observe and observe" again and again, in the hope of correcting blind Huber or Swammerdam, or other old naturalists, who, though sometimes wrong, did wonders, considering how

imperfect were their instruments. But this is microscopy, not apiculture, and requires a perfectly achromatic "Stephenson's erecting binocular" (a title which would have delighted Sam Weller), though a skilful operator may do a good deal with a powerful light and a good watchmaker's eyeglass.

Bee-keeping is probably as old as the Pyramids. I don't remember any representations of hives in the Egyptian farming pictures; the Jews preferred their honey from the stony rock. But the old Greeks and Italians kept bees; when Augustus was turning his veterans into peasant proprietors—and very bad farmers they seem to have made—he commissioned his laureate, Virgil, to write up husbandry, and bee-husbandry amongst the other branches. Critics think the Fourth Georgic the best as a poem; it is certainly far the weakest as a practical guide.

"Bees like water, but do not like bad smells, therefore it is no good keeping them near a stagnant pool. They have a King"—he knew nothing of Queens—"and officers of sorts"—Shakespeare borrowed all that from the Mantuan bard—"and you mustn't have more than one King in a hive. Bees like flowers, and I knew an old pirate settled near Tarentum, on a patch of waste, who took to gardening with such success that no great man's gardener could come near him.

"Bees alone among the lower animals live a social life, under strict laws, well enforced. They alone work from a sense of duty, so much so that one cannot help thinking they have a share in that great soul which fills all things. Self-helpful as they are, you will have trouble with them, for they have many enemies—lizards and mice, and beetles and spiders. He never mentions those worse pests, the ants. And not seldom they fall sick, and then you must burn gum galbanum, and feed them with honey poured in through reeds, and with thick raisin wine in which you have boiled centaury and thyme. And if they all die out, then build a hut with four very narrow windows facing the points of the compass; get a steer, stitch up its nostrils and mouth, and then beat it to death with clubs, and lay it in the hut on a bed of balm and cassia. Do this in early spring, and before long you'll find your steer full of grubs, which will soon change into bees, and sally forth swarm after swarm."

That, with much poetical adornment, is all Virgil has to say; and, though Samson

had a somewhat similar experience with a lion, one can only hope his cruel experiment—recommended in the first instance by that shifty and truculent old sea-god, Proteus—was not often tried. In Britain, bees have been kept ever since metheglin, alias mead, was the drink of chieftains. They have “paid,” of course, but not so much as to lead to their being more extensively taken in hand. They were kept because folks generally like to go on with what they are hereditarily used to. Rule of thumb answered well enough; and, when science stepped in to modify practice—for with bees it is the science that began all these new practical arrangements—many called out “an ounce of practice is better than a ton of theory.” The canny Yorkshire dalesmen keep bees, as their ancestors the Brigantes did, and they send them up every year to the moors, that the heather bloom may give a scent to the honey. The West Cornish housewife keeps them, and she has plenty of the sweetest heather, with brighter colours than that of the north country. She has, too, the furze blooming all the year round. But both in Yorkshire and Cornwall they would much prefer three acres and a cow—in spite of the fear that so many cows would bring down the price of butter—to a present even of a set of Neighbour’s Improved Cottage Beehives, which look just as “comfortable” and picturesque as the old straw “skep” or “butt,” and yet are fitted with all those novelties that in the frame hives appear so uncanny and unsightly. Were I going in for high bee-farming I think I should try Neighbour’s plan. It all depends on what plan you do try. I knew an old Cornish parson who had got on pretty well with straw hives till the widow of a stranger, who had come to live—or, as it happened, to die—in the parish, persuaded him to try her husband’s apparatus. Such an ugly arrangement—a long black box, like a giant’s coffin, with three or four square white boxes inside of it. Were I a bee I would not have been deluded into such a gloomy den. Sure enough the swarms did refuse to be allured into the white boxes, and my friend, after losing several, had to go back to the old straw hives. This was not for want of management; for, though old-fashioned, the parson was a good manipulator—fearless, withal, since he had the rare gift of handling bees without ever being stung.

If, therefore, you go in for novelties, go in for the right sort. Read. and study. and

inspect, and do not be induced to buy anybody else’s cast off appliances because they are cheap, or because you are doing the seller a good turn by buying them. And, if you do go in for scientific apiculture, you had better set up a microscope as well. The hive and its inmates afford, perhaps, a more interesting field for microscopic research than anything else in the whole insect kingdom. Take the bee’s sting; why, that alone might occupy all the rest of this paper. The sheath makes the first wound, and, inside it, so managed that they inclose a tube-like space down which the poison runs, are two darts, all built in such a strictly mechanical way that—Mr. Cheshire says—they remind him of the guide rods of a steam engine. The poison is gummy, but it is prevented from clogging the machine by a gland which secretes a lubricating oil. The Queen’s sting is bigger than the workers’—drones have none—but it is practically barbleless, and can therefore be easily brought away instead of being left in the wound, and thereby causing the death of its precious owner. It is a formidable weapon, the sheath so hard that it turns the finest razor-edge; but a Queen never stings except in contest with another Queen; she may be handled with impunity.

Of the worker, it is a mistake to say that it always leaves its sting in the wound, and dies from the loss. If it generally does so, the fault often lies in your impatience; bear it like a hero, and the bee will work its sting round and round till it is able to withdraw it without impediment. Of course you get pierced deeper and deeper, but then, consider, the creature’s life is saved by your suffering.

Our honey bees belong to the long-tongued division of the great bee family. Of long and short tongued together there are at least 212 species in England—according to those who delight in multiplying species—while of the long-tongued we have nineteen kinds, including the solitary leaf-cutter, which may sometimes be seen at work on a rose-bush, and of whose history the most marvellous fact is that the last-laid egg is first hatched, and, by eating its way out, gives free egress to those behind.

The humble-bees are social, but their little society does not last long. All die before winter, except a few females, some of whom on warm spring days you may see inside your window panes, growing more and more furious at not being able to get out again.

Among our bees the workers survive, unless you take all their honey and neglect to feed them with proper syrup, or leave their hives unhatched during rain or severe cold. The drones are turned out, and often stung to death, soon after swarming is over. A Queen will live four, or even five years. But she never mates but once—in her first youth;* and after a time the eggs she lays, being unimpregnated, produce only drones, which is equally the case with the eggs of Queens who have never mated. Drones, therefore, have a mother, but no father. In other cases of parthenogenesis—production by unmated females, not uncommon among insects—it is females only that are produced. Among gall-flies, this process has been traced through twenty generations, without a single male being born. After mating the Queen becomes, so to speak, male and female, and is able at will—as we must express it—to lay an impregnated or an unimpregnated egg, according as she has, by feeling with her antennæ, found the cell at which she has stopped to be a worker's or a drone's. The drone's cell is bigger, and the drone-grub gets a lot more food than the worker-grub, but food of the same kind, whereas the Queen-grub is fed all through on what some writers call "royal jelly"—a mixture of honey and pollen—which its nurse has taken care to digest before giving it to the royal infant. All the grubs are fed on this at first—Mr. Cheshire calls it "bee milk"—but drones and worker grubs are weaned betimes, and have to put up with an unassimilated mixture of pollen and honey and water.

The workers are not sexless, they are simply "aborted" or undeveloped females, incapable of mating, yet sometimes by a freak of nature, laying a few drone-eggs. Before a worker is allowed to go afield and rifle the blossoms she has to pass an apprenticeship as a nurse. Her work begins almost as soon as she comes out of the chrysalis state, which—with a marvellous change of organisation—succeeds to the grub-life. Out of that miniature mummy-case she gnaws her way and comes forth, pale but perfect and downy, like a young chick. As soon as she is dried she preens her wings and gets rid of the down, and in twenty-four hours begins the task of feeding the grubs—giving to each, Queen, drone, or worker, its proper

rations—or of attending on Her Majesty. This constant attendance on the Queen of a group of workers, kotooing in the truest Oriental style, and backing out of the way as she slowly progresses, was long misunderstood. Virgil mentions it, speaking of the attendants as "the King's body-guard." Later writers, too, thought that they are there to protect her. The truth is they are her food-suppliers; and what a quantity of food she must want, seeing she lays four times her own weight of eggs in a day, all these eggs being made of very rich tissue-forming matter, which is so much vitality withdrawn from nourishing her own body! Now pollen, the grains of which are often still alive when the bees store them up, is not easy of digestion; and so a queen would need a hundred-outrich power of stomach, if she had to keep up her strength on pollen. Her attendants, therefore, feed her, as they do the baby grubs, on digested food—"bee-milk" if you please to call it such; and so she is able to take in a vast quantity without inconvenience, and, what is more, to assimilate it. The workers, we know, carry home three substances—pollen, wax, and honey. They do a great work, on which Mr. Darwin and many more have written elaborately, in the way of fertilising flowers. Of these many are incapable of self-fertilisation, for others it is a difficult and uncertain process. The old naturalists noticed this. Sprengel, nearly a century ago, wondered that, whereas most flowers contain both anthers and stigmas, their structure seems specially designed to hinder self-fertilisation. That pleasant Pantheist who sometimes calls himself Grant Allen, thinks that it came about somewhat in this way: Plants—except a few foolish ones—found that cross-breeding was injurious, like the marriage of cousins, and therefore set themselves against it. The only alternatives were wind fertilising—very uncertain, but still largely in use, as the amount of pollen drifted from a fir-plantation or a clover field shows—and fertilisation by insects. Hence the plants gradually shaped their flowers so as to hinder self-fertilisation. At the same time the flowers brightened their colours in order to attract the insect fertilisers—most self-fertilising flowers are small and inconspicuous—while they fringed the flower-stalks and often the petals and ovaries with stiff hairs and other appliances, to keep out detrimental, such as ants and little flies, which would devour the honey without being of any use in the

* It is the old Queens, not the younger ones, who are put forth with the swarms.

way of carrying pollen. The big hairy bee is a welcome visitor; she forces her way in, and is pretty certain in doing so to get herself well covered with pollen, which, while rifling the next flower, she deposits on the expectant stigma. And, most wonderful of all, they tell us that she only visits one kind of flower on each journey, so that, while cross-breeding is ensured, there is no confusion of species. Therefore, ye bee-keepers, plant your flowers in large masses, and thus save your workers the trouble of going so far afield as they must sometimes have to do when unluckily they begin with a flower of which your whole parish only affords a single specimen. For fruit bees are as useful as for flowers; why three apples out of five fall off unripe is, not so much because there is a worm at the core as because the blossom was imperfectly fertilised. And do plant flowers enough, else your bees will be driven to lick up the "honey dew" which the "aphides"—green blight—exude on the surface of leaves, and of which ants are so fond that they keep dairies of aphides for their special benefit. This honey-dew, Mr. Cheshire thinks, is nasty, though Kirby and Spence say "it emulates sugar and honey in sweetness and purity."

Well, all this knowledge of the ways of bees comes of the new-fangled systems; or rather the scientists, determined to understand the ways of bees, invented the windows and the bar-frames, etc., and then the practical men adopted them. I have not told you the hundredth part of the marvels they have discovered. There is the bee's eye, with its hundreds of facets, each presenting the same image—this is proved by separating the many-sided cornea and looking through it with a microscope at a candle-flame. The bee, moreover, besides its pair of faceted eyes, carries on the top of its head three simple eyes, very convex, for short-distance vision. Then there are its antennæ, whereby it feels its way in the dark hive, and which give it moreover its exquisite power of smell. Bees can hear, too, though Sir John Lubbock thinks not. They seem deaf because, like wise people, they only attend to such sounds as concern them; their own hive's "roar" the stragglers can hear a very long way off, and Mr. Cheshire thinks that the old key and warming-pan music at swarming-time is by no means exploded. Their impassiveness under many kinds of sound he compares with that of most human beings in a thunderstorm; we are as if we heard not,

whereas if a child cries for help we wake into activity. Bees clearly are not given to waste emotion or nerve force. They have a nervous system, with ganglions—i.e. knots or lumps where the nerve-threads meet. A bee's brain is a bigger ganglion placed in its head, divided—like ours—into two lobes. In Queens and drones the brain is small. The worker has proportionally twice as much as the ant, and more than twenty times as much as the cockchafer. Intelligent though it is, we need not suppose it to be a high-class mathematician because its cells are hexagonal. Mr. Cheshire says that if you put a soap-bubble on a bit of slate, one side gets flattened. Put another close to it, and the contiguous walls become quite flat, owing to the equal tension on the two sides. Now add five more bubbles, so that the first occupies the centre; a cross section of this central bubble will now be perfectly hexagonal, all the contiguous walls of the seven bubbles being flat, the free ones curved. This is the case in the hive; the free walls of the comb always running in a sweep, and the hexagonality being simply due to the pressure of one bee against another as they are working.*

You don't think of mathematics as an endowment of soap and water, why then of bees? It is a general law of nature that matter under pressure takes certain forms. Nevertheless, what we find in our integral calculus is true; the hexagon is the most advantageous of the three shapes that will completely occupy space, the other two being the square and the triangle; that is, its area is the largest in proportion to its circumference; and wax is very hard and exhausting stuff to make, therefore has to be economised. A pound of it makes 35,000—some say 50,000—cells. Then there's still plenty to write about—the vibrations of bees' wings, 200 per second—and the ingenious contrivance for counting them, and much more. But I have done; and while I recommend apiculture to gentle as well as to simple, saying in Girard's words: "All the money a bee-keeper throws out of window will come in again to him with heavy interest at the door," I recommend all who go in for high bee-farming to provide themselves with a good microscope, and not to be satisfied till they have learnt how this interesting little creature behaves at home.

* How about the South American bees, which, says Mr. Bates (Amazons), built cells round or rudely polygonal, not having yet learnt the art of making regular hexagons?

THY VOICE.

I SAW thy face once more—and knew thee not,
 Although I once had kissed thy lips and brow.
 Years passed so swiftly; well-nigh I had forgot
 That thou and I once loved: yet now, yet now,
 I heard thy voice once more: then all those years
 Seemed washed away in mine own welling tears!

Thy voice, dear love! its accents low and sweet,
 Its gentle cadences were all the same.
 Once more my heart lay bleeding at thy feet.
 Once more I proffered all thou would'st not claim.
 Once more youth gazed from out my long-dimmed
 eyes.
 Once more hope breathed to me her honied sighs.

It was across the crowd I heard thy voice,
 And straight once more I was a youth again,
 I felt mine heart within my breast rejoice,
 And lost the sense of disappointment's pain.
 I knew again that none save thou could'st be
 All that thou should'st have been to mine and me!

I had forgotten this—until the tones
 Of that true voice fell on my listening ear,
 'Twas like re-clothing of long-dried dead bones,
 That once had life, and were to some one dear:
 Straightway the fabric of those vanished days
 Rose up once more, and shone in evening's rays.

I turned and looked; old age sat on thy breast,
 Throwing her cobwebbed veil o'er all thy charms.
 'Tis but a veil, for how can all thy best
 Be dead and lost, since thou lay in mine arms,
 If that sweet voice, unchanged, still soft, still low,
 Sounds as it used to sound so long ago?

I will believe all lasts: Time's cruel hands
 Cannot destroy what once has been our own.
 That somewhere, aye, perchance in heavenly lands,
 We'll have again the happy years we've known:
 Ah! blessed faith, I'll learn it from thy voice,
 That, all unchanged, bids me once more rejoice!

DAISY.

A STORY IN FIVE CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER I.

"I SIMPLY hate and abhor the notion of going abroad!"

So a girl exclaimed as she sat, on the dearest of spring evenings, by the river-side. Royal Thames shone silver white in the pure radiancy of the time, the time that is called spring, but that is overborne by the luscious warmth of the onrush of summer. The girl was one of four who occupied a bench on the terrace of a fair bowery suburb. The faces of the other three were pleasantly alight with the subject of their talking; but Daisy's face was clouded, and as her hands knotted themselves angrily and set their grasped selves on her knees with determination, her back rounded, and her whole pose expressed discontent.

"Stuff!" was the sisterly rejoinder made by Eleanor at the far end of the bench.

Then came in Cousin Josephine:

"You are a funny girl, Daisy! Wouldn't I give my ears for your chance!

Just change places with me, and see how you like London streets year in and year out. Look at the waste of my education," she laughed. "Where is the use of speaking half-a-dozen languages when for all your days you are condemned to English of the metropolis. Now you——"

"Bless you, Josey! we never do more than talk our native tongue."

Daisy was so upset that for the moment a generalism slipped over the bounds of truth.

"I'd change places with you at once—without you sacrificing your ears, if only aunt and mother would look at things from my point of view."

"Which they are not likely to do," was put in here by the fourth girl, Janet Stewart, from Aberdeen, kith and kin to none of the other girls, but simply on a visit to Josephine Bray. With her she had come down for the day to see the Holfords; they had had afternoon tea and had strolled down to the river, shewing it as sight to the Scotch girl: and it was a sight. There may be grander rivers than the Thames, there may be wilder and more markedly picturesque shores, but where would you find a rival fit to compete with the stream as these girls saw it? No wonder "royal" has been a word given long ago to it. What sweet and fair-smiling dignity was seen in the sure, steady sweep of its waters! What a gentle-ladyhood of graciousness in the lapping of its waters amongst the sedges of the banks! What but a sea-nobility would have so calmly borne the untaught oars of the City lads! But royal Thames bears all alike, the finished stroke and the laboured struggle.

"There goes an eight!" Josephine cried.
 "Lovely!"

"They're just coming out—they're nothing when you are used to them." Daisy's spirit was ruffled. "Look ahead!" came the moment after though, and then—she was by no means an ill-tempered girl—the cloud flew from off her face.

A novice in river-craft was plunging blindly from under the shelter of an island right on to the bows of the "eight." The youth was pulling with might and main, and with laughable awkwardness. Now, would his clumsiness meet its reward down in the cool bed of waters, or would his savage strength and his heavy boat show that brute force may conquer delicacy and art?

"Look ahead!" again rang from the boat-keeper of the island.

"Fool!" came from the "eight."

A second's doubt, then, like an arrow shot by a mighty bow, a swift "swish!" was heard, and the fragile-looking, airy thing sprang, literally sprang, to right angles from her former course.

There was no drowning.

No; but a roar burst from the men on the island of boats, and a cheer from the terrace of idlers; and all at once those who had been strolling stood still, and those who had been sitting on the benches darted forward.

With a gay acceptance of praise, and a careless scorning of danger, the "eight," pausing for a moment in their stroke, lifted their blue caps and—flew forward, noiseless.

Daisy Holford, a perfect child of impulse, had run forward. Then she ran back. "Did you see that? Grand! Did you see the 'stroke'? I'll never forget him! The others were laughing, but he was as grave as—grave."

"You are ridiculous, Daisy!"

"Thanks. Well, I have heard the same before, so it is not a strikingly original remark. You'd be as ridiculous as I if you had had energy enough to get to the front. I'm sure he saw me, too; I'm sure he saw me wave my handkerchief. I'm sure——"

"You are too much!"

"Jossey, come and walk along the terrace a bit. I want sympathy in my excited state. I think I should go cracked if I saw any very great act of heroism. I'm so excited—now." And truly Daisy's cheeks were too rosy and her eyes almost too full of fire. She and her cousin were at once away from the other two.

"I used to be just like you, but I've grown old, you see, and staid. I dare say if any great and real heroism came before our eyes we should be about the same—quite cool outwardly."

Jossey might theorise; she very often did so with Daisy; for Daisy, from always having been a wild child, had so far developed more of impulse than of sobriety.

"You think so? You really think so, Je? You understand me better than the rest. They do bother me abroad. Will you go instead of me? Will you go with me? There! I have started a brilliant idea! Come back at once, and don't attempt to reason with me, for I'll not listen. The only reasons I will hear will be my own and anybody else's who will come on my side."

But Jossey would not turn as yet; and she made Daisy walk on as they had been

doing until they came to the end of the terrace, and saw a low, black riverside house, the beginning of one of our most ancient riverside towns. Stay, we will not be more explicit, we will call the suburb where the Holfords lived Ryebidge, and towards Ryebidge did Jossey again set her face, carrying Daisy back in a calmed frame of mind.

Enough so far.

The family history that seems necessary here to be told is simply that Mr. Holford was, or rather had been, an officer of Her Majesty's Civil Service; that he had during the past year retired on a good pension. Pension and property together made a good income; but a big family being a sort of domestic quicksand into which any amount of cash can be absorbed, the Holfords had a year ago seen fit to do as many another family of the neighbourhood did—they had let their house for the summer months, and from June to September had gone abroad. People may do this and may make a profit; anyhow, casting aside the monetary profit, there had been the vast advantage of a journey taken, and new life seen, with no more expense than would have gone in the keeping up of the Ryebidge home.

Now the same project was again afloat. Webb, the house agent, had "The Elms" on his books, and the first enquiring tenant was this very evening—shall we give Daisy's version?

"Just poking his nose into every hole and corner. I took care to hide my photos and to lock my drawers."

So the subject had been well ventilated by the girls, as they had walked down to the river. Naturally it was a matter for girls to talk much about. Three months abroad! Three months of new faces, new sights, new thoughts!

But Daisy was not to be conquered—as yet. Truly she showed herself a girl of independent character on this point.

"Now, joy or misery?" was her characteristic cry as she flung open the gate of "The Elms." "Shall I live or shall I die?"

"What extravagant talking!" and Jossey rapped her cousin's shoulder. "You will live, and I prophesy joy. Perhaps you'll be snapped up by an Italian Count or a German Baron—who knows?"

"Thanks, awfully!" And Daisy parodied affectation. "You are too kind! My taste is for an English farmer rather than either of the creatures you name."

The house was let—let to great advantage seemingly; but, instead of clearing out and making their start by the second week in June, Mr. Holford had given way, and, for the convenience of his tenant, would pack up and give him the house by the first of the month.

"Life is not worth living!" Daisy remarked.

But people may, and do, make mistakes in their impulsive speeches.

CHAPTER II.

WE are not going to write a guide-book, neither are we going to make our story a sort of advertising medium for hotel-keepers—the Holfords had seen good and bad hotels, princely houses, and dear old provincial peasant inns. They saw town life and town fashions; the girls wearing their best clothes and playing tennis under the awful grandeur of mountains. What does this argue, the littleness or the greatness of man?

They had also gone about with alpenstocks and in thick boots, and had tramped over ice-fields and scaled mountains. The most indefatigable climber was Josey Bray, for the powers had held conclave, and the desire of her soul to see foreign lands and to speak foreign speech was gratified. She and Daisy marked the antipodes, the spiritual antipodes of the party. Josey was always alert for doing everything; Daisy liked a book in an hotel garden, and an English nursemaid with her baby to amuse her.

"Half the time is over—congratulate me!" Daisy cried, as with her arm linked in her cousin's they walked the sweet gardens of the hotel. Yes, July was half gone, the air was hot, the sun had been one golden blaze. The girls, in their coolest of cotton dresses, always carried fans with them—even the villagers did that. They panted through the midday fire, and when the evening came all the world was alive. What delicious roaming amongst gardens—Italian gardens, whose wealth of flowers no tongue can tell, no eyes can measure!

Now the place where we find them we will call Chiaranza, because one would not be personal even with so lovely a place. People are so apt to say, "Oh, we know who is meant by such a person. We saw her at X—, and she acted in just the way the story shows. But is it possible such things can have come to her now?" Well, all this we avoid, because on no map will you find the name Chiaranza, the

lovely village down by the lake; where the gardens sweep down in terraces from the high, uplifted hotel; where, as folks dally on summer nights by the marble parapet, there is always the soft music of the ripple of the Maggiore waters.

People of all nations were—nay, always are—at that hotel. Some Swedes—nobles, according to their names as seen on letters in the hall of the hotel—were pacing up and down. There was a young man with a high voice—he had an air of distinction—also there was a tall girl, with the pale gold hair of the Scandinavian races; also there was with them a little old lady who was very quiet. The young man and the girl were not brother and sister; perhaps the old lady was chaperon. The girl had been over to the Borromean Islands that day, and she had come home laden with flowers. What a mass of stephanotis was she wearing on her dress! How it scented the already luscious, perfumed air!

From out on the lake came the rattle of oars in rowlocks; a big, roundish boat of the country went by. Again came the swifter wraith as a lighter craft swept along; then came laughter. Then again, from further away, where glimmered two lanterns which made their silver trail like a fairy path on the waves, there rose the ringing of a boat song. Men's voices did it—or rather one man's voice, a barcarolle of the country—then a lull, and the golden and green lanterns floated away. Ah! there was the singing again, and then surely it was an English song.

Verily, yes! Just the

Row, brothers, row!

of the Canadian boat song, and a girl's voice was taking the lead.

"That's jolly!" Daisy cried. She stopped Josey in their walk. "Why did we never do that?"

"You? You always say you cannot sing!"

"No more I can for 'company' to listen. I don't like it, and," here she gave a spring, and pulling Josey's taller head down whispered, "I don't mean to. But out on the water, like that—it's like a book—it's like—"

"But," Joe puckered her face, "it's a way of doing things that belongs to these warm countries. You have only just said—I'm getting rather tired of hearing it, you know—that you are charmed to think you can count the time now before going home. You are a sham, Daisy."

"Thanks—thanks, awfully. But I'm

not a sham when I say I am going to have a boat now. Is Cesare here?" and she ran to the steps, at the bottom of which the gaily-painted boats of the hotel were moored. "Call Nell!" she cried, "and I know the pater will be only too charmed to take advantage of the treat his youngest daughter offers him. Fish him out. I dare say he's smoking his head off somewhere!"

Daisy's tongue always rattled. Josey smiled to herself and obeyed.

The party of Swedes smiled too. Though their high voices were always speaking the sharp, harsh-sounding words of their native tongue, they, like most Swedes, were facile linguists, and understood every tongue under the sun—under the European sun certainly.

Now Daisy Holford, with all her quips and cranks, was a girl who in most things managed to get her own way. Perhaps her family looked upon her as "their baby;" perhaps she had pretty fascinating ways, which converted by their magic other folks' wills to her own gay pleasure. Very soon Cesare was pulling her and her gathering out on the moon-swept waters. And very soon too the Swedes, still pacing and still talking, heard more singing, and as they knew English, they knew the words of the song. They did not know what a hackneyed, school-girl sort of thing it was.

See our oars with feathered spray,
it began.

What matter if it were a trite thing for English glee societies? It was fresh and new out there, and the English girls' fresh voices were just charming. Mr. Holford droned his bass, and presently Cesare made a tenor part of his own with a swinging rhythm of "la, la, la," knowing nothing of the English. But above all came the sweet high voices of the girls.

They were far away from the boat of singing men. But whether in the hush of the night these last caught a bit of the song, or whether their own purpose was to turn at that moment, they did so turn, and the green and yellow lanterns swept nearer and nearer. Cesare's lazy stroke was as nothing to the pull of two English boating men, for if Cesare could pull with might when he chose, yet when one was only out for the sake of the signorine enjoying the air and singing, why should one weary oneself? Why, indeed?

A very few minutes brought the lanterns within a boat's length of the girls, and then at a word—you see, we are ubiquitous,

we fly from one crew to the other—a word was spoken, and a dark, bare-armed, flannel-arrayed man, rolled forth the beginning of an ancient round. The girl, his companion, took it up, and then another man's voice came, this second, as the party floated lazily alongside the Holfords, had for a moment the moonlight sweeping across him. Was he so fair, so almost white of hair? Yes, and the girl was the same, only her head was shrouded in black lace.

Foolish girls! As the singing struck the air in that gay frolicsome way, the Holfords all fell silent, and there was Mr. Holford, whose voice could not be ordered in so spasmodic a fashion, droning on in his ponderous bass for a moment alone.

Then the master of the other craft distanced his own, and the lanterns seemed to fade away, not going towards the length of the lake, but still distancing in—may we word it so?—in a broadside sort of fashion.

As it was night and as neither crew had acquaintance with the other crew, there was no cause why our girls—we prefer to keep with them—should give a thought to this other English party when once they and their lanterns faded out of sight. Cesare let his boat drift along. When he had orders to land he was nigh under the shores of Intra; but the word of command set his muscles in vigorous order and it was really in no time that the level line of the marble of the Chiaranza hotel terrace came in sight.

Just before reaching their own landing-steps Cesare swept by the white gleam of another set of marble steps—those belonging to another hotel, whose gardens stretched high up the hillside.

At the top of some half-dozen steps stood a girl, a wondrously fair girl, and a dark man. She in her white skirts, and he in his white flannels, shone strangely in the dim purple of the night. They and the moonlight, and the mystic fascinating glamour of the scene and the time, might fitly enough have been part of a scene on some fairy stage.

Jo and Daisy, as usual, were together as all sauntered up through the gardens. A turn came, and a huge kalmia, with pink blossoms all whitened in the radiancy of the moon, stood where the turn came. By the lagging of one step Daisy held her cousin back, and had the rest out of ear-shot.

"Are you superstitious, Jo?"

"Decidedly not. Neither are you. Do

you mean to say you see elves and hobgoblins? Come in."

"I never was till five minutes ago. In five minutes my faith is shaken. My unfaith is leaping like—like mad. What do you think? It is not for nothing that it has happened. Thank the powers which have ordained that Chiaranza and its visitors come and perform their devotions in this very hotel to-morrow."

"H'm! Are you moonstruck? And if you are, you might talk civilised English. Don't waste those flowers; it is a shame—Dears!" And here Josey, who had her enthusiasms, however much she might personify prose with Daisy, gave a tap to her cousin's hand as she was ruthlessly breaking up some of the fair, pink blooms. Some she gathered for herself, laying her lips softly upon them.

"You don't wish to hear?" Daisy drew more backward, as if she could compel Jo to stay her feet.

"I'll hear anything, Daisy; only be quick."

"Then, I've seen him again, and he is here!" Daisy's whisper was intense.

"'Him' and 'he'?" Where is the noun for the pronouns?"

"I'm not sure. I should say at the *Città Venezia*" (the rival hotel).

"Thanks be! Is he a spectre, or a man, or—what?"

"Don't be so disgustingly prosaic. It's the 'stroke' on the river that night."

"Greek, Daisy. It's the 'stroke!'"

Jo accented the word with a gay sarcasm. "But it does not matter; even if you had given the most pronounced 'he' I should have been no wiser. Are not the 'strokes' on your river to be called legion?"

"No; they are not. They are one. There's some more illogical grammar for you. I shan't say any more. Yes, I will. I must, or I shall never sleep. You remember the day Janet Stewart came down? You remember the accident?"

"The accident that might have been, but was not? Yes; I know all about it now."

"But—was not. You are right. Don't you think I know that 'stroke' again when I see him?"

"You pretend you saw him to-night?"

"I know I saw him on the *Venezia* steps, and he's the tenor in that boat with the lanterns. There!"

"There was another man—and—a girl."

"No prose, Jo! Do you hear? No prose!"

VICTIMS.

By THEO GIFT.

Author of "*Lil Lorimer*," "*An Alibi and its Price*,"
Etc., Etc.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"HE HAS DECEIVED YOU."

MADAME ST. LAURENT came into the room, closing the door behind her as she did so, and then, for a moment or two—only for that, though it seemed an age to both of them—mother and daughter stood gazing at one another in a kind of dumb anguish of shrinking, unutterable pain and dread, shrinking from the change which both recognised as having come over the other since they last met, dread too intense for speech of the explanation which might yet have to be given of it.

It was in the elder woman, however, that the change was most visible outwardly. Vera was pale and dazed-looking, and both her soft hair and the gown she wore had that crushed and tumbled appearance, which comes from a night passed in a chair instead of one's natural couch; but her pallor was the less noticeable from the fact of her never being rosy at the best of times, and though her sleep had only been taken in a chair, the latter was a comfortable one, and the slumber (thanks to the fatigue and over-excitement) so profound that it had lasted from midnight till nearly ten o'clock in the morning without a break. But Madame St. Laurent had spent that night in a sailing boat on the Channel. She had been sea-sick and ill. She was dragged with rain, buffeted with winds, worn out and dishevelled with twenty-four hours of shame and anxiety, of anguish of mind and weariness of body. Her face was ghastly, her eyes red, her lips cracked and swollen with weeping. She looked an object so deplorable, so terrible, that Vera gazed at her in a sort of horror of remorse and amazement. All in a moment, as it were, it flashed upon her that while she had only been thinking of her mother as angry or offended, the poor woman had really been consumed with grief and anxiety; that while she had been surrounded with all a lover's care and tenderness, Madame St. Laurent might have been having the horse-pond at Les Châtaigniers dragged for her lifeless body; and all the girl's natural tender-heartedness welled up in a great wave of sympathy and penitence as, stretching out her arms to her mother, she cried out:

"Oh mamma, forgive me, forgive me!"

You have been unhappy about me; you have come all this way! Oh! I ought to have let you know I was safe. I ought not to have frightened you; but I never thought. Mamma dear, you will forgive me now I am married, won't you? You won't be angry with—him?"

But Madame St. Laurent would not suffer the embraces which her daughter would fain have bestowed on her. She did not even speak, or relax that hungry questioning gaze which she had rivetted on the girl from the moment of her entrance. It was only the faltering of the latter's voice at the end of her appeal which seemed to break the spell, for she started violently then, and, putting out one trembling hand to repel her daughter's nearer approach, dropped heavily into a seat, hiding her face and moaning out:

"Oh God, my own child! My lost, fallen, miserable child! Oh, how have I deserved it!"

Vera was terribly distressed. This was far worse than any mere anger or scolding, and all the more because so utterly unexpected. Once or twice before in her life she had seen tears in her mother's eyes; but they had been tears more of irritation and annoyance than grief. Whatever weakness of spirit or sorrow Madame St. Laurent might endure, her reserved nature made her keep to herself, till her daughter had grown to look upon her as too strong and unimpeachable to be capable of either. In the horror of seeing this present suffering and knowing herself to be the cause of it, she forgot even the rebuff she had received; and, throwing herself on her knees by the bowed and broken figure, clasped her young arms almost forcibly round it, and laid her soft cheek against the unresponsive shoulder, sobbing out:

"Mamma, don't—don't do that! Don't call me 'lost' because I went away. It was not because I did not love you. I would even have given him up for you if— if papa had not insisted on my marrying the Count. I hated leaving you in that way; but I was so miserable, and we loved one another so much, and I thought that once—once it was all over—— besides, he says he will give papa the money to repay the Count. I don't know how much it is; but even if we have to go without ourselves, he will gladly give it. He is richer now than he was. Mamma dear, I know he has made you promise to forgive me. You would not have come to me otherwise: and when you know how really

good he is, and what care he has taken of me, I am sure you will be friends with him too. Only do say so; do say you will, or I shall never be happy, not even now."

Madame St. Laurent raised her head slowly and looked at her, pushing away the girl's fondling head that she might do so better. Then she said in a low, hoarse voice:

"Happy! Do you ever expect to be happy again? Are you quite hardened already then—you, so young!"

The tears welled up thickly in Vera's eyes. Was it hardened to look for happiness at her age: she who had had so little? She began to wish greatly that Marstland would come to her assistance. Could it be possible that he was still doing battle for her with her father?

"Mamma," she said gently, "I know it was wrong of me to disobey you about the Count; but I did wait and bear it a long time, and all that time George was waiting too, and true to me. Oh, you must own now how true he has been; that it was me he cared for; and, indeed, he would care for you, too, if you would let him. Has he not told you——"

"Who do you mean by 'he'? Of whom are you speaking?" Madame St. Laurent asked, harshly enough to bring the blood into Vera's cheek.

The poor child blushed crimson as she answered:

"Why—why who should I be speaking of but Dr. Marstland, mamma?"

Madame's dim eyes glittered.

"Marstland! Your lover; the man who has ruined you, persuaded you to leave your parents, your home, to forget all duty, all modesty, to forfeit your position as a Christian young woman, and— and a lady—you, who have been taught so different, so different, all your life! You think that wretch would dare to face or speak for one moment with your mother!"

The crimson on Vera's cheek deepened.

"Don't! Please, mamma, don't speak of him so," she said entreatingly. "Indeed, it is not—not just. He has not done what you say. He only took me away from home to be married, because he knew we could never be happy otherwise; that papa would never give his consent. But he is a Christian, too, and a gentleman. We were married in church. I can be just as good as—as——"

Madame St. Laurent put up both hands to stop her, with a kind of groan.

"Hush! Are you trying to deceive me still, or has he deceived you too? You talk of marriage, you poor, unhappy child! Has this man really persuaded you that you are married to him?"

Vera's lips quivered with wounded feeling. She stood up quickly.

"I am married!" she said with something like dignity. "I was married yesterday at the church here the moment even after we landed. If he is with papa now he will most likely have shown him the piece of paper—the certificate, is it not called?—that tells about it. Oh, mamma!" dropping on her knees again at her mother's side, and speaking in her old, appealing tone, "did you doubt it? Was it that made you look at me in that dreadful way and say such dreadful things? But you might have known I would be married as soon as ever I could get here; that I would not have stayed away otherwise. Did I not remember all you said about that Miss Deloraine? And I do not do improper things. I have been so careful that no one should even think I had. It was for that I made him promise not to tell anyone—even his own sister—that I had run away with him. I thought it might displease you for it to be said of me. Mamma, dear, if you would let him come up——"

"Come up!" repeated Madame, looking at her. "Where do you suppose then he is?"

Vera began to tremble. A sudden, sickening dread came over her.

"Why—why downstairs with papa," she answered, her cheeks paling. "Papa is there, is he not? I heard men's voices. Mamma, why do you look at me so? What do you mean? Was not Dr. Marstland with you last night? Isn't he——"

"Your father and I were on the sea all last night," Madame St. Laurent interrupted. "As for the man you speak of, we have not—fortunately for him—even seen him; and now, from what I hear, he has even escaped chastisement, the cowardly villain!"

"He—— Mamma, oh, for Heaven's sake, have pity on me! Don't speak in that way. Tell me what you mean," Vera cried in an agony, her face paling fearfully, her whole body shaking. Marstland not below; not with her parents at all! But then what—what could have become of him? "Where is he—my husband?" she whispered, sobbing violently.

Madame St. Laurent stretched out her hands pitifully towards her.

"He is not your husband. Oh! Vera, my poor, poor, misguided child, were you really ignorant enough, though living in France among French people all your life, to fancy that such a ceremony as you went through would have been legal for you, a French citizen under age, marrying without your parents' consent—that that would make you a wife? Oh, heaven! your father is ready to curse me for not having taught you better; but who would have thought there was any need to tell a girl about such things! Have you not seen brides going from the 'mairie' to the church again and again, and do you not remember how many years that Elise of ours waited to be married to Martin Lac, because her grandmother would not give her consent, and the girl's parents being dead she could not get married without it?"

Vera's eyes were rivetted on her mother in a kind of incredulous horror. Was she not married then? But in truth what did she really know about such things! And there was no Marstland present to reassure her or interrupt; nothing but the pattering of the rain upon the window, like a dreary echo to her mother's words. A feeling of faintness came over her.

"That was—in France," she said slowly. "He said it would all be different in England, and that Guernsey was the same as England."

"And did he say that you would become English, or cease to be a French girl, by coming over to Guernsey?" Madame asked bitterly. "Child, child, he has been deceiving you the whole time. He knew the law well enough, and that no clergyman in France would have married you; that, though he might have passed you off as his wife among his own friends as long as it suited him to do so here, in your own country, in the eyes of the law, of the friends and servants who have known you all your life, of your own father, Vera, you would be nothing better than any poor ruined wretch in the street; while he himself would have nothing more to do when he was tired of you, but take you back to France and leave you there to starve; desert you as he has done now, and perhaps marry——"

A shriek from Vera interrupted her. The girl was standing upright, swaying to and fro, her hands outstretched, her eyes wild and staring.

"Oh! hush, hush! He has not deserted me. Where is he?" she cried out, making an unsteady movement as if to reach the

door. "It isn't true. It can't be. He will tell you himself if he is alive, if someone has not killed him to prevent his coming back to me. He knows. Oh! I want him. I want him. Let me go to him."

Madame St. Laurent put her arms round her, holding her tight, the tears streaming down her own face.

"My dear, my poor child, you can't. Oh, Vera! bad as you've behaved, low as you've dragged us all, down to the very dirt indeed, I can't but be sorry from my heart for you. I'm your mother still, whatever you are, though the man you forsook me for has forsaken you. He left here by the mail boat this morning. You won't see him any more."

And then she staggered and had to call for help, for Vera had fallen heavily forward in her arms in a fainting fit.

Fortunately Mrs. Nicholls was near. She had only been in the next room indeed during the whole colloquy; both her interest and her curiosity in the poor young bride so mysteriously stranded on her mercy having been roused to fever pitch about two hours previously by the arrival at her door of a fly out of which had stepped a middle-aged gentleman and lady, sorely agitated and dishevelled in their appearance, who announced themselves as the parents of a young lady whom her lodger, Dr. Marstland, had run away with and entrapped into an illegal marriage the day before. Fortunately they had discovered the elopement within a couple of hours of its occurrence, owing to the father of Petit-Jean having caught his son in the act of counting over his ill-gotten gains on the previous night, and forced a confession out of him as to where they came from and all he knew of the intrigue which he had assisted in, after which he only waited for the morning light before taking the culprit up to Les Châtaigniers and handing him over to his master. A visit to the young lady's room to test the truth of the story had disclosed, not only the fact of her absence, but, in the pocket of one of her dresses, a note from Dr. Marstland alluding sufficiently plainly to his arrangements for the Guernsey marriage to make it easy for them to follow; and the unhappy parents had set out accordingly with the least possible delay; and, thanks to the kindness of a friend who had spared no trouble or expense in assisting and expediting their journey, had arrived in Guernsey little more than twelve hours

after the runaways. There they had gone straight to the church named in Marstland's letter, had knocked up clerk and clergyman, ascertained that the marriage had actually taken place on the previous afternoon; and having obtained the bridegroom's address had come on thither burning with indignation and despair, and fully expecting to surprise the couple at their conjugal breakfast.

Their utter astonishment, therefore, at hearing of Marstland's mysterious disappearance ever since seven o'clock on the previous evening, and of their daughter (whom despite all wrathful threats they had had grave doubts of being able to remove except by his own consent from her husband's protection) being actually in their power unfriended and alone, may be better imagined than described. It resulted in the calling in of a second middle-aged gentleman, who had remained at the foot of the garden-steps as if to prevent the possibility of escape by any one within, and whom Mrs. Nicholls afterwards described as looking like "a well-dressed tiger as was just mad for somebody to tear." A rapid conversation in French took place between the two gentlemen, after which the second comer contented himself with listening while the parents cross-examined the landlady as to everything that had occurred from the moment of the bride and bridegroom's arrival at her house till that, barely an hour later, when Marstland made his sudden and inexplicable exit, on pretence of going to the post-office, and never returned. Mrs. Nicholls also told of how the young man had taken her rooms a little over a fortnight back, but had scarcely lived in them at all in the interim; how he had spoken of expecting his wife to join him for the last week; and how from the preparations he made for her and the manner of both young people she had guessed that the wifehood was not of long standing.

"So that when she told me, crying her heart out, pore gurl, as the wedding wasn't over ten minutes afore she come into my house I wasn't a bit surprised," the landlady went on; "though whatever come over 'im afterwards, or how he could have left 'er, I can't fathom."

Father and mother looked at each other in agitated silence, and then Madame St. Laurent said in a trembling voice:

"But you say she told you she knew where he was."

"Yes; but it was quite a sudden idee

with her, for she'd been cryin' dreadful before, an' begging me to send Nicholls out 'igh and low to see for any sign of 'im. What she meant, either, I don't know, for she wouldn't say; but even so she only expected 'im to be kept a little while; and she wouldn't go to bed, but just set down in the armchair above there, watching for him, and so cried herself to sleep; which wore out she must ha' been, poor young lady! for, though I've been to the door twice this morning to look at her, she 'adn't stirred; and such an in'cent, baby look on her pore little face as I 'adn't the 'eart to wake her, knowing there was nothink but bad news to give her of the 'usband she'd be sure to ask for the first thing."

"But then you have news! Nom d'Dieu! where is he, the accursed villain?" cried M. St. Laurent, so fiercely that the landlady, for all her ready volubility, shrank back.

"If you can call it news, sir," she said timidly, "which I own it don't sound credible under the circumstances, as I said myself; only if not he, where can he be? which I observed to Nicholls when he come back, about 'alf-an-hour ago, and brought me word as a gent answerin' in every way to Dr. Marstland's description had embarked aboard the packet boat for Southampton this morning, just five minutes afore she started and not ten afore Nicholls got down to the pier. I was only just a saying to 'im, 'Whatever can it mean, and 'ow shall I break it to that pore gurl?' when you drove up; an' thankful I am, 'aving a mother's 'eart myself, as she's got a mother to take care of 'er."

"The Lord grant I am not too late to do so. I can't understand it. I don't know what to think. Can he have been arrested and carried back to England on some other charge? But, take me to my daughter first. It is she that matters most to me," Madame exclaimed brokenly. "St. Laurent, you will wait a little while longer! You will be patient while I talk to her; while I——" And then she turned away, the tears gushing from her eyes, and followed Mrs. Nicholls upstairs to the room where, as we know, Vera was already awake and listening curiously to the sound of their voices and footsteps.

Poor child! It seemed cruel to drag her back from the merciful unconsciousness which followed on the shock of her mother's tidings; and though the latter had tenderness enough to step aside when

she saw the girl's eyes opening at last, and let the landlady's less suggestive face be the first to greet them, poor Vera had not even the comfort of that momentary forgetfulness of sorrow which often follows on insensibility. Her first question, interrupting Mrs. Nicholls' well-meant words of soothing and encouragement, proved that those last spoken to her were still ringing in her ears.

"Oh! where is he? It isn't true that he has gone away—has left me. Tell me—you know—where is he?"

Mrs. Nicholls looked from the piteously appealing eyes to those of Madame St. Laurent, which answered back: "Tell her," and the woman obeyed.

"My pore dear miss," she said compassionately, but with an accent on the "miss," instead of "ma'am," which the girl felt instinctively; "I'm sorry to say it, but I do fear, I do indeed, it's too true. Nicholls went down to the pier 'isself this morning, while you was still sleeping, to make enquiries, and there he learned that a gentleman, every way answering to your 'usband, had sailed in the steamer for Southampton ten minutes afore; a big man, dressed in a brown overcoat and light check trousers, and with broad shoulders an' beard and moustache. He was the only gentleman passenger from here to-day, so the folks on the pier 'ad noticeed 'im more particularly. But don't you fret, don't you now, my dear; for, if he's deceived you, you're fortunate per'aps to have seen the last of 'im so soon; and you've got your dear ma to take care of you instead. Indeed, if you ask my opinion, miss, I'm thinking now that maybe the reason he went off so quick was that 'e'd got wind as she and your pa had come after you, and was afraid of being took up an' punished, as they tell me he could be, for abducting you."

But Vera scarcely listened to her.

"Oh!" she said almost scornfully, "you don't know him then, after all, or you wouldn't say that. He is never afraid of anything; he couldn't be, and he would not deceive me. I know he would not. They—they always said I might trust him, that he was so good. Oh, no! I vexed him, perhaps, by crying that time. It was very silly and wrong, for he had been so kind and gentle all the way, just like a father to me; but I did want Leah so much. Ah! you don't know who she is; but she was my friend, my only friend, and she had promised to be with me when

I was married to him. That was when we thought papa would consent, however; and when I found that she did not even know about it—that he had not told her what we were going to do, I was afraid she might blame me. I could not help crying—”

“My poor child,” said Madame St. Laurent, coming forward and taking the sobbing girl’s head on her shoulder. “Did Dr. Marstland tell you that? Did he make you believe that Leah Josephs knew nothing of his wicked plan to ruin you?”

Vera looked up at her imploringly.

“Oh, mamma, don’t! You think it is not true, because you don’t like her now, because you are angry with her; but it is only me you need be angry with in this. Indeed she did not know. She has never even written to me but once since you forbade it, because she said she would not do things secretly; and it was on account of that that he would not tell her anything about it beforehand. He said so. He—”

Madame St. Laurent made a little sign to the landlady, who brought her some torn fragments of pink paper. She spread them on the coverlid on which Vera was lying.

“He told you a falsehood, Vera,” she said distinctly. “Oh, my poor child, it seems cruel to have to speak so to you, but till you can be convinced of the utter worthlessness of this man, and of the kindness and wisdom of the parents who tried to save you from him—to secure a happy, honourable position for you instead of that of a poor, deceived, degraded girl, the shame and sorrow of her friends, the mockery of her enemies—there will be no use in trying to reclaim you. Read that. It is a telegram which he tore up and threw away, but which Mrs. Nicholls found later on. I don’t know when it was sent, for some bits of it are missing, but it is from Leah Josephs to this man, Marstland, and it speaks for itself.”

Alas! only too cruelly. The fragments of the telegram, put together and devoured by Vera with greedy eyes, read thus:

“... m received vica . . . if not and still time to delay entreat you to . . . marriage not be valid For Vera’s sake don’t will go to her father very anxious.”

“Vera,” said Madame St. Laurent almost solemnly, “you call Leah Josephs your best friend, and you say I am angry with her. Is that wonderful when you show

me that you care more for her, to whom all this harm is owing, than for your own mother? But, child, I have forgiven her even that. I am not angry with her now, for I can see that, however wrong she may have been in the beginning in introducing you to this man, she has at least been trying to save you from the sham marriage with him into which he was deluding you, while pretending to you that she knew nothing about it. Can you read the telegram? Do you see that she remonstrates with him, tells him that what he is proposing is vice and wickedness, that it will not be valid, entreats him for your sake to pause; even threatens to go to your father! Ah, Heaven! if she had only done so, the poor man might not be sitting down below here now, broken-hearted, and cursing the day his only child was born—born to shame him, to bring his grey hairs into dishonour. Oh, Vera, have you no feeling, no pity for us? Are you still degraded enough to care for a man who has so utterly deceived you?”

But the question was needless. Vera, crushed, beaten down, with all her faith and courage annihilated in one moment by this single proof of Marstland’s apparent treachery, was clinging to her mother with both her hot, trembling hands; shaking from head to foot; sobbing in an agony of grief and humiliation; entreating, with face hidden and in a voice choked with tears, that the mother, who had never spoken to her so tenderly, never held her so fondly in all her remembrance before, would forgive her, would take her home, would not let her be disgraced. Indeed, she had done nothing shameful, nothing wrong. She had tried to be so careful, so prudent, and he had been—like a brother! He had seemed so good. How could she help believing in him? If her mother only knew—

“Tell me everything then, that I may know,” Madame St. Laurent said, clasping the quivering, tortured creature, to her still closer, and speaking low but firmly. “Child, be frank with me now at least. I will forgive you in any case. I have done what I could for you already. Even in the first shock of finding out that you could leave me in such a way, and while there still seemed the hope of your repenting and turning back, or of our overtaking you, I took measures that none of the servants even, save Joanna, should know of your disappearance. I said that you were unwell, and sent her up with your

breakfast, and when the carriage was ready we managed to keep them away from it, and made them believe that you had got in first and were starting with us. But that is not enough. There is that wretch Bénétoite to think of, and the boy whom you, who boast of being so careful, have given the power of ruining you. You must be saved from them and all other gossiping tongues to whom this miserable story may have reached. Your good name, your reputation, without which you can't even look your own father in the face, you poor, unhappy child, has got to be established, and it can only be done by perfect frankness with me now. I must know everything, every word. You must keep nothing back——"

Down in the parlour the two gentlemen were still sitting, one with his grey head, and lined, swarthy face, bowed upon his arms on the table; the other, upright, silent, with folded arms, and only that tigerish glare in his eyes still testifying to the fever in him, when the door opened, and Madame St. Laurent entered, closing it behind her as she did so. Her face was still deadly pale, her thin cheeks channelled with tears, her bonnet-strings and the bosom of her gown damp with those poor Vera had shed in her embrace; but withal there was quite a different expression on her face from that which it had worn an hour and a half previously—a kind of joy, of triumph. She went straight up to her husband, and laying her hand on his shoulder, said, in a voice broken and gasping with emotion:

"St. Laurent, cheer up! It is not so bad as we feared."

M. St. Laurent raised his head, and looked at her without speaking; then his eyes travelled slowly, appealingly as it seemed, to his friend opposite, and as if moved by the same impulse, his wife also turned to the latter, her hands joined in entreaty, her tears falling fast as she spoke.

"Oh! Count, be generous. It is true, you must believe it. You must help us to protect and save her, you, without whom we could never have overtaken her; and it is her right, for, beyond the going away, she has done nothing to be ashamed of. She is as pure and innocent as a lily, my

girl. She doesn't even understand what she had to fear. It was a silly freak, a bit of childish romance into which she was beguiled, and she's nigh crushed to the earth with shame and sorrow now, for having been led into it; but that was all. The man (I don't understand him now, unless her goodness or that telegram frightened him) he treated her all along with as much respect as if she had been a Queen. Count, the child is broken-hearted enough over her folly; but it was only folly. She doesn't deserve to be punished more, to have her name blackened unjustly, her own father set against her. You can do what you like with him. Your influence is everything; but, all the same, I swear to you——"

"Madame, I accept your oath," said the Count. "There is no need for you to excite yourself. M. St. Laurent and I have discussed this matter, in which, as the betrothed husband of Mademoiselle Vera, I have as much interest as he. He knows my intentions, and he has agreed to them. Had mademoiselle suffered any insult or injury at the hands of the villain who has robbed me of her, it would have been my duty and pleasure to kill him. I would go to England, to Africa, if need be, for that purpose; but you assure me that such vengeance is needless—that, by carrying it out, I might, perchance only injure your daughter, whose honour it is my duty to uphold, Soit! If that honour is stainless it shall be upheld. If not—if perhaps you have thought it well to again deceive me—it will be at your own risk, and there may be two lives sacrificed instead of one. Your husband understands me. We have made our compact, and a de Mailly does not go back from his word. I accept your oath, Madame!"

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No. 920. NEW SERIES.

SATURDAY, JULY 17, 1886.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

ALEXIA.

BY ELEANOR C. PRICE,
Author of "Gerald."

CHAPTER XIV.

THEN came an afternoon in February ; a grey soft twilight falling upon a sunny day. Mr. Page had taken Alexia for her first drive. The world had been full of life and beauty, breathing of spring,—green wheat growing ; lambs crying in the fields ; snowdrops clustering in the brown banks of the old hedges. There was colour too. The hedges and the woods lay purple under a sun that softly warmed the air ; the ploughed land glowed red, and the distance was full of deep blue shadows.

Alexia had not spoken much as they drove slowly along the quiet lanes. She was still very weak ; and, like the earth waking from chill winter, she was waking from a long, strange dream, which had begun on that wonderful night of the fire, now some weeks ago. That night, in truth, had strained the cords of her whole nature till they snapped ; and the illness that followed was a time of rest, with short intervals of fever, when the people who were watching her learned a few things which affected them in various ways.

As she got better she asked no questions, and never alluded to the fire, or to her past life in any way ; she was amused with little things, liked to play with dogs and cats, and to have old jingles of verse read to her which she had known when she was a child.

The doctor warned them to keep her perfectly quiet ; to tell her nothing startling ; to let everything drift quite gently and naturally back into the old ways. He promised them that some day all the old

in everything, would return, and they could only trust him, and have patience.

She really was almost well now, though not yet like herself, and the day before this Mr. Page had ventured to ask her if Edmund might come. He had gone back to his parish immediately after the fire, and his mother and sisters were gone now. Mr. Page was left alone with Alexia, and felt very proud of his nursing.

She had said dreamily that of course Edmund might come ; and late that night they were expecting him. Mr. Page was glad to think that he and Alex would not meet till the next day.

The cheerfulness of the drawing-room certainly did credit to her nurse's thought and taste. The fire was blazing gloriously in that twilight, and her own old sofa, which had so often comforted her, was wheeled up close to it ; the mild evening light shone in at the window, half conquered by the fire. There were hyacinths of different colours, and a great bunch of pale violets on Alexia's own little table with all her treasures. A large screen had been set up, keeping out every breath of cold air from the bright fireside corner, where Mr. Page poured out tea for his little Alex after her drive, and amused her by making the dog play tricks, with a devouring wish in his heart all the time to tell her something, fighting with a rigorous sense of honour that said no.

"How very nice it is to be ill !" she said, looking up at him as he took her cup from her. "Many people don't think so," he said.

"I suppose I am getting well," said Alexia, "or I shouldn't understand it. But I believe it would be a grand thing if everybody could stop thinking for a month ; stop entirely, I mean, like me. Things come back quietly and nicely, and in their

Mr. Page muttered something, and poked the fire. He was not sure that he understood her.

"I thought Eddy would soon come," she said presently.

Her father in his own mind thought that Eddy might have stayed away a little longer. It was not wonderful that he, to whom the engagement had always been utterly unsatisfactory, should have caught at this unforeseen delay, this strange interruption to all their plans, with a vague hope that the whole affair might come to nothing after all. He knew too that Mrs. Rowley had been further shocked by words of Alexia's in those fever dreams of hers. Nothing to be ashamed of; only old childish recollections forcing their way; but if a name was ever mentioned, it was not Edmund's; and Mrs. Rowley, with the help of her former doubts and Mrs. Dodd's hints, now knew quite enough to make her uneasy about the future. But now seemingly Edmund, writing so soon to ask if he might come and see them, was quite free of any share in his mother's forebodings. This was not strange either; the man Alexia had promised to marry was not likely to wish to give her up. His mother might talk, but he would not believe her; if he had, Mr. Page would certainly have despised him more still.

"Shall you be glad to see him?" he said, watching Alexia under his eyelids in a quiet way he had.

Her face looked pale and wistful in the firelight; the thought of her lover's coming brought no brightness to her eyes or colour to her cheeks.

"Ask me no more questions, father; let that be a bargain," she said after a moment.

"And what's the other side of the bargain?" said Mr. Page.

"I will give you no more trouble, and be very good for the rest of my life."

"Thank you, Alex. I don't care about that at all," he said, leaning over the fire.

She smiled as she lay back on her cushions, saying in a low voice:

"What a bad man you are! But listen, I want to tell you something; and remember that I must have my own way. When you are talking to Eddy to-night, don't make me out less well than I am. He has been rather ill-treated, and we must try to make amends. We must not make any more delay now."

"Well, my dear, if it must be——" said Mr. Page after a long pause, during which

all the tenderness in Alexia's heart seemed to find its way into her eyes, not for Edmund, but for him.

"You know it must be, don't you?" she said in the same low, steady tone. "You did not expect me to break off my engagement now!"

"Of course not; you couldn't do it," said Mr. Page, hastily. "But I see no reason for any hurry. You are not half strong enough yet; it is absurd to talk about it yet. Edmund won't be so unreasonable."

Again there was a long silence. He sat bending forward, staring into the fire, and she lay in her warm corner watching him. At last she said:

"The sooner the better, I think, because I am not quite altogether to be trusted. I like Eddy with all my heart, you know; he is very good; I am not half good enough for him, that's true. But what would you have said to me, I wonder! That night I was very unhappy, and after I went to my room I thought for some time that I really could not marry him, and I meant to tell you in the morning. Wasn't it dreadful—the very day itself! Afterwards I knew what a wretch I was. One has heard of people doing such things—but it is dishonourable, isn't it? What would you have said?"

"I should not have liked you to do it," answered Mr. Page. "It would have been unlike you. But of course no one could have insisted—not I, Alex."

"No—things are in one's own power. However, I changed my mind, and if—if it had not been for the fire, everything would have happened as it ought. But—don't you understand?—having been rather torn in this way, I want everything to be settled soon now; I want it to be taken out of my own hands."

"You are right, my dear," said Mr. Page, rather thoughtfully. "Everything shall be settled as you and Edmund wish, and I think you are likely to agree."

Late that night he was sitting by the fire again, with Edmund opposite him instead of Alexia. He had received his nephew with extra kindness, for after all he knew that there was some truth in her words—Eddy had been rather ill-treated. He had been pushed aside a little roughly at the time of the fire and her illness; he certainly had been anything but the hero of that day, which was to have been the most important in his life. It was partly his own fault, for being so easily pushed

aside; but, as a fact, no one had thought about him much, or seemed to care whether he stayed or went away—except his mother, and she was not comforting. It was true, he ought to have been more considered; and, now that his anxiety about Alexia was over, Mr. Page was quite just enough to see that, and he made up by friendliness now for his abstraction then.

At the same time, observing Edmund closely, he was rather puzzled by his manner, which was grave, dismal, and dreamy. He listened to all that Mr. Page told him about Alexia, but did not ask many questions, and showed none of the eagerness or deep interest that would have been natural, and which in fact belonged to his character. He was so strangely oppressed that Mr. Page became impatient, and presently began to talk to him in plain words about the future.

"Well, Edmund," he said, "I suppose we shall soon see the end of your troubles. You must be beginning to think that you have waited long enough. It has not been my fault or Alexia's—you'll acknowledge that."

Edmund did not respond to the encouragement: perhaps he thought it was Alexia's fault, a little bit. There was so plainly something on his mind, as he sat there frowning and twisting his hands, that Mr. Page said kindly, after a minute or two:

"Well, my boy, what is it?"

"I don't know that any one is to be blamed, except myself, for blindness," Edmund broke out suddenly. "Nobody tried to take me in—I'm sure she didn't—but the fact is, Uncle William, I have come down on purpose to have a serious talk with you. I want you to tell me something, if you will."

"Go on," said Mr. Page. He looked rather stern now, but Edmund did not mind that, and went straight forward with his awkward subject.

"You remember that I travelled down with Mr. Melville, the day before the fire, and I told you he talked in a queer way, and said he was coming to the wedding, and I was not to tell Alexia——"

"Your mother has been talking to you," said Mr. Page, interrupting him. "She had some nonsense in her head about Charles Melville—but I should have thought you were too wise to be troubled by that."

"Wait till I have told you all," said Edmund. "He said things to me that I did not repeat at the time. He told me

that Alexia had refused him. Of course I knew that he married afterwards; but that was nothing strange in a man of his kind; he may have had many reasons for that. Money, for instance; I suppose it was money; and he may not by any means have forgotten—in fact, of course one couldn't be blind to what everybody else saw the other day. You know this is not a mere idea of mine, or my mother's. You will be just to me—and be good enough to tell me why Alexia refused him."

As his uncle did not reply at once to this startling demand, he went on:

"At first, when I knew the fact, I only thought that she did not like him, and that did not surprise me. But since then I have begun to guess that there may have been some other reasons—not that at all—and I should like to know the truth."

"Why do you think so?" said Mr. Page.

"My mother has heard things, which probably are not all false. She has heard how very intimate they used to be—and Alex has said things herself. She did not know what she was saying, but then—well, you see, I should like to be sure, and to know the truth of it all. Of course I have always known that she was too good for me—but if, besides that, she does not really care for me, it only means misery for both of us."

"I understand you," said Mr. Page.

"You are right, and I will tell you Alex's whole history—in confidence, of course."

"Thank you," said Edmund, and then he sat still and listened.

After all there was not much to tell; but the one fact was enough for him. Charles Melville had been Alexia's first love, and she his; she had only refused him because her father and his mother persuaded her that she must. He could not say that he thought she had ever been really happy since.

"Why did she——?" Edmund exclaimed, passionately, and then something choked him. He coloured crimson, and covered his face with his hands; then he was as pale again as before.

Mr. Page did not feel at all inclined to laugh at him.

"To tell you the truth, my boy," he said very kindly, "that was a question I often asked myself, and never could answer—at least, not to my satisfaction. But she has always thoroughly appreciated you. You have no cause to complain of her. She would marry you to-morrow, if I would let her."

Edmund tried to speak, but it was still a difficulty; at last he began to get out some broken words.

"I don't complain of her. I only wish I had never seen her. If they care for each other so much—as I know they do—there are plenty of things I can see now—that very evening I could not understand her—I remember, when she was showing me the presents—I mean, how can I marry her now, and make her unhappy for life!"

"She won't be that, Eddy," said Mr. Page. "She is a brave little soul, and women have many things to divert their minds."

"Even if I had known all this a month ago," said Edmund, in his deep agitation. "I might still have thought, then, that I could make her happy, because she is so brave and good—but now—how could I—how can I help thinking——?"

"What you have no reason to think," said Mr. Page.

"You are very good; but I know what I must do. I shall write to Alex to-night, and tell her that she is free. I shall go off to-morrow morning without seeing her. And some day she will be happy in her own way," he said with a sort of vehemence.

Mr. Page looked at him in silence for a minute or two, feeling honestly sorry for him.

"I regret this whole affair sincerely," he said. "But I must remind you, Alex is a good girl; she has given you her promise, and you can trust her. If you choose to let things go on as they are, you will never repent it. But you know the facts, and you must decide for yourself. At the same time I must say, in the end, I doubt whether this marriage would be for the greatest happiness of either of you. But I have doubted that all along."

"Certainly not for hers," said Edmund.

"Nor for yours—a sensitive chap like you," said Mr. Page.

"I've almost forgotten what it feels like to be happy," said the young man; and then he started up and wished his uncle good-night.

After he had gone Mr. Page sat long over the fire, very thoughtful, with a rather melancholy smile on his face. Then he fetched his favourite Horace, and read it, as he often did, with a philosophical reflection that no one would have given him credit for. It gave him a wide view of human nature, so passing, yet unchangeable. In this there was a certain consolation, and yet the great vague sadness of every wide view.

HELIGOLAND.

IN THREE PARTS. PART III.

THERE are neither horses nor cows on the island of Heligoland, a few goats only being kept, whose extremely unpleasant milk is sold at a fabulous price. These, with four or five sheep waiting their turn to be killed, compose the whole reserve stock of the island, and browse upon rocks, flints, and a little short green grass. There are no roads, but the clean little toy-like-looking lodging-houses, bright as paint and whitewash can make them, are popped down on the velvet turf anywhere, to all appearance without foundations. They are all of one storey, and everything is sacrificed to compactness; otherwise in the fierce winds which assail and occasionally cover the islands with driving sea foam, the houses would be literally blown over the cliff. I saw a few small patches of potatoes; but there is really no room for anything to be cultivated, and the few flowers about are stunted as if shrinking from the salt sea-winds. The unwritten tongue spoken is of course akin to German, but no more resembling the language of Berlin than Cape Dutch does that spoken in Holland. They appear to be hardy, law-abiding people, of somewhat slow understanding, who must work hard, and make all they can while the summer bathing-season lasts, knowing that a long, dark, stormy, northern winter will soon settle down upon them, during which all the population, save the fishermen and pilots, just hibernate in their houses. From November to April the vast caves which honeycomb the perpendicular and inaccessible sides of the island are alive and resounding with the melancholy, ceaseless cry of the sea-birds whose winter home is among the fissures of these storm-lashed rocks. Much good shooting is obtained by a hardy sportsman during this inclement season, but at great fatigue and often peril of his life. The town, so called, or "Underland," is at the bottom of the steps, and they have much pride in a rather fine "Conversation-haus," or public assembly room, where, during the season, a band discourses sweet music, and a little mild dancing, on an excellent floor, can be indulged in, supposing the gentlemen to be in correct evening costume (they are very particular about this). The Kapellmeister was a man of great eminence at the time of which I speak, and had been in the royal band at Vienna. Fish catching and curing

occupy the greater part of the islanders' lives, and fish is their staple food, the supply luckily never failing.

The church on the Oberland, storm-beaten, unclothed, and bleak, is a very old building, really its sole merit, for it can boast of no beauty of form or architecture, without or within. Though an English colony for more than seventy years, the service was in German, a Lutheran clergyman officiating. The congregation, whom I can only justly describe as being not "well favoured," sat in their high, dreary pews, with only the crowns of their heads visible, and moved nothing but their eyes, with a stolid, stony look, like tortoises, entirely devoid of interest or enthusiasm, while their excellent pastor droned monotonously through the lengthy service; but they showed that at all events they were not without excellent lungs when the few hymns were sung, the stout building ringing with their hoarse notes, as they rose and fell like the sea surging in a cave.

There were two christenings in the middle of the morning service, both pretty and interesting. First, some little children, related to the babies about to be baptized, brought mugs of water, carried with exceeding care, lest they should be broken, which were emptied into the font. The godmothers, who wore bride-like wreaths of flowers upon their heads, accompanied by the godfather (who looked extremely depressed) conducted the babies and arranged everything, the parents never appearing at all; and we were told that a marriage between the sponsors was not considered legal, as they were too closely related! Perhaps this fact accounted for their melancholy appearance. This law seemed the more odd, inasmuch as a Heligolander frequently espoused his own niece without let or hindrance.

Suspended by cords from the heavy rafters above were several small models of ships under full sail, gaudily painted, of decidedly Dutch build, presented by sailors who had vowed them to their church when in peril on the seas—a relic of Roman Catholic days curiously surviving in a Lutheran church, where all was severely simple. A lengthy prayer (the Governor whispered to me) was for abundant hauls of fish. I observed that many joined heartily in this prayer who had been wholly unmoved during the remainder of the service. It evidently came home to their slow minds, which is scarcely astonishing, seeing that to many of the con-

gregation it meant the difference between starvation or competence. Not so very long ago I was informed "a good wreck" was publicly prayed for, in lieu of good hauls of fish, with great fervour. It showed that, however mistaken the object, they had faith in the efficacy of prayer. There were no children in the island, unless the grave, miniature men, exactly the pattern of their fathers, and solid, buncy little maidens with caps on, could be considered as such; but they appeared to be grown up from birth, and not to have an idea of amusing themselves.

The Governor's one thought was the welfare of Heligoland, well assisted as he was by his trusty German island secretary, a faithful servant to the nation for half a long lifetime. The latter, however, had his distractions in bird-stuffing, and closely observing the habits of the many migratory birds congregating here, to say nothing of painting on stones, and many other accomplishments. The Governor himself—who, extraordinary as it seemed, was content to vegetate upon a rock in the North Sea for twenty years—had been a Guardsman well known about London, and had shown much gallantry in the Crimea, as aide-de-camp to Lord Cardigan. It was his own choice to remain in Heligoland, for promotion to larger governments had repeatedly been offered to him, and as often declined. During our stay a serious weight lay upon His Excellency's mind—no less than an appalling deficit in the yearly budget! We used to laugh heartily over his troubles, because this deficit that was in future ages to create a national debt for Heligoland amounted to £22 6s. 8d.! We proposed that six per cent. debentures for the amount should be issued, and taken up in £1 shares, by the merry party staying at Government House. But, while alluding to deficits, mention must be made of his triumphs, which lay in the success of a constitution recently granted to the Heligolanders, a necessary part of their bodily property they had previously been without.

We had much pleasant society, the French and Spanish Ambassadors to Berlin, the former bearing the honoured name of Talleyrand-Perigord—well known in London society twenty years before—together with Secretaries of Legation, were our frequent guests at Government House: and we were all much interested in Mr. Mullier, a fine young German, who had been the third officer of the famous "Alabama," and who, under the care of his uncle, Dr. von

Aschen, was slowly recovering from a dangerous wound received in the action. Many of our evenings were passed in the Conversation-haus, where all the pleasant people met together and enjoyed the cheeriest talks to the music of our fine Austrian band. Cards were there for those who liked them, but high play and gambling were strictly forbidden. We generally mounted the steps in a body, about ten p.m., as very early hours were kept all over the island, always ending by a steady look-out from the lighthouse, at the bottom of the garden, in case any Danes, Austrians, or other marauders were on the move.

The few flowers that survive the strong, salt winds, are generally scentless and stunted, and some there are which will only give forth their scent to the night and early morning. A day or two after my arrival at Government House I was awake in the grey dawn by the powerful scent of a curious trailing blossom, suspended from the trelliswork of the verandah; its name is unfortunately forgotten, but the delicious perfume never can be. Those mornings in June and July, from this quiet, closely-paled garden, are a dream of peace. The blue sea only heaved and laboured in great undulations, as if in sobbing remembrance of the fierce storm which had torn its now placid breast. From my perch high up in the lighthouse I could see spread out with beautiful map-like precision the greenish milky white patches stretching towards the Föhr Islands, denoting shoal water, the white sails of ships, and long black trails of smoke on the horizon, all culminating to the same point—the entrance to the Elbe, while to seaward the great North Sea traffic passed and repassed ceaselessly to and fro. The climate at this period of the year is excellent, neither too hot nor too cold; and my remembrances of Heligoland in the summer are most cheerful, healthful, and pleasant.

"But, ah! dear lady," explained the poor Governor, "there is another side to the picture; you know not our winter, when the pale sun rises so late and sets so early, when the sea beats and flings itself as in furious wrath against these hard rocks—rocks against which hundreds of tough ships have been ground to splinters." He told me that all day long in the drear, half-light winter, vast flights of Arctic birds, I believe Lapland buntings, wheel and scream with loud discordant cries, as if in pain, among the rocky crevices high above the sea-foam. Heavy storms of hurricane force sweep over

the bare unprotected island for weeks together, only to be succeeded by thick, rolling sea-fog, wet as rain. And then how dreary the long hours of darkness, when no one leaves the shelter of the sturdy, one-storeyed little houses, save the hardy fisher-folk, who are like the sea-gulls in their contempt for danger and familiarity with the heaving waves. These fishermen will brave the greatest dangers to succour each other in need, but there never comes a time when their hearts are melted to tenderness and pity—they are grave and stolid of speech and aspect, old with toil while yet young these Norsemen, descendants of the hardy Danes of ages past. In the frequent and dangerous sea-fogs that envelop this island, the piercing cries of multitudes of sea-birds hovering around these hollow, wave-worn caves, are sometimes heard by mariners many miles away at sea, and serve as an invaluable warning of the proximity of danger. After a hard winter vast masses of pack ice float down the Elbe and out to sea, catching the poor little island traders and fishing boats in an icy and often dangerous embrace.

We had one great storm in June, when the thundering, booming surf beat against the rocks to seaward with the force of a battering ram. As the wind hurled its furious breath against the low-lying buildings of Government House, one comprehended why it was but one storey, and turned in bed endeavouring in vain to deaden the sound of the violent blast, which threatened to uproot the frail house and hurl it over the rocks into the sea below.

Heligoland is the favourite (proposed) resting-place for those vast flights of woodcock which, in the month of October, leave the fast fading forests and bare rye-fields of Norway and Sweden, where they have hatched out their young and fattened the young birds upon the resinous shoots of larch and succulent bilberries of the far North. At the first ice-blast they prepare to fly south, and about the middle of October every eye in Heligoland is on the alert watching for their arrival. Right across the narrowest end of the island high poles are fixed in the ground; from pole to pole strong fishing nets are stretched, resembling gigantic tennis nets. All is now prepared for the "hospitable" reception of the poor, tired birds, and at last the happy day arrives. Sometimes during church time the cry is heard, "The woodcock are coming!" when every soul,

including the clergyman, rushes out, and seizing a long club-stick provided for the purpose, watch the long, black, wavy streak in the sky till it comes nearer and nearer—the poor birds fly very low in their fatigue after so long a flight, and hitting against the nets fall down and are killed in enormous numbers. This is the rich harvest of the year for the Heligolanders, and boats are immediately got ready to convey the dead birds to Hamburg. Woodcock pâté is also made for the next week without ceasing, and fetches large prices in Germany, being very like Strasburg pâté. So few escape to continue their flight that this massacre of the innocents may account for the comparatively rare appearance of these excellent birds in our English woods. Mr. Gätke, the island secretary, whose life has been spent here, and whose knowledge of the habits of birds and their migration is second to none, has contributed many papers on the subject culled from a personal observation of forty long years. Not only do the woodcock congregate in great quantities on this island, but enormous flights of chaffinches, buzzards, hedge-sparrows, jays, and Lapland buntings. Mr. Gätke observed also millions of fieldfares. These birds arrived during the cold winter of 1878; in February of the same year skylarks in equal numbers were seen; so that it seemed as if birds which usually stay at home became migratory under the pressure of unusual cold. All these rarely seen birds Mr. Gätke noticed during the two severe winters following that of 1878. In one of his late papers quoted in "The Times," and all well worth reading, Mr. Gätke remarks that "birds about to take flight only commence the journey with a favourable wind; they prefer what sailors call a beam wind, for which they will wait many days with admirable patience and almost human intelligence." He also says that "some of the routes of migratory birds have been supposed to be ancient coast-lines along which their progenitors formerly used to travel, the descendants from generation to generation having since followed that identical track, though the land has long ago disappeared into the sea." This may account for the woodcock still taking Heligoland in their flight, as, if tradition does not lie, Heligoland and the mainland of Schleswig Holstein were one in bygone ages. Large quantities of the feathers worn in ladies' hats come from Heligoland.

where the destruction of birds for their plumage is one of the great and never-failing industries, and where, luckily, the supply is so enormous that there is no question of extermination, or of even perceptibly lessening their numbers.

Bathing was of course the beginning and end of a visitor's existence. In the morning a boat was chartered which rowed you over to Sandy Island; after disporting yourself in a more or less vigorous manner for the requisite time, a loose toilette was made, and you betook yourself to one of the little cafés adjoining for a late breakfast; an essentially lazy life, but then it was part of the "cure," and carefully superintended by the "Cure Doctor," who arrived at Heligoland with the first visitor and departed with the last.

Our last excitement was the sudden appearance of the whole Austrian fleet coming out of the Elbe, heading for Föhr, the paddle-steamer "Elizabeth" having fishing-boats laden with coal, and a small river-steamer in tow. They evidently meant business this time. It was known that a final armistice had been agreed upon; but no official intimation had been communicated to the Austrians, who astutely proceeded to take these islands before the news could reach them. Briak cannonading was heard all day long; but Captain Hanmer, the Danish commander, retreated at nightfall, with his row gunboats, into the shallows, where none could follow, and so escaped capture. Peace was made at the conclusion of this last armistice, and finally signed at Vienna, October, 1864.

Cricket matches now became the great amusement, until they were put a stop to by telegrams ordering the "Wolf" and her consort to England, there to prepare for a commission in the West Indies. Her mission in the North Sea was over, and the question remained, how I was best to get home, as the ship was to sail early on the following day, and our weekly steamer to Hamburg had but just left us.

A telegram was sent by the Governor to the captain of the English steamer "Countess of Lonsdale," which was to sail from Hamburg, for London, on the morrow, requesting him to call off the island and embark a lady passenger. This telegram was unfortunately never received. It was intended that the Governor's mail boat, a small craft about twenty-eight feet long, should take me on board and cut off the steamer somewhere between the Elbe light vessel and Cuxhaven. I accordingly started at

9 a.m., with a fresh S.W. wind; but sailed into a dense white mist, losing sight of the "Wolf" with bitter regret, as she swiftly steamed out to sea in the opposite direction. For seven hours we bobbed up and down in the rough chopping sea left by a gale of wind, I suffering agonies of seasickness. Eric, the Governor's trusty coxswain, a sturdy Heligolander, who, with two others had charge of me, vainly entreated that I would drink a "leetle grogs," and kindly covered me up with boat-cloaks. At last, when about five miles outside the outer Elbe light-ship, at four p.m., our steamer was seen coming out. We sailed up alongside her, and actually touched her sponson. Eric gesticulated violently, and shouted "Stop," that I was a passenger, and I stood up in the boat, waved and beckoned; but notwithstanding that we had hoisted the Jack, they only screamed angrily at us and never stopped for a moment. My feelings may be faintly imagined when I realised that she was really steaming swiftly away, leaving me still twenty miles out at sea, in an open boat, with none but Eric and his men (all trusty and excellent creatures, however). Having made quite sure that the steamer had no intention of returning for me, there was nothing for it but to go on to Cuxhaven, where I landed, a miserable rag, about 8.30 p.m. Having paid and dismissed good Eric, who was still dazed and bewildered by such extraordinary conduct on the part of the steamer, and as to what His Excellency, i.e., the Governor, would say, I walked about the town in the quiet summer evening, and saw all the world of Cuxhaven got up very smartly, who were coming to the hotel where I had been deposited by Eric, for a public dance to be given that night. Not caring to join in the revels, I went cheerlessly to bed, five storeys high, in a room that could only have been out of the builder's hands a day or two before, as the plastered walls were literally streaming with wet.

Telegraphing to Hamburg, I found that nothing but a cattle-steamer for Hull would call at Cuxhaven next day. She was my only chance. Accordingly I went on board the steamer, "Emerald Isle," early next morning, and found a berth vacant. For two days and nights I endured untold smells and horrors, added to my usual luck, a hard gale. I think I should have died of nausea and exhaustion had not the kind captain lent me his deck cabin during the day, into which the many villainous odours could not penetrate. On the third day all

that was left of me was landed at Hull thankful beyond measure to be on shore again. The explanation afterwards given by the captain of the "Countess of Londale," in answer to the Governor's and our letter of remonstrance, was, that first, he had received no telegram, and had, therefore, no reason to expect me; and secondly, that being himself below, the mate on deck did not see our boat till she was actually under her sponson, and not half hearing or understanding Eric's German, owing to the wash of the paddle-wheels, he fancied we had unintentionally got in his way, and were in danger of being run down, had taken our gesticulations for angry remonstrance, and soon ceased looking at us. However that may be, I can never forget my despair at being left in the open sea, out of sight of land, in a small boat with night coming on, by that cruel steamer.

THOUGHT-READING.

Few subjects have excited wider interest in recent times than thought-reading, or thought-transference. Public performers have enchained the attention of multitudes, while, in private, numerous experiments have been instituted, with an amount of success which has frequently astonished the performers themselves.

"Finding the pin" has become as popular a pastime in some circles as forfeits or charades, and localising imaginary pains, or deciphering the numbers upon concealed bank notes, has been again and again accomplished with complete success. The fascination of the subject is not difficult to explain. If mind can influence mind apart from the ordinary media of the senses; if, by any hitherto unrecognised process, one individual can succeed in fathoming the intellectual operations of another; it is obvious that we have here a new discovery fraught with keen interest and grave importance. If, on the contrary, the experiments of the thought-readers involve no new principle, and are capable of interpretation on the lines of ascertained knowledge, it is worth our while to enquire into their genuine explanation.

The writer has witnessed and taken part in many thought-reading experiments, and he is convinced that, in conjunction with much that recalls the familiar tricks of the conjuror, these performances contain a germ of half-forgotten truth, which, if closely scrutinised, may be found capable of throwing light on that mysterious region

where body and mind join, where physiology begins to tread with halting steps, and psychology has hitherto found no sure resting-place. He proposes to examine thought-reading in the light afforded by the much-neglected facts of Hypnotism, or Electro-biology, where he believes the rational explanation of many puzzling phenomena may be found.

For the sake of clearness we may describe thought-reading experiments as divisible into three categories.

First. Finding some concealed article, such as a pin.

Second. Performing some definite act, or series of acts, previously agreed upon by the audience.

Third. Localising some imaginary pain.

In the first experiment, which is now generally familiar, the performer retires to an ante-room, while the person selected to act as medium conceals a pin or other article in the room or hall. The performer then returns, seizes the hand of the medium, and proceeds to search for the concealed article. Some performers prefer that the medium should place his hand, or simply a finger, in contact with their foreheads. Others, again, are most successful when a chain, or band of metal, connects their wrist with that of the medium. The course of the performance varies. Sometimes the performer dashes off with scarcely a moment's hesitation, and, dragging the medium after him, speedily succeeds in the object of his search. Sometimes he slowly proceeds with much hesitation, and fails entirely. Most frequently he advances on his search with apparent uncertainty, then the impulse grows stronger, and finally he dashes forward with perfect confidence, and puts his hand unhesitatingly upon the concealed article. In this experiment the performer is blindfolded, and can obtain no assistance from the sense of sight.

In the second type of experiment, the audience, or committee, agree upon some specified act, such as walking through the hall along a pre-arranged track, playing upon a piano, smoking a pipe, etc. This pre-arranged performance is communicated to the medium, who puts himself in contact with the performer, and the performance proceeds as before.

In the third type of cases, the medium imagines that he is suffering pain in some part of his organism, and the performer takes his hand and, after a little manipulation, places his finger on the part imaginarily affected.

There is no limit to the varieties of thought-reading experiments, but the above may serve as fair specimens. It is an indispensable condition of success that the medium should fix his thoughts, resolutely and without intermission, upon the act about to be performed.

These experiments have been greeted with a scepticism and a credulity often alike unreasoning. Medical men especially, were for a time loud in their disbelief, and persisted in the theory that these performances were either mere fraud or else a revival of conjuring, although the closely-allied phenomena of hypnotism might have served as a warning against an entirely incredulous attitude. As regards the hypothesis of fraud, whatever may be thought of professional thought-readers, the honesty and integrity of many private performers are entirely above suspicion, and gross imposture of any kind may therefore be summarily ruled out of court. Many of these performers inform us that they cannot themselves explain their own experiments, but they believe that, in some way, directing influence passes to them from the medium, whether by the senses or by some new channel of communication. The analogies of conjuring or sleight-of-hand equally break down. Marvellous as are the conjuror's arts, it is inconceivable that by any manual dexterity a performer could succeed in such an experiment as discovering the site of an imaginary pain. We must distinguish between belief in the genuineness of the performance and adhesion to any particular explanation of it. Many persons, who are thoroughly convinced of the reality of the performance and the bona fides of the performers, quite logically reject the theory which is involved in the terms "thought-reading" and "thought-transference."

Our first conclusion, then, is that the performances are real, and that they cannot be explained on any known theory of conjuring or sleight-of-hand. It is plain that knowledge, force, direction, or thought passes from the medium to the performer—the question to be determined is whether this knowledge or force passes by the ordinary channel of the senses or by some new sense. Is thought-reading merely a fine variety of tactile sensation? Is it simply a development of the muscular sense? Is it nerve-sympathy of some more delicate kind than we are familiar with? These are questions of much interest to the physiologist and to the psychologist, and it

would be a misfortune to science if they were relegated to the realm of idle wonder or ignorant credulity.

Before we can advantageously approach such questions as these, we must examine somewhat more closely the conditions of thought-reading experiments. First of all, contact of some kind between the medium and the performer is indispensable. Hand to hand, hand to forehead, wrist linked by a chain to wrist, are the most usual methods, but hitherto experiments have not succeeded without some species of physical contact. Here a materialistic hypothesis at once creeps in. If thought-reading were really a question of thought; if the immaterial processes of one mind could influence those of another by any channel except that of the senses; physical contact should be superfluous. We may thus safely advance to a second conclusion, viz., that thought-reading is not a mysterious and immaterial process, but that in some way it is dependent on tactile sensation, whether ordinary touch, the "muscular sense," or some "tertium quid."

A favourite theory with many persons is that thought-reading is simply muscle-reading, and that the medium directs the performer by the contraction of his muscles. According to this view, the medium consciously, or more often unconsciously, draws the performer towards the concealed object, or else yields readily when he is going right and resists when he is going wrong. Unskilled mediums undoubtedly do this sometimes in amateur performances. Whether from good nature, or from a desire to share in the applause which greets the successful accomplishment of the attempted experiment, they frequently jog the performer and help him on towards the hidden object. At other times such assistance is given by mediums quite unconsciously, and without any sense that the understood conditions of the experiment are being thus violated. But, however applicable this explanation may be in some exceptional cases, there are others where such a hypothesis breaks down entirely. Frequently the performer plainly drags the medium after him, while the latter remains perfectly passive. Experiments have succeeded even when the medium has been warned to avoid giving the slightest muscular indications, and has undoubtedly preserved rigid physical passivity. Further, there are many thought-reading experiments upon which the hypothesis of muscle-reading throws no light. Thus, a medium might guide a

performer by unconscious muscular indications to a certain corner of a room, where a concealed object might then be detected by ordinary touch; but he could not in this way direct some elaborate specified act—such as removing a certain ring of several upon the same finger, and placing it upon a given finger of another individual as pre-arranged.

Nevertheless, a very large proportion of thought-reading experiments seem readily explicable on the theory of some sort of tactile sensation passing from medium to performer; and it is especially worthy of note that frequently, when the performance fails, the thought-reader goes as far as muscle-influence could guide him, and then becomes embarrassed and hesitates. Thus it is quite usual for the performer to proceed rapidly, and without the slightest hesitation, to the corner of the room where the hidden article lies concealed, and then he often pauses and not unfrequently fails altogether to find the object, although it may be within a few inches of his fingers. Now here the readiest explanation seems to be that the performer is guided by the muscular contractions of the medium to steer a correct course; but when it comes to the finer point of precisely localising the concealed object, the tactual sensations are not exact enough to communicate the required information. If all thought-reading experiments exhibited this tendency to error in minute details, the "muscle-touch" explanation would amply suffice, and it would be idle to seek for any further clue to facts already simply and adequately explained. But often the thought-reader shows the most wonderful accuracy in the minutest details. A particular ring out of many is drawn from the finger, one book is lifted from numbers thrown together in confusion, or an article is deposited with perfect exactitude in the precise spot pre-arranged. The most successful performers, on being interrogated, deny strenuously that they are pushed or drawn in any direction by the medium, or that any sensible muscular indication passes from him to them.

We are now reduced to two explanations. First, that some new force passes from the medium to the performer analogous to the odic or odylic force, of which the world once heard a great deal which it has speedily contrived to forget; or, secondly, that the performer's senses are unusually exalted, and that he receives sensory impressions sufficient to guide him

in his experiments, but so faint that he is barely, if at all, conscious of their existence. Of the former theory we may remark that odic force is still a hypothesis—a half-forgotten and very doubtful hypothesis—and that it is not permissible to explain the known by the unknown.

We believe, then, that the true explanation of thought-reading is that the performer receives impressions—partly muscular but largely nervous—through the ordinary channel of the senses, his sensations being unusually exalted by the state of entire passivity into which he endeavours to throw himself. This state of entire obliviousness to all external impressions except those connected with the experiment, and of eager receptivity to all suggestions from the medium, is closely analogous to the hypnotic state, in which we know the senses become extraordinarily exalted. A hypnotised subject has been known to have his olfactory nerve so abnormally stimulated that he has detected a ring, among twelve, by the sense of smell, and has found the owner of a glove, among sixty persons, by the same means. The muscular sense is also rendered inconceivably acute, as we see by the perfect safety and ease with which the somnambulist (whose state is allied to that of hypnotism) mounts roofs, treads dizzy parapets, and performs other difficult muscular acts which he would not even attempt in the waking state. If the thought-reader, in his efforts after entire mental abstraction, really throws himself into a state bordering on hypnotism, it is certain that he might receive sensory impressions from the medium, of which, under ordinary circumstances, he would be entirely unconscious. A slight tightening of the hand-grasp, or quickening of the breathing, or any similar slight indication, would be sufficient to guide him in his experiment. But is the mental state of the thought-reader in any way comparable to the hypnotic or mesmeric trance? Some thought-readers would unhesitatingly deny the suggestion; but even they are conscious of more or less severe mental tension and abstraction, while other performers seem to suffer from great nervous prostration after their experiments—a fact which lends support to the idea that they are in a partially hypnotised state.

The view that nerve-force passes from the medium to the performer is quite distinct from the theory that "thoughts," or "ideas," are transmitted. That thought

can pass from brain to brain by means of touch is a hypothesis opposed to all our knowledge, and may be safely dismissed. What does pass is probably a nervous current, which produces some modification of tactile sensibility. It may seem difficult to explain how a simple undifferentiated nerve-current could possibly convey the definite information requisite for the performance of specific acts; but the difficulty becomes less in the light of the phenomena of hypnotism. The performer is in a state of nervous strain, of expectant attention, and his senses are so exalted that he becomes keenly alive to slight impressions to which at other times he would be entirely oblivious. The medium, on the other hand, is earnestly concentrating his thoughts on the article to be found or the act to be accomplished, and he is thus prone to give indications of which he has himself no knowledge. If ideas actually passed from medium to performer, there is no reason why the two should not stand hand-in-hand until the idea had time to pass, the performer then proceeding, unaccompanied, to the execution of the experiment. But this he is never able to do. He starts, uncertain whether he is going or what he is about to do. Clearly no idea has yet been transmitted to him. As he proceeds he gains confidence, and the medium becoming excited in the result, becomes more prone to give helping indications. Thus the performer is helped on little by little until he finally succeeds, but no definite idea has at any time been conveyed to him. The indications given by the medium are not merely contractions and relaxations of muscle, but are often nerve-currents signalling success or failure. Frequently the performer does part of the required act, pauses and hesitates, and then completes it with perfect confidence. Probably an unconscious signal indicating success and encouragement has passed from the medium. The performer is rarely certain that the required act, if at all complex, has been correctly achieved, until so assured by the spectators. If it is a pin that is to be found, the sensation of touch is of course sufficient to assure him of success, but if he is performing some complex act, he usually seems uncertain until congratulated on the result. Now if any definite "idea" or "thought" had passed into his mind from the medium, he ought to be fully assured of success without being informed of it.

Further, on the ordinary thought-reading or thought-transference theory, the performer should be able to indicate before commencing his performance what he is about to do or where the concealed article lies hidden. But this, as has already been indicated, he never succeeds in doing. There is no philosophical ground for the common notion that the idea, say of the locality of a concealed pin, will pass more readily from medium to performer as the hidden article is approached. It is the increasing excitement and growing nervous concentration of the medium, as he sees success almost achieved, which cause him to give more definite indications at the critical moment.

It must be remembered that the faculty of reading obscure indications varies enormously. Persons who are highly nervous, sensitive, and sympathetic, read with unerring certainty slight indications which convey no information whatever to others. A person of this type will divine in a moment that a near relative or dear friend is displeased, or anxious, or otherwise mentally affected, although the most studious efforts may have been made to conceal such feelings. This capacity of divining the feelings of another is probably akin to the powers of the skilled thought-reader. The medium may be utterly unaware that any directing influence has passed from him; but, nevertheless, the unseen telegraphy is really at work, and the thought-reader interprets, perhaps quite unconsciously, the unheard clicking of an invisible needle.

We know what a world of meaning may be conveyed by the slightest raising of the eyebrows, or pursing of the lips, or tightening of the hand-grasp to anyone trained by habit and sympathy to interpret slight signs. The power of divining, which has undoubtedly been possessed by some persons, is merely the faculty of reading signs and sense indications too subtle for detection by the ordinary intellect. The diviner does not penetrate into the mysterious region of mind, but he reads the writing of the senses, which is written in invisible ink for others, but traced in plain characters for him. The medium is, no doubt in most cases, perfectly unconscious of giving any aid to the performer, but we must remember that, by the conditions of the experiment, he has concentrated all his thoughts on one fact, and the extraordinary mobility of the mind and its proneness to unconscious action when

under the influence of one "dominant idea" is one of the most familiar facts of mesmerism and hypnotism.

This suggested explanation of thought-reading experiments is much strengthened when we investigate the characteristics of those persons who are most successful as performers or mediuma. Skilful thought-readers are nervous, excitable, "highly strung," sensitive, and sympathetic persons, who readily receive and respond to impressions from without—precisely the type of individual most amenable to hypnotic or mesmeric influences. The chief requisite for a successful medium is the power of mental concentration, which really means strength of will, which is only important to this extent—that the person who wills strongly that a certain thing shall be done, is certain to give unconscious assistance towards the doing of it. Sympathy is important in a medium, but only for the same reason, viz., that the sympathetic person more readily aids an experiment than one who is uninterested or apathetic.

There is a vague idea afloat that one will can act upon another without the intervention of the senses, and apart from any consciousness by the person operated on that efforts are being put forth to influence him. Thus it is popularly held that if you look steadily at a person in a crowd, he is sure to return your gaze. The writer has repeatedly tested this belief, and with an almost uniform want of success. No doubt on the mere principle of chances, if one person gazes fixedly at another for several minutes the latter will occasionally chance to look round, and his attention will be arrested by perceiving a significant glance directed at him; but the theory that some nervous influence has passed from one to the other is untenable.

Again, it is within the cognizance of everybody that, if two persons be in strong sympathy, the same idea will occasionally flash through the two minds almost simultaneously, and some remark, quite unconnected with the drift of the previous conversation, is met with the reply: "those very words were almost in my mouth." If the current reading of this familiar fact were correct, we should have here a very close analogy to what is popularly understood by "thought-reading;" but another more material and more probable explanation suggests itself. Two persons, who have been much in contact and possess similar tastes and sympathies, will

be to a large degree similarly influenced by objects which affect the senses. A picture, a landscape, a chord of music, a child's cry, may cause the same ideas to flash through both minds; but the explanation is not any imaginary "thought-transference," but rather that the association of ideas has operated similarly on two minds previously prepared by similarity of sympathy or education. This argument may be readily tested in the following way.

Let one of two persons, who are in strong mutual sympathy, fix upon some idea unconnected with any visible object or recent occurrence. Let him now join hands with his friend, and silently endeavour to cause the passage of the idea from his own brain to his companion's. The result, according to the writer's experience, is certain failure. But let some trifle, however small, escape, which is capable of acting upon the senses and awaking the laws of association, and success is very probable.

Yet it may be granted, without undue credulity, that the possibility of one mind influencing another at a distance by the transference of ideas cannot be absolutely denied. All the length which scientific investigation enables us to go is that hitherto no fact or phenomenon has been adduced requiring this hypothesis, and that all the facts known to us are explicable without the assumption of any new force or any new mode of mental operation. So far as we know, the mind derives all its knowledge of the external world through the medium of the senses. Thus it is that it learns the properties and powers of matter, the nature of life and qualities of sentient beings, and we may feel sure that it is through the same medium that it learns all it knows, or ever can know, of the operations of minds other than itself.

DAISY.

A STORY IN FIVE CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER III.

It was the "stroke," and his name was Nicholas Owen, and with two cousins he was staying at the Citta Venezia on their way home.

All the English of Chiaranza were at the service in the chapel of the hotel on the following day, Sunday, and then it was that the hero of Daisy's imagination presented himself in the conventional attire, and with the conventional bearing, of the tourist Englishman. He and his cousins knew the chaplain—the chaplain and his

wife were resident in the Holfords' hotel—and Nell Holford had for the past two Sundays acted as organist, playing the harmonium, and thereby relieving a resident Chiaranza lady, who was taking a holiday.

The Owens and the Holfords were introduced by Mr. Herbert, the chaplain, and as they all strolled together into the shadowed vestibule—nay, rather the open-air central hall of the hotel—they began to talk.

But it was not Daisy who by any means came to the front. No, her gaiety, and her wild ways, and her rather rattling speeches, all were in the shade.

Perhaps Margaret Owen, the very fair girl, and her very fair brother, were truly for the nonce the leaders; certainly they were the leaders of the young part of the group. Nicholas Owen and Mr. Holford stood by a bench under a huge palm, where Mrs. Holford had sat, and dozed, and read, while the service had been going on.

Good lady! She fanned herself, and she said: "The weather was really too much! The girls liked the lake, but she wanted air."

And here a breath of hot, sun-scorched air, came sweeping under the awnings from off the lake.

Nicholas Owen smiled. He pointed to the great palm-leaves waving slowly, and as the perfume of roses, and syringa, and stephanotis bore across from the gardens he simply gasped, "Ah!" and lifted his tall, dark head. He could revel in the heat and the luscious scents.

"You think we have air? I want cool air." Mrs. Holford fanned herself vigorously, and spread her opened left palm on the cool iron of her seat. "Yes, cold air—sea air; but I really have not energy to have my own way. They must do as they like."

"Why not do as we are going to do to-morrow—drive over the Simplon? There will be snow and ice there in plenty."

"No?"

"There was a week ago, but certainly the weather has changed very much during the week. Anyhow, we shall find cool air."

Here the groups of old and young became more mixed, and Margaret Owen, walking up to her cousin, said: "Now we are here, and we have friends here—so many!" she nodded her head gaily round to all, "you shall take me to see the gardens. I am sun-proof. Come!" She shook out her white umbrella ready for opening, and with an amusing air of command led Nicholas outwards. "They say

they beat ours, but I stand up for the 'Venezia.'"

"You know the 'Venezia'?" asked the very fair young man.

"No—no; not at all. But I am here, and I appropriate everything. What is one's own is best, always best."

"You are loyalty itself," Roger Owen said lazily. He leaned against a marble pedestal, whereon stood a tub from which the arms of a cactus spread with flaming crimson blooms. He was twisting his lazy fingers—fingers that were strangely brown in comparison to his fair brow and yellow cropped hair—lazily in and out of a pendent creeper which hung down from the balcony of the floor above.

"Yes," she answered. "Loyalty to one's own."

"It is too hot to argue out that idea. One might suggest that the element Self was given too prominent a place."

"Don't suggest principles and don't argue anything. Who can!" Josey was talking nonsense.

"It is my trade to argue;" but he looked too utterly lazy to be equal to more than his idle playing with the purple creeper.

"How dreadful!" was her careless reply.

"I suppose," she thought, "he means he is a lawyer."

"More dreadful still to talk 'shop.'"

"But who does not do that? Artists do, musicians do, doctors do, and parsons; why should not we?" For the moment Josey dropped her laziness and spoke naturally.

The man smiled. Which was the real girl, the lazy one or the brisk one? But he would go on with his own assumed laziness. "Don't, please!" he pretended to implore. "If you invite me to 'talk shop' in so determined a way you will command the next moment, and then where should I be?"

"Where you are, I suppose—a slave of obedience. I should like to try my powers, but," her voice fell into softest languor, "I really am not equal to the effort."

"I am grateful. I should be in a distressing position. I must obey you, and yet I should be making myself hateful in your eyes by talking of judge and jury, and witness and client, and pros and cons."

"Don't, pray!"—acting her lazy rôle. Then suddenly the girl shook out her fan, a huge red thing with a garish picture of tarantella dancers on it, that she had bought in a village shop the day before for "dear ugliness, and for local colour." Shook it

and fanned herself, and cried naturally, "What stuff we are talking! What an idiot I am!"

Owen had no time to say any word to the contrary, but his eyes laughed. He and she had both been playing a game. But there, the gong was vibrating the very ground they stood upon.

"Hideous things to inflict upon civilised creatures!" Owen said, standing erect.

"But the pleasure they suggest!" and Josey laughed merrily. "I am so hungry—but, perhaps—you are too tired."

"Scarcely. Are your tables full! Or, do you not think we might cement our friendship by lunching together! We are here, and—there is the climb to the 'Venezia.'"

"I hate a lazy man!" and she tossed her head mischievously.

"So do I."

He did not show laziness in getting his idea worked into an accepted fact.

Josey and Daisy had one room between them, and that night when both were in bed Daisy exclaimed:

"What a day!"

"You sound tragic, dear!" But Josey knew.

"All these strangers, and now we are hand-and-glove with them, and going to travel with them for two days. Are they nice, or are they horrid?"

"Very nice, I think."

"My romance is getting involved, Jo." Daisy always must talk in this unveiled way.

Wiser Jo smiled to herself, and saw in this a healthy sign. The truth was that Daisy's hero was very clearly a man who was not susceptible to the charms of new acquaintances. Jo saw that he preferred the society of the older part of the company to that of the girls. He showed no great devotion to any girl. But, being a true gentleman, he had in a certain way been polite to herself and her cousin—again, his most happy, most restful manner was when he and his own cousin Margaret were together. She had, as we have hinted, always a manner of proprietorship with him. All was strange as yet, but wise Josey Bray was glad that Daisy should talk in this open way. For Daisy to be silent would mean that Daisy was stricken—love does come unbidden, and love strikes painfully, sometimes. So she would enlarge, and enlarge in light tones, about the "romance."

"Involved? How? The 'stroke,' I suppose you mean. Was he not sufficiently devoted?"

"Devoted!—who to?"

"The romance must answer." Daisy keeping silence, Jo went on, "I liked him—he was very kind and polite to me."

"Oh, yea."

"And to you."

"He was simply lovely to me, but—he thinks I'm in the school-room, I'm sure."

"Ignorant person!"

"I'm not the style he admires, evidently, and—I'm not going to educate myself up to it. I shall be as quiet as ever I can for the next two days."

"Whatever for? I mean to enjoy myself. Fancy! driving over the Simplon! Talk of romance!"

Daisy's words followed her own line of thought.

"That cousin, that Margaret—do you like her style?"

"Yea. Why not? You wouldn't think it, but she's a Girton girl, and has passed exams. that would frighten me. She's a B.A., only not being a man she can't be the 'B.' I'd be called it if I won it."

"She doesn't seem extraordinarily clever."

"No—charming! Is she not? Quite natural!"

"I suppose so. Very natural; but cousins are not always like that. Am I like that with any of your boys?"

"You order them about pretty well!" And Josey laughed.

"I do, but not like that. Jo, romance is, I foresee, a bothering thing. I've just read the first chapter, and I'm not sure that the second will look so agreeable. He's very nice, though, and I'm not sure that I'm not a bit sorry."

"Daisy! don't be a silly! You! to fall in love with a——"

"Just stop, Jo—I'm not falling in love with any man; and I'm not going to do it, either. I'll just rattle on to-morrow and the next day, and I'll just slip out of the way when I see the two cousins together—they shall understand that I have my wits about me. He's not half as good-looking as I thought he was—is he, Jo?"

"Oh! yea. He's far handsomer than I ever supposed!" Josey was plotting in her kindly way.

"Fahaw! handsome!"

CHAPTER IV.

SOME days passed.

We cannot give the details of the two days' travelling in company with the Owens—all the world knows how such a time of close companionship may weld a friendship for life, and—alack! for the contrarities of human nature!—may also hold awkward sayings and doings, able to excite the mildest-seeming souls to bitterest animosity.

Warm air; mulberries and olives; gaily-kerchiefed women and brown, half-clad children, gradually were left behind, and hilly slopes were mounted till the airs one breathed were cool—nay, sharply cold. Then one shivered and donned one's wraps, and one's mind assorted itself so swiftly, so easily to the change that was growing all around. There were children still flying after the carriages, still crying, "Soldo—soldo!" but now their hands were full of the pink mountain flowers, of the blue forget-me-nots of the north. Aloft, too, on the heights flashed the scarlet lilies of the Alps. Snow and ice and stillness made the home of those lilies.

Then had come the frontier, the show of inspection for contraband goods, the chalk mark on one's packages, the pass into a new country.

Italy was behind them.

But this is too much of travelling experience; let us go on.

Once—there being a certain individuality amongst the two parties—the Owens had gone mountaineering while the Holfords stayed by lake and chalet; then, again, they met, and for a week were once more together.

Truly then romance, Daisy's romance, grew complicated.

Nicholas Owen did one day, in a certain quiet way he had, decidedly single her out as his companion. It had begun by the fact of their all six walking abreast along a valley road, alpenstocks in hand. She had adhered to her programme of wild gaiety for the two days after leaving Chiaranza, but since then she had been gay or sad as the humour seized her, and evidently ruled her manner not at all.

But the chance, which had thrown Daisy next to the "stroke" at the start of the walk, was in power apparently for the morning. The valley road got left behind, and a mountain was being breasted. Margaret, tall, erect, and free, strode ahead like the pioneer of the party. Surely study had

not injured her lungs. How the girl sang, as she mounted into the air that at every step grew clearer and clearer!

Daisy and Nicholas Owen were the next; Daisy, happiness itself, gathering a bit of every new flower in her path, stopping perpetually.

"You'll be all day getting up to Sainte Clugéon," Nell cried as she tramped past. "Daisy will be tyrannical if you humour her as you are doing, Mr. Owen." Then her voice was lost and herself hidden by a turn of the path.

Josey and Roger Owen also were lost to sight, but ambition was not to blame in their case. They were below.

"Am I victimising you?" and Daisy stood upright. She always had a very clear way of speaking, and whether gay or sad her natural manner was one that seemed to say that her heart was in what she spoke. In a word, to be sincere was a necessity.

Grave Nicholas Owen smiled at the earnest face.

"No," he answered as sincerely. "Did you ever know a man who allowed himself to be victimised?"

"Plenty," was her gay answer. Then she walked on a bit more quickly.

"Not at all," he caught her up. "They have liked it all—just as——" Here he suddenly stopped short.

"Just as you like humouring my fancies!" she laughed. Surely the mountain air was making her wild.

"Exactly so. But hear my logic. When the word 'victimising' comes to the front it is always at the moment when they are growing selfish again, and when they are tired of—of their pleasant play," he ended abruptly. "I wish Margaret would keep in sight."

Why did he end so sharply? Why did he bring Margaret and his care of her so forward?

Is this the place to edge in one word of his history? There seems none other. He had been solitary since his boyhood; he had grown up to manhood with a necessity always before him that he had himself to trust to and himself alone. School and engineers' workshops—he was an engineer—had been, one may almost say, sought, and found, and worked through by himself for himself. Naturally he had friends—a man is no man who is friendless—but of relations he had none who took notice of him until, five years before the time we meet with him, an uncle had come home from India, made an English home for his own

sons and daughters, and a home for Nicholas too. Since then Nicholas had been engineering in Egypt. He had been in England now for some eight months, but after this jaunt with two of his cousins he was bound for Russia, railway making. By this time he had seen twenty-seven years of life.

"Margaret!" Daisy repeated. She felt chilled. She had been so happy, so intense in her enjoyment; the world was such a good world—and now, one huge cloud seemed to kill the sunlight and the joy. "Margaret—she is so brave, such a wonderful person." Her words were coming more quickly. "She always seems to me to like to go just exactly her own way."

"You are right," he said quietly, "she is self-reliant. You should see her at home, she is more than self-reliant. All the family rely upon her, trust to her!" His tones too grew warmer as he ended.

"Yes. I dare say."

"She has no fear." Nicholas was musing. He, too, had a mania—if such a word may be borrowed for a feeling which means almost a passion for guarding and guiding. Until so lately he had been alone, with no mother to help, no sister to guide. Surely Margaret was much to him.

"There is no danger where we are going now." Daisy, like the rest of womankind, might slip into hardness. Was she jealous?

"No—not if she walks as we are walking; but she clammers recklessly."

"Do go to her, Mr. Owen," was the next word, spoken very coolly.

By this time all these acquaintances had, we may say, become so friendly that any stiffness, or what one might call outside veneer of mannerism, had flown to the winds. By Daisy slipping into what was rather a formal style she struck her companion.

Suddenly a gleam of light burst over his face, then as suddenly a hot colour surged over it, and the light was gone. He was thinking—what had he done? An instinct made him turn from Daisy and look, as it were, up the mountain.

Now, to the right of them swept steep green uplands, snow-streaked up aloft, and then green soft places travelled on roundly till they melted in a fir forest. Above the firs rose a rampart of rock; but for the hiding of the firs that rock would have shown itself travelling sheer down, block upon block, to another valley than the one they had started from. Owen knew this. He knew of danger.

Daisy knew nothing; she was jealous.

and she hugged her jealousy, and she lost her own natural, true self. For a moment her face, too, burned hotly; but it was with anger and with contempt for what she would have called her "idiocy;" then she felt very cold and she spoke again coldly, but all the while making as great a show of ease as was in her power.

"Yes," she said, "do go forward. You'll catch her up in no time, and I like being here. I like being alone—I shall stay about here till the others catch me up. There are heaps of flowers."

And she really thought she was making him understand that flowers could well compensate to her for his absence. Daisy Holford was clever enough, but she was not a good actress.

He was half-deceived, however, for he felt one degree glad at her coolness. He argued in this way—she was cool, so he had not hurt her. But the moment after he saw a fact concerning himself—life showed him love. Before, he had known a man's love for his friends; and, of late, there had been the love for all in his new home, but—this was a new thing.

But he was a strong man, and could master impulse.

He answered prosaically. "You are sure you do not mind—you are fearless, too!"

"Quite." Daisy felt glad to be something which he approved.

"Then I will hurry after her, and you—you will wait here till the others come up!"

"Yes—I have no wish to explore."

He was moving one step forward—no more, when a strange sound came.

A cry, a sharp distant cry, broke the fair stillness of the mountain. It was from the crag atop of the fir forest.

Both looked. But even in that instantaneous glance they could neither of them see the exact figure of the one who cried.

A gleam, a falling sweep of pale colour was, by the time their sight had caught it, hurtling against the projecting crags, touching the tops of the fir trees—gone out of sight behind the massed green of boughs and stems!

"Margaret!" Owen cried.

Yes—the pale mass was the pale pink of the girl's cotton dress.

"Fly! oh, fly!"

He had made a dash forward when her voice struck him.

"Daisy! my darling! I must go!" and before she knew his arms were around her,

and yet again, before she knew, the clasp was loosened, and he was setting a burning kiss upon her hand.

"Oh, go!—you must go,—you must go!"

And he was gone.

She stood alone. What had happened? She scarcely knew for a second. The mountain was still, save for the singing of birds or the tinkle of cow-bells. The sun was high in glory, the flowers swayed their dainty heads in the gentle summer breeze.

Then Daisy knew all, and she ran—ran for dear life—till she came to Josey and her companion—him she sent flying to the rescue.

Was this the deed of heroism they were to watch calmly?

CHAPTER V.

ALL were back in England and October was in, but September's winds were still blowing.

What had happened in the interval?

Margaret had gone safely enough, and would have remained in safety, had she not been seized by some wild freak of shouting to her friends, whom she had just discovered from her crag. As she shouted she unconsciously stepped to the very edge, and—it gave way. She fell; she knew of one—two—three violent jerks and fallings, then she became unconscious.

What she next knew was a sensation of water on her face, in her opening eyes—that was after Nicholas, her cousin, had found her.

To go down was as bad as to go up, and going up was far shorter. To an athlete like Nicholas Owen, to choose his footing calmly, to stride with a giant step, to carry Margaret, was no great deed—not in his own eyes, at least.

It was done; and with a spurt of victory he almost flung the girl on to the firm rock above, himself springing after her. But either his spring was not direct enough, or, maybe, in the struggle upwards, weighted as he was, his strength may have wasted. One knows not. He did not know himself.

He fell. And he fell dangerously.

Margaret shrieked for help, but only the four winds heard her, for no help sprang in answer till her brother came. They could not see Nicholas, they could not reach him from where they were, he was far below the ridge on which Margaret herself had rested.

When they found him they thought he was dead. He was not, but he was sorely hurt.

For weeks he lay at the hotel, then—we repeat the opening sentence of the chapter. "All were in England, and October was well in."

The Owens were at Teddington, the Holfords, as we have before seen them, at Ryebidge.

Nicholas was getting well, but he must lose his Russian appointment, so he feared, and though he was not wholly dependent on his work for the bread of life, yet he was trusting to it for things that make life worth living. He had been calm and an unimpulsive man, now he was chafing at the fate that still tied him to a couch for most of the day.

He had "been the first to be thought of, the one whose wants were in the forefront of the house's management long enough," he said. "He wanted to be at work again."

A man who is worth anything will desire "work" in this way, but, probably, beyond the universal instinct Nicholas had discovered, within the lately past time, some personal and decided incentive to the earning of an income on which he should be able to build a home.

Every day he chafed more and more at his chains, but—doubtless, returning power awoke some part of his rebellion—every day he also made some step forward.

One day he walked across his room, another day he walked along the garden, and—so on. One can easily imagine the details of convalescence with a man who is determined to fight himself back to health.

He had written to the Company, for which he had been appointed engineer, a straightforward, manly letter, barely touching, but still painfully touching, upon the accident which had lamed him.

However, the writing of the letter seemed to lift a weight from his mind—it was an evil faced and passed.

Let us go over to Ryebidge and see what the Holfords were about.

As a family they were brimful of excitement, for Josey Bray was to be married in October to Roger Owen. Perhaps, in the touches which we have been able to give of her and her doings, this consummation of her foreign tour is not a strange or unexpected one. By the common saying "coming events cast their shadows before

them," and Josey's "coming event" has pretty clearly foreshadowed itself.

Nell and Daisy would be her bridesmaids.

At last we come to Daisy's name, the Daisy who, so unheroic, has to pose as the heroine of this story.

Her romance had certainly grown complicated—so complicated that it had entirely changed the girl. She was, as the family said, a different girl since that foreign tour, she had grown womanly; and Daisy, womanly as well as bright, was charming.

Sometimes, in her room alone, she did not see her happiness; sometimes she, too, chafed to see how fate had treated her whimsically, and had taken rough liberties with her. Then, again, she remembered one day, one supreme day, one supreme moment when—she loved to repeat the words to herself which her hero, in his abandonment, had spoken.

How she grieved for him and over him! The others could talk of him, Daisy could not talk. She kept her grief silent.

No wonder the girl had become womanly. Was she jealous still of Margaret! In a way—yes. She was womanly.

She said to herself: "Margaret is like his sister, who so fit to tend him!" but, when she saw Margaret wait upon him, then Daisy grew silent and fell apart.

How they learnt it she did not know; but it seemed to be an accepted fact in her sisters' minds that "Nicholas Owen was proud, that Russian appointment would have given him wealth, and he would have carried Margaret to Russia with him."

Daisy did not gainsay them. How could she? In a vague, troublous way she believed it. She had read enough of romances to know that marriage may be promised and carried out, and that a passionate love may exist outside all that.

They went on, she not contradicting. "Now, because he loses it, he leaves her free. A man can be so proud!"

"And I call that being honourable, not proud," was Daisy's remark.

"You always did think him perfection." To which no answer was given.

Then came the day of Josey's wedding.

The Holfords were all home—most people understand the loose, demoralised condition a family gets into after the long exciting day of a wedding. One cannot put on one's useful dress without some extra decking, one cannot pass the evening without continual bursts and breaks such as "Did you see so-and-so in the church?"

—“I feel sure X. felt himself a discarded lover, his jokes were so intensely washy!”
—“Josey! did she not look sweet in her travelling dress?” and so on, and so on.

Into the midst of this sort of thing the servant announced, “Mr. Owen, ma’am.”

Nicholas had driven over.

“I have great news, great news!” he said.

“Nothing exciting, I hope, Mr. Owen?”
Mrs. Holford said. “To-day has been almost too much for me.”

“I am afraid it surpasses the whole of many to-days in its effect on me. The A— Company defer the commencement of their work for a full month—a full month from the proposed date. That means six weeks from now. I feel well at once.”

“They wait for you, you mean?” Mr. Holford asked.

“Yea. I am vain enough to say yea. You do not know what it means to me.”

One can manage many things when one is a determined lover—by-and-by Daisy was being asked a question which—which—well, which we will not say much about here.

“Russia will be worse than France or Switzerland,” Nicholas Owen was saying.

“I don’t care!” and her arm, which was within his, gave it a spasmodic grasp.

“So cold——”

“I’ll get plenty of furs, sir.”

“And you dislike foreign parts——”

“I did. ‘Circumstances alter cases,’” she quoted. “Are you changing your wishes, sir?” and she tossed her head gaily.

“My darling! But am I altogether right?”

There perhaps his action was not logically in unison with his words.

“Margaret!” Daisy now could afford to parade her jealousy.

“Poor Madge! she still must wait on,” Owen said calmly.

“Ah!—Eh!—Wait!” and again Daisy’s head lifted. “Do I have to disappear within a given time? Is that part of the programme?”

“My child! have you ever thought? Why, Margaret has been engaged to a young doctor ever since she was sixteen. He simply can’t get on. You know she talks of being a nurse.”

“I know she talks. That’s the reason, eh?”

But Daisy was supremely calm under this further piece of news. “I really have felt horrid, dear, sometimes,” she said.

VICTIMS.

By THEO GIFT.

*Author of “Lil Lorimer,” “An Alibi and its Price,”
Etc., Etc.*

CHAPTER XXV. ROBBED.

WHEN Marstrand came to himself after the fall which had stunned him, it was to find himself in pitchy darkness, and with a sensation of lying at the bottom of the sea on a bed of extremely rough and rocky shingle. How he had got there he had no idea. Indeed, the first vague notion that came to him was that he had been shipwrecked on the voyage to Guernsey and drowned; and instinctively he stretched out his arms to feel if Vera’s body were lying among the stones and water-weeds near him. But the action only brought his elbow in contact with a big fragment of rock close by, while his fingers encountered nothing but smaller pieces of the same. And, by-and-by, gleams of clearer consciousness and intelligence came back to him. He was able to recognise that what he had taken for the roaring of the waves was only a singing in his own ears; that the bed of shingle smelt strongly of coals, while a longer interval still brought with it something like a flash of recollection concerning a telegram and some iron railings. Yes, he recollected now: he had gone to send off a telegram, and the railings—where were they? There was a pile of them, and he had sprung over them and fallen on a trap-door, or something resembling one, which had given way beneath him. . . . He could not recollect any more.

It took him a long while to get even as far as this, and his mind kept going over and over the few facts thus painfully recalled in a kind of sing-song circle. Telegram, railings, trap-door—trap-door, telegram, railings; round and round and round again. Though who the telegram was to, or what about, or how the railings and the trap-door had come in his way, he had no idea; and his head ached too badly to think about it. Perhaps if he sat up a little it would be better. These rocks too—it could not be wise to be lying on a heap of broken stones and rubble with a head that ached like his.

He put one hand up to it, as he thought this, attempting to raise himself at the same time; but the hand stuck in his hair, which seemed matted together with some glutinous liquid mixed with gravel; and the movement brought quite a different set

of images into his mind. All of a sudden he seemed to see a bit of waste ground, enclosed by a pile of tall, dark-red buildings, and himself hurrying across it to reach an open gate at the further side. Hurrying! Why, of course he was hurrying. He was in hot haste to get to some one; who could it be? Some one who was waiting there at the window; some one—with a loud cry of "Vera! Vera! Heavens, it was she! Where am I! What has happened! Why, it is all—all night!" he started to his feet and took a staggering step forward into the darkness about him. Only a step, however; then something in his head gave a giddy, sickening swirl. A thousand stars blazed up and split into fragments before his eyes, and he spread out his hands, and fell heavily for the second time.

When he next opened his eyes the scene had entirely changed. There was bright light all about him, and he was lying on a table in the middle of a large room, with his head, which still ached and throbbed terribly, pillowed on a soft cushion. A medical-looking gentleman was bending over him, manipulating at the hair behind his ear with a small pair of scissors, while some one else (a woman as he judged by the touch of her hands) stood behind him bathing his temples; and some one else, again, was sobbing hysterically in the background. It was the half-smothered noise she made which first attracted Marstrand's attention.

"Don't!" he said faintly, and in a queer, husky whisper. "Vera—it is Vera, isn't it! Don't cry, darling; I—I'm not hurt. It was only a fall—a—a fall, that's all."

"And a duced nasty one too," said the gentleman with the scissors, "though I'm glad to see you're coming so well out of it. Now don't try to talk just yet awhile. This cut isn't 'as deep as a well, or as wide as a church door,' but——"

"Hush!" Marstrand interrupted, turning his eyes reproachfully on him, "she'll hear you; and she's frightened already, or she wouldn't cry. She's so easily frightened, poor pet. Vera! it's nothing. Come here, dear; or I'll—I'll come to you. I—— Let me get up, doctor. I—I want to go to her. I——"

He was getting excited. The doctor made a sign to have the hysterical person put out of the room, and, pressing him gently back, held a glass to his lips.

"Drink this first," he said soothingly. "She's all right; she's not frightened really.

Drink." And as Marstrand obeyed, and, closing his eyes, sank quietly back with a sigh which seemed to merge into the peaceful breathing of sleep, the man of medicine set the glass down, and turning to the person assisting him, a motherly-looking woman in a print gown, smiled reassuringly.

"He'll do," he whispered. "That is, if your confounded servant girl doesn't disturb him again with her hysterics. The idea of a great lass like that not being able to stand the sight of a drop of blood!"

"It's an awful bad cut, sir," said the woman apologetically; "and it have bled dreadful. There's quite a pool down among the coals where he fell."

"Ay, it's a nasty cut," said the doctor. "A shade more and there'd have been concussion of the brain; but he'll do well enough now. I saw that by his eyes, directly he opened them; and it was the loss of blood that saved him."

"Do you think he was properly conscious then?" the woman asked.

"Conscious! As conscious as you are. He didn't know where he was, that was all; and if he'd been allowed to excite himself there might have been danger of fever or cerebral inflammation. I've put a stop to that, however. The dose I gave him will make him sleep for the next six or eight hours, and, if he's not disturbed, my opinion is there won't be much the matter with him when he wakes. You don't mind keeping him here till then?"

"Oh dear, no, sir. I only wish we knew who he was. His folks must be so terribly anxious about him."

"Well, from the French coins and railway ticket in his purse, I should say he was some bird of passage only. If he were a Guernsey man I should know him. Anyhow he'll be able to give an account of himself and of how he came down your coal-cellar when he wakes up; and if he isn't, it'll be time enough then to send him to the infirmary, and make inquiries about his identity. Keep the place quiet, that's all; and I'll look in again on my afternoon round."

The doctor went away, and the woman, who was wife to the foreman of the works and lived on the premises, moved softly about, darkening the room, and making other little arrangements for the greater comfort of the sufferer so mysteriously thrown on her hands. It was her husband who had found him lying insensible at the bottom of their coal-cellar that morning; and the open trap above him (one fastening with

a spring bolt on the inside) sufficiently suggested how he came there; though whether the accident had resulted from a stranger trespassing in the dark on private property, or whether he had been flung down by some malicious hand, there was no evidence to show. Inquiry proved that the trap had been unbolted and the yard-gate left open in anticipation of an arrival of coals. These not having been delivered, however, before the time for closing, the lad whose duty it was to see to that office had fastened the gates and gone away, without even noticing that the trap was open, and a motionless figure stretched at the bottom of the cellar beneath it, the head resting in a pool of blood against a great fragment of coal.

Marstland more than verified the surgeon's prediction. He slept soundly for eight hours at a stretch, and when he woke, though it was to the painful consciousness of a splitting headache, the latter was unaccompanied by any of the semi-delirious confusion of his first awakening. His very first words—

"Good Heavens! where am I! Have I been insensible? How long?" told that this time, at any rate, he had recognised at once the strangeness of his surroundings; and, as the woman who was attending to him came quickly to his side, a few more rapid questions and answers soon took away all mystery both as to his present whereabouts and how he came into them. Then, however, the two gazed at each other in almost equal dismay; a dismay which bleached Marstland's face, already pale from loss of blood, to an almost livid colour.

Found at the bottom of a coal cellar at seven o'clock that morning, and sleeping under the doctor's opiate till between four and five in the afternoon! Why, then he had actually been away from his new-made wife and the temporary home to which he had only just brought her, for nearly twenty-four hours! And all that time she had been alone, watching, waiting for him, suffering Heaven only knew what untold tortures of anxiety and suspense on his account; perhaps imagining him dead—killed in some sudden and frightful manner—as indeed, but for Divine mercy, he might have been killed; perhaps almost out of her mind with terror and distress (she who was so easily alarmed at the best of times), and with no better comforter than a strange landlady, a good sort of woman enough, but commonplace and

vulgar as the rest of her tribe—a transplanted Cookney, without even the advantage of that semi-French refinement appertaining to the natives of the island—and in whom the poor helpless, terrified girl might not have cared to confide!

Oh, it was too horrible, too dreadful to think of! It was like a bad dream; like a chapter in some book, thrilling to read, but impossible all the same; something that could not be true, that was too unlikely and unheard-of for real life; but which was not only true and real as death itself, but was something so simple, so easily explained, so naturally the result of a workman's carelessness and a young man's impetuosity, that if it had only occurred to somebody else, someone who had not been married only a couple of hours previously; who had not eloped with his wife that very morning, and carried her off triumphantly through a host of dangers, would scarcely have been thought worthy of a word of comment, of a line in a local paper, or a momentary wonder.

"And you see, sir," the foreman's wife went on, while Marstland sat gazing at her, his large, bright eyes dilated with a horror almost too deep for words, "though I don't doubt your poor wife sent out everywhere to make enquiries for you last night, you weren't found even by us till this morning; and though our men were questioned about it then, and very likely mentioned it to others when they knocked off for their dinner at noon, it's quite probable that those they spoke to hadn't even heard of a lodger being missing from one of those little houses in Hill Street, more especially as the gate into there isn't ever opened except for carting coals or rubbish. The one the men use is in quite another street, where, maybe, your folk wouldn't have any occasion for going. What I wonder is they didn't go to the Police Station. But, there! we ought to have given notice there too, I suppose; only when the doctor said he thought, from your not having been robbed, that it was a clear case of accident, and that you'd be all right when you woke up, Mr. le Geyt, our manager, said there was no good giving information, or making a fuss, till we knew there was need for it; and he doesn't like having police about the place, or—but whatever are you doing, sir! You're not going out now! You can't. The doctor said you was to be kept as quiet—"

"The doctor did not know that I had left my wife—a girl of twenty, only that

day married—alone in strange lodgings and a strange place," Marstland said hoarsely, his lips, strong man as he was, fairly shaking with emotion; "that I said I would only be ten minutes away from her, and that it was only my cursed impatience to get back that brought me into this fix. I knew I had no business in your yard. It was my own fault; but, good Heavens! it is enough to make one mad to think of it. For pity's sake, my dear, good soul, help me to tidy myself up a bit, that I may go to her now at least. I'll come back and thank you for all your kindness afterwards, when I know that she is safe: that she has not died of fright and loneliness during all these long hours."

He had risen to his feet as he spoke; and the woman's efforts to restrain him, even her assurances that she would send or go for his good lady that minute, were equally unavailing. Indeed Marstland thought it quite probable that Vera would have been rendered too ill by nervous anxiety and terror to come to the factory, even if she were sent for; and, in any case, he judged it would be better for her to see him arrive in his own person, safe and so far well as to be able to go to her, than to hear of his accident from a third person, and perhaps fancy it even more serious than it was. He got over the good woman's remonstrances by simply refusing to listen to them; and even persuaded her to lend him a coat and hat of her husband's, his own being too grimed with coal-dust and stained with blood to be presentable. Poor fellow! his hands were shaking as he put them on, and he darted from the house at almost as rapid a pace as that with which he had quitted the lodgings on the previous evening.

There was no one at the window when he came in sight of it now, however: It was open, and the white curtains were puffing in the breeze which had blown away all sign of the morning's rain save a few glittering drops dangling from the shining green points of the leaves, and the fresh moist smell of the earth in the little flower borders. The front door stood open too, though there was no one at that either, as he half expected there might be; and he was hurrying in when a shrill exclamation and a rush from the back part of the house showed that his step had been heard and recognised, and Mrs. Nicholls stood before him, her face blank and agape with astonishment, in which, however, there was a mingling of something sinister and indig-

nant, which might have surprised him had he not been too much filled with the one thought of Vera to notice anything else.

"Lor' sir!" she exclaimed, "it is you, then! You've come back after all!"

"Come back? But I suppose you thought I was dead?" said Marstland quickly. "No, I've had a bad accident, one that just stopped short of costing me my life, or ——— but where is my wife? Is she well? Is she upstairs? Has she been very much frightened about me? I do hope you have taken great care of her."

He was 'almost choking with eagerness, for the half-opened parlour door from which no one darted out to welcome him told him plainly enough that Vera was not there, and a horrible idea came over him that she might be ill in bed, ill with grief and fright. Mrs. Nicholls's face had become very red. She looked at once angry, scornful, and puzzled.

"If you mean the young lady, Dr. Marstland, sir," she said, "the young lady as you brought to a respectable 'ouse, never telling me a word about 'er, and then left on my 'ands without so much as a good-bye to 'erself or a sou in her pocket, which——"

Marstland caught her by the arm, his face, so pale a moment back, flushed with anger now.

"Good Heavens!" he cried out, "you don't mean to say that you—you have been adding to that poor child's troubles by bothering her about money; you, whom I've paid every week as regularly as it came round! Oh, I don't believe it! You couldn't be such a fiend, such a heartless——"

"'Eartless yourself, if you please, sir!" retorted the landlady fiercely, "which I'll thank you to keep such language to yourself and take your 'ands off me, a respectable legally-married woman with a lawful 'usband, even if he be such a pore creetur as he can stay sneaking about in the back kitchen there when 'is own wife is being assaulted! No, sir; and I ain't going to be sworn at, not in my own house I ain't, and after all the annoyance and scandal I've been put to this day, as pounds and pounds wouldn't pay for, and may ruin my letting for months and months. I stood your up-setting, here-to-day and there-to-morrow ways as long as I thought you was a bachelor an' by yourself; but when it comes to bringing young women here and passing them off as your wives, when well you know as you've only decoyed 'em into a sham marriage, poor things! and de-

serting of 'em afterwards. No, Dr. Marstrand, sir, I'll not be silenced nor pushed aside. This is my own house, and I'll say what I please in it; and it's no use your looking upstairs, for the young lady an't there—and a good thing too; for if she was to see you in the disgraceful state you're in, with your 'air all rumbled up nohow and wearing some other man's clothes——”

With a sudden staggering movement Marstrand let his hand fall, and, turning from her, dropped heavily on to one of the lower stairs.

“She isn't upstairs!” he said hoarsely. “No, if she were, she would have heard my voice and run out to me. This is what I was afraid of, that she would be wandering about the streets in search of me. She would guess there had been an accident, and, perhaps, she has not yet found out—Is that so? Is that what you've let her do? For Heaven's sake tell me the truth at any rate. Tell me where she is, that I may go to her, and I'll forgive you anything, even your vile, unfounded insinuations, though, if you have dared to insult that pure young girl, my wife, with them——”

Mrs. Nicholls looked redder and more puzzled than before. A feeling of discomfort, of doubt in her own perspicuity even, was beginning to come over her. Marstrand's erratic habits, the amount of strong tobacco which he consumed when at home, and the reckless criminality of his conduct with regard to anti-macassars, even amounting to crumpling them into hard balls and dropping them on the mat outside the parlour door, had marked him in her mind as anything but a sober or steady character; and her own theory of his disappearance was simply this, that on leaving his pseudo-bride he had met with some fast friends, had been persuaded to drink with them, and had done so to such an extent as to either get himself “locked up” for the night or left somewhere by his companions to sleep himself sober. She had heard of such cases before in her own class of life, and once, among the upper ten, of a wild young fellow who, being on the eve of marriage with a view to reforming himself and breaking free from a set of evil-living friends, had been taunted into backing a wager made by one of them that he would yet drink a farewell glass with them on his wedding night, and had kept his word to such effect that on leaving the symposium he staggered into a neighbouring outhouse and hanged himself! It was a ghastly story, but in Mrs.

Nicholls' mind “nothing could be too bad for some men, bless you!” And supposing her theory to be true, it was quite likely that if, on recovering from the effect of his potations, or being released from custody in the early morning, the erring bridegroom had chanced to get sight of the parents of the girl he had attempted to ruin hastening to her rescue, he might very well have lacked courage to face them, and have taken the boat for Southampton or anywhere else in preference. The whole appearance, indeed, of the young man at present, his wan face, dishevelled hair, and the palpable disguise he was wearing in the shape of someone else's garments, suggested more than anything the remorse-smitten rake returning when the coast was clear to enquire after his victim; and it was only something undefinable in the agonised sincerity of his manner, his evident indifference to her suspicions of himself, and, more than all, the practical impossibility of his even having been able to get to Southampton, far less return in the course of the day, which so far shook her in her theories as to make her look at him more narrowly and thereby observe that he was on the verge of fainting, and that the back of his head was covered with surgical bandages.

“Why, good Lord, sir!” she exclaimed, “you are hurt! Whatever 'ave you been up to? And why, if you did care for the young lady you run off with—as I own you do make believe to—why didn't you stand by her like a man instead of going off on the loose and leaving 'er to face 'er parents, pore thing, all by 'erself?”

“Her parents!” repeated Marstrand. He half rose to his feet, but sat down again giddily. “I can't stand,” he said faintly. “My head—tell me what you mean, for pity's sake. Her parents, have they been here? They did follow us then, and you—you let them in!”

“Why, in course, sir, they followed. Is it likely they wouldn't?” Mrs. Nicholls answered, more uncomfortable still, but expostulating less. “You must think of their feelings, sir, though it's not every father and mother as would set off and travel day and night after a daughter as had disgraced 'erself; and I'm sure the looks o' that pore lady when she got 'ere at nine o'clock this morning would ha' moved a heart of stone. She looked worn out with anxiety and weepin', she did, and if her daughter wasn't in a worse state still you may thank me for it, though I

says it as shouldn't, that 'ad been up all night with her, and so cossetted 'er and cheered 'er up, and persuaded 'er as you'd come 'ome to 'er all safe an' sound, that, believe me or not, when 'er pa and ma got here if she 'adn't fallen asleep and was as sound as any babbey."

"May Heaven bless you for that at all events!" cried Marstland solemnly. "At nine o'clock, you say? And I—oh, Heaven! to think of it—I was lying insensible under that doctor's opiates; I was only just across the road at the factory there at that very time. But go on—go on about her. Where is she now? They have not taken her away! They could not. She is my wife, and they must know

"Begging your pardon, sir, that's just what they tell me she isn't," Mrs. Nicholls broke in with a very crimson face. "And anyhow they did take 'er away, though not against 'er will; for glad enough she seemed to go; for though scarce able to walk and not 'aving courage to face 'er pa, as was persuaded to go in a different carriage with the other gent, she was clingin' to 'er mother's arm like a child, an' begging 'er not to leave 'er, nor send 'er away, and she'd never do nothink wrong again as long as she lived. They didn't go to a hotel nor nothing after leaving 'ere, but went straight down to the 'arbour, where the sailing vessel as had brought them from France—one as belonged, so I gathered, to the gent as come with them—was lyin' in readiness to take 'em back; and Nicholls 'e went down to the pier, an' saw them off. It's a matter of three hours ago now; and oh, sir!—taking out her handkerchief and beginning to weep—"what you've been up to, or whatever kep' you away, I can't imagine, but if you do care for that pore young woman, or mean honest by 'er, I do 'ope as you'll go after and marry her proper as is 'er right, for it's a sad thing to bring an innocent thing to shame; and innocent she was, I'm sure, for it's more like the dead than anythink alive she looked when she fainted away on hearing she'd been deceived by you."

"She has never been deceived by me—never!" cried Marstland, starting to his feet and speaking in a voice of thunder. "She is my lawful wife—married in your own parish church here yesterday. The certificate is in this very house now, and no human power, no laws of man or devil,

have the right to separate us. What fiendish lies have you and those cold-blooded wretches, who were selling her to pay their debts when I rescued her from them—what infamous falsehoods have you and they been telling her, poisoning her pure mind and practising on the misery and fright my absence had plunged her into—my darling, my poor, poor darling!—to make her doubt her own rights, her own wifehood, mistrust the husband who would have died a thousand deaths rather than wrong one hair of her innocent head! Why, the very accident which might have killed me was caused by nothing but my trying to take a short cut back from the post office last night, in my anxiety to get home to her two minutes sooner; and you—your mind was so evil that you must needs jump to the conclusion that I had been fool and fiend enough to desert my new-made wife, and tell her so! What she must have suffered! What she must be suffering now! And I thought at least she was safe with you. I entreated you to take care of her and guard her from disturbance, even when I fancied I shouldn't be ten minutes from her side. I would have paid you for your fidelity double and treble of what they no doubt have paid you for betraying her, and yet you did so. You let her be tortured, worked upon, dragged away out of the island, so that I cannot even get to her—cannot—Why, Burt! Jack Burt, is that you?" his almost frenzied tone changing to a weak, piteous cry, as he turned towards the doorway, where a tall, fair-bearded man in an ulster and tweed travelling-cap was standing, gazing at the scene before him in puzzled bewilderment. "Has Heaven sent you here to me? Run for a doctor, old man; my—my head—I'm going mad, I think, and I mustn't be mad now. I—you'll help to keep me sane, Jack, won't you, till I've found my wife—my poor, little helpless wife whom they've stolen away!"

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A Weekly Journal

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CHARLES DICKENS

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PRICE TWOPENCE

ALEXIA.

BY ELEANOR C. PRICE,
Author of "Gerald."

CHAPTER XV.

ONE morning, a few days after this, Mr. Page came in to his early breakfast, and found the dining-room windows wide open; a feast of crumbs spread on the gravel path for the birds, who breakfasted there every morning; a fire blazing with peculiar cheerfulness; a bunch of fresh snowdrops lying on the table; and, in fact, every sign of Alexia.

This was the first morning that she had come down since her illness. Mr. Page went to the nearest window, and stepped out on the three stone steps which led down into the garden; he thought Alexia could not be far off.

There she was, coming along by the old ivy border, carrying more snowdrops in her hand, the sun shining upon her, the birds singing as if it was April, though March had hardly begun. She had thrown a shawl over her head and shoulders, and looked like a girl in a picture, with pink cheeks and smiling eyes. As she walked she was singing some gay little air.

"Come out, father; you don't want any breakfast, do you?" she cried when she saw him. "I have thought of some improvements in the garden. I want to have a new bed for lilies of the valley, and a great many more carnations. I shall take up carnations. All this year I am going to be perfectly mad about the garden, and you will have to spend lots of money. Won't Mrs. Dodd think me a goose?"

"You will rather enjoy that, you young rebel," said Mr. Page placidly. "Come in, and don't tire yourself any more now. There is a letter for you."

said Alexia, for his manner was a little grave, and just now she was living like a child in a wonderful new atmosphere of freedom and peace.

"From Mrs. Melville."

"Oh dear me! I shall have to write and tell her—or you might do it for me."

"I wrote the day before yesterday. I thought everyone had better know at once. So this is an answer, and you must have your breakfast before you read it."

"I'm glad you wrote," said Alexia, as she followed him into the room. "I hope she won't think I have behaved badly."

In his little plan about breakfast the good William had forgotten how the look of Mrs. Melville's letter would startle Alexia. He had had several of such letters himself, from her and Charlie, but while Alexia spent most of her time upstairs, there was no trouble in hiding them. But now it was too late; she had it in her hand, with its deep black edge, and was looking at it with frightened eyes and a face from which all the light-heartedness had suddenly fled.

"But why—who is it?" she muttered, turning very white.

Her father looked at her for a moment, and then carefully closed and fastened the window.

"It was hard on Charlie," he said, "and he was very much cut up, too. On the very day of the fire he got a telegram to say that she was dangerously ill—and he got there too late, after all."

"His wife? Oh, poor thing, poor thing!" cried Alexia; and she sat down, still gazing at the outside of Mrs. Melville's letter. "Oh, what a cruel thing for her!" she said. "But, father, why haven't I known it all this time?"

"I was not to tell you anything that

"And he—where is he now?"

"He sailed this week for America."

"What was it?"

"An attack on the lungs; it went the wrong way from the first; she was only ill a few days. She had a cold when he left her. You knew he was going to America. I told you all that Mrs. Melville told me about that, when I was in town that day. He came down here to see me—I did not expect him—and as you know, he did not make his appearance here that evening, so the first I saw of him was in his burning house. Poor Charlie!" said Mr. Page, beginning to cut bread with quite unnecessary vigour. "Now, my dear, everything will be cold."

"But that poor thing—all alone—how very dreadful!" said Alexia, leaning her elbows on the table, and beginning to read Mrs. Melville's letter. "What a sad business it has all been! Not to see him again—and you know, I'm sure she cared for him a great deal. She was one of those women who don't show their feelings, but I'm quite sure she was very fond of him in her way. How sorry he must have been that he had left her!"

"Yes, I think he was sorry," said Mr. Page. "I dare say you may be right about her—only I know that it was, on the whole, an unhappy marriage. I think they had been on very uncomfortable terms for a long time, when he made up his mind to go away. They did not understand each other in the least. I have heard a good deal about it from Mrs. Melville; it has been a great trouble to her."

"This must be a great trouble to her, and to him, too," said Alexia. "People forget their misunderstandings—and I'm sure he blames himself, now. He knows how much nicer he might have been."

"Very likely," said Mr. Page. He went quietly on with his breakfast, and allowed her to read her letter in peace. She flushed a little as she read it, and her eyes filled constantly with tears. Presently she handed it across to her father, saying in a low voice: "Mrs. Melville is nicer than anybody."

As he read it, he was glad to see that she too made some pretence of beginning her breakfast. Mrs. Melville's letter was so calm that its effect was calming; there was nothing strained, or morbid, or unnatural in it, but a sort of healing sweetness. Her fine instinct knew how to keep on the surface of things, and yet to make

her real feeling felt through all. Her few simple words about poor Maud, whose good fortune had been so much less than it appeared, had a tender regret in them, a little self-reproachful: one knew that Charlie's mother felt she might, perhaps, have drawn them together more—and yet—. She hardly mentioned Charlie; and as to the breaking-off of Alexia's engagement, she expressed neither surprise nor pleasure. But she said that now, once more, she must repeat the invitation which Alexia had so often been obliged to refuse—would she come to her in London, as soon as she was well enough to travel? And then, a little later in the spring, they might go back to Redwood together, for she wished to spend a few days there, when the Manor was habitable again.

"You will go, Alex?" said Mr. Page, as he gave her back the letter. "You had better go next week."

He felt desolate enough as he said it. Alex did not look up to answer him, but there was a slight smile trembling about her mouth, and he knew that she was glad Mrs. Melville had asked her.

"Yes," she said, "I think I must go."

That afternoon she was sitting at her writing-table in the drawing-room, leaning back, tired but happy; she had just finished a letter to Mrs. Melville, and her head and her hands were hardly strong yet. She was wondering, as she sat there, how she had lived patiently through the years of that engagement, from which Edmund had so wisely and mercifully released her. Now life seemed to lie before her quite fresh, and calm, and new, with a soft morning light on it. Her father, and her dear old home; she rather wondered now how any danger or any attraction could ever have tempted her to leave these, to whom her true life belonged. Year after year, there would be fresh flowers in the garden; there would be young lambs and puppies and kittens to play with. Her father was training a young horse for her, and she meant to ride with him more than ever, when she was well. If there were as many strawberries as last year in the garden, the village children should come in and feast; their mothers too, if they liked, poor souls! Some of them, after all, were not older than herself, and she still loved strawberries. Why did not she think of it last year? She was selfish then, and in prison.

Yes, indeed, several of those village

mothers were younger than herself, and she could think of one face, at least, worn already with trouble. Then, she did not know why, her thoughts flew to her mother's grave in the churchyard, near the porch, under the shade of the lime-tree, and she said to herself with a little smile, "It is all quite settled now. I shall stay here, and be buried beside her. That is a comfort. Mother, you are pleased now. I am going to be quite good now."

There was a little brass mirror on the table; she stooped forward and looked intently into it, holding her face between her hands. She thought she did not look at all young—quite as old as poor little Jane Wildman, whose husband drank, and who had lost her two babies.

"I am very ungrateful not to look happier," thought Alexia, as she gazed into the sad dark eyes of the pale image before her.

Just as she was thus occupied, not at all aware that any one was coming, Mrs. Dodd walked into the room.

Now the news about Alexia's engagement had been a great shock to Mrs. Dodd. She had been away from home for a few days, and her husband had heard it from Mr. Page, who had naturally told it in very few words, walking off at once from the Rector's round-eyed amazement. When Mrs. Dodd came home, she blamed the Rector for not having insisted on more particulars. He ought to have spoken seriously to Mr. Page—a weak, foolish, trifling person, who hardly seemed to know right from wrong, and whose slavery to his daughter was disgraceful. Mr. Page ought to know what respectable people thought of such proceedings—making engagements and breaking them off again. It was not to be borne, especially when dear good people like the Rowleys were victims of it. "Not that Mrs. Rowley will be very sorry, I suspect," said Mrs. Dodd; "but the poor young man was perfectly infatuated. At this time, too! Really it is too barefaced. I should hardly have thought even Alice Page would have dared to do it."

So ignorant, and armed with these convictions, came Mrs. Dodd into Alexia's drawing-room that afternoon. She was determined for once to do her duty, and to tell this false, ambitious, dishonourable girl what she thought of her.

"And with nothing better to do than to stare at herself in the glass!" was Mrs. Dodd's first impression as she came in.

"Well, Alice," she said, "I suppose you are quite strong again now?"

There was something a little new in her manner to Alexia that day. It had never been pleasant; but its unpleasantness had not gone beyond stiffness and attempts at snubbing, which generally failed. The fact was, that she had never before had anything tangible to complain of in Alexia; but now, being so decidedly on the right side, she became rather stern and contemptuous, putting on an air of reproof. Alexia might have been any ill-behaved village girl, to whom the Rector's wife felt bound to administer a scolding.

At first Alexia answered her gently enough. She had felt sure that Mrs. Dodd would be much disappointed, and she did not dream of the heavy blame that was laid upon herself. She was in charity with all the world, too; her mood was soft and sad, and, being still physically weak, she had never been less inclined for fighting.

"Perfectly strong, of course," said Mrs. Dodd. "You look it; you have quite a colour. And what are you going to do next, pray?"

Alexia felt almost too idle to notice the studied offensiveness in her words. She was not accustomed to unkindness. Of course Mrs. Dodd did not mean to be unkind; it was only her tiresome manner. And such things—in a different tone, certainly—might have been said by way of cheering an invalid.

"Next?" said Alexia. "I am going away soon for a week or two, and then I shall come back and work very hard in the garden. I want to have a great many carnations. Do you know what is the best place to get them?"

Mrs. Dodd stared, thinking this the coolest impertinence.

"Nothing more startling than that?" she said, with a sort of sneer, which made Alexia lift her eyes, and really did bring the colour into her pale face.

But she did not understand, even yet, the tenth part of Mrs. Dodd's thoughts about her, and she answered very quietly:

"I am a little tired of startling things. I suppose I have been rather conspicuous lately; but I couldn't help it, you see. And this—I knew you would be surprised—and I dare say people are talking a good deal, because of course the circumstances were odd; but they will soon forget all about it, I hope, and they won't be startled any more."

"Oh, won't they?" said Mrs. Dodd.

"As far as I am concerned, certainly not."

said Alexia. "Do you know a carnation called *Bizarre*?"

"I know nothing about carnations," said Mrs. Dodd, quite snappishly. The colour deepened in her own cheeks, for she felt seriously angry with Alexia.

The characters of these two women had a bad effect upon each other. They were naturally antagonistic; and nothing could have drawn them together, except perhaps a shipwreck on a desert island, which might have roused their goodness by making them mutually dependent. As it was, Alexia made Mrs. Dodd uncharitable; and Mrs. Dodd tempted Alexia to be a little hard and flippant.

Mrs. Dodd sat extremely upright. Her surface of thick black cloth looked uncompromising; her mouth was squarely set, and her eyes shone with indignation. Alexia lay back languidly in a low chair; her dark blue gown fell in easy folds. There was a kind of soft, idle gracefulness about her, which to Mrs. Dodd's eyes was perfectly heartless and horrible.

"Alice," said Mrs. Dodd with resolution, "I am a very old friend. Will you let me speak to you in plain language?"

"I don't quite know what you mean," said Alexia.

"Now pray let us have no affectation between us," said Mrs. Dodd. "I am a true friend, though I sometimes think you look upon me as an enemy. But that is often the lot of true friends."

"I don't, indeed," said Alexia. "Why should I? I have done nothing to hurt you."

"Ah, what a good thing it would be if you could say that to everybody!" exclaimed Mrs. Dodd.

"I really don't understand you. Who have I hurt?"

"Alice, you have hurt us all," said Mrs. Dodd, with great earnestness. "Everyone who cares for you and your father, and wishes you to be respected. You have disappointed us all; and that is great pain. I won't say anything of the person whose heart you must have broken. It is always wrong to be false to an engagement, but in this case the circumstances make it doubly—treble—atrocious," Mrs. Dodd ended, having fairly wound herself up.

Alexia felt a little as if a shower of stones had been thrown at her head. She sat quite still for a few moments, looking down; then she said very quietly, "But I don't think you quite know. Who has told you anything about the circumstances?"

This was rather enraging to Mrs. Dodd, accustomed to be the village oracle.

"Are they not perfectly well known," she said, "to the most ignorant person in the village? Am I so stupid that I need come to you and ask *why* you have broken off your engagement just at this time!" And Mrs. Dodd laughed. "I repeat, the circumstances make your conduct unpardonable—shameful."

Alexia flushed up suddenly. "Is it possible——?" she began in a low voice.

"Did you really think we were all so stupid?" said Mrs. Dodd. "But let me advise you, don't flatter yourself too much——"

She was interrupted by Alexia's suddenly springing out of her chair. She walked to the window and flung it open; then she came quickly back across the room to the fire, poked it into a blaze, and threw on a fresh log of wood from the basket that stood there. Then, after leaning over the fire for a moment, she turned and faced Mrs. Dodd, standing on the hearthrug.

She was upright enough herself now; the colour had ebbed away and left her quite pale; but her eyes were burning, and she spoke with a painful effort.

"Such a little vixen I never saw!" said Mrs. Dodd afterwards.

"I should like you, please," said Alexia, "to tell me what you accuse me of. Yes, do," as Mrs. Dodd stared at her without answering. "You asked me just now if you might speak plainly. Do speak plainly. Tell me the very worst."

"I did not intend to put you out of temper," said Mrs. Dodd, collecting herself.

"I spoke as a friend, and I hoped you would listen quietly and seriously. No one can be more grieved than myself and Mr. Dodd, who have known you so long. Of course it is no use speaking now. The thing is done, and can't be undone. Only I should like to think that you were sorry—that you were conscious——"

"This is all nothing," said Alexia, with an impatient wave of her hand. "What do you expect me to be sorry for? What have I done?"

"You have most unjustifiably broken off your engagement——" began Mrs. Dodd in high tones.

Alexia's eyebrows went up a little. "And if I had broken off twenty engagements," she said, "I don't know what concern it would be of yours."

"But worse than that, far worse," went

on Mrs. Dodd, shaking with rage, "the whole neighbourhood hears two pieces of news in succession. First, that Charles Melville has lost his wife; then, that you have broken off your engagement with Mr. Rowley."

Alexia stood quite still. She felt rather stupid, and only dimly conscious of this woman's unbearable insolence. Mrs. Dodd, of course, took her silence for shame.

"You asked me to speak plainly," she said; "and——"

The triumph in her voice recalled Alexia to herself. "Don't say any more," she said very quietly, and Mrs. Dodd was silenced for the moment. "If my father had been here," said Alexia, "you would not have dared to hint—he would have told you—but I will tell you just this, that it was Edmund Rowley, not I, who broke off the engagement."

"Indeed! Well, I dare say he had good reasons," said Mrs. Dodd.

Alexia turned round and rang the bell. Then she faced Mrs. Dodd again, looking very white and like a statue.

"Martha will open the door," she said. "I think you had better not stay here any longer."

Mrs. Dodd stared at her for a moment, bewildered; and then walked out of the room.

When Mr. Page came in, some time after, he found Alexia sitting by the fire, strangely still. He took hold of her hand, which was as cold as ice, and she looked up at him with eyes that were full of some new intensity of pain. Her letter to Mrs. Melville was lying on the table.

"What is the matter, Alex?" said Mr. Page hastily. "Why haven't you sent your letter? It is nearly post time."

"Mrs. Dodd has been here," said Alexia, in a low, strained voice. "I have turned her out of the house."

"Out of the house! What on earth do you mean?" exclaimed Mr. Page, incredulous and horrified.

"Yes, I know I behaved awfully," said Alexia. "I knew you would be angry—at least, I didn't think, because you see I could not bear her a moment longer. Oh, the letter! Well, I think I can't go to Mrs. Melville. You had better dig a grave for me in the garden, and put me in. I am too disgraceful to live any longer."

"Why are you talking all this unfounded nonsense?" said Mr. Page rather sternly.

"I can't tell you, father," she said.

"Burn that letter, please. I will write to Mrs. Melville to-morrow, and tell her I can't go—*she* doesn't think so, though, or she would not have asked me," the girl muttered to herself.

"My dear Alex," said her father after a pause, "you must tell me what all this means."

"I think it means that Mrs. Dodd is out of her mind," said Alexia. "At least she has driven me out of mine. And you know how she talks to everybody. But you don't know what she and the neighbourhood are saying about me now."

"Then I had better know as soon as possible."

"How can I tell you!" whispered Alexia.

He stood looking at her for two or three minutes in silence. Then he came and sat down beside her on the sofa, drawing her head to rest on his shoulder, and holding and caressing her two hands as her mother might have done.

"Tell me, Alex," he said; "I shall put it all right for you."

"I don't think you can," she said, after a minute. "She won't believe you; her story is too good. She says—she says I broke off my engagement to Edmund because—because Charlie——"

"That will do. I understand," said Mr. Page. He did not move at once, but went on stroking her hands, and looking at the fire with very bright indignant eyes. At last he said, "Don't think of it any more, Alex. The lie is so plain that I can easily contradict it. Did the woman dare to say such a thing to your face, then?"

"Yes—but I made her," said Alexia. "She would go on hinting, and I asked her to speak plainly, and so she did. Father, shall I have to apologise?"

Mr. Page smiled slightly.

"Well, I suppose it won't do to stay for ever on these terms with the Dodds," he said. "But she shall apologise, too. In my soul I'm glad you treated her as you did; it may be a lesson to her. But as to giving up Mrs. Melville—nonsense! How can you be such a little fool!"

He hastily looked at his watch, started up, snatched the letter from the table and went out of the room.

Alexia's eyes were already full of tears, brought there by his tenderness. When he was gone she hid her face in the cushions, and sobbed and cried, till she finally cried herself to sleep. There he found her, a limp little crumpled heap in the corner, when he came back later from the Rectory.

CHRONICLES OF SCOTTISH COUNTIES.

THE COUNTIES OF GALLOWAY. PART II.

WIGTONSHIRE might aptly be called Little Ireland, for as well as its strong leaven of Irish population it has a good deal of the sombre, melancholy Irish aspect in its scenery. It is not a county very tempting to a mere pleasure tourist, although there are pleasant nooks and valleys here and there, all the more delightful in contrast with bare and forlorn surroundings. The coast-line, too, is sometimes picturesque and often gloomily grand, with broken ruins upon heights and headlands; but fierce tides, strong currents, and rocky channels make the navigation round about difficult and dangerous.

Hardly have we reached the River Cree, which divides the county from the stewartry, than we are in presence of one of those ruined piles whose origin is lost in the mists of antiquity. Cruggleton Castle may have been built by the Vikings, or possibly by one of the Norwegian Kings, who attempted a permanent conquest of the country; but, if so, the rovers of the Baltic were much better builders, and had command of greater resources, than we generally give them credit for. The legends connected with the castle attribute its foundation to the McKerlies or McCarrols, and go back to the Scandinavian invasions, when King Haco landed on the shore close by and tried to get possession of the castle by a stratagem. After the McKerlies came the Comyns, and then the castle fell to ruin, and was no more used as a stronghold.

Passing the head of Wigton Bay we come to a channel through the sands where a rivulet finds its way to the sea, and affords a landing-place for small craft, which may originally have given its Saxon title of the Wic to the neighbouring town, which is itself neither on sea-shore nor river-bank, but perched saddle-wise across the ridge of a hill. Modern improvements have given the town a gracious and cheerful aspect, and it is the centre of a rich and fertile district in strong contrast to the bare and desolate features of the rest of the county.

The most notable event, perhaps, in the history of the town is of a sad and tragic character. All Scotland has heard of the Wigton martyrs, and these not of the

benighted days of early religious struggles, but barely two hundred years ago—as late as 1685, to be precise—and the victims, no earnest divines or controversial zealots, but a poor widow woman and a maiden of eighteen summers, who had shared the general feelings of their country on the subject of episcopacy, and refused to deny their opinions at the bidding of time-serving magistrates. And these two poor creatures were actually tied to stakes upon the sands of Wigton Bay, and left to be drowned by the rising tide within sight of a strangely passive crowd.

It is said, indeed, that at the last moment these poor women were offered their lives if they would only say "God save the King," and that widow MacLaughlan, when urged by her friends to comply on the ground that it was only a Christian duty to pray for all, even her enemies, much more for those in lawful authority, replied, with wonderful calmness and resolution, that nowhere was a Christian woman commanded to pray at the bidding of any vain profligate. That the devoted woman had rightly estimated the character of those concerned was evident in the treatment of the younger woman, who had been left to perish last, and who professed her willingness to pray for His Majesty's welfare. But the officer in command replied to the eager appeals of the girl's friends that she must also repeat the act of abjuration, while, on her refusal, the ruffianly town officer, with his halbert, pushed the head of the dying girl beneath the tide, with the inhuman words, "Tak' another drink, my heartie."

Tradition says that, ever after, that wretched townsman suffered from a thirst unquenchable, and always bearing about with him a huge vessel of water could never slake the torments that devoured him. The man's descendants, too, it is said, suffered from some curse of a like nature, and, wretched and deformed, were shunned and abhorred by all the world. The graves of the martyrs are still shown in the kirkyard of Wigton, and the inscriptions recording their cruel fate, constantly cleaned and renovated by the care of succeeding generations, are still to be read on those ancient stones.

More ancient memorials of earlier religious movements are to be found in following the coast of the peninsula, which forms a mighty horn, projecting into the troubled waves of the Irish Sea. At

Whithern, twelve miles to the south of Wigton, is one of the ancient holy places of Scotland, once the resort of pilgrims. According to tradition, here was the birthplace of famed St. Ninian, the son of some petty chieftain, who, devoting himself from an early age to a religious life, was ordained at Rome, and became a disciple of Martin of Tours, who initiated him into the precepts and practices of ascetic and monastic discipline. Returning to his native land towards the end of the fourth century, Ninian built a cell and chapel upon an island on the coast near Whithern, retiring at times, after the example of his preceptor, to a solitary cave. The cave is still traditionally known as Ninian's, and recent excavations within it have confirmed the tradition, by the discovery of rude incised crosses of early form, and other traces of the former occupation of the cave by some ancient anchorites.

The paternal rule of the Monastery of St. Ninian extended, no doubt, over all the country round about, and when, at a later date, the power of the Northumbrian kings was established in the land, the sanctity of the site made it the fit seat of a bishopric of the Northumbrian pattern, known as *Candida Casa*, or, the *White Lodge*; in familiar Saxon, Whithern. But with the decline of the Northumbrian power, the bishopric ceased to exist, and the Gallowgians seem from that time to have been under the spiritual rule of the Bishop of Man. In the twelfth century, during a revival of ecclesiastical influence, the Priory of Withern was founded or restored, and the priory church became the cathedral church of all Galloway.

From the earliest days, Whithern had been the object of a popular pilgrimage, and it is probable that St. Ninian himself took advantage of some existing well, or rock, of sanctity and power in early superstition, to attract his heathen neighbours to his ministrations. And after the foundation of the priory, the fame and popularity of the pilgrimage increased, and the peasants and cultivators, who had long been accustomed to visit the shrine of St. Ninian, were joined by the rich and noble of the land. James the Fourth was a most constant votary at the shrine. On foot, and girt with the belt of iron that he wore in expiation of his share in the violent death of his unhappy father, he visited St. Ninian's, when his wife—fair Margaret of England—was near the agony of death

in childbirth. After the Queen had come happily through her trouble, and was restored to health, the royal pair came in state to Ninian's to render thanks to the saint.

James the Fifth, too, was a frequent visitor to St. Ninian's, and the Douglasses, when they could spare a little time from fighting and conspiring, made a point of paying their respects to the saint of Galloway. Not that the shrine grew ever very rich, for even the most exalted of its visitors were of frugal minds in matters of devotion.

We have from Sir Andrew Agnew, a descendant of the hereditary sheriffs of Wigtonshire, a pleasant account of one of the early Reformers of Galloway. This was Gordon of Airds, familiarly known as Sanie Rough, who was born in 1479, and died in his hundredth year. In his youth Sanie had travelled in England, and, meeting with friends among the Lollards, had brought home with him one of Wycliffe's bibles, which ever after he made his text book, quoting it on all occasions, in spite of the danger he incurred from having such a book in his possession. We may cease to wonder at the rapid spread of the Reformed doctrine in Scotland if many of its votaries had such enormous families as Sanie Rough. It is related that, upon strict orders being given by the authorities in Church and State as to the proper observance of the festivals of the calendar, when sheriffs and others were called upon to distrain all cattle used in labour; on such occasions old Gordon showed his contempt for the edict in the following original manner. The patriarch assembled all his friends one Christmas Day, and, bringing out plough and tackle, he yoked ten of his sons in the plough, holding it himself, while the youngest boy acted as caller, and thus tilled a ridge of the lands of Airds, defying any enemy to distrain his team. This handful of sons, by the way, was but a sample of the rest, for he had eighteen or more altogether.

About old Gordon is told the story of a traveller, who came to demand hospitality at Airds, and, accosting a well-grown youth was referred by him to his father, a comely middle-aged man, who, in his turn replied that he must be guided by what his father said, when the traveller was introduced to a venerable grey-haired grandsire: "Sir, you must ask my father the laird," replied the veteran in quavering tones; and so the stranger at last reached the head of the

house, the hoary and withered patriarch, sitting in his old arm-chair, whence he still ruled the household with its many generations of inmates.

The famous Cave of St. Ninian is three miles or so from Whithern, near Glasserton, where there is also a holy well of some repute, St. Medan's Well, about which there is a legend. Lady Medan, it seems, had devoted herself to religion and celibacy, but was pursued by a certain noble knight, who had become desperately enamoured of her. Wherever she went, he followed; no hiding-place was safe for long; he pursued her to the sea-shore, Lady Medan swam to a rock, the rock floated away with her, and carried her off to a distant shore. But the devoted lover still followed, and found her at last asleep in the meadows. A vigilant cock observed his approach, and crew loudly enough to awake the maiden, who escaped from the arms of her lover into the branches of a tree. Here she held a parley with her pursuer—"What is it you see in me," she asked, "that constrains you to follow me with such unlawful passion?" "Those beautiful eyes," began the knight gallantly; whereupon Medan plucked out her eyes and threw them to the knight, who, at this proof of her unchanging resolve, retired horror-struck and repentant. Where the blood of the saint fell a spring gushed forth, whose waters miraculously cured her wounds.

About here once stood an old kirk, called Kirkmaiden—and this, according to tradition, with the other better known Kirkmaiden on the opposite shores of the Bay of Luce, was built by two maiden sisters. Soon after the Reformation, it seems, the kirk on this side ceased to be used and the pulpit and bell were placed on board a boat to be conveyed to the sister Kirkmaiden on the other side of the water. All was calm and placid as the voyage began, but in the middle of the bay a great storm arose, and the craft foundered in the waves, and all that it contained went to the bottom. The old Romish bell that had rung out so often for mass and vespers, prime and angelus, that had been blessed by mass priests, and consecrated by mitred bishops in pontifical robes, had thought, it seems, but little of the Reformation, and declined to join the new Kirk of Scotland. But there it still lies at the bottom of the sea, and its voice may yet be heard, tolling out in muffled tones whenever one of the old family of Myrton is "in extremis."

The old McCullochs of Myrton, by the way, were something noted in the good old times—of the real, turbulent, fighting, unappeasable Gaelic race.

Tame were the ither Scots to them;
The Southron loons they lo'ed to claw.
Our grand forbears o' auld langyne,
The wild Scots o' Gallowa'.

There was one McCulloch, known by the sobriquet of Cutler, who, by his predatory visits to the coasts of the Isle of Man, excited the ire of the King of the Isle, the Earl of Derby, who thereupon led a foray with all his ships and men as far as the coast of Galloway, where he plundered the lands of the McCullochs, doing them considerable damage, but carrying off no great booty, it may be imagined. From this time Cut McCulloch was busier than ever among the Manxmen, till his name became a word of terror, long used to frighten the naughty children of Mona's Isle. The Manxman remembered their foe even in their prayers, as with the pious old islander whose nightly orison was:

God keep the house and all within
From Cut McCulloch and from sin—

Till one night his prayer was answered by the mocking voice of the enemy:

Gudeman! gudeman! ye pray ower late,
McCulloch's ship is at the gate!

At the extremity of the cape which is known as Burgh Head are the extensive foundations of some early fortress, whose origin and history are alike unknown. Like Bamborough, or Dunstanburgh, on the Northumbrian coast, this may have been the stronghold of roving pirates from the Baltic, from which they might levy contributions on the surrounding districts; although it is difficult to conceive how such extensive works could have been carried out with the means at the command of the Viking bands.

Rounding this Cape Horn of Wigtonshire, we come to the open Bay of Luce, no sheltered anchorage, but swept by strong tides and open to the south-westerly gales. In the bight of the bay a pleasant valley opens out, where long ago a colony of Cistercian monks, from Melrose, established themselves in a delightful and sequestered dale. According to tradition, the famous Michael Scott, the wizard, was once Abbot of Luce, and in this spot his magic wand was broken, and his books—those mystic books which contain all the hidden lore of past and future—buried deep in some subterranean vault. And a guardian more terrible than giant or dragon guards the

treasure. The wizard, it is said, shut up the plague within the vault, and who opens that chamber will let forth death and desolation to stalk through the land.

Crossing a neck of land about six miles in width, we meet the Atlantic breezes that play over the deeply indented fiord of Lochryan, which, with the Bay of Luce, cuts off a lonely peninsula, in shape like an old-fashioned crutch-handle, and this isolated region is known as the Rinns o' Galloway. The extreme point to the south is the Mull of Galloway, a grand, windy height, from which, in fair, calm weather, is to be seen a fine panorama of land and water, the Isle of Man looking almost close at hand, the coast of Ireland in the horizon, with the shores of Solway and the blue mountains of Cumberland. But in a general way the Mull of Galloway is the haunt of all the winds that blow. No stormier eyrie could be found all the island round than this rugged height, where tempests seem to gather and burst continually, while roaring tides and spouting billows beat against the Head.

There are whirlpools, too, and strong currents even more formidable, which gave the Mull of Galloway an evil reputation with the shipmasters of old. But here we must quote old Andrew Sympson, whose description of Galloway, written towards the end of the seventeenth century, is one of the pleasantest books of the kind :

"The Point of Mull is a great rock, on which, as I have been often informed, such as sail by it on a dark night have observed a great light, which hath occasioned some to say that there is a rock of diamonds there." And the pleasant "Arabian Nights" flavour of this account is strengthened by the following account of the whirlpool : "There is a place of the sea close upon the Mull where ships if they enter are quickly turned round and sunk down, whether it be from contrary tides or a catadupe I know not, but I am informed of it by the Laird of Mull living there."

There is a great light to be observed on the Mull at the present day, but it proceeds from no rock of diamonds, but from the lighthouse that throws its cheery beam over the stormy waves, and warns the mariner away from the dangerous headland.

The Mull belongs to the parish of Kirkmaiden, the sister church to the ruined kirk on the other side of Luce Bay ; and hence the allusion in Burns' poem,

Hear, land o' cakes and brither Scots,
Frae Maiden Kirk to John o' Groats!

Near Kirkmaiden there is a famous holy well—though not really a well, but a cluster of pot-holes on the sea-shore, which, filled by the tide, were resorted to by the neighbouring population, who bathing therein found their troubles and maladies much alleviated by its waters. It is a curious evidence of the tenacity with which these old customs were retained by the people of Galloway, that up to the end of last century on the first Sunday in May the kirk itself was deserted, while all the parishioners flocked to the holy well, and performed their devotions thereby. If the minister chose to come and lead the service, well and good, otherwise he might hold forth to bare walls. The ministers, as might be expected, set their faces against the custom, as savouring of the ancient superstition, and although the practice lasted more or less well into the nineteenth century, yet it has now died out. But even now those who visit the wells are advised to make an offering to the genius of the place. A pin, a pebble, anything will do ; but it would not be lucky altogether to neglect the unseen powers.

In the same neighbourhood might perhaps be discovered by a careful explorer the cave described by worthy Sympson. "There is a large cave called the Cave of Uchtrie Macken close by the sea near Portpatrick, accessible by six steps of a stair, entering a gate built with stone and lime ; at the end of which is built an altar, to which many people resort upon the first night of May and there do wash diseased children with water which runs from a spring over the cave, and afterwards they beg a farthing or the like, and throw it upon the altar."

On the rugged coast of the Rinns, facing the Irish shore, stands Portpatrick, the nearest haven to the land of Erin, the distance between the two shores being barely one-and-twenty miles. At one time this was the chief port of communication between Scotland and Ireland, and it was especially favoured by the patron saint of the Green Isle, when he wished to cross from one country to the other. On one occasion he strode across, and footsteps in the rock on either side of the Irish Channel are left to this day, in testimony of the feat. On another occasion when barbarously decapitated by the heathen folk of Ayr, he swam across, according to the Irish account, holding his head with his teeth. Before the days of steam there was a constant immigration of the poorer Irish, who

have settled so thickly in the industrial towns of Scotland, and to this day Portpatrick has a distinctly Irish brogue and Irish population. But its port is now almost deserted, and its pier falling to decay, although as a watering-place it has many attractions, being one of the warmest, sunniest places to be met with thus far north.

Above the town on the summit of a frightful precipice stands the Castle of Dunskenne, once noted as the strongest place in all Galloway, and the annals of the country record how Eugenius the Fifth, King of Galloway, rescued the castle from the hands of Edfred, King of the Northumbers, defeating that monarch on the River of Luca, where 20,000 Saxons and 6,000 Scots were killed.

The shores of Lochryan are melancholy and desolate enough, although affording an excellent haven for the thriving town of Stranraer, which has carried off the ancient traffic of Portpatrick, and become a thoroughfare for the traffic with Ireland. The Adairs built a castle here which has been converted into a gaol; but the town did not come into existence until the seventeenth century, although the merits of the haven were long known. As Barbour, in his rhymed chronicles, relates of Robert Bruce—

Syne to the sea he took his way,
And at Lochraive in Galloway,
He shipped with all his men.

A curious story is told about the building of the Castle of Stranraer on a site where no stone was to be found, while the whole district would not supply a single cart or waggon to bring the hewn stone from the quarry. In this quandary the Adairs mustered their retainers, and formed a line from quarry to castle, handing the stones from one to the other like the buckets at a fire in the country.

The isthmus of the Rinns is guarded by the royal Castle of Lochnaw, the seat of the Agnews, hereditary sheriffs, and bailies of the county. Pleasantly placed among wooded hills by the side of a romantic loch, the ancient seat of the Agnews still boasts the square, solid tower, about whose battlements is spread a wondrous scene of land and water, while clustered about the tower is a rambling country house of modern erection. And happily for us, Sir Andrew Agnew has embodied the chronicles of his house and of the neighbouring district in a bulky volume, which is a perfect mine of characteristic stories about the old times in Wigtonshire.

The Agnews, as their name and arms imply, are of Norman origin, and bear upon their coat three lambs. They established themselves on both sides of the Irish Sea, leaving one foot, so to speak, on either island, and probably, after the Norman method, without much regard to the rights of the folk who were there before them. As a powerful if alien family, they attracted the regards of the Scottish monarchs, who sought to strengthen their hold upon the principality of Galloway. And thus from an early date they were par excellence the King's men, and seem to have gone hammer and tongs with anything but lamb-like behaviour against all other potentates in their neighbourhood.

When the Douglas ruled at Thraive the Agnews had a hard time of it. Douglas grim and black were altogether too strong for both King and sheriff, and Lochnaw was captured by the Douglas power, and the Agnews driven into exile. They probably had some concern in that terrible scene at Stirling Castle, where the Douglas was done to death by the King and his attendants. Anyhow, soon after that event the King granted by charter the hereditary sheriffdom to the Agnews.

As a rule it must be said that the sheriffs were every bit as wild and lawless as the rest of the King's lieges in these parts. Forays, feuds, sieges, and plunderings, curiously mixed up with pleadings and law-suits, went on from century to century. When the Douglasses were out of the way there were the Kennedys to quarrel with:

The Kennedys wi' a' their power
Fra' Cassilis to Ardstincher Tower.

The Kennedys, Earls of Cassilis, were far more powerful than the sheriffs, but the Agnews held their own in many skirmishes and downright battles, both in the field and in the law-courts.

Castle Kennedy, the seat of that powerful family, is not far off, on a remarkable peninsula between the two lochs of Inch. It is a ruin now, for it was nearly destroyed by fire early in the eighteenth century. The overpowering influence of the family is recalled in another popular rhyme:

'Twixt Wigton and the town of Ayr,
Portpatrick and the Cruives of Cree,
No man need think for to bide there,
Unless he court with Kennedie.

The Earls of Cassilis disappeared from the scene in the reign of Charles the Second, and their possessions were acquired by the rising house of the Dalrymples of Stair, with whom the sheriffs were in

alliance. Of this family was Marshal Stair, who was in command at the battle of Dettingen, a hard-won victory, due rather to hard fighting than good generalship. Less pleasant memories are connected with the Master of Stair, who was the instigator of the massacre of Glencoe.

UNSUCCESSFUL MEN.

"WILL no one write for us the lives of unsuccessful men?" asks Mrs. Annie Edwards in one of her novels. "The brothers of the poets, the first cousins of the painters, the godmothers and godfathers of the novelists—enterprising writers of biography have shown us these and all other relations of great men from their cradles to their graves. And still the human beings nearer to greatness still—the men who have not succeeded—find no historian."

This paragraph is certainly pregnant with suggestion; but, unfortunately, in the eyes of the well-to-do world, records of failure are unpleasant and voted uninteresting. Yet, if truth were valued at its proper worth, how instructive and how beneficial to the promotion of social sympathy would be the records of men and women who have bravely struggled, and, through misfortune, fallen in the fight!

In every example of biography we read much more of achievements than of endeavours. The prevalent tendency is, and has always been, to gloss over the attendant miseries of early struggles, and to come as quickly as possible to the brighter side of a career, to the dawn and sunshine of ultimate success. The petty worries and disappointments—the sorest trials in life, far more distressing than actual misfortunes—are passed over. Great gaps are left in the narrative; we read so much more of success than of failure. All this is a mistake.

"For many years I struggled with poverty in a garret," writes a living celebrity in his "Memoirs," "until one day I conceived the idea for my great work on 'The Habits of Primeval Mammals.' I at once carried it into effect. I wrote my book, published it, and reaped a rich reward. From that hour I became a successful man, and to-day I am what I am!"

All this is very well, but we should very much like to be told how the great man managed to subsist during the composition of his work. Did his ink ever run short at a moment when he found

himself penniless? What misadventures befell him over the negotiation of his manuscript? And, finally, did not some one assist him to publish his work on his own account? It is just these scraps of information which tend to deceive the general reader, and give rise to false conclusions. Were a little more of the truth revealed; were a few of the more painful incidents held up to view, we should have far fewer deluded mortals blighting their lives by a craving after literary renown.

To prove that the struggles of non-successful men are full of the greatest didactic force, we give the following passages from Carlyle's "Life of Hoffmann," whose weird tales are now so popular on the Continent:

"Misfortunes, almost destruction, overtook him, even on his journey. Seconda he soon found to be a driveller: the opera shifted from Dresden to Leipsic, and from Leipsic to Dresden. The country was full of Cossacks and Gendarmes, and Hoffmann's operatic melodies were drowned in the loud clang of Napoleon's battles. Till the end of 1814 he led a life more chequered by hard vicissitudes than ever; now quarrelling with Seconda, now sketching caricatures of the French, now writing fantasies, now looking at battles; sometimes sick, often in danger, generally light of heart, and always short of money."

At a former epoch he suffered no less from the buffets of Fortune.

"In Berlin he could find no employment whatever, either as a portrait painter, a teacher, or a composer of music. Meanwhile the last remnants of his cash, his poor six Friedrichs-d'or, were one night filched from his trunk, and news came from Posen that his little Cecilia was dead and his wife dangerously ill. In this extremity his heart for awhile had well-nigh failed him, but he again gathered courage and made a fresh attempt."

All this is very interesting, now that the world recognises the genius of Hoffmann; but would it be regarded in the same light had he succumbed to penury before the establishment of his fame? We suspect not. Readers of Kingsley will remember that when Alton Locke refers with the hopeful pride of youth to the "innumerable stories of great Englishmen who have risen from the lowest ranks," his complacency is wrecked by the bitter question: "where are the stories of those who have not risen; of all the noble

geniuses who have ended in desperation, drunkenness, starvation, and suicide?"

We have dwelt upon the literary aspect of our theme, for the reason that nothing is so common as to attribute the non-success of an author to his lack of talent, energy, or application, rather than to an overwhelming competition, the lack of capital wherewith to publish his works, and other extrinsic circumstances over which he cannot possibly have any control. In this matter-of-fact age men are not measured by the abilities that they possess, but by the money which they can command. Success makes success no doubt, but money must lay the foundation.

In another department of letters it may be mentioned that some of the finest plays the stage has seen were hawked about for years before their ultimate production. And though managers and actors subsequently reaped a rich harvest of success, the authors of the means of success had been prematurely driven to their graves by despair. Such was the case with Thomas Otway; with John Tobin, the author of "The Honeymoon;" and Gerald Griffin, author of "Gisippus," who retired into a monastery from sheer disgust. Such, indeed, has probably been the case with many dramatists whose works were never heard of at all. One of the most lamentable chapters in Disraeli's "Curiosities of Literature" is that devoted to the life of Eliza Ryves; the production of her play was delayed again and again, until she died of a broken heart. Says Disraeli: "The mysterious rites of procrastination are by no one so well systematised as by the theatrical manager, nor its secret sorrows so deeply felt as by the dramatist."

Regarding the commercial side of non-success, it is notorious that every published account of one successful man may be counterbalanced by those of the thousand no less talented, albeit unsuccessful, individuals whose stories will never be told. "He started with eighteenpence in his pocket," continues the author of "Archie Lovell," already quoted, "a habit of early rising, strict religious principles, and a taste for arithmetic; and died worth half-a-million. All right for him; the one sheep garnered into the great fold of success; but what account have we of the rest of the shadowy host, for whose prudence, whose patience, whose religious principles, whose arithmetic even, no market ever came? If there be

any law which governs the secrets of human success, we have signally failed as yet in discovering its mode of operation."

There are countless beings equally talented as their more successful brethren, whose opportunities for asserting, not to say distinguishing themselves, have been "nipped in the bud," and who have been assailed by every possible misfortune. Yet the world has no thought of their existence, and however heroic their daily fortitude may have been, common parlance would apply to such lives the catch-phrase of Tom Hood: "There's no romance in that!"

Truly there are heroes in obscurity, and these die at their posts; not wholly bereft of honours, but how requited? The many years of patient struggling are not appreciated by the busy world; but when the end comes, and failure shrouds their graves, how much greater is the reproach! The soldier who dies at his post; the captain who goes down with his sinking vessel; the fireman who perishes in the act of saving life—these examples of heroism are striking, because they stand out in relief amid a halo of excitement. But the inventor who lives only to see his ideas pilfered and realised by an unscrupulous capitalist; the musical composer who starves in a garret with pen in hand and unfinished score before him; and the poor author perishing on a doorstep, with a tragedy in one pocket and a farce in the other; these are laconically stigmatised as "Poor Devils."

Respecting the inventor, the greatest and the worthiest genius of all, since he benefits human kind, can any story be more mournful than this, which is fact?

He was a dealer in second-hand furniture, residing in the native place of the present writer. Oddly enough, the purveyor of domestic necessities turned his attention towards instruments of warfare. After repeated experiments, he produced an invention of real value: a gun-carriage that would not oscillate, or rebound, after the discharge of the ball. Unable to patent his own invention, he was advised to proceed to London and lay his plans before the War authorities. He did so, leaving his business in the care of his daughter. He freely exhibited his plans, but failed in executing his mission, the proper authority in the War department being still on his way to England from abroad. Newly advised, he afterwards went to Paris, to wait upon the French Government. His invention, though fully

examined, was at once pooh-poohed, and declared impracticable. Losing heart, he returned home, recalled by his daughter, to recoup his attendant losses by a temporary attention to his regular business. Early in the following year he made another trip to London, when he succeeded in gaining an interview with the Minister of War in person. His ideas were in a fair way of being adopted, until, unhappily for him, the fact was brought to light that the self-same invention had just been patented for use by the French Government, in Paris. By his previous visit to the French capital, he had enabled some unscrupulous individual to acquire fame and profit from his long-cherished ideas. In despair he returned to his native place, to be afterwards removed to a mad-house, where, if he is still alive, he lingers now.

What compensation can a man have for such injustice? And what reproach can be directed against him that he did not succeed?

SOME FAMOUS PLAYS.

IV.

SHERIDAN'S "RIVALS" AND "SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL."

IN TWO PARTS. PART I.

In the middle of the last century no gayer city existed within the length and breadth of England than Bath. Beau Nash had not yet risen to originate its Assembly Rooms, frame rules for its manners, and regulate its ways; but men of parts and women of fashion, fatigued by the dissipations and weary of the monotony of London life, crowded here to drink the waters of health and seek fresh means of diversion. In the mornings, gossips of both sexes thronged the Pump Room to slander and calumniate their friends and acquaintance in the smartest and most entertaining manner. At midday, royalty, with its train of courtiers, famous beauties with their groups of followers, belles in powder and patches, beaux in satin and periwigs, wits, flirts, soldiers, and civilians, in all a goodly crowd, took the air in Harrison's Gardens. In the evening, the narrow streets were filled by the sedans of pleasure-seekers on their way to assemblies, balls, concerts, and card parties. The atmosphere of this city of delight was redolent of sin and snuff, rouge and romance, scandal and intrigue; and brilliant with the light of tapers and diamonds. the sheen of silks

and swords, the the witchery of w

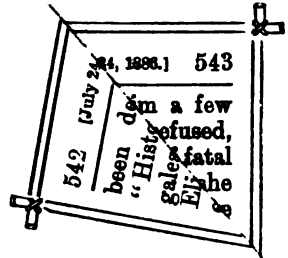
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"a wrong-headed, whimsical man, pursued an active though not wholly profitable career. Adopting the stage as an occupation, he considered himself superior to David Garrick; becoming the manager of a Dublin theatre he lost his fortune; and now following the calling of a public lecturer and teacher of elocution, he sought to maintain his family. This consisted of three daughters and two sons—Charles, the eldest, and Richard, the future dramatist. Mrs. Sheridan, a writer of novels and plays, had recently died at Blois, in France, a country in which the state of her health and of her husband's finances made it desirable for them to reside for some time.

Having settled in Bath, Tom Sheridan held classes to "impart the arts of reading and speaking with distinctness and propriety"; in which he was assisted by his eldest and favourite son, who had begun life at the age of twelve as an orator. Richard, who was born in Dublin in the year 1751, had, from the age of eleven to eighteen, spent his days at Harrow, where he became a general favourite. On leaving school no career had been selected for him by his father, and the lad was accordingly left to follow the bent of his inclinations, and spend his time as he desired.

He therefore mixed freely among the society which Bath so pleasantly furnished, being "beloved by every one, and greatly respected by all the better sort of people." His sister, describing him at this time, declares he was generally allowed to be handsome; his cheeks had a glow of health and his eyes were "brilliant with genius, and soft as a tender and affectionate heart could make them." The same playful wit, that afterwards distinguished his writings, now cheered and delighted the family circle. "I admired, I almost adored him," she adds enthusiastically.

Amongst the families with whom, on their arrival at Bath, the Sheridans became familiar, were the Linleys. Linley was a musician of fair renown, a conductor of concerts, a composer of note, a man of consequence withal. As was natural, he had bred his children to the calling which had earned him distinction. They have



geniuses described by Dr. Burney, in his "History of Music," as a family of nightingales, in which the "queen bird" was Elizabeth, Linley's eldest daughter. Before entering her teens she had sung in public, and now took part in oratorios and concerts. Her form was graceful and delicate; her features, regular and expressive, were touched by that mysterious shadow which prefigures early death. Her bright youth, delicate beauty, and rare talent rendered her name notable and her company desired. She charmed women by the sweetness of her voice, and attracted men by the brightness of her eyes, and was exceedingly lauded by both. Families of rank and fashion contended for her company, and she was received rather as a favourite guest than as a professional singer in the wax-lighted, rose-scented salons of the Parade and the Crescent.

In this bright world, to which she was gladly welcomed, dainty compliments, dangerous flatteries, and luring speeches were whispered in her ear. A score of gallants, wearing their hearts upon their brocaded sleeves, for ever followed in her wake; amongst them being one Captain Matthews, a married man, Elizabeth's senior by many years and a patron of her father's, who under the guise of friendship sought her love. Learned in the arts of a betrayer, he figured before her young imagination as a victim of domestic misery, gaining her sympathy through recounting his woes. For three years he hovered round her, engaging her attention by his studied wiles, whilst blinding her to his ultimate designs.

Towards the end of this time, the Sheridans arrived at Bath, when the two young men, Charles and Richard, immediately fell in love with Miss Linley. In a little while the former proposed to make her his wife; but his offer incurred the displeasure of both families, and was rejected by Elizabeth. Richard behaved with greater caution, and without exciting the suspicions of the elders, gradually gained the girl's confidence, and ultimately won her affection. From the first she found him "agreeable in person, understanding, and accomplished." She was soon to prove him courageous, honourable, and helpful.

Understanding her past position by the light of her present affection, she was convinced of her error in admitting even a sentimental regard for Matthews, and therefore resolved to break off all communications with him. To this end she was

probably advised by Sheridan, who, that he might mentally gauge the Captain and render her good service, speedily ingratiated himself into the Lothario's friendship. At first, Sheridan was deceived by him, as Miss Linley writes, "but he soon discovered the depravity of his heart under the specious appearance of virtue which he at times assumed, and resolved to make use of a little art to endeavour, if he could, to save me from such a villain. For this purpose he disguised his real sentiments and became the most intimate friend of Matthews, who at last entrusted him with all his designs in regard to me, and boasted to him how cleverly he had deceived me, for that I believed him an angel."

Escape from the clutches of such a man was a task more difficult of accomplishment than Miss Linley anticipated; moreover, in her efforts to elude him, she was unassisted by her parents. Dreading the results of her father's violent temper, she withheld from him all knowledge of Matthews's particular attentions, but revealed them to her mother, who laughed at what she considered romantic fancies, and declared the girl thought that every man who paid her a compliment must be in love with her. Matthews's intimacy with the family, and his private addresses to Miss Linley, were therefore continued.

At this period of her history an elderly gentleman, named Richard Walter Long, the owner of vast estates in Wiltshire, fell in love with, and proposed to marry her. Because of his wealth and station his suit was favourably regarded by her parents, who strenuously pressed her to accept so excellent an offer. In obedience to their commands she was therefore engaged to Mr. Long; who, in accordance with a stipulation made by Linley, agreed to pay £1,000, by way of indemnification, for the loss Miss Linley's retirement from public would occasion her family. Meanwhile, as the day appointed for her union with Long approached, the girl's wretchedness increased; until, at last gaining courage from desperation, she, possibly at the suggestion of young Sheridan, flung herself upon the generosity of her elderly suitor, and, declaring that her marriage with him would result in greatest misery, besought release from the engagement. The old gentleman behaved with the utmost chivalry, for not only did he accede to her request, but took upon himself the blame of breaking their engagement. Learning the plight had been broken, Linley threatened an

action for breach of promise of marriage, when Long generously settled £3,000 as a dowry upon the woman he loved.

The excitement these circumstances produced, acting on a nervous organisation, caused Elizabeth Linley serious illness, which it was feared might develop into a decline; a condition Captain Matthews attributed to his powers of fascination over an unsatisfied heart. Charles Sheridan, on the other hand, imagining her engagement to have been abandoned because of her secret love for him, again proposed, and was once more rejected. Grievously disappointed, he betook himself for some weeks into the country, and was, therefore, absent from Bath, when the most important acts in the drama of Elizabeth Linley's life were enacted. Meanwhile Richard, yet keeping his affection hidden from all, not only saw her continually in public, but occasionally contrived to meet her privately, in "a moss-covered grotto of stone, shaded by dew-dropping willows." In this shrine of romance, situated in Sydney Gardens, the lovers whispered long of troubles surrounding them as a sombre sea, from which they saw no means of escape; for he having neither money, profession, nor prospects, and she being followed by ardent admirers and subject to the wishes of mercenary parents, there seemed no chance of their ultimate union.

All the while gossip was busy with her name. In the Pump Room during the morning, on the Parade in the afternoon, and at polite assemblies in the evening, the principal topic of conversation was Miss Linley and her lovers. And Linley, now becoming aware of reports linking his daughter's name with Matthews's, and growing fearful of its consequences, broke off all friendly intercourse with him, and made her promise she would see the Captain no more. With this request she was most willing to comply, and, writing to acquaint Matthews with her father's decision, begged they might part as friends, whereon he commissioned Richard Sheridan to assure Linley that he would avoid seeing his daughter in future.

For a while all went well, until one day Matthews privately wrote to her declaring that he was going to London for two months, and that if she did not consent to see him on his return, he would shoot himself. Elizabeth answered, pointing out the injustice of his conduct, and requesting he would not address her again. To this she received a reply stating that he had something to communicate of the utmost importance to her happi-

ness, and begging her to grant him a few minutes' conversation. If this were refused, he added, she might expect to hear of fatal consequences. Terrified by threats she agreed to his proposal, and met him at the house of a mutual friend; when, producing a pistol, he swore, if she did not promise to see him on his return, that he would shoot himself before her face. Distraught with excitement and trembling with terror she pledged her word, and then, bidding her meet him four days later, he released her. Before reaching home she resolved on escaping from his persecutions by the destruction of her life. For this purpose Miss Linley secretly procured laudanum.

The following day being Sunday she attended church with her mother and sisters, but, refusing to accompany them on a walk, returned home, made her will, and wrote letters to her father and Captain Matthews. Whilst engaged in this manner Richard Sheridan entered the room, and, seeing the laudanum and the letters, suspected her intention. He therefore sought to persuade her from such designs, and, being unsuccessful, made her promise to postpone them till the afternoon, when he might have news that would change her resolution. No sooner, however, had he departed than, fearful of betrayal, she drank the laudanum, and was soon after found in a condition at first mistaken for death.

A most distressing scene followed. Her parents were overwhelmed by grief and remorse, her sisters distracted. The doctors, however, had hope of restoring her, and on the evening of day following she was sufficiently recovered to see Sheridan, who now revealed Matthews's character in its true colours, showing her for the purpose several letters which he had from time to time received from the Captain. In one of these it was stated that Miss Linley had given him so much trouble, that he would renounce all pursuit of her if his vanity did not desire conquest. He was resolved, therefore, when they met on Wednesday, to abandon the character of a suppliant and to assume the authority of a master. But if she refused to meet him, he would carry her away by force. On reading this letter she fainted. On recovery Sheridan asked her what plans suggested themselves to her for protection. "I told him," she wrote to a friend, "my mind was in such a state of distraction between anger, remorse, and fear, that I did not know what

I should do; but as Matthews had declared he would ruin my reputation, I was resolved never to stay in Bath."

Sheridan then proposed that she should fly with him to France, where he would place her in a convent in which his sisters had been educated. Here she would be safe from danger, and, when he had seen her settled, he "would return to England and place her conduct in such a light that the world would applaud and not condemn her." This being a period when violence and abduction were common occurrences, she evidently had little faith in the protection her father could extend against the arts of a man of wealth and position. Therefore, consenting to Sheridan's proposal, she agreed to be guided by him in all things. Accordingly he made secret preparations for their departure, in which he was aided by his eldest sister, who, favouring the scheme, helped him with such money as she could spare from the household expenses.

At last the time fixed for departure—the evening of the day on which Elizabeth Linley had promised to meet Matthews—arrived. The hour had been well selected by the lovers. The young lady's mother lay ill in bed, her father, brother, and sisters were performing at a concert, from which she had absented herself on plea of indisposition.

All things being arranged, Sheridan, unheeded in the gathering dusk, arrived at the Crescent followed by two sedan chairs. Into one he handed Miss Linley, in the other he placed her luggage. Then, bidding the carriers convey the chairs to the London Road, he walked behind by way of protection. He had not proceeded many yards when he encountered Matthews, who, furious that Miss Linley had not kept her appointment, was about calling at her mother's house. Sheridan assured him of Mrs. Linley's illness, and, stating that he was engaged in an affair of honour, in which he might require assistance, begged that Matthews would await him at his sister's. The Captain complying, Sheridan followed the chairs until they arrived at the London Road. Here a post-chaise stood waiting, in which Miss Linley found an elderly married woman seated, whom Sheridan had engaged to accompany them as a duenna. The lovers then proceeded in all haste to London, which they reached that night.

Arriving in town, Sheridan sought an old friend of his father's, one Ewart, a

brandy merchant in the City, and introduced Miss Linley as an heiress, who had consented to elope with him to the Continent. The old gentleman bade them heartily welcome, congratulated him on his undertaking, and offered them every possible assistance. As luck would have it, a vessel, chartered by Ewart, was then ready to sail for Dunkirk, in which he willingly gave them passage, and moreover presented them with letters of introduction to his partners there, whom he besought to facilitate their departure for Lille. On arriving at Dunkirk, the fugitives, in order to silence any scandal that might arise, went through a ceremony of marriage, performed by a Catholic priest. They then set out for Lille, and here Sheridan took an apartment in a convent for his companion, where she was to remain whilst he returned to England and prepared their future home.

She had not been many days at the convent when, overcome by fatigue and excitement, she became seriously ill. Sheridan therefore postponed his homeward journey and sought advice from an English physician, Dr. Dolman, of York, who, with his wife, was then staying at Lille. These kindly people betrayed the friendliest interest in the invalid, and, believing she would feel more comfortable in their home, invited her to stay there whilst her indisposition lasted. Sheridan and his wife—as she may be called—had written to Linley, from whom they agreed to conceal their marriage, simply stating that this step had been undertaken to save her from peril and perhaps ruin.

To these letters no answers were returned. A missive, however, reached Sheridan from Matthews, who from the hour of Miss Linley's departure had persecuted the members of her family with enquiries for the fugitives. From them he had obtained Sheridan's address, and made use of it to threaten and abuse the man who had balked him in his evil design. To his offensive epistle Sheridan replied that he would return immediately, and would never sleep a night in England until he had thanked him as he deserved. Meanwhile Matthews, by way of avenging himself, inserted the following paragraph in the Bath Chronicle of Wednesday, April 8, 1772:

"Mr. Richard S— having attempted, in a letter left behind him for that purpose, to account for his scandalous method of running away from this place, by insinua-

tions derogating from my character and that of a young lady, innocent as far as relates to me, or my knowledge; since which he has neither taken any notice of letters, nor even informed his own family of the place where he has hid himself; I can no longer think he deserves the treatment of a gentleman, and therefore shall trouble myself no further about him than, in this public method, to post him as a l—— and a treacherous s——.

“And as I am convinced there have been many malevolent incendiaries concerned in the propagation of this infamous lie, if any of them, unprotected by age, infirmities, or profession, will dare to acknowledge the part they have acted and affirm to what they have said of me, they may depend on receiving the proper reward of their villainy in the most public manner. The world will be candid enough to judge properly (I make no doubt) of any private abuse on this subject for the future, as nobody can defend himself from an accusation he is ignorant of.

“THOMAS MATTHEWS.”

Sheridan, though unaware of this public attack, was anxious to hurry home in order to punish Matthews for his private insolence, but before he could depart Linley arrived. Thoroughly satisfied with the explanations which Sheridan gave, he thanked him for the protection afforded his daughter, whom he heartily pardoned. However, he insisted that she should return immediately, in order to fulfil some professional engagements he had made on her behalf; after which, he said, she might return to the protection of the convent if she pleased.

Therefore they three set out for London, and, on arriving, sought the hospitality of good Mr. Ewart. On their way from Dover they had stayed a night at Canterbury, where Sheridan refused to seek rest in bed, that he might keep his promise of not sleeping in England before meeting his slanderer. Hearing the latter was in town, Sheridan immediately went in search of him, but it was late at night before he discovered that the Captain was located at a lodging-house in Crutched Friars. Arriving here towards midnight and knocking loudly, Matthews came down, but, recognising his visitor's voice, declared that the key of the door was lost, and promising that Sheridan should be admitted when it was found, promptly retired to bed. This excuse did not suffice to divert Sheridan from his purpose; he persisted in knocking at the door and alarming the

neighbourhood until two o'clock in the morning, when he was admitted. He then made his way to Matthews's room, when the latter arose, complained of cold, called Sheridan his dear friend, and begged he would be seated. His whole bearing was that of a coward, who, seeing that the hour of his punishment had arrived, sought escape by protestations of civility.

Sheridan said he had come to answer his challenge, when Matthews declared that he had never meant to quarrel; that his dear friend's anger should be vented on his brother Charles, who, enraged by Miss Linley's preference, had prompted him to write the note. Blinded by rage on hearing this, Richard hastened to Bath, and, seeking Charles, demanded an explanation. High words passed between them, which resulted in both the brothers hastening back by post-chaise to town in order to punish Matthews, not only for his slander but for his last lie. Richard immediately called him out, and, accompanied by young Ewart, met Matthews and his second, Captain Knight, in Hyde Park. Coming to the ring, Sheridan observed that this was their ground; but Matthews—doubtless the original Bob Acres—objected to the spot. Therefore proceeding some yards they arrived at a level space, when Sheridan paused again, but his unwilling antagonist declared the place too public. They agreed to wait until the Park was deserted, and, after a considerable time, Sheridan once more prepared for combat. But the gallant Captain, perceiving a solitary figure in the distance, roundly swore they were watched, and, protesting he would not fight whilst anyone was in sight, suggested that the duel should be postponed until morning.

This Sheridan declared to be mere trifling; however, that Matthews might have no excuse, he went forward and requested the figure to withdraw. On his return he discerned Matthews quickly making his way out of the Park, when he immediately followed him, and, swearing he should fight, conducted him to the Castle Tavern in Henrietta Street, Covent Garden. Here Ewart called for lights, and led the party to a private room, when they drew their swords. The contest was sharp and brief, and in a few seconds Sheridan's opponent was at his mercy; whereon Captain Knight rushed forward crying, “Don't kill him!” and Matthews begged for his life. The victor then broke his opponent's sword, and insisted he should

write a contradiction of the statements falsely made. With this he refused compliance, but Sheridan, declaring he should not leave the room until this satisfaction had been rendered him, Matthews wrote the following lines :

"Being convinced that the expressions I made use of to Mr. Sheridan's disadvantage were the effects of passion and misrepresentation, I retract what I have said to that gentleman's disadvantage, and particularly beg his pardon for my advertisement in the 'Bath Chronicle.'

"THOMAS MATTHEWS."

The Sheridans, returning to Bath, caused this apology to be inserted in the paper which had originally published the accusation. In recounting the incidents of their duel Richard refrained from observations contrary to his adversary's credit; chance, he said, had given him advantage in the affair, and Matthews had therefore written his apology. Two days later the gallant Captain arrived and represented the encounter in a manner casting insinuations on his antagonist's behaviour whilst extolling his own bravery; hearing which Sheridan made known the truth. Accordingly the story of Matthews's cowardice, spreading through Bath, caused him to be shunned by men and ridiculed by women. He therefore hastily retreated to his home in Wales, but the news of his conduct having arrived before him, he was there likewise alighted and derided by friends and neighbours.

Stung by repeated mortifications, he at last sought to retrieve his honour by the desperate expedient of fighting a second duel with his late antagonist. For this purpose he returned to Bath, accompanied by one Barnett, on whom he greatly depended to sustain his courage, and challenged Sheridan to combat. The latter, having already avenged his injuries and given ample proof of his courage, was at liberty to decline the meeting without blemish to his honour; but, impetuous and heroic, he accepted it with alacrity. The bitter slights under which Matthews writhed had wrought his spirit to the highest pitch, and he determined that the second duel should prove fatal to one or other of the combatants.

Of this Sheridan was well aware, and in this hour it was his fate to be parted from those dearest to him. His wife was fulfilling an engagement at Oxford, his father and brother were absent in London. The day fixed for the meeting at last arrived, and on the morning of the 1st

July, 1772, he and his second, Captain Paumier, met Matthews and his supporter at Kingsdown, about four miles outside Bath. It was but three o'clock. Night had scarce faded from the fields, and the profound silence brooding over the mystery of dawn was unbroken, when they left their respective chaises and sought the ground already selected for their encounter. Here they at once drew their swords. Sheridan rapidly advanced on his opponent, then gradually retreated, and finally running in on Matthews sought to catch his sword. In this he failed, when the captain dealt him a blow which broke his weapon. He then laid hold of Sheridan's sword-arm, and tripping him suddenly, both came to the ground. Matthews, being uppermost, seized his broken sword and repeatedly struck his fallen foe on the neck and face. Neither of the seconds interfered. Sheridan's sword had been bent in the fall, but, managing to grasp its point, he succeeded in wounding his antagonist slightly in the stomach; the latter then seized the point of his sword and stabbed Sheridan repeatedly. Both were furious from passion, maddened by pain, and covered with blood. Matthews now called out: "Beg your life, and I will be yours for ever!" and this request was repeated by Barnett; but Sheridan fiercely cried out that he would never ask for mercy. The seconds now interfered to part them, but before this could be achieved Matthews called out that Sheridan should be disarmed; and this being accomplished they were conveyed to their separate chaises waiting close by, when Matthews, who was but slightly wounded, drove to London, and Sheridan was carried to the White Hart Tavern, where two of the most famous physicians in Bath were speedily summoned to attend him.

At the request of his sisters he was conveyed to their father's house the following day, and for a week continued in danger. Meanwhile alarming reports of the duel and its consequences appeared in various papers, one of which reached Linley at Oxford as he was about to conduct an oratorio. He managed, however, to conceal the news from his daughter, knowing that it would prevent her appearance. Presently the family set out for Bath, and on arriving within a few miles of the town were met by the Rev. Mr. Panton, who entering into conversation with Miss Linley, begged that she would undertake the remainder of the journey in his chaise. He then with due

preparation told her of the duel, on which, overcome by surprise, she cried out, "My husband, my husband!" and begged that she might be taken to him. Compliance with this request was, however, impossible, as Sheridan's father now forbade his family to hold intercourse with the Linleys.

When pronounced out of danger, Richard was sent to visit some friends at Waltham that he might recover strength, whilst his wife was placed under care of relatives at Tunbridge Wells. On their return to Bath the utmost caution was taken by the Linleys that Sheridan should not see their eldest daughter; and, so carefully was she guarded, that for long she found it impossible to write him a letter or receive one from him. At length he conceived a stratagem which outwitted vigilance. Arriving at an understanding with the owner of the carriage hired to convey her to concerts, he disguised himself as its driver, when he was enabled to slip notes into her palm, and receive others in return as he handed her out. In this way their vows of fidelity were renewed, until at length perseverance was rewarded, opposition relented, and they were married on the 13th of April, 1773, the bridegroom being twenty-two years and the bride nineteen.

So much has been recorded of Sheridan's early life, because of the influence it subsequently bore upon his productions, many scenes of which reflect incidents and characters which had come within his personal experience.

VICTIMS.

By THEO GIFT.

Author of "Lil Lorimer," "An Alibi and its Price,"
Etc., Etc.

CHAPTER XXVI. A STERN CHASE.

"It comes to this, George, if you won't be calm and reasonable I shall leave you," said Burt gravely.

It was the fifth day since, being on a holiday visit to Guernsey, he had received a telegram from Professor Josepha, giving him Marstland's address, and adding, "Call on him. He may want your advice." He had obeyed the suggestion at once, and had arrived just in time to catch the poor fellow in his arms, and carry him up to the room where he had been lying ever since, struggling with all the strength of a mighty will and a magnificent constitution against the illness which, following on such

a shock, would have brought nine out of ten men to the brink of the grave.

"He will pull through because he is determined to do so," the doctor said, "and because, fortunately for him, his blood, and brains, and organs generally, were in a thoroughly healthy condition to begin with." But it had been a narrow squeak, and but for Burt, who nursed him with all the skill and nearly all the patience of a woman, it may be doubted whether the surgeon would have got through as well as he did.

He suffered a great deal both from pain and fever during the time, but he was never wholly delirious or unconscious; and it was at his earnest desire that Burt had telegraphed and written to both Vera and her parents at Les Châtaigniers, where it seemed most probable they had returned, giving a full account, certified by the medical man, of the accident which had kept the young husband from his wife; claiming her as such; and offering, if there was any flaw in the ceremony by which he had made her so, to have it repeated when, how, and where she and her parents pleased.

Burt had written the letters; but Marstland had had himself lifted up in bed, that he might append his signature as well as burning fingers and trembling wrists would enable him to do so. No sign or shadow of response had been vouchsafed to them, however, and he was accordingly bent on making his way to Les Châtaigniers as speedily as possible.

"You see, my dear fellow," Burt went on, "the doctor here has said you may travel to-morrow, because you'll only fret yourself worse if you don't; but there's no use in taking advantage of a permission of that sort to work yourself up into a state of excitement, which will only end in your being taken ill again on the road; and I tell you plainly I won't go with you if you do."

"Oh, yes you will, Jack," said Marstland, stretching out a great, gaunt hand to his friend. "You'll not desert me now, after seeing me through so far; and I'm not going to be a bad patient. I wouldn't be such a fool, when I know that every hour of strength gained is an hour nearer to my darling."

"Keep yourself calmer then, or you'll never get to her," retorted Burt, "and to do so you must learn to look at the facts of this unlucky case more coolly, and see where you have been wrong. Of course you meant to make the young lady your wife——"

"She is my wife," said Marstland, doggedly.

Burt sighed with gentle impatience.

"You meant to make her so, and meaning this your first step ought to have been to get the very best advice how to do it legally and properly, instead——"

"It's as legal a marriage as yours, Burt, and I defy anyone to prove the contrary," Marstland broke in, his cheeks flushing angrily.

His friend nodded, and went on with perfect imperturbability:

"— Instead of which you did the most foolish thing possible—kept the matter a close secret from your best friends; acted out of your own head, knowing nothing about the law on the subject; and so hashed the whole affair that, thanks to an unfortunate accident which you couldn't foresee, and therefore couldn't guard against—you an Englishman, living on English territory, are at this moment in the position of being a married man with a wife living, though not in your power, while the lady whom you very properly call by that name is at the same moment in her own country, and, according to its laws, an unmarried girl without a husband living or dead. Now that's a position that no two people in your circumstances should be in, and the man who has got them into it by a mixture of hot-headed impetuosity, misplaced sentiment, and amateur cleverness, is a man—don't be savage with me, old fellow, for saying it—very decidedly to blame."

"I'm not savage with you," said Marstland sadly. "Blame me as much as you please, only do it justly. As for scouting advice, for instance, I didn't scout it; but in the first place I felt bound to comply with Vera's entreaty that the affair should be kept a profound secret from my friends as well as hers."

"Misplaced sentiment!" Burt interposed quietly.

"And in the next, I did consult with young Dampier, and it was entirely owing to his advice that I didn't try to get married by the Protestant chaplain at Quimper, as I originally intended. I should have preferred that; to have taken my betrothed straight from her home to the nearest church and married her there by special license; but Dampier said it was not to be done; that there were no such things as special licenses in France; and that there'd have to be a civil ceremony before the religious one, entailing no end of delay and botheration. This Guernsey marriage was

his suggestion, and I acted on it. If I didn't consult him as to details, that was simply in consequence of the first of the untoward chances which have befallen me in this affair. One reason, you must know, for his brother being so willing to put his yacht at my disposal was, that she had just been fitted out and manned for his own use, when he was prevented starting by his young wife being taken seriously ill. Well, three days after I had gone over to Brittany, and before anything was settled, Tom Dampier wrote me a hurried note that the malady had declared itself to be malignant typhus, and that, as his brother had written to him to take charge of his boys during the Easter holidays, for fear of infection, he was just leaving London for that purpose, and might be absent some time. He added that the yacht-master had orders to proceed to Morlaix, or any other convenient port, immediately on the receipt of a telegram from me, and from thence to whatever place I might have fixed on for my wedding; but he did not say where he was going. He gave me no address; so it was impossible for me to apply to him, still more so to trouble his brother for further advice. I have told you already why I didn't choose to consult the Josephses."

"Yes, that was the hot-headedness, George," said Burt. "The Professor's a sensible man, and would have advised you both wisely and kindly. You can see that by the letter he has written since, and by his daughter's. What a nice girl she is, to be sure! I used once, you know, to think you were fond of her."

"Of Leah! Nonsense!" cried Marstland, flushing. "Why, we never were anything but friends. What could have put such an idea into your head?"

"It was a very natural one. You were always there, and she is a very charming, clever young woman, and just the one to make you a capital wife. I think it's a pity you didn't see it for yourself."

"Very likely. Leah Josephs is charming and good enough to make a capital wife to any man worthy of her; but I was never impertinent enough to propose myself as the individual in question, and should probably have lost a friend and got well snubbed if I had. Besides, I happen to be in love with Vera, my wife, and, as Leah Josephs is her most intimate friend, I'd be thankful if you did not suggest the possibility of my being fond of her as well."

"All right; only that is the more reason for, instead of against, your consulting her

and her father in a matter so seriously affecting the other young lady. You see what he says; in France——”

“But my dear Burt, that’s just the point,” Marstland interrupted, his thin face flushing. “This is not France, and I’m not a Frenchman. I am an Englishman of full age, desiring to be married and live in England according to English laws and customs. Why then should I, or my wife, who is already half an Englishwoman, trouble our heads about any abominable foreign regulations which have no authority outside the country they belong to; or do in any way differently from what we have done? I engaged lodgings here for the proper time. I gave the proper week’s notice at the church. I took out the license and paid for it in the proper way; and if I did vouch for Vera’s being of age, as well as myself, at a time when she was not actually so——”

“Which, in the strictly English marriage you are talking of, would not have mattered at all,” Burt broke in quietly, “seeing that by English law a girl is free to marry at eighteen. So far as that goes, therefore, if Mademoiselle Vera had been an Englishwoman, she might have walked out of her father’s house three years ago and married you, whether she had his consent or not.”

Marstland almost gave a shout of triumph.

“Why, then,” he exclaimed, “there can’t be a doubt on any point as to the validity of our marriage; and Leah’s telegram—poor girl! there have been moments when I’ve almost been brute enough to curse her for it, was a blunder after all. I have sworn to nothing that——”

“Gently a moment, George! I said if Mademoiselle Vera had been an Englishwoman! As it happens, she is nothing of the sort. She is a Frenchwoman and a French subject, both by birth and parentage, and, as such, she was not of age to marry without consent of her parents till she was twenty-one; nor then, mark you, without having made either two or three formal and respectful representations to both her parents of her fixed desire and intention to do so; nor without an equally formal notice to them of the marriage one month before it took place, and banns published openly on two successive Sundays, with an interval of three days between the second one and the ceremony itself. Failing these conditions her marriage, even if celebrated in another country and in accordance with its laws and customs, would be as utterly null and void in her own as

mine would be here, supposing my present wife were dead, and I were to take her sister over to France, where such marriages are perfectly legal, and marry her according to every detail of French law. In other words, the lady in both cases would, in her own country, be simply regarded as the mistress of the man who had so wedded her, her children—if she had any—as illegitimate, and neither they nor the husband would be capable of inheriting any such property as, in the event of its having been a legal marriage, would naturally have come to them.”

“Now, look here, old man, I do wish you wouldn’t excite yourself”—for Marstland had uttered a passionate exclamation, and half risen from his chair—“I know quite well what you’re going to say—that all this wouldn’t affect your wife’s status in England, or matter one iota to you. All the same, you know, it might matter to her. It would, at any rate, entail a grave sacrifice on her part, and, knowing this, and believing that you were probably acting in ignorance of it, I think Miss Josephs was quite justified in warning you of the risk you were running. On the other hand, however, if you really were, both of you, prepared to accept these drawbacks——”

“As I was,” Marstland interrupted sternly, “and as I am convinced Vera would be were you to give her the choice. She loves England already with all her heart, and once we were married and settled there, what need would either of us have to care about France, or French people’s opinions? My income is quite enough to maintain my wife and children upon, and provide for them after my death without looking to what her relations might have to leave; and of one thing you may be sure, no shadow of insult, or even of a disrespectful word, should ever have been allowed to reach her ears once I had her safe in my own care.”

“Then, my dear boy, in that case your first thought should have been to make and keep her so, beyond all risk even of accidents such as this that has happened. Your best plan, in fact, would have been to have made all legal and proper arrangements for your marriage before leaving England, and then to have taken Miss St. Laurent straight over there, married her, and carried her off straightway to some pretty little village—in the Welsh mountains, say—small and remote enough to be well out of the ken of her French relatives, while you wrote to inform them of what

ad taken place. By that time it would have been too late for them to interfere, and useless for them to attempt to do so, seeing that our English laws, which are as careful in guarding even clandestine marriages as the French are in preventing them, would certainly not have allowed a father to remove your wife from you by force, even had he wished to do a thing which could only put her to open shame. No; the St. Laurents probably would have hated you just as keenly, but under those circumstances you would have made it their interest to insist on your doing the very thing which, as a man of honour, and for your bride's sake, you would naturally desire—i.e., the legalising, as soon as might be, in her country a marriage which would be already legal in our own."

"Don't go on, Burt. I wish I'd had your advice earlier. It might have been of use then," said Marstland bitterly. "As it is——"

"As it is, the case is reversed. Your wife has been taken away from you by her parents and carried back into a country where the law will not look on her as a wife at all. Still, as they can't be wholly without principle, and as the mother is an Englishwoman, I think you may look on the separation as only a very temporary one, and that, when you have humbled yourself properly, and submitted to a good dose of hard words, you'll be allowed to recommence your wedded life on a fresh footing. You see they have your explanation at present. They know you never intended to desert the young lady, and they must have heard from their daughter of the honourable manner in which you treated her throughout. Of course they are furiously indignant with you for having run away with her at all, and spoil their plan of a noble marriage for her; but you must just put up with all that for your wife's sake, and for the comfort of knowing that it is quite as much their interest as their duty, let them bluster as they will about it, not to let her be left in her present position a day longer than they can help."

"She would not be in it now but for that confounded doctor keeping me here," said Marstland, and then he clenched his hands together with a gesture of angry pain. "To think that she is bearing the penalty of my blunders!" he said. "Suffering for and through me. Oh! my poor little love, my poor, poor Vera!" He could think of nothing else.

They left Guernsey early on the following morning, and travelled straight to Pont l'Abbé; for, though the doctor who had attended Marstland had said plainly that he considered it too soon to undertake the journey at all, and urged that it should at least be carried out by easy stages, the young man himself laughed at the idea, and indeed seemed to pick up so much of increasing strength and vigour with every hour which brought him nearer to his destination that, but for the burning touch of his hand and the feverish glitter in his eyes, Burt might have thought that future precautions were really superfluous with him.

From Pont l'Abbé they drove over in a hired carriage to Les Châtaigniers, and as they drew up at last in front of the iron gates at the entrance to the avenue, Marstland, quivering with excitement as he was, could not help a curious thrill at the contrast between this visit in the broad light of day and the midnight one he had so recently paid. Truly time had been swift in its revenges with him since his brief triumph then, and as he sprang to the ground he felt within himself that Burt's hurried warning, "Make up your mind to a 'mauvais quart d'heure,' old fellow, and don't let hard words make you lose your temper," was not unneeded. He was too agitated to answer, but simply nodding an assent, turned and hurried up the avenue to the house.

"Now I wonder how long I shall have to wait," the artist murmured to himself.

A far shorter time than he expected! In little more than five minutes he saw through the chestnut boughs a figure hurrying towards him, and the next moment Marstland was at his side, pale as death, and almost panting for breath.

"They're not there!" he gasped out. "The house is shut up, and the only servant left in charge, an old woman who could hardly speak three words of French, said the family were all away. They had left on the ninth (the morning of our elopement, Burt), and she had heard that they were going to Paris for Mademoiselle's marriage."

"The marriage you put a stop to!" said Burt. "So! then they did not bring her home again as we imagined they would. I wonder—— Holloa, George! where are you going?"

"To Bénéite's cottage," said Marstland, who was already on his way to the low, thatched dwelling by the roadside whence

the blanchisseuse had watched him arrive on his first wooing; but alas! disappointment awaited him here also. The ever open door was closed; no smoke rose from the chimney, no cluck of hen or hum of gluttonous bee made sign of life in the little garden at the rear; and, as the young man stood staring in blank dismay at the deserted-looking residence, a boy riding by on a donkey stopped, and said something in the Breton dialect which seemed to intimate that no one was living there. Fortunately Burt, who knew something of the language, came up at the moment, and the boy explained to him that Bénoite and her sister were gone away. They had done something—what he did not know—to displease Monsieur, their landlord, and word had come to the bailiff that they were to be turned out on the instant. No, he couldn't say where they had gone. Bénoite had relations in Pont l'Abbé, perhaps it was to them; and then he too stood staring, while the men looked at one another, and Marstrand muttered a very strongly expressed curse on M. St. Laurent.

The incident was of evil omen for them.

"Only what one might have expected after all, though," Burt said. "Let's look up the bailiff, George; very likely if we found the woman she would know no more of the St. Laurents' present abode than we do, and he will be sure to know it."

The bailiff was easy enough to look up, but hard to deal with when found; his scowling expression and short answers making it plain enough that he had been warned of the probability of their visit, and directed not to enlighten them in any way. It was only grudgingly that he was got to own that the family were away, but for how long or how short a time, and what was their present address he would not say. He had no authority to do so, he briefly observed. If the gentlemen wanted to write to Monsieur or Madame, any letters addressed to Les Châtaigniers would be forwarded. That was all he could say; and the two Englishmen had to own themselves beaten and drive away.

Their next visit was to the Curé of St. Tryphine, who, from his probable intimacy with the family seemed the most likely person of all to know about their present doings and whereabouts, and was scarcely more successful. The old priest, a mild, white-haired little man, was indeed as easy to find as the bailiff, being on his knees in the little garden attached to his presbytery when they drew up, busily engaged in

stripping an army of magpie caterpillars off one of his gooseberry bushes, and dropping the marauders into a basin of boiling water which he held in one hand; but he desisted from this occupation the moment he caught sight of his visitors, and, still carrying the basin, went forward to receive them with all that gentle benignity which forms a pleasing characteristic of the French clergy, and a simple frankness of manner which had no air of being put on.

But yes, assuredly he knew the "famille St. Laurent," he said. Monsieur was almost his principal parishioner. Would that he could say the same of Madame and her daughter; but possibly this happy marriage which Mdlle. Vera was about to make, and of which the "messieurs" had doubtless heard, might yet be the means— But all this while they were wanting to know the present address of the family, and, "malheureusement," he had not got it to give them. They had all gone to Paris, a week ago, under the escort of M. le Comte; and he believed were to put up at a hotel near the mansion of the de Maillys, in the Rue— What the name of the hotel was, however, he could not say. He had never been in Paris himself, and knew little of that gay city. But what a pity, he said commiseratingly, that these gentlemen, compatriots and old friends, perhaps, of Madame St. Laurent, should have arrived at Ste. Tryphine just when she was away from home! And would they not, at least, honour him by entering his humble abode and partaking of some refreshments?

Marstrand looked piteously at his friend.

"Shall we take him into our confidence? He seems kind and honest," he said hurriedly; but Burt shook his head.

"Better not. The family have evidently tried to do away with the scandal of a daughter's elopement by spreading it about that they all started together on the ninth, and for you to upset this belief would only enrage them more and turn this good priest, who hopes so much from the young lady's marriage with de Mailly, into an enemy. No; I see nothing for it but to go to Paris, and enquire at the hotel nearest to your late rival's abode."

"They won't have gone there now," Marstrand said decidedly.

"Most likely not; but the hotel people will have heard from them to countermand their rooms, and will probably have their address to write to." And, as this seemed not unlikely, the two men hastened to offer

their thanks and excuses to the good Curé, and, after bidding him farewell, drove off again.

They travelled up to Paris that evening by the night mail. Burt slept comfortably nearly the whole time; but Marstland never closed an eye. His whole soul was racked with thoughts of Vera. Where was she? What was she suffering? Had she received his letters? What was she thinking of him now? He seemed to see her little pale face through the darkness turned appealingly to him; and when Burt woke up in the morning he thought his friend looking haggard and wan to a painful degree, and elicited an avowal from him that the wound on his head ached "a little."

"But it will be all right when I have found my poor little wife," he added with a faint smile. "Burt, do you think we can have to go through another day first?"

It seemed probable. On arriving in Paris they drove at once to the street the Curé had named, and having easily found the Hôtel Mailly, desired their coachman to put them down at the nearest public one to that abode; but either it was not the one at which the St. Laurents were to have stayed, or the people in the bureau were indisposed to be communicative, for they professed entire ignorance of the name, and Burt had some difficulty in persuading his friend to refresh himself with a bath and some breakfast before going on to prosecute his enquiries elsewhere. It was well that he succeeded, for the after-search was as fruitless as those that had gone before, and when, in the sheer bravado of despair, Marstland determined to take the bull by the horns and ask the question he could get answered nowhere else at the door of his late rival, even the more prudent artist could offer no safer suggestion than that he should be the one to make the enquiry, his friend remaining at a little distance meanwhile.

They were still discussing this point, standing on the side pavement outside the door of a fashionable-looking confectioner's, when a carriage that was passing stopped suddenly in front of them in obedience to a shrill voice from inside. The driver looked round crustily.

"Eh, well then, what is it?" he asked. "Did you not say the Hôtel Mailly, and there it is at the corner?"

"I know that," retorted the shrill voice, "but before we return to the Hôtel

Mailly it is necessary to refresh ourselves;" and forthwith the door was opened, and there stepped out four young women, all dressed with the smart neatness peculiar to the Parisian soubrette, and wearing brand-new white kid gloves and breast-knots of white flowers.

"A la bonne heure!" cried the shrill-voiced one, as she tripped past the two Englishmen, "I should die if I had not a sirop de fraises or something to console me after such a triste spectacle. Va! call that a marriage—it was more like a funeral."

The girl behind shuddered a little.

"Don't talk of funerals," she said, "I cannot get the face of that poor young bride, as they carried her into the sacristy, out of my mind. It was like a corpse."

"Ah! and they say she fainted again before they got her to the carriage," retorted the other. "As for the mamma, Madame St. Laurent——"

With a hasty stride forward, a strangled cry, Marstland caught the speaker by the arm.

"Who—whom are you speaking of! For the love of Heaven, tell me!" he asked wildly; then, seeing by the frightened faces of the girls, and the curiosity in those of the cabman and sundry passers-by, that he was making a scene, the poor fellow forcibly controlled himself, and taking off his hat, added, in a hoarse, imploring voice: "Mademoiselle, pardon me, I entreat you, but I just heard you mention the name of—a friend whom I have been travelling all night to see. You said Madame——?"

"Madame St. Laurent, Monsieur, whose daughter——"

"Yes—yes—whose daughter. What of her? Go on."

"Whose daughter has this morning been married to our master, the Comte de Mailly. Alas! then is it that Monsieur was one of the invited, and has arrived too late?"

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ALEXIA.

By ELEANOR C. PRICE,

Author of "Gerald."

CHAPTER XVI.

FOR the next two years Alexia's life knew a happiness that it had never known before—not even in those girlish days when she always had her own way, and rode to hounds, and ran wild in the fields, and was first in love with Charlie. Those days were not always quite happy. They were a little doubtful and restless; she was almost too free, too much left to her own instincts. The child was, in fact, neglected; and her position among the neighbours being not quite assured, it was only Charlie, and her own natural good sense, which kept her from becoming sensitive and morbid.

So I think that for some years, ever since she began to grow up, and to realise that the troubles of life were never far off, Alexia had been very lonely. She had never made friends with other girls, except on the surface. Her father was a great deal to her, but he could not be everything; and her mother's death had taken away her only chance of the one thing she wanted: the sympathy of an older woman, who could love and understand and guide her. That want had betrayed itself once, and to Mrs. Melville, the only creature Alexia knew who could satisfy it. It was not entirely as Charlie's mother that Alexia laid her head on her knees with passionate sobs that day; and Mrs. Melville had known that very well. She was deeply touched, and could have given Alexia all she wanted, if the heavy chains of circumstance had not bound her too hard and fast.

In her childish days Alexia had always

shrunk from Mrs. Melville, who certainly had never attempted to take much notice of her.

Charlie's mother was a person to be dreaded; she was very grand and worldly, and did not care for him. He and Alex enjoyed themselves much more when she was out of the way. It was very natural. Mrs. Melville was a woman of the world—fashionable, full of ambitions, plagued with the want of money, completely occupied with her own and her eldest son's affairs. It was not likely that she would have more than a word now and then to spare for a poor little country girl like William Page's daughter. She was never unkind, for she liked Alexia's mother, and was sorry for her; but of course Alexia herself had not interested her at all, till the dreadful discovery that Charlie meant to marry her. Then at last she was obliged to realise the girl, and then she found out her beauty, high spirit, and character. Her interest in Alexia dated from that day; and, strangely enough, Alexia's attraction towards her began then too.

There were, of course, many people whom Mrs. Melville called her friends; but, for all that, she was a lonely woman, and, after Charlie's marriage, a disappointed one too. Under the surface of her nature she had a great deal of nobleness, sincerity, and goodness; her ambitions for Charlie had not been low ones, and were not satisfied by seeing him a rich man. She had her dreams of a life that was really worth living, and she knew too in her heart what sort of things made life worth having. She knew, in spite of all her early training and practice, in spite of all the sneers of the world and the good sense of the majority, that love, and truth, and greatness of mind were things for which a man might give himself and all he had, and never repent of the bargain.

Now, during the next two years, while Charlie was on the other side of the world, Alexia spent a great deal of time with Mrs. Melville, and a friendship grew up between them, as perfect as their position would allow. Mrs. Melville sometimes came to Redwood, but more often Alexia paid her long visits in London, where she learned to know many things and many people. Mrs. Melville watched a little anxiously at first for the effect of society upon Alexia, but she soon saw that her favourite child was not to be spoilt; that while her manners developed, her character did not change, and that the admiration attracted by her beauty and freshness would never do her any harm. Twice in those two years Mrs. Melville persuaded Mr. Page to let her take Alexia abroad, and all her own first enjoyment of everything came back in sympathy.

Charlie wrote to his mother very seldom; and, when his letters came, she never read them to Alexia, but was generally a little graver than usual for a day or two, and yet more affectionate. But at those times Alexia always felt as if the tie that bound her to Mrs. Melville was in some strange way a division too—as if they were held together by a bar, that would neither let them be near each other nor far off. Charlie, the subject most deeply interesting to them both, was the one subject they avoided, for they could not be quite frank with each other. Alexia had in fact no wish to disturb the half mysterious peace that reigned in her life now, and Mrs. Melville was far too wise, whatever her thoughts might be, not to leave the future to itself.

The ivy grew fresh and green over the blackened walls of the old Manor, for the rebuilding was left till the Squire's return, except what was necessary to keep the walls standing. The place was lonely and sad, and it was no wonder that Mrs. Melville did not care to be there much.

But in the third spring she seemed to change her mind, and came down for some weeks, and was very busy putting the place in order. The lawns and shrubberies began to get back something of their old civilised beauty, and the beds in the garden were bright once more. Alexia thought she had never seen the garden looking prettier than it did one afternoon in May, when she came to see Mrs. Melville, and found her walking up and down the long flowery space between the great dark yew hedge and the red walls where magnolias and clematis flourished. The old soft turf was

studded with patches of brilliant colour. A crowd of white tulips rose out of a thick bed of blue forget-me-nots; close by red tulips lifted their bright heads from a deep setting of some small purple flower, and so on all along the garden—a bright mosaic painted by Mrs. Melville's fancy. She was walking there with a letter in her hand, which she put into her pocket when she saw Alexia coming from the dark arch in the yew hedge, crossing the shadow into the still sheltered sunshine of the garden—for this May day was a day of the poets.

Alexia looked very happy and young. She was dressed in pink, which always became her; her eyes were smiling, and her curls clustered softly under her round straw hat.

"Did you want me?" said Alexia, for Mrs. Melville had sent for her. "But I'm afraid I must go back to tea, please, because I have asked Mrs. Dodd to come."

"I'm sorry. Yes, I wanted you very much. Poor Mrs. Dodd! she is rather in the way sometimes," said Mrs. Melville a little absently.

"I did not think I could put her off," said Alexia, looking at her anxiously.

"No, no; of course not. That would have been wrong," said Mrs. Melville. "It doesn't matter." And she put her hand in Alexia's arm, and walked on slowly past the tulip beds.

"I think they get lovelier every day," said Alexia.

"What? Oh yes," said Mrs. Melville. "And the blue sky is so beautiful, and the fresh green leaves, and the sunshine. Poor Mrs. Dodd! She doesn't matter at all, Alexia, to you and me. Does she, darling!" And Mrs. Melville turned round and kissed Alexia, who knew at that moment, she could not tell how, that something perfectly wonderful was on the edge of happening. "My dear, I have something to tell you," her friend's voice went on. "I had a letter to-day from Charlie. He is in England—in London. He has arrived three weeks sooner than I expected him."

She stopped, and Alexia murmured something like "I didn't know."

"I kept his plans to myself," said Mrs. Melville, "because I thought they were so very uncertain. But he seems to be quite decided now—at least, Alexia, he does not quite know whether he is to come down here to-morrow, or whether I shall go up to him."

Again she was silent. Alexia felt horribly ashamed of herself. What business had

she to feel that all her thoughts were escaping from her own control, and that she really could not speak in her natural voice, because of these facts that Mrs. Melville had told her? How could they concern her? With crimson cheeks and a violent struggle she said rather abruptly: "What are you going to do?"

For a moment Mrs. Melville did not answer; they walked on silently. Then she said, very gravely and sweetly, "My dear, it is you who must decide. Charlie says I am to tell you that it depends on you."

Alexia stood still on the grass, Mrs. Melville watching her, while she gazed down at the white tulips and forget-me-nots. Her confusion and excitement had suddenly passed away; the happiness was too perfect for any doubt or fear now. Only after a minute she slowly lifted her eyes and looked at Mrs. Melville to have her only question answered. "Do *you* mind?"

"Don't be cruel, Alexia. You know I love you," said Mrs. Melville, her voice trembling a little as she stooped and kissed her.

CHAPTER XVII.

AFTER a long time, as the hours went on, Alexia and Mrs. Melville both remembered Mrs. Dodd. To Alexia the recollection came with an almost comical shock. Poor Mrs. Dodd! She would hardly be made to believe now that she had not been right all along; but what did that or anything else matter?

"I ought to go home now," Alexia said. "I wish—I wonder if you would go with me!"

"I will, my dear," said Mrs. Melville, who was almost as happy as Alexia. "In fact, I was going to ask myself, for I don't feel inclined to let you out of my sight."

It certainly was hard to have to sit down quietly and pour out tea, and talk reasonably on parish matters to Mrs. Dodd, when the thought of to-morrow, like some dazzling vision, would fill all one's mind and sight; when one could hardly feel the ground under one's feet, or understand what other people said, or realise that life to everybody else was still the old colourless humdrum thing it had been to one's self for so many years past.

Alexia longed to run away to her own room and be alone, and try to think what it really was that Mrs. Melville had told

her. But she had to sit still and behave properly while her good angel talked to Mrs. Dodd, who was delighted to meet her, as she wished to consult her about a woman who *would* let her children go in rags.

Alexia tried to join in a little, but she could not take the subject seriously, and made one or two nonsensical remarks, and went off into a wild little fit of laughter. Mrs. Dodd looked surprised, and Mrs. Melville's lips trembled; she gave Alexia one glance, and said:

"Alexia, we really don't want your opinion, for you know nothing about it."

Then she turned to Mrs. Dodd again and went on talking seriously.

Ever since their grand quarrel, more than two years ago, Mrs. Dodd and Alexia had been on the most polite terms. By her father's wish Alexia had gone to Mrs. Dodd the day after that quarrel, and had told her she was sorry for having lost her temper. Mrs. Dodd, who was an honest woman, had at once apologised for her part in the business, and confessed that what she said was founded on a mistake. Since then they had avoided each other as much as possible, but had felt a certain mutual respect, though Mrs. Dodd thought aloud in private that it was a great pity Mrs. Melville made such a fool of the girl.

Presently Alexia left her tea-table, for she was really too restless to sit still. She wondered where her father was, and how she should tell him. She went to the window and stood there, looking across the garden, seeing nothing, hearing nothing of the talk in the room, only conscious that a nightingale in the great lilac-bush was singing with a sweetness that was almost agony.

Then she heard another sound, which somehow she seemed to have expected all the time—the click of the opening gate. It opened and swung back again, and Charlie came in. Then she heard the nightingale no more, but only his footsteps as he came along to the door. She did not speak or move, except that she drew back a step from the window without knowing it. But in a kind of bewildering dream she watched him, hardly conscious that there was no pain now—no pain in seeing him, for the first time for more than six years. She could not turn round or speak to Mrs. Melville, who little knew how near he was—Charlie, the sunburnt traveller, walking with quick eager steps, looking thoughtfully on the ground.

Just before he reached the door he

looked up once at the window, and caught sight of Alexia as she stood there. Then, like the impatient man he was, he walked straight into the house, along the well-known old passage, and in at the drawing-room door. Even then Alexia did not speak or move, but only stood in a dream, looking at him.

Mrs. Melville started from her chair, and Mrs. Dodd screamed, but Charlie did not see either of them, or perhaps he was too impatient to care for a dozen spectators. He came straight up to Alexia and caught both her hands, and said :

"Alex, have I waited long enough?" and then he was holding her passionately close in his arms, whispering, "At last!" while he kissed her; and poor little Alexia in this intense happiness lost all her self-control, and broke into a storm of sudden tears.

Mrs. Melville's eyes were full of tears too, and for the first minute she said nothing. Mrs. Dodd got up, and after staring wildly at those two in the window, turned helplessly to her.

"I had no idea—I think I had better go," she said under her breath.

"Well, suppose you and I leave them for a minute," murmured Mrs. Melville, beginning to smile, and she very gently drove Mrs. Dodd before her into the hall.

Mrs. Dodd was quite flushed and trembling with excitement. At such a moment she forgot all her principles, her prejudices of years, all that she really thought unbecoming and undesirable in such a state of things. These feelings were sure to return to her afterwards in cold blood, but just now, being at heart a woman like the rest of us, she was carried away, and felt nothing but astonishment and sympathy.

"Mrs. Melville, I assure you—I really had no idea——" she stammered out. "So very sorry—so glad, I mean—I did not even know that Mr. Melville was in England."

"He landed yesterday," said Charlie's mother. "I did not expect him here till to-morrow, so I am as much surprised as you are. Not at that—I knew about that, of course."

"Well—well, I am sure I hope she will be worthy of such great good fortune."

"I hope we shall be able to make her happy," said Mrs. Melville quietly. "You won't mind my asking you—don't tell anybody at present, except Mr. Dodd."

This Mrs. Dodd promised with much

earnestness, and then, to Mrs. Melville's great relief, she went away.

Near the gate, as she was rushing along with a very red face, already beginning to realise all the consequences, she met Mr. Page. He would have stopped to speak to her, but she waved her hand impatiently.

"Go in, go in!" she cried. "Wonderful things have happened," and she hurried on her way.

He looked after her in amazement. Her manner was so strange that it flashed across his mind—"Another quarrel with Alex!" but after all he thought not, and so took her advice and went in.

Mrs. Melville had by this time gone back into the drawing-room, and was sitting on the sofa with Alexia's hand in hers. Alexia was comforted now, and had torn herself away from Charlie to fly to his mother. He was standing on the rug, talking very fast; but when Mr. Page came in he stopped, and went forward to meet him, holding out his hand.

"I'm not half good enough for her," he said, "but will you give me Alex now?"

Alex herself got up and went to her father too, taking hold of his arm with both hands, and leaning her face against his shoulder, as she had often done in hours of trouble. He put his arm round her, turning very pale, and for a moment did not give his hand to Charlie. He looked at him hard, and then down to Alexia's hidden eyes, and then across to Mrs. Melville, who met his glance with the smile that he used to say would take her to heaven.

Somehow, just then, he felt as he had never felt before, even when her wedding seemed to be so near, that the time was come when he must lose his little Alex. She was really giving herself away now; there was no doubt now; she belonged no more to him, but to Charlie, who stood there waiting for her, with lines on his face written by many troubles and climates. He was a good fellow after all. Mr. Page told himself that he knew that: the man who was thought rough by his acquaintances would never be rough to Alexia.

Her father's arm tightened round her a little, and he stooped and touched her curls with his lips.

"Very well, Charlie," he said, giving him his hand, and smiling a little. "I don't know about goodness, but you'll be good to her."

This is only a sketch of a few years in a

girl's life, and there is no need to carry it on any further. Alexia and Charlie were of course meant for each other from the beginning; they were lovers always, and I shall be surprised if they do not continue lovers to the end. They were neither of them faultless, and both made mistakes in their lives, which might very easily have ruined them for ever. If Charlie's first wife had lived, the stream down which he was slowly drifting might have dashed him at last among rapids and waterfalls, without strength or heart or conscience to struggle. If Alexia had married Edmund, her nature would have starved on the humdrum machinery of life, even flavoured with quotations. But I think she would still have walked in the light, for she was stronger than Charlie; her young soul was pure and high, and never felt anything but horror of darkness. Of course, she would have gone through the Inferno itself to save him, but that is another story. She went through something not unlike it to save the humming-birds, and strangely, by that wild impulse, saved herself instead.

SOME FAMOUS PLAYS.

IV.

SHERIDAN'S "RIVALS" AND "SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL."

IN TWO PARTS. PART II.

A FEW months previous to his marriage Sheridan had been entered as a student of the Middle Temple, but now neither time nor money necessary to the pursuit of his profession was at his disposal. His father had declined to countenance his union, and refused him future help; and Richard, declining to make use of his wife's talents for their common support, had determinedly rejected profitable engagements offered her.* His objections to her

* In this determination, which satisfied his pride and saved her from continual temptations, he earned the approval of Dr. Johnson. "We talked," says Boswell, "of a young gentleman's marriage with an eminent singer, and his determination that she should no longer sing in public, though his father was very earnest she should, because her talents would be liberally rewarded, so as to make her a good fortune. It was questioned whether the young gentleman, who had not a shilling in the world, but was blest with very uncommon talents, was not foolishly delicate, or foolishly proud, and his father truly rational, without being mean. Johnson, with all the high spirit of a Roman senator, exclaimed: 'He resolved wisely and nobly, to be sure. He is a brave man. Would not a gentleman be disgraced by having his wife sing publicly for hire? No, sir, there can be no doubt here. I know not if I should not prepare myself for a public singer as readily as let my wife be one.'" The happy change in public opinion since this sentence was delivered, is worthy of note.

appearing as a professional singer were exceedingly strong. She having before their marriage made an agreement to sing at the Worcester Musical Meeting, Sheridan, after great pressure from the directors, permitted her to fulfil her promise, but gave her salary to public charities; and once more he allowed her to sing at the ceremony of Lord North's installation as Chancellor of Oxford, "merely to oblige his Lordship and the University." Nay, so anxious was he that her profession should be forgotten, that he discouraged the exhibition of her talent in private assemblies. Northcote records how Sir Joshua Reynolds invited the Sheridans, soon after their marriage, to one of his famous dinners, together with a large number of guests, in hopes that she would gratify them by her singing. That she might have a suitable accompaniment he hired a full-toned piano. But to his great mortification, "on hints being given that a song from her would be received as a gratification and favour, Mr. Sheridan answered that Mrs. Sheridan, with his assent, had come to a resolution never again to sing in company. Sir Joshua repeated this next day," says Northcote, "in my hearing with some degree of anger, saying, 'What reason could they think I had to invite them to dinner, unless it was to hear her sing, for she cannot talk!'"

The young couple began life on part of the fortune settled on Mrs. Sheridan by Long. Meanwhile, her husband strove to earn an income by writing for journals and magazines, in which occupation he was occasionally aided by his wife, who had given proof of her literary talent by turning sentimental verses, and inditing pretty letters. "We are obliged," he told one of his friends, "to write for our daily leg of mutton, otherwise we should have no dinner."

"Ah!" replied his confidant, "I perceive it is a joint affair."

In the year succeeding that of his marriage he was engaged on a book, of which no trace has been discovered, and on a comedy subsequently known as *The Rivals*. "I have done it," he says, writing of the play to his father-in-law, "at Mr. Harris's (the manager's) own request; it is now complete in his hands and preparing for the stage. He, and some of his friends also who have heard it, assure me in the most flattering terms that there is not a doubt of its success. It will be very well played, and Harris tells me that the

least shilling I shall get—if it succeeds—will be £600. I shall make no secret of it towards the time of representation, that it may not lose any support my friends can give it. I had not written a line of it two months ago, except a scene or two, which I believe you have seen in an odd act of a little farce."

The Rivals was first produced on the 17th of January, 1775. Shuter, Woodward, Lewis, Quick, and Lee, respectively playing the parts of Sir Anthony Absolute, Captain Absolute, Falkland, Bob Acres, and Sir Lucius O'Trigger. John Bernard, an actor of repute and experience, has, in his "Retrospection of the Stage," given his impressions of the first night's representation. "It was so intolerably long, and so decidedly opposed in its composition to the taste of the day," he writes, "as to draw down a degree of censure, which convinced me on quitting the house that it would never succeed. It must be remembered that this was the English 'age of sentiment,' and that Cumberland and Hugh Kelly had flooded the stage with moral poems under the title of comedies, which took their views of life from the drawing-room exclusively, and coloured their characters with a nauseous French affectation. The Rivals, in my opinion, was a decided attempt to overthrow this taste, and follow up the blow which Goldsmith had given in *She Stoops to Conquer*. My recollection of the manner in which the former was received bears me out in the supposition. The audience on this occasion were composed of two parties—those who supported the prevailing taste, and those who were indifferent to it, and liked nature. On the first night of a new play it was very natural that the former should predominate, and what was the consequence? why, that Falkland and Julia—which Sheridan had obviously introduced to conciliate the sentimentalists, but which in the present day are considered heavy incumbrances—were the characters which were most favourably received, whilst Sir Anthony, Acres, and Lydia, those faithful and diversified pictures of life, were barely tolerated, and Mrs. Malaprop was singled out for peculiar vengeance."

After its second representation the comedy was withdrawn. Its failure was chiefly attributed to the bad acting of Lee as Sir Lucius; and, his part having been given to Clinch, and some alterations effected in the dialogue, it was again performed, and gradually rose into favour with the town.

Towards the end of the year 1775, Sheridan produced a comic opera entitled *The Duenna*, a light, brilliant offspring of his genius, plentifully interspersed with sprightly airs by Linley, one of which at least, "Had I a heart for falsehood framed," is not wholly unknown to the present generation. The *Duenna* became immediately popular, and succeeded in running twelve nights longer than *The Beggar's Opera*. Fortune indeed now smiled on Sheridan, for before another year had passed he, at the age of twenty-five, became part manager and proprietor of Drury Lane Theatre.

This important step had been brought about by Garrick, who, having achieved a fame such as no actor had previously earned, and accumulated a fortune proportionate to his success, resolved on retiring from the stage, withdrawing from management, and selling his moiety in the patent of Drury Lane Playhouse. Rumour of this intention having spread through the town, Garrick was beset by numbers anxious to purchase his share, which amounted to £35,000; but the manager, having first tendered it to Colman, of Covent Garden, next offered it to Sheridan, who, in conjunction with Linley and Dr. Ford, was desirous of acquiring the property. The sum of £35,000 was considerable to the future shareholders; "but, I think," writes the young dramatist to his father-in-law, "we might safely give £5,000 more on this purchase than richer people. The whole is valued at £70,000; the annual interest is £3,500; while this is cleared the proprietors are safe, but I think it must be infernal management indeed that does not double it." And again, he hopefully tells Linley, "I'll answer for it we shall see many golden campaigns."

In June, 1776, the sale of Garrick's share was duly effected. Sheridan and Linley paid £10,000 each, Dr. Ford £15,000, and the brilliant young playwright in a little while became directing manager. Lee, who had been Garrick's partner, and still held his share of £35,000, was in Sheridan's opinion "utterly unequal to any department in the theatre. He has an opinion of me," he continues, "and is very willing to let the whole burden and responsibility be taken off his shoulders. But I certainly should not give up my time and labour—for his superior advantage, having so much greater a share—without some exclusive advantage. Yet I should by no means make the demand till I had shown myself equal to the task."

In February, 1777, the new manager produced a comedy, *A Trip to Scarborough*, which was merely an alteration from *The Relapse*, by Vanbrugh, and then set to work in writing *The School for Scandal*. The composition of this famous play, apparently the issue of happy chance and unpremeditated wit, was the patient result of untiring industry. Two distinct sketches of the comedy were first made, which, after consideration and trial, developed into one perfect whole. In the first outline, Lady Sneerwell and her slanderous associates, her ward Maria, and a sentimental young gentleman named Clerimont, are the chief characters; in the second, Oliver Teazle, a retired merchant, his wife, and Plausible and Pliable—the originals of Joseph and Charles Surface—are the principal personages. The sparkling repartee of the first, and the motive of the second, combined to present the most brilliant picture of eighteenth-century society known to the stage.

Evidence remains, in his manuscripts, of the care Sheridan devoted to the construction of his sentences, and the labour he underwent in setting forth his humour to the best advantage. Repeatedly he expressed one idea in various forms, by way of ascertaining its most effective use, and he continually refined his wit till it shone with brighter lustre in each new setting. And, as he toiled, so did he triumph. Involved meanings, over-glaring witticisms, cumbrous sentences, were simplified, softened, and curtailed, as he proceeded. The time occupied in polishing the comedy was greater than he had anticipated, and, the piece being announced for performance before it was finished, the last scenes were roughly scribbled on detached pieces of paper. Towards the close his work evidently became irksome to the author, who, coming to a conclusion, wrote after the final words: "Finished at last. Thank God. R. B. Sheridan." To which the prompter, no less grateful, added, "Amen. A. Hopkins."

The comedy being announced, the town awaited its representation with interest. Garrick had diverted his elegant leisure by reading it with close attention, and, as Arthur Murphy records, had spoken of it with the highest approbation in all companies, a compliment the author fully appreciated. Between them a kindly friendship had been established. Tom Davies says that Sheridan esteemed and loved Garrick, "knew the value of his advice, and im-

PLICITLY relied upon his experience and discernment." On the other hand, the great actor paid Sheridan the loftiest compliment possible by placing him on a mental level with himself; for, when one of Garrick's admirers regretted that the *Atlas* who had long propped the stage, had left his station, the late manager replied, "If that be the case he has found another young Hercules to fulfil the office."

Anxious for Sheridan's success Garrick daily attended the rehearsals, to which he brought the benefit of his exact judgment and skilled experience. Moreover, he wrote a long prologue for the comedy, a form of composition in which he excelled. The newspaper advertisements announced the play as "never before performed," but made no mention of the author's name; and the preliminary notices declared the comedy "would be ornamented with scenes which did honour to the painters, and furnished with dresses new and elegant."

At length the evening of May 8th, 1777, the date fixed for first performance of the comedy, arrived. The doors of Drury Lane Playhouse opened at half-past five o'clock, and, before an hour passed, "a brilliant and crowded audience," to borrow a phrase from *The Public Advertiser*, had assembled. In due time, the curtain rising, King came forward to speak Garrick's prologue, which, with much pleasantries, "adverted to the title of the play and shot an arrow of pointed satire at the too general proneness to detraction observable in the daily and evening papers." Then the comedy began, and a play of wit, exchange of repartee, and charm of diction flashed on the hearers with surprise and delight. "The loudest testimonies of applause," the *London Evening Post* of the following day states, "greeted the comedy between every act"; and the *Daily Advertiser* adds: "it was received with the highest marks of universal approbation." The full force of enthusiastic approval was reserved for the screen scene in the fourth act, which, according to the *Public Advertiser*, "produced a burst of applause beyond anything ever heard perhaps in a theatre." A further testimony of the sensation this scene caused is recorded by Frederick Reynolds, the dramatist, in his "Life and Times." On this night he was returning from Lincoln's Inn about nine o'clock, "and passing through the pit passage from Vinegar Yard to Brydges Street," he writes, "I heard such a tremendous noise

over my head, that, fearing the theatre was proceeding to fall about it, I ran for my life, but found the next morning that the noise did not arise from the falling of the house, but from the falling of the screen in the fourth act, so violent and so tumultuous were the applause and laughter."

Owing to frequent rehearsals, and the care exercised by Sheridan, the acting on the first night was unusually good, and largely helped to secure success for the play. Mrs. Abington, as Lady Teazle, exhibited grace and vivacity. Smith's playing of Charles Surface, and King's representation of Sir Peter Teazle, were pronounced admirable. The remainder of the company were almost equally excellent. "To my great surprise," writes Horace Walpole, who witnessed it some nights later, "there were more parts performed admirably in this comedy than I almost ever saw in any play. Mrs. Abington was equal to the first in her profession; Yates, Parsons, Miss Pope, and Palmer all shone." Yates played Sir Oliver; Parsons, Crabtree; Miss Pope, Mrs. Candour; and Palmer, Joseph Surface.

The curtain fell, at the close of the first performance, on a scene of enthusiasm such as the walls of Old Drury had seldom witnessed, and, before morning dawned, the happy playwright, then in his twenty-sixth year, was, as he told Lord Byron many years later, "knocked down, and put into the watch-house, for making a row in the street and being found intoxicated by the watchmen." Next day the London press expressed its admiration of the brilliant comedy. The Public Advertiser was of opinion that Sheridan had united in one piece the easy dialogue of Cibber, the humour and truth of Vanbrugh, with the refined wit and pleasantry of Congreve. The Gazetteer pronounced that his genius "had happily restored the English drama to those rays of glory of which it was being shorn by a tedious set of contemptible scribblers." The Morning Chronicle declared the dialogue of his comedy to be "easy, engaging, and witty, abounding in strokes of pointed satire and enriched by a vein of humour pervading the whole." The objections it pointed out were that the production was somewhat too long, the scandal scenes were overcharged, and the last act was hastily composed. The Morning Post alone hit the sole blemish of this well-nigh faultless play. "If," says this journal, "there is a part that the pen of criticism

can justly point out as exceptional, it will be found in the second act, where, in our opinion, the business of the piece is suffered to hang in compliment to a chain of wit traps, some of which seem rather too studiously laid to have the desired effect."

Sheridan had now secured the reputation of having written the most brilliant comedy in our language. He has since earned the gratitude of countless numbers for the gratification it has afforded them. Its success continued at full tide during the remainder of the season, and was received with renewed enthusiasm in the autumn. Indeed, its continued representation for the next two years, whilst powerless to lessen its own popularity, was detrimental to the success of later productions, as may be surmised from the following remark, written by the treasurer of Drury Lane in his official report of the receipts for 1789: "School for Scandal damped the new pieces."

Before this date it was played in Dublin, Edinburgh, Bath, and many of the larger towns in England, and was everywhere received with hearty approbation. In 1788 the screen and auction scenes were embodied in a piece called *Les Deux Neveux*, played with success in Paris, and later on it was produced at the *Théâtre Français*, under the title *Le Tartuffe des Mœurs*, and at the *Porte St. Martin* as *L'Ecole de Scandale*. A version of the comedy was produced in Vienna by Schröder, an actor and author of repute, who travelled to England for the purpose of seeing it performed; and it has also been played in the Hague.

It was not until some years after Sheridan's death, that one of his biographers ventured to insinuate that the comedy had been pirated from a nameless young lady, the daughter of a merchant in Thames Street, who, obligingly dying of consumption, left Sheridan in possession of her manuscripts. "While time rolls on," says Dr. Watkins, in a fine spirit of false prophecy, "the difficulty of settling this question must necessarily be increasing, and this, in all probability, will be one of those critical points about which the spirit of literary research will labour in vain." The hall which this foolish doctor of laws sought to set rolling was timely stopped. Even if *The Rivals*, *The Duenna*, and later on *The Critic*, did not claim *The School for Scandal* as kindred, Sheridan's original sketches of the comedy happily remained to prove the worthlessness of this ingenious aspersions.

DREAMING.

I DREAMED as I slept last night,
And because the wild wind blew;
And because the plash of the angry rain,
Fell heavily on the window pane,
I heard in my dream the sob of the main,
On the seaboard that I knew.

I dreamed as I slept last night,
And because the oaks outside
Swayed and groaned to the rushing blast,
I heard the crash of the stricken mast,
And the wailing shriek as the gale swept past,
And cordage and sail replied.

I dreamed as I slept last night,
And because my heart was there,
I saw where the stars shone large and bright,
And the heather budded upon the height,
With the Cross above it standing white;
My dream was very fair.

I dreamed as I slept last night,
And because of its charm for me,
The inland voices had power to tell,
Of the sights and the sounds I love so well,
And they wrapt my fancy in the spell,
Wove only by the sea.

STUDIES OF OVER THE WAY.

A HOUSE IN CHARLOTTE STREET.

ON a certain occasion, when I was searching for a new abode, a friend told me incidentally that Charlotte Street, Fitzroy Square, was much affected by artists. Just then we had been suffering from an unusually severe course of fogs, and I was anxious above everything to get into a clearer air. Artists, said I to myself, would never congregate about Fitzroy Square unless it were comparatively free from fog. So to Fitzroy Square I took my household gods, only to learn that artists, like other men, are prone to err; for a more foggy district than that to which I had migrated I never lived in.

As I had artists all round me, it was not wonderful that I should have one for my "over the way." He was a tall, dark, sombre-featured young man, who might very well have had a drop of Spanish blood in his veins; and his wife, though without any striking beauty, was a sweet-faced little woman, a mere child, and evidently passionately in love with her husband. They occupied the first floor front-room; so I was able to command a good view of their movements from my post of observation—the window of my sitting-room on the second floor. The young man worked every day as long as the light held out; and then he and his little wife would issue forth, and when they came back from their walk he would generally be carrying a paper parcel, which I ventured to assume contained most likely some inexpensive

delicacy for the tea-table. My neighbours were poor, there was no doubt about that, but they were certainly very happy. The husband's grave face would light up in listening to his wife's cheery prattle; and she, clinging to his arm and looking up in his face, seemed to call upon all the street to look at her happiness and to confirm her judgment that her husband was the finest fellow in all creation.

As the spring days lengthened out, my neighbour's hours of labour lengthened also. He made the most of every minute of light, and I noticed that he began to look pale from overwork. I could see him, as he sat before his canvas—a somewhat large one—and his wife, more often than not, would be sitting near him and reading aloud. At last there arrived one day a large gilt frame, so I concluded that the picture was finished. A few days afterwards a four-wheeled cab was summoned, and the picture with some difficulty was got inside. The painter mounted the box beside the cabman, and away they went. For the next three weeks or a month my friend took life much easier. From the domestic details which I observed I had reason to believe that breakfast over the way was rarely finished before eleven, and the painter spent much of his time looking out of the window, pipe in mouth. He was troubled with very few visitors, but in these leisure days I noticed that a tall man with a limping walk called nearly every day. He generally stopped an hour or more, and once I noticed him standing before a sketch of my neighbour's and seemingly criticising it, so I concluded that he was a brother artist.

One morning I saw the painter leave the house with a downcast air. He slammed the door violently behind him, and a look of mingled rage and despair sat upon his face. After an hour or two a cab drove up to the door. The painter descended from the box, and, with the cabman's help, dragged a large picture out of the cab and took it into the house.

For a month after this occurrence the house was almost a blank. I scarcely ever saw the painter or his wife. The former would sometimes come to the window, and gaze into the street with a look of weary despair upon his face. The tall man, too, discontinued his visits. At last he appeared again, and this time he stopped nearly the whole afternoon. He must have been the bearer of good news, for the painter seemed quite himself again on the

morning. He set to work at his easel. At first I missed the figure of the little wife with her book open beside him; but my binocular soon informed me that she was seated before him on the platform, evidently posed for her portrait.

He worked with all his old energy for a fortnight or so, till the portrait was done. Then it was brought forward and placed in the window, so that I could easily get a view of it; and though I could see that it was a good likeness, I could see equally that it failed to display the principal charm of the sweet young face it represented. The look of youthful innocence was wanting. In a day or two's time a handsome carriage drove up to the door, and a magnificently attired lady descended and went into the house. I could see her moving about in the room, criticising the picture from all points of view. The painter's face was all aglow with pride and admiration of his work as he did the honours; but the little wife came up to the window—I had not seen her so plainly for weeks—and looked out with very sad and hopeless eyes, and I fancied I could mark the traces of recent tears upon her pretty cheeks. The fine lady drove away, but very soon she returned, and a tall, handsome man with her, whom I judged to be her husband, and, on taking a comprehensive view of the studio, I discovered her seated on the platform, while the painter was sketching out her features on a new canvas.

I felt genuine pleasure that my neighbour had at last gained a foothold on the ladder of fame; the only bitter drop was the blank woe-begone face of the young wife as she gazed out of the window, or trotted out—alone now—on her house-keeping errands. Often during the sittings I marked the tall, handsome gentleman talking to her on the other side of the studio.

As soon as the lady departed, the painter invariably removed the canvas from the easel and put in its place the portrait of his wife. Then he would sit down in front of this and gaze at it motionless in silent admiration. Once I noticed that he started angrily from his seat, and a second glance showed me that his wife had thrown a cloth over her portrait, and hidden it from his sight.

This little episode, I confess, puzzled me considerably. I was in full course to construct a theory of love and jealousy. The painter had fallen in love with his fair sitter, and the poor young wife's woe-begone face was an index of her jealous

torment; but this could hardly be maintained when the artist seemed to long to get rid of the sitter, so that he might gaze in rapture at his wife's portrait. Was he jealous of the tall, handsome gentleman? I saw nothing to justify such a conclusion. He rarely left the house; for, when the last vestige of daylight had faded, instead of going out as heretofore, with his wife on his arm, he would sit down before her portrait and keep his eyes steadily fixed upon it. He even forgot to light his pipe. The lame man, whom I had not seen for a long time, now recommenced his visits. He came much oftener than before, but the painter never went out with him.

Soon other carriages drove up to the door. My neighbour had evidently become a fashionable portrait-painter all at once, for one lady would come on Mondays and Thursdays, and another on Tuesdays and Fridays. I noticed that whenever any lady came for the first time he would always exhibit to her his wife's portrait, now placed on a handsome easel and draped with velvet in the most favourable light.

One day the lame man called, and this time he was accompanied by a young woman, handsome and of a fine presence, but poorly dressed. He did not stay more than five minutes, but the young woman remained behind and did not leave till evening. Then the street door was opened for her by the painter himself, and he bade her good-bye with a touch of something rather warmer, I thought, than friendly greeting.

The young wife meantime was seldom seen. Now and then her pale face appeared at the window, and on fine days she would go out languidly for a short walk. I could see she was being driven melancholy mad by her husband's treatment, for every day the fine, handsome girl came, and, after staying three or four hours, the painter would escort her to the door, laughing and joking as if there had been no misery under the roof.

The poor young woman soon grew worse, and I lost sight of her entirely. Then there appeared on the scene a stout, middle-aged woman, evidently an attendant from a lunatic asylum, and it was four or five weeks before this woman took her departure. A few days after she had gone Simpson came in, and I bade him set to work at once to piece together the most fascinating set of fragments I had yet laid before him.

"I at once determined," he began, "when

he looked in about a week later to give me the result of his investigation, "that I must make my approach by getting into conversation with the pretty young wife. Pale and ill as she looks she has been out every day. I discovered that the Broad Walk in Regent's Park was her favourite haunt, and by the time the poor little woman got so far she was always ready to sit down. I soon managed to open a conversation with her; for there is something in my appearance which always inspires women, and especially young ones, with confidence; and after a day or two I let her see that I knew something of the goings and comings and mysterious goings on generally in the house over the way.

"She started violently, and a flush of colour came over her pale face, but she said nothing. I could see, however, that she shot had told, and that she was burning to find some one she could trust to share with her the secret, the weight of which was bearing her to the ground. The next day I found her in the same place, evidently looking for my coming, and before we parted I had heard the solution of the mystery. This is it, as nearly as I can tell it, in her own words:

"My husband is an artist, Vincent Rose by name. We have been married just two years, and, until a few months ago, we were very poor indeed. Fortune, however, came to us very suddenly, and now, after having nearly starved us, is giving us more than we want. My husband has already earned five hundred pounds this year. Of course I am glad that his genius is at last recognised, but I wish that the money was anywhere else rather than in his pocket, for there is a curse upon it—a curse which will, I am sure, destroy us all.

"During the days of our poverty I cannot tell you how happy we were. My husband made a little by book illustrations, and now and then sold a picture for a few pounds. Out of his earnings we always first put aside the rent and whatever he might want for materials, and then set to work to make the remainder go as far as possible in our housekeeping.

"There was no money to spare for models, so I used to sit to my husband in all sorts of costumes for his subject-pictures; but though he put his best work into these—work which would shame much that is done by men with famous names—he never sold one, or managed to get one hung in any public exhibition. A

dozen or more of them still stand piled against the wall. Now I suppose they will sell fast enough; but we are no longer poor, and the money, when it comes, will only increase my unhappiness.

"About six months ago my husband met in the studio of a friend of his a man named Bernard Zink. Though he drew very well himself Zink was not an artist by profession. Many men were in the habit of sending for him to revise the composition of a picture, for he had a wonderful eye for grouping and effect. Sometimes he would touch the outline of a face, and he would never fail to leave a strange and subtle, yet most life-like expression, an expression which no after work by another hand could obliterate. It was understood that Zink expected a good fee for his service, so there was little chance that my husband would ever call him in professionally.

"Therefore it was rather a surprise to me to find him one day in the studio standing before one of my husband's historical pictures, and offering various criticisms and suggestions on the treatment of the subject. He greeted me with cringing, over-acted politeness, and when he went away, he swept aside, with a benevolent wave of the hand, my husband's murmured suggestion as to payment for his advice.

"To you, my dear sir," he said, "I shall always be ready to give my best counsel, and I shall ask no better reward than to come and have a chat with you sometimes when the light fails. We must see if we can't get to the bottom of that strange story. Some people would call me a madman, but I see that you have the true philosophic faculty for sifting evidence. Perhaps we will give the world a surprise some day."

"As soon as Zink was gone I naturally wanted to know what was the strange story he had alluded to. Vincent laughed, a little uneasily I thought, and teased me about being a true daughter of Eve, and all I could get him to tell me was that Zink was really a little mad on some subjects. He had been reading Cornelius Agrippa, and other books dealing with occult knowledge, and he believed himself to be on the high road to the discovery of some of the great problems which had baffled the great masters. He was a very amusing fellow, however, and the hints he gave were really very valuable—quite worth the price of having to listen to his fancies for an hour or two.

“After this first visit, Zink often came, and I must say at first I was very glad that Vincent had found some one to chat with, and shake off the worry of work for a time; but, after a little, I began to notice that the two always appeared embarrassed when I came into the room. They would begin to talk about some commonplace matter, and I never heard a whisper of Cornelius Agrippa, or the occult sciences. I concluded that Mr. Zink was diffident about exhibiting his peculiar beliefs in the presence of the inferior sex, so I always went away and left them to themselves.

“All this time, in spite of Mr. Zink's cheerful conversation, Vincent was growing more and more depressed and gloomy. Zink came very often, but as a rule did not stop more than five minutes. One day he came and stayed for some hours, and I did not see him, as I was busy upstairs. When I came down, however, I noted at once a strange change in my husband's manner. He was nervous and excited. His pale cheeks were flushed, and a strange wild light shone in his eyes. He swallowed two or three glasses of water at our midday meal, but scarcely ate a morsel, and was in a great hurry for me to finish and clear the room. As soon as this was done, he told me that he wanted me to sit to him at once for my portrait in my everyday dress, just as I was.

“I was a little disturbed at his excited impatient manner, but it was a relief to find him ready to get back to his work, for, since he had been so intimate with Zink he had scarcely touched a canvas. He kept on, almost without intermission, till dark. The next day he was working without intermission till noon. Then he let me get down for a quarter of an hour to eat a mouthful of food, but he himself took nothing. He painted all the afternoon till the dusk came, then he threw himself into an easy chair, and fell asleep from sheer exhaustion.

“I noticed on his painting-table something which I had never seen before, and this was a small phial of clear glass containing a bright amber-coloured liquid. In mixing the colours for my picture he used occasionally a few drops of this medium. Somehow or other I could not help associating this phial with the unwonted excitement which had possessed him all day, and I was seized with curiosity to examine it. I took it up and removed the stopper, and, to my amazement, the phial grew quite hot in my hand, the fluid began to effervesce, and a pungent but not unpleasant odour

rose from it. I hastily replaced the stopper, and then the bottle gradually became cool again.

“For four or five days my husband worked at my picture so hard that I felt sure he would injure his health. On the very day, almost at the very moment when it was finished, Zink entered the room. He was enthusiastic in his praise of it, and predicted a brilliant future for Vincent. I had never liked the man, but that day my aversion to him rose to positive hatred. I cannot say I was quite satisfied with the portrait. It was marvellously like me, and the treatment masterly all through, but there was a look on the face, especially about the eyes, which I am sure mine never wore. It was a subtle, half-cruel, half-wanton smile, such as one sees in the eyes of a portrait of a lady painted by some great Italian — “La Gioconda,” I think it is called. But with my husband it was quite different. From the moment that the picture was finished he could not keep his eyes off it. In gazing at it he seemed to forget my existence. Often I missed him from my side at night, and, on stealing down to the studio, I found him with a lighted lamp, sitting as if in a trance before the canvas.

“I cannot describe the distress I felt at this strange change. It was not merely that my self-love was wounded and the promise of my life blighted. The impending weight of some indefinable calamity seemed to crush me. I dreaded some evil I could neither describe nor define. How I grew to hate that baleful picture before which he would sit for hours! I should have been less unhappy even if I had discovered that he loved another woman.

“On Zink's recommendation, a lady of high rank came to see the picture, and so much was she taken with it that she gave my husband at once a commission to paint her portrait. She was a handsome, gracious lady; but he treated her with a sullen reserve; and all the time she was sitting to him, I could see that he was only thinking of the moment when he should remove her picture from the easel, and sit down before the accursed figure of myself.

“The lady was fairly well pleased with her portrait, but it wanted, she declared, the wonderful and mysterious charm which the painter had been able to throw into the eyes and mouth of his wife's picture. Three or four other ladies called, and all of them, as soon as they saw my portrait, arranged with my husband to sit to him.

He painted them in the same perfunctory way as the first. The portraits were fairly good, but the nameless charm which they found in my picture was wanting in all of them.

"Suddenly the idea struck me that the use of that strange liquid in the little phial might have enabled him to throw that glamour and expression into my eyes and mouth. Then I remembered that Vincent had used the last drop of the medium in giving the final touch to my eyes, and I felt almost convinced that my notion, wild as it was, was not altogether visionary. I asked him one day where he had procured the liquid, and why he did not get some more of it; but my question threw him into a violent rage, and he bade me brutally to mind my own affairs.

"Zink continued his visits, but he never stopped for a chat with Vincent now. My husband seemed to know his ring at the bell, and he would leave his work and rush out of the room, quivering with excitement, to open the door; and, more often than not, I never saw the visitor. After a few minutes' talk outside, Vincent would return with all his excitement quelled, and a look of weary despair upon his face.

"He was so much occupied with his portraits that he had no time for work on subject-pictures. One day, however, I found him busy setting out a large canvas, for what seemed an allegorical work. Zink called that afternoon and stayed some time. In their whispered conversation, I heard him mention my name; but my husband frowned and shook his head. I wondered why, and I was not long kept in ignorance.

"Vincent now rarely spoke to me, save when he wanted something, so it was rather a surprise when he told me next morning that he was going to begin a fresh picture for the next Academy, and that Zink was going to bring him a model to sit for the principal figure. I glanced at the canvas on which the design was roughly sketched out, and saw that the central figure was that of a woman.

"About noon Zink came, bringing with him the model. She was a fine, tall woman, of quiet, gentle manners, and very simply dressed. In other days my husband would have asked me to sit; but I knew that in the strange mood which had come over him, any remonstrance from me would be worse than useless, so I held my peace.

"My husband set to work at the picture, and by night had sketched the woman's head. I had been busy all day, and had

never noticed her face closely; but it happened that I came into the room suddenly, just as the light was beginning to fade, and my eyes fell at once upon her. I started back, and a deadly faintness overcame me; for upon her face was the self-same unholy, mysterious smile, the eyes were quick with the same suggestive baleful light which pervaded my own picture, only here they glowed in flesh and blood, and not upon the inanimate canvas.

"Vincent was working away doggedly—almost fiercely, and I could see that he was dissatisfied with his performance from the tight lips and the frowning brow. As the clock struck five the woman rose to go. She put on her bonnet and left the room, merely bidding me good afternoon, and saying to Vincent that she would return at the same hour to-morrow. He left off work immediately, and his eyes never left her face as long as she remained in the room. That night he never turned to my portrait, which stood on a show easel by the window; but he lay on the sofa in a half-dozing state all the evening.

"The next day his work grew very slowly under his hands, and whenever I happened to look towards him his eyes were fixed in fascinated regard upon the face of the model. Strange to say, I felt no jealousy. I knew that the spell which bound him was never the love of a mortal woman; but something more awesome and mystical—some force without a name, which had equally held him to the worship of a square of painted canvas. I dreaded far more the influence which Zink had gained over him. Often, when lying awake at night, I used to wonder whether the man might not have solved some of these secrets of nature, and probed the depths of those dim abysses which still mock the searchings of our men of science. Of one thing I was well-nigh certain, that his hand worked the charm which had mastered my husband's senses and made him the slave of that witch-like smile. On the day of the second sitting, Zink never appeared. That night I went to bed physically and mentally exhausted, so that I fell at once into a heavy sleep in spite of the trouble which molested me. Suddenly I started up, shaken in a second out of the profoundest slumber into the keenest state of utter wakefulness. The silence and darkness were both intense, but my senses of hearing and sight strained their utmost to make the black stillness give up its secret: and some wild vision swept before

my eyes, and my ears drank in some faint sounds, which in the darkness were terrific enough as I rose from my bed and lighted a candle.

“Vincent was not in the room and the door stood ajar. I could no longer endure the solitude, so I hastily put on some clothes with the intention of descending to the studio. Our bed-room was at the top of the house, and as I neared the studio door I saw that it was open. There was a light inside, and I could hear the sound of voices speaking in a low tone.

“In a moment I quenched my light and stole noiselessly into the room. Just inside the door stood a large screen; and passing behind this, I was able to hear all that was said, and, by peering through a crevice, to see my husband and Zink seated in front of the two portraits, my own and that of the model. The one dim candle on the table made only a faint circle of light, and in this were framed the visages of the two men: Vincent’s pale and haggard, every muscle strained as if in obedience to some intense passion whether of fear or longing; and Zink’s calm and indifferent, with a look of cunning malice in his sunken eye.

““He cannot let you have it. He will not let you have it, except on these terms,” he said, “and to tell you the truth I scarcely dare ask him.”

““But he let me have it once, and I will give him any price he likes to ask except—”

““Bah!” said Zink, with a threatening frown, “but you know your own business best. Try how you can get on without it. Look at your wife’s portrait, and see how you gave a rendering of a pretty, simple face, in a way that proclaims you a genius, but then you had the essence to help you. Now look at the attempt you have made without it, to catch the expression on your model’s face. Can anything be more pitiful? And yet that woman’s face is all aglow with that marvellous spirit-fire which you kindled in your wife’s eyes without seeing it. My poor Vincent, you are a genius when you paint with the essence, but only then.”

““Nevermind, I will try again and again. It is impossible that I should see that face before my eyes every moment, waking or sleeping, without being able to catch the spirit of it sooner or later.”

““You forget your model can only give you two more sittings. He wants her elsewhere.”

““What, is she too under his orders?”

““Yes, but his rule is very light, very light indeed, as you will find, my dear fellow, when you have signed this agreement.” And as he spoke Zink pushed a paper towards my husband and handed him a pen.

“Vincent sat for some time silent.

““No,” he said at last, “and yet I have got two days. I cannot believe my hand is paralysed. Come back on Friday night; but Zink, do help me in this. Help me to get the essence without paying such a terrible price.”

“Zink did not answer. I heard him moving towards the door as I stole out of the room and regained my bed-chamber. Vincent did not come back, and I found him when I went down to breakfast with another canvas all ready to start his picture afresh. The model came, and he worked all day long at her face with despairing industry. I was in the room when she left, and she said, in her low and gentle voice, that after to-morrow she would be engaged elsewhere.

“I went out soon after, as my head was throbbing with fevered excitement, and I felt as if my brain would burst unless I got into the air, leaving Vincent sitting before his canvas in the deepest dejection. When I came back, after about an hour, the studio was empty, the easel overturned, the canvas torn and trampled upon, and the painted face blurred out of all recognition. Then I knew that despair had conquered, and that the tempter, when he should return, would find an easy prey. To-night he will come, and the last strings of the infernal net which this man-fiend and his familiar have woven, will be knotted securely over my unhappy husband’s head.”

“Here the young woman paused,” Simpson said; “and I sat for some seconds lost in wonder at this strange revival of the infernal temptation on the good old model in a commonplace London street. Presently I turned to address a question to the poor creature, and lo! she was gone. I went the whole length of the Broad Walk, but could see nothing of her. I suppose you did not mark her return. If I were you I should sit up all night, and watch for the coming of Mephisto in the person of Mr. Bernard Zink.”

Simpson then took his leave, and it is needless to say I followed his advice. When midnight struck I was wide awake watching, and one o’clock found me on the

alert, though rather weary. Then sleep, which so often refuses to come when I want it, must have mastered me, for I was suddenly awakened by shouts, and the rushing of feet, and the rumble and clatter of wheels. I looked out of the window, and saw that the house over the way was in flames.

The firemen were soon at work, but though the engines did their best it was clear that the flames would have their way till the last remnant of the house was consumed. A fire-escape was placed against the top-floor window and a fireman began to ascend; but scarcely had he mounted a dozen steps, when a floor within collapsed, and a huge burst of flame rushed from the first-floor windows. For a second my vision was dazzled by the awful brilliance; but the moment after, when my eyes cleared, I saw plainly two figures, apparently unharmed, issue from the burning room and float downwards out of sight amidst the grovelling wreaths of smoke. The face of one of them was the face of Zink, now radiant with triumph and malice. With his right hand he grasped lightly the arm of the other, who turned away his face as in an agony of shame and remorse, but the figure I recognised at once as that of the ill-starred painter.

VICTIMS.

By THEO GIFT.

Author of "*Lili Lorkner*," "*An Alibi and its Price*,"
Etc., Etc.

CHAPTER XXVII. FACE TO FACE.

"COME into the confectioner's, and George, my dear, dear fellow, do be calm. This is some horrible mistake. Ladies, you will let us offer you some refreshments," Burt broke in eagerly, his hand on his friend's arm, his lips trembling. He was not at all calm himself. His hand trembled as well as his lips as he put down the money for what he ordered on the counter.

The little tragi-comedy, whose blunders and cross-purposes he had till now been surveying and disentangling with such cool, superior wisdom, had become in one short moment a tragedy indeed, and a tragedy so terrible, so utterly unexpected that he shrank back appalled by the mere thought of what might be the ending of it.

The young surgeon himself, however, seemed to become suddenly cool in proportion to his friend's agitation. His fingers had no shake in them as he handed

glasses and cake plates to the pleased and giggling damsels; and there was no quiver, only a harsh sort of ring in his voice, as he begged them to tell him something more about the wedding.

The young women were only too pleased to obey. Where is the servant girl, English or Parisian, who does not love to describe a wedding? And these girls were in an additionally talkative mood from a sense of aggravation and disappointment in having been, as it were, defrauded of their rightful anticipations.

They were lavish in the description of the grand preparations which for some weeks had been making for their master's wedding; of the improvements and renovations at the *Hôtel Mally*, in honour of the bridal couple; of the glories of the "*corbeille de mariage*" which the whole household had been permitted to see; and particularly of the wedding-dress which formed part of it, a veritable triumph of Worth's—"white satin, Monsieur, draped with cascades of Mechlin lace and rained over with orange blossoms;" finally of the crushing news which had come all of a sudden, that the bride had been taken very ill not long before, and, though recovered, was in such a delicate state of health that the physicians had ordered the wedding to be as quiet and private as possible. There were to be no guests besides the immediate family, no grand breakfast or reception, and the happy couple were to drive away immediately after the ceremony to "*The Châlet*," a villa at Neuilly belonging to the Count, and not far from the hotel at which the bride and her family had been staying during the last week.

"And they are gone there now—to this *Châlet*?" Marstrand asked. It was the first time he had interrupted, by so much as a word, the rapid discursive dialogue.

"But yes, this moment even, Monsieur. Our new Countess, who is indeed frightfully delicate, though pretty all the same, '*une vraie innocente*,' of the type *Anglaise*—"

"Josephine! Be quiet!" interrupted another of the girls. "Madame la Comtesse is of the type *Anglaise*, because her mother is an Englishwoman, as Monsieur, who it is easy to see is English too, doubtless knows better than thou."

"Ah! that is true enough, and Monsieur must excuse my folly," said Josephine, good-humouredly; "but in that case he will be still more grieved to hear how ill his '*compatriote*' looked at the wedding for which he has unfortunately been too

late. Ill! Mon Dieu, she was as white as her beautiful dress itself when she entered the church; for she did wear the dress at least, though that other ravishing costume of pale-blue velvet for the civil ceremony, was never put on, seeing that, in order to save her strength, the party drove straight from the "Mairie" to the church, and, though we strained our ears, no one heard the sound of her voice once during the service. It was not till after the ceremony, however, when Madame de Mailly and her mother went up to embrace her, that she fainted, and even then they managed to lead her into the sacristy, before she became wholly unconscious. But that was an end of the affair for us. They did not even have the procession down the church afterwards, for, as the sacristan told us, the poor young bride was so weak after her fainting fit that she had to be carried from the vestry door to the carriage; and in the end—figure such a thing to yourself, Monsieur—her mother accompanied her and M. le Comte to the Châlet!"

But Josephine's volubility was stopped at this point by a general move on the part of the others, and a cry that it was getting late, and if they did not hurry, the Dowager Countess and her daughters would be at the Hôtel Mailly before them.

"Now then, to get to that Châlet as soon as possible," Marstland said, as the last of the quartette whisked out of the doorway, but though he spoke in a perfectly calm voice he did not look at his friend, and Burt noticed that the muscles on the back of his head were swollen and of a deep purple colour, so that they stood out like cords.

"George," he said anxiously, "what are you thinking of? My dear fellow, where would be the good of that—now?"

Marstland looked at him.

"When some blackguard takes advantage of your absence to run off with your wife, Burt, I'll ask you that question."

"My poor boy, I don't like to say it; but if my wife cared so little for me as to go off in my absence with a blackguard, I certainly shouldn't trouble myself to follow her. I——"

"No; you'd do like the people in novels, and such rot," Marstland interrupted, with huge contempt, "go your way, and let her go hers, ask no explanation, and twenty years later find out that you'd sacrificed your own happiness and your wife's honour, and subjected her to half a life of

infamy and injustice rather than act like a man in the first instance. Not I, my Vera!" dropping his voice suddenly to the same low, curious key as before. "I understand you, if no one else does. Poor helpless lamb, deceived, maddened, and dragged half-fainting to the shambles by those accursed—— no, no, Burt, I made my poor young wife a promise as to what I would do if that man ever again dared to force himself into her presence, and—I'm going to keep it."

He took a tighter hold, as he spoke, of a stick he was carrying in his hand—a tough blackthorn branch which he had cut out of a hedge in Brittany the previous day, and had since been trimming into shape. Burt glanced at it uneasily, and was going to speak when the young man checked him.

"Look here, old fellow," he said, not angrily, but with a sort of stern decision, "I think you'd better not come any farther with me at present. You've been awfully kind, I know; but this has touched me deeper than you think, and I can't bear talking or interference from any one. What I've got to do is my own business—to protect my honour and that of my wife, and no human being can stop me in it."

"Well, then, I don't suppose it's any use trying to do so," said Burt slowly.

"It is not; so keep out of it. It'll be better for both of us. I'm sane now; but by Heaven! if any one were to say much to me before—before I get to her, I shouldn't be so long."

"I'll not say a word to you," Burt answered, "but I'll go along all the same. I'll not back out of this now, George, till I've seen you through with it; though I think you're half mad at this moment—and I don't wonder at it!"

They set out together on that understanding. Marstland had beckoned a fiacre while his friend was speaking, and his only answer was a grip of the hand before bidding the man drive like lightning to the station for Neuilly. He never spoke once during the short journey there; but there was something in those recent, deeply-furrowed lines between his eyes, and the way in which the stick bent and quivered every now and then in his grasp, which filled his friend with something more than misgiving.

For himself, Burt was conscious of quite as much indignation and contempt for Vera as for those who had bullied or persuaded

her into the horrible, unseemly marriage of which they had just heard. He was a religious man, a High Churchman, with a great reverence for everything appertaining to sacramental or ecclesiastical ordinances; and the mere idea of a girl who—after going through so solemn a service as that of marriage with one man, and vowing to be true to him for the remainder of her life—could be capable of allowing any mere legal informality to induce her to break through that union, and enter on another with a second man within eight days of the first, seemed to him a proceeding too immoral and unwomanly for credibility; and he failed altogether to comprehend the tenderness which enabled Marstland to feel nothing but an anguish of compassion and yearning for the feeble creature who had at once outraged and betrayed him.

They had been fortunate in getting a train on the point of starting, and on arriving at Neuilly they set out to walk to the Châlet, having been told that it was not five minutes' walk from the station; and had only just turned into the quiet, leaf-shaded road in which the Count's villa was situated, when they were met by an empty carriage-and-pair proceeding in the opposite direction, and which, from the white satin favours and bouquets of flowers decorating both coachman and horses, suggested so forcibly the use to which it had been recently applied that involuntarily both stopped and looked at one another, white to the lips with excitement.

"The carriage!" Burt exclaimed. "George, it must be! Thanks to their driving all the way and our coming by train, they can only have arrived a few minutes before us after all."

The Châlet was a small villa-like residence embowered in tall trees, which completely concealed it from the high road, and further protected from intrusion by locked iron gates and a lodge. The two men had just got in sight of the latter, when Marstland stopped and observed:

"Burt, I think you'd better go ahead, if you don't mind, and ask for the Count at the lodge. Say you know he has returned from Paris—it is possible they may tell you he's not at home—but that you want to see him on important business."

Burt looked at him.

"You are thinking——" he said slowly.

"That this man and his confederates have not gone to the trouble of forbidding the people at Les Châtaigniers to give any

information as to their whereabouts, of hiding in this out-of-the-way suburb, and getting through their mockery of a marriage in the hole-and-corner way those girls described, except through fear of me and of my following, and overtaking them. For the same reason they will probably have ordered the lodge-keeper here not to admit any one answering to my description, but you, being as unlike me as possible, and speaking French like a native, might not come under the same category, and in that case——"

"Once inside the gate, I could make you a sign to join me," said Burt. "I'll go."

He hurried on accordingly, but on reaching the gate soon found that the lodge-keeper's orders had evidently been more precise than Marstland anticipated. He did not, indeed, deny that the Count was at home, but he declined altogether to admit Burt, or even to send in his name, declaring that it was quite impossible for his master to see any one that day. He and Madame la Comtesse had only just arrived at the Châlet after their wedding. If Monsieur's business was of importance, he could mention it by letter.

Burt went back to his friend, hardly knowing whether to feel disappointed or relieved. It would certainly be infinitely better if Marstland could be kept from meeting the Count till his present excitement had a little cooled, but whether this would be practicable under any deterrent he doubted exceedingly, and the doubt became still stronger when, on turning the corner of a buttress, behind which he had left the young surgeon to await his return, or signal, he found no sign of him. Marstland had disappeared!

"By Jove!" Burt said to himself, "he's given me the slip. What a fool I was not to guess that was what he intended!"

It was true. Marstland had no sooner seen from the manner and gestures of his friend and the lodge-keeper that the former was being denied admittance, than he determined not even to waste time in asking for it, but to force an entrance on his own account. No one was in sight at the moment, and the wall, thanks to sundry projecting stones in the buttress, was an easy one to climb. While Burt was still carrying on his argument at the gate Marstland had swung himself to the top, and dropping lightly down on the other side, was making his way as swiftly and quietly

as possible through the thick belt of trees and shrubs, beyond which he could see the walls of the Châlet glittering in the sunshine.

There was no one in sight here either. This side of the house, indeed, seemed deserted; but a glass door, opening on to a pretty, flower-girdled lawn, stood open, and Marstland, entering it without question or delay, found himself in a short passage leading to the entrance-hall, across which, at that very moment, a gorgeous-looking footman in livery was carrying a tray of glasses.

Marstland made no pause, but went straight up to him. He had come to the Count's house meaning to ask for that gentleman himself in the first instance; but somehow the very sight of this private and embowered nest, the hall with its flooring of inlaid woods, strewn with costly rugs, its portières of sapphire velvet, and stands of hot-house blossoms, the very flunkey, in his crimson and gold finery, so maddened him that he forgot all prudence and reticence, everything but rage and righteous indignation, and thundered out in a voice which could have been heard at some distance:

"I am Dr. Marstland. I want to see Mrs. Marstland, my wife, at once. She is here."

The Mercury in ruby plush stared at him in undisguised amazement. For an instant he honestly thought that this loud-voiced intruder, with the wild-looking head and beard, flaring eyes, and loosely-cut suit of rough blue serge, was some dangerous lunatic, who had escaped from an asylum, and penetrated by accident into this bridal sanctum. The next moment, however, there came into his powdered head a remembrance of certain mysterious orders given by his master that, under no circumstances and at no time, was an Englishman, answering certainly in description to this audacious individual, to be even admitted within the outer gates, and he drew himself up and answered with scornful dignity:

"You mistake yourself, Monsieur. There is no lady of that name here. This house belongs to M. le Comte de Mailly, and he is not at home to-day to any one. I must ask you to retire at once."

"I shall do no such thing," said Marstland shortly. "I am quite aware that this is the Comte de Mailly's Châlet, and I wish to see him as well as my——" but he was interrupted by that subtle change in the

footman's expression and attitude which tells when a third person has appeared unexpectedly on the scene; and glancing upwards the young Englishman became aware that the gentleman of the house was at that moment coming to meet him down a prettily carved wooden staircase, leading from the hall to a gallery above.

There was no possibility of mistaking his identity. The immaculate fit and newness of his clothes; his elaborately waxed moustache; the glitter of his small, pointed boots; more than all, the delicate white orchid blossom relieved against the breast of his coat; testified to the bridegroom without need of words: a bridegroom, however, wearing an expression of such mingled anger and sullenness as scarcely seemed appropriate to the occasion. The anger was expressed in his voice as he asked sharply:

"What is all this? Haven't you said that I do not receive to-day? What does the man want?"

"You, Count de Mailly," cried Marstland, his eyes flashing, his lips quivering, his whole form seeming to dilate and tower over that of the nobleman in front of him. "You, villain, thief, blackguard, buyer of helpless girls, robber of other men's wives! Where is mine whom you have stolen from me? Where is my wife, Vera St. Laurent? Give her to me."

A piercing cry answered him. Marstland's voice, always deep and resonant, and now raised to a threatening pitch, had had power to reach a room opening out of the gallery which ran round the upper half of the hall; a room where Vera, having recovered from her swoon and the fit of exhausting weeping which followed it, was lying on a couch, her head resting on her mother's bosom, her fingers clutched with feeble vehemence on her mother's arm as though to protect herself from any attempt to tear her away from that one refuge left her. At the first sound of that voice from below, however, that familiar voice whose tones had from the first possessed a charm to thrill and inspire her, the girl gave a sudden start and tremble. Madame St. Laurent, dreading what might be happening, knowing that Marstland was on their track, and suspecting that it might indeed be he who was making the noise below, made a sign to the maid to draw a heavy velvet portière across the door, and began to talk in a rapid agitated manner with a view of distracting her daughter's attention. It was no use, however. Vera remained quite

silent for a moment or two, her head a little raised, her eyes dilated, her lips parted and drawn back, and an awful look growing in her white strained features; then, with that shriek, which those who heard it never forgot, she almost bounded to her feet, thrusting her mother away, and crying out:

"It is—it is he! He has not deserted me! He has come after—and you, you—it is you who have deceived me the whole time. Oh, George! George!" She rushed wildly into the gallery as she spoke. She had still on her wedding dress, its rich, pearly folds of lace and satin not so white as the despairing face above them; her hair, from which her mother had removed the veil and wreath, falling in ruffled masses over her shoulders; her soft, bare arms stretched out in an agony of entreaty to the man from whom her own ignorant act, and the cruel deception of others, had severed her. "George! George!" she cried out in her piteous, vibrating accents, "you have come at last; but oh! it is too late—too late now. They said you had deceived me, that I would be disgraced. They made me marry—oh no, no, no!" her voice rising suddenly to a shrill despairing scream, "it can't be true, it can't! I can't be married to him! Oh, George, save me! Kill me or save me. You said you would."

She had stumbled and fallen on her knees, her brow resting on the carved wood-work of the balustrade, her arms still weakly extended to him.

"I will save you yet, my darling, my wife!" Marstland exclaimed, making a dart forwards to get at her; but he had forgotten the Count, who, though, like his rival, he had been stricken dumb and motionless for an instant by the white and terrible apparition of the betrayed and maddened girl, was equal to the occasion.

"Keep back!" he cried out, his face purple and swollen with fury as he interposed his own body between the other man and the staircase. "Keep back, and leave my house this instant, you scoundrel, unless you want me to give you into custody. How dare you force your way into a gentleman's private dwelling and frighten his wife into hysterics, you 'canaillé' you? Here Pierre! Antoine! Some of you, turn out this drunken Englishman."

He had put his hand on Marstland's collar as he spoke; but the words and the action cost him dear; for in the same moment he was whirled round and almost

flung to the ground by one turn of the young surgeon's, while the next, that stout blackthorn stick, cut from his own hedges, was whistling through the air and descending in a very rain of blows on his prostrate and writhing body.

Vera had fainted, and her mother and one of the maids carried her, white, cold, and unresisting into the room she had so lately quitted; but it took all the strength of three men-servants to rescue M. le Comte de Mailly from the cruel punishment he was undergoing at the hands of his antagonist, and to thrust the infuriated young man into the street, where, fortunately perhaps, John Burt was still lingering on the look-out for him.

The rivals met between four and five o'clock on the following morning in a secluded grassy glade of the Bois de Boulogne. With great difficulty, and almost by force, Burt had prevented his friend from making a useless scandal and risking being taken into custody by attempting to batter his way back into the house from which he had just been ejected; but though winning the day on this point, and perhaps the more easily because of the exhaustion Marstland was feeling after his late exertions, the artist himself saw that the next step was an inevitable one, and even acted as bearer of the challenge which, within an hour of the occurrences above narrated, Maitland wrote with a hand still quivering from the passionate excitement which could only find relief in action of some sort.

Burt was not without hopes that it might be declined, the Count having the law clearly on his side, and being therefore able to appeal to it for protection; but with all M. de Mailly's faults he was no coward, and had not the slightest thought of saving his own skin at the expense of making public through the law-courts the disgrace and humiliation to which he had just been subjected, and which had left him with his bridal garments cut into unsightly strips, and even his face marked with one long discoloured weal. Both men knew that the duel, unlike most French duels, was to be "à la mort," and that the appeal of the unhappy girl, whom each claimed as his wife, could only be answered by the life of one of them.

They met accordingly. Pistols had been decided upon as the weapons; the Count's late drubbing having left him too sore and

stiff to feel sufficiently confident of his wonted skill in the use of the rapier; but as he was considered one of the best shots of the day this mattered little, and despite his unseen bruises and that ugly mark on his cheek, he presented far the cooler appearance of the two, and leaned nonchalantly against a tree smoking a cigarette and flicking idly at some minute spots of mud which had got on the glossy sleeve of his coat, while the seconds were measuring out the ground, and Marstland, haggard from a sleepless night, flushed with fever, with dry, cracked lips, and hands shaking with passionate excitement, moved restlessly about as though incapable of even standing still. Even the surgeon who had come with the Count and his second in the former's carriage looked pityingly at the young man, and observed to himself that de Mailly might very well have ordered the poor fellow's coffin before starting, and that it was to be hoped he would be merciful enough to put him out of his pain at the first shot.

But there was no thought of mercy in the Count's breast, or of anything else but an almost murderous hate; and just as the two men had been put in position and the signal was about to be given, he tossed his cigarette lightly away, and observed in tones of cool, biting irony, and with his sneering eyes fixed on his antagonist, though he professed to be addressing himself to Burt:

"Monsieur, let me request you to advise your principal to preserve a little more calmness and fire straight. It will really be well both for himself and perhaps—yes, perhaps for some one else—that he should! And, Monsieur, you may also tell him, if you please, that the marriage which he has taken upon himself to resent was an act of the highest benevolence and moral justice on my part, designed for the express purpose of giving a practical and lifelong lesson to a so-called 'ingénue,' on her supreme folly in attempting to be the first woman to outwit and defy a de Mailly. La belle Vera will certainly learn that lesson, humbling as it may be, unless your friend shoots very straight, Monsieur."

"For Heaven's sake, give us the signal!" said Marstland hoarsely.

It was the only answer he made to the brutal gibe which had even provoked a murmur of "Fie, for shame!" from the Count's side; but all the blood in his body seemed concentrated in the two fever spots in his haggard cheeks, and when the double report rang out it was no surprise to anyone to find that he had fired wide by a yard or more, his bullet having lodged in a tree at some distance, while that of the Count just shaved his neck by the twentieth part of an inch, scorching the skin and even cutting off a piece of the coat collar.

A mocking smile lit up de Mailly's face.

"Saved by being too frightened to stand still," he said in an audible aside. Then, raising his voice, "Don't be in a hurry, Monsieur. Any message now that you may like to entrust to me for your too amiable mistress I—" But he was interrupted by the signal, and as the two shots split simultaneously on the ear Marstland staggered back, his left arm pierced just above the elbow, and the blood pouring from it, while at the same moment the Count gave a little spring into the air, and, turning over, fell heavily on his face.

He had been shot through the heart!

Marstland let his pistol fall on to the grass, and, taking off his hat, looked round on the other members of the group with a face perfectly pale now, and filled with a kind of calm, grave light.

"Gentlemen," he said solemnly, "I take you all to witness that this man brought his death upon his own head. What I have done has been for the preservation of my wife's honour. She has been innocent hitherto. She will remain so now."

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CONTENTS.

	PAGE		PAGE
THE INTRODUCTION	1	IN THE MAY TIME	40
THE LADY OF DIS	9	HYACINTH'S ATONEMENT	46
HEART OF FEATHER—HEART OF LEAD	23	THE EPILOGUE	56
ONE DAY'S WORK	30		

THE INTRODUCTION.

CHAPTER I. — AMONG THE NARCISSUS-FLOWERS.

It was Eastertide in a wood.

If such things had been for mortal ears, they might have heard strange whisperings in the warm, soft air all fragrant with perfume of mosses and rich brown earth, all golden with spring sunlight. For the tall trees with their delicate tracery of new green leaf, the primroses with their pale, tender faces uplifted to the Easter sky, the slender daffodils with their golden bells, had each something to say to the other.

"Persephone has come back to us from the sad Land of Darkness. See! Where the hem of her garment brushed against the mosses as she hasted to greet her waiting mother, the wild flowers sprang into life, while her tender voice calling, awakened the trees! Oh, sorrowful Earth's children, we bear for you the message she left with us, that the Darkness is but waiting, that morning awakens the night! Persephone! Persephone!"

And then the wood, this spring afternoon, hushed its many voices and waited still and silent as a little group of mortal men and maidens passed by. Four girls and two men.

The girls in their dainty gowns, the men with that air of unconscious good breeding and careless faultlessness of dressing which

only Englishmen have to perfection, made, as they passed now through slanting rays of sunshine, now through flickering leaf-shadows, a very pleasant sight to behold. They were all carrying baskets of formidable dimensions, or rather all except one of the young men, who had apparently relegated his task to a great retriever trotting behind him.

"You are lazy, Mr. Linton!" exclaimed one of the girls who was walking beside the dog's master, a little ahead of the others. "Why don't you take that basket yourself, and let that unfortunate animal of yours have a scamper? I am sure he must be hating the basket—and you!"

The young man laughed lazily.

"I offered to carry yours, Miss Rashleigh."

"I'm sure you would have been welcome to it," said Miss Daisy Rashleigh. "It is an awful bother now it is empty. What it will be when it is full, I don't like to think. But then, you know, we made the rule we were to do everything ourselves. You know it is a good work!"

"It's awfully selfish of you, then, not to let any fellow share it with you. No good will come of it, you'll see."

Miss Rashleigh laughed, glancing up at him with a mischievously-provoking look, which already, novice in the art of flirting as she was, being barely seventeen, rarely failed in its effect upon a companion of the other sex.

"I dare say it is a dreadful waste of time," she said. "The flowers will be quite

dead by the time they reach London. It would have been better if we had made pictures of them; but then it was one of Hyacinth's experiments. What she will do when her ideas are all exhausted, I don't know. I often wonder what she will be like when she is old and grey, considering how flat and profitless she finds life now! It is always at one of these moments when she finds life particularly so, that she starts an experiment."

There was just the faintest touch of asperity or irritation in the last words as Daisy glanced round and caught sight of Hyacinth Craig—a tall, slight girl about eighteen, with an affected air of languor and weariness on her very handsome face, who was walking by the side of the one other man of the party. Apparently she had his undivided attention, for the two other girls were dawdling carelessly and contentedly a little way behind.

A decidedly mischievous look flashed into the eyes of Daisy's own companion as he saw the backward glance, and heard the sharpened note in the pretty voice.

"Danvers seems quite enjoying hunting for notes in the sunbeams," he said innocently; "but I am afraid he still smiles a little too much. I remark Miss Craig rarely smiles, and then only with an effort. Danvers should practise that effort. I'll tell him to murmur, 'Dust and ashes!' for a month every morning while he is shaving, and try and smile at the same time. It will probably give the right effect."

"I can't think how Hyacinth can be so silly!" exclaimed Miss Rashleigh petulantly. "Why can't she enjoy herself like other people—and let other people enjoy themselves too?"

"Or let them alone," said Cecil Linton so meekly that if Daisy had not been too preoccupied with her own disapproval of Miss Craig's proceedings, she might have suspected the genuineness of his humility. But the fact was, that ever since the day before, when Sir Charles Danvers had arrived at Oaklands, the residence of Mr. Linton and his mother, where the four girls were staying too on a visit, Miss Rashleigh had set him down as her own special attendant. Just as she had already established a kind of proprietorship in the private attentions of her host, to say nothing of at least two of the other young men forming the Easter house-party.

And Sir Charles Danvers was particularly interesting to her at the moment. He was unusually handsome—at least two

inches taller than any other man in the house; a splendid shot; and a woman who fulfilled even her wildest school-girl dreams. Now when all these fascinating qualities are displayed to the eyes of a very pretty girl, who combines all the delights of a new art with a very steady passion for flirting, to say nothing of a desire to be first even among her best friends, it was only to be expected that Miss Daisy Rashleigh did not at all approve of Sir Charles Danvers discussing a weary world with Miss Hyacinth Craig.

"How much farther have we to go before we reach this ghostly ruin of yours, Mr. Linton?" she asked a little petulantly after a few seconds' silence.

"Not very far. It's horribly tiring being good, isn't it?" suggested that young man sympathetically.

"I don't know why you should turn gathering flowers for poor sick people shut up in London alleys, into ridicule," exclaimed Daisy with dignified asperity. "But so you do everything that is at all good. I believe you are dreadfully selfish!"

"I know I am," he said with penitent meekness; "only you needn't cast it in a fellow's face. And here's the place already."

A grey stone wall stood before them. It was falling into ruins. Tufts of grass and ivy grew out of the cracks and crevices; mosses, green and brown, did their best to hide the weather-stains of years and gave it the tender touch of their own beauty. Inside the wall, was a plantation of fir and pine, which contrasted in a curious way with the fresh rustling of the new spring leaves of the wood beyond. Their sombre stillness gave a sense of desolation, which brought more vividly to their imaginations the story that Cecil Linton had told them of the place. More than a hundred years before, a man had been found murdered in the Chase, of which this wall encircled a part. The murder remained a mystery. The victim was a perfect stranger in the neighbourhood, and who had murdered him or what had been the motive of the murderer, no enquiries could ever discover, and the mystery had passed into one of the county legends. Mr. Linton improved upon it by telling the girls that the dead body had been buried in the Chase, and that the narcissus-flowers had bloomed in marvellous abundance ever since. It was to gather them that he had brought the

ris there this afternoon. There was no one to object, for the house itself had been uninhabited for years, the present owner, an eccentric old maid, living no one knew where.

All the party stood for a few seconds looking at the wall and the dark still fire beyond.

"It is the stillness I don't like," exclaimed one of the two girls who had been talking behind, looking up, her bright face slightly tinged with awe, at the great dark branches. For May Freeling was apt to be superstitious. "Is it really true, Mr. Linton, that the ghost of the man who killed the other is supposed to wander about there?"

"I don't believe it was the ghost of the murderer," said her companion, a girl with sweet true eyes and grave proud lines of mouth and chin, almost too quiet for her age, for she was only at the beginning of a woman's life.

"The poor man who was killed, must have had some friends who loved him. If anyone haunted the place I believe it was the spirit of someone who could not rest till he was found."

Miss Hyacinth Craig laughed contemptuously.

"My dear Violet! As his dearest friends would have probably forgotten him in life at the end of six months, is it likely their souls would have searched for him for a hundred years after? I should say he had found life not worth living, and killed himself instead of being killed."

There was a general laugh at Miss Craig's expense. Life was far too happy at that bright spring moment to most of them, to enter into such melancholy theories. Miss Craig smiled a little disdainfully. But the next moment, Mr. Linton, with the quick eye and practised skill of a schoolboy who has not lost his cunning, caught sight of and seized a footing in a crack of the crumbling wall. In another, he had swung himself on to the top of it, his well-made muscular figure standing balancing itself for a moment in its perilous position, while the loose stones rattled down on each side of the wall.

"Here goes for the ghost," he cried, "and hurrah for the narcissus-flowers!"

He sprang lightly down into the Chase, disappearing in a small avalanche of crumbling rubbish. There came a thud as he touched the ground, then the most absolute silence.

"O—oh!"

The silence was broken by a stifled exclamation of the most complete discomfiture.

"You are perfectly welcome," a sweet, clear voice, with just the faintest suspicion of laughter, replied to the exclamation.

The hearers on the other side of the wall, who had been frightened in the sudden silence, thinking he had hurt himself, stared at each other in dismay.

If they could have looked through the wall, they would have seen Mr. Linton standing facing a girl, at whose feet he had tumbled a second before, his face crimson with discomfiture and surprise.

"I might have killed you!" he stammered at last.

"Oh, no! I saw you coming," said the very sweet voice again. "I was only afraid you might bring down the wall and hurt yourself."

"I'm awfully sorry!" he began again desperately. "But the fact is, I thought the place was empty, and we came to get some flowers. I was going to open the door for the others. I don't know what you will think."

"You are perfectly welcome. I hope you will gather as many as you like. I only came yesterday, so you could not know there was anyone here. It is the first time I have walked here, and I was just thinking what a pity it was that there was no one to gather the daffodils. I will go and open the door. Please ask your friends to come."

She turned quickly and walked some ten yards down the wall, followed submissively by the young man, who had not yet recovered from the shock of being caught so unceremoniously trespassing.

The rest of the party beyond the wall, formed some idea of what had so silenced him, when, reaching the door in the wall which could only be unlatched from the inside, it was opened wide, and in the space, against a background of red boles of pine, stood the cause of his discomfiture.

A girl, tall and slender, with a face out of which looked at them a pair of most bewildering grey eyes, so dark that at moments they seemed violet blue. The thick fringe of eyelashes, almost black, made them look larger and deeper still, while hair of a wonderful shade of red brown, merging into golden, and a complexion of wild-rose tints, gave something almost startling to her beauty.

Three of the girls and Sir Charles Danvers looked at her in undisguised in-

voluntary admiration. But it had the strangest effect upon the other girl. May Freeling stood gazing at her with a kind of startled wonder which had something of repulsion.

"Oh, please come in!" exclaimed the girl in the doorway again. "There are such heaps of flowers, and there is no one to gather them. I am here all alone. There is only Miss Owen, who doesn't care about flowers at all!"

She reiterated the offer with an earnestness which was almost wistful. In some way, the wistfulness, added to the fact that she was clad in black from head to foot, gave a touch of pathetic loneliness to the girl, who complained that there was no one to gather her flowers. It struck and touched them all. She did not wait for a refusal, but led the way through the pines, whose sombreness apparently only formed a belt round the Chase, for a few seconds' walking brought them out again among the other trees.

And suddenly a sight broke on the eyes of the girls, which made them forget for a moment everything else. All the earth seemed literally covered with golden bells, and in a few minutes they were scattered among the trees, scarcely knowing where to begin to gather in the wealth of yellow flowers.

The owner of the daffodils stood watching them, but a curious change had come over her. The bright eagerness had vanished, and she stood still and silent, her black dress looking more sombre than ever in the midst of the golden glory of sunlight and flowers.

"I suppose it would be too great a tax on your charity to ask you to help us to fill our baskets?" asked Linton.

"I can give you my basket if you like," added Sir Charles Danvers with hasty generosity.

Neither of the men expected the strange, almost passionate longing, which flashed up into the beautiful eyes.

"Do you think your friends would mind my helping them? I should so like it!"

The look—the very pleading of the question discomfited them both.

Danvers was the first to recover himself.

"If you won't mind the trouble, I am sure they will be delighted," he said.

A smile like sunshine lit up the sombre depths of the grey eyes.

"If you think so—" she began hesitatingly.

"If you wouldn't mind sharing the

honour and glory of this basket," said the young man with an alacrity which was suspicious of considerable relief, "I'll carry it about, if you don't mind filling it."

She still hesitated; then with a quick movement, as if suddenly dismissing a doubt still troubling her, she moved in the direction of the other girls, while Danvers walked after her.

Linton pulled out a cigar, and dropped lazily down beneath the tree where the girl had been standing. He sat smoking and looking at the scene before him with the air of a man who had done his duty.

The girl in black had joined the others, and had been welcomed gladly apparently, for she was talking and laughing too. Linton noticed also that Danvers was always near her, and wondered with a little wicked amusement how Daisy approved of this new rival. Far more dangerous than Hyacinth had been, he could see by the intense admiration which had flashed into Danvers's eyes when he had first seen the girl in the doorway.

But this last recollection roused another train of thought.

He sat suddenly straight upright, and looked across to where Danvers and the owner of the Chase happened at the moment to be standing, a little apart from the rest, with a troubled, uneasy look in his eyes.

"I half wish I had put him off," he said to himself, "when I found mother had asked all those girls. However, I must keep him out of their way as much as possible. He'll have plenty to see if he really thinks of buying the place." A sharp spasm of pain contracted the young man's face, and he drew a deep breath.

But a little later, when they all came up to him with their baskets full of overflowing of their golden treasure, he greeted them with his usual lazy smile.

There was a great outcry at his indolence.

"It's my misfortune," he said in a sad tone, as he tossed the end of his cigar away and rose to his feet. "I'll try and do better next time." He glanced at their hostess.

"Oh yes, you will come again," she asked quickly, with the same curious note of entreaty, "whenever you want flowers, whether I am here or not?"

She stopped, hesitated in a curious kind of way, then went on. "My name is Laurent—Narcisse Laurent."

May Freeling, who had never once spoken

to her, but had always wandered away from the rest whenever the girl had joined them, started and looked at her strangely; but Miss Laurent did not notice it, and went on again.

"I shall be living here for good, I think, and I am sorry you are only on a visit to the place. I hope people will call; I am afraid it will be very dull if they don't," with a half glance back to where the house stood. "But it was left to me unexpectedly, and one of the conditions was, that I was to take possession at once, before even the repairs were begun."

She laughed a little. But the sound was sad rather than really amused, and she flushed a hot painful flush. She did not tell them any more about herself, except that she was going to live there with a companion—Miss Owen. They had both arrived the day before, and taken possession of the rooms which—the least in disrepair—had been hastily set in order for them by the two old people who lived as caretakers in the house. But the workmen were coming in next day, and so she hoped before long to make the place less dreary and desolate, as it was to be her home. And it seemed as if a sudden change had come over her, and her manner was shy and constrained as she wished them good-bye.

They all felt it, but nothing was said till they stood once more outside in the wood, and Linton had pulled to the door after them.

"Poor girl! I should say she had already found out that life is full of delusions," said Hyacinth with a faint sigh.

"She is lovely!" said Daisy critically, who was feeling very cross. "But she ought to be careful how she dresses. Her style is so peculiar that it would not take much to make her bad form—though I should like to paint her!" her artist soul struggling through her ill-humour.

"I think she is perfect!" said Violet Damer, with a degree of warmth which she rarely ever displayed. "Only she looks so very lonely."

May's lips parted, but she shut them again with a violent effort of will.

Neither of the men said anything. Probably they thought the more.

CHAPTER II.

OAKLANDS, lying about two miles from The Croft, was a beautiful old place, which had belonged to the Lintons for generations. There were only two mem-

bers of the family living there now, Mrs. Linton and her son, who about five years before had inherited his father's estate. The four girls, daughters of some of Mrs. Linton's old schoolfellows, with the two or three young men who formed the house-party this Easter, were enjoying their visit, as a visit to Oaklands only could be enjoyed. None of them suspected that the invitation had been given in the very bitterness of heart, and that this gathering would be the last that would ever take place in the house of the family which had reigned at Oaklands for so long. The dark clouds which had been threatening for years—clouds raised by follies and extravagances—had gathered so thickly now, that the storm was breaking at last, and Cecil Linton was to pay in full the debts of his father and forefathers. There was only one way to save himself and his mother from ruin. To sell the place over which his fathers had reigned for so many generations, and which during the twenty-eight years of his own life had grown almost part of his being. He had fought manfully enough to stave off the evil day, retrenching, with the help of his mother, on every hand, but it had been useless—as they both knew all along.

It was under these circumstances that Mrs. Linton, to whom all girls were dear, for the sake of a dead daughter, had invited these four girls—daughters of her dearest friends—to spend a month with her. And the girls, seeing none of the clouds, had vetted the visit a perfect success. They had danced, and ridden, and flirted, and played tennis, and enjoyed themselves generally. They had been capital friends among themselves, during those spare moments when they were not bewildering the minds of the young men who formed the other half of the house-party at Oaklands. For a fortnight, perfect peace had prevailed. Then a slight cloud arose. One of the young men who had hitherto studied with assiduous devotion the secrets of a hollow world, suddenly and without apparently the slightest cause, went over to the frivolous conversation of Miss Daisy Rashleigh.

Miss Hyacinth Craig, unaccustomed all her life to having a single fancy thwarted, or to be overlooked for another, with this one more proof of the hollowness of life, grew more weary and melancholy than ever. It was in this mood that she suddenly discovered the theory, that to supply æsthetic pleasures to the East End was the only thing worth living for. The daffodil gathering was this theory turned into practice.

She had rigorously excluded all the men from the party, and had only yielded after much persuasion to the entreaties of Cecil Linton and Sir Charles Danvers.

A little cloud, in spite of the success of the daffodil gathering, seemed to rest still in some intangible way upon the party. Perhaps the girls were tired with their long walk. Perhaps the vague sense of antagonism between Daisy and Hyacinth affected them all; but, at any rate, they were all rather silent, and some of them decidedly cross that night at dinner. Sir Charles Danvers, seated between Daisy and Hyacinth, was lazy, and only roused himself to expatiate on the beauty of the new acquaintance they had made that afternoon. And the girls, with the quickness of girls in such matters, saw that his fickle man's fancy had been taken captive, and that their own fascinations were vain. Though neither really cared a bit about him, this desertion piqued their vanity. It was only a passing phase of feeling, one of those cross-currents which are always in some way or another disturbing the steady flow of daily life; but it is these eddies which by their very unexpectedness, sometimes cause the greatest shipwrecks.

A large party had been invited for music and dancing at Oaklands that evening. The guests came from all the neighbouring houses, and as they sat listening to the music and talking, one of the chief topics of conversation was the arrival at The Croft, and the new acquaintance that the daffodil gatherers had made that afternoon. Everybody in the room was interested, the closing of the house twenty years before, having been a county wonder. On the death of the last owner, a Mr. Munro, the place had been left by him to his only child, a daughter, who had already shown signs of extreme eccentricity. The first thing she did on her inheritance, was to shut up the place, leaving in it only two servants, and then disappear herself.

From that time no one had ever seen or heard anything of her. To-night, everybody had something to suggest or ask. Was Miss Munro really dead? Was the new arrival any relation to her? Perhaps Miss Munro had married in her curious retirement, and this might be her daughter. If so, why had the girl taken possession so suddenly and secretly? As was natural, considering that no one knew anything at all about it, no definite conclusion was come to. Only one person took no part in the conversation; and yet, as she heard all

the vague speculations, it was the hardest matter in the world for her, to keep back the information, with the desire to repeat which, she was bubbling over. It needed to be a strong doubt indeed, to keep her silent. As a rule, she said what she thought first, and repented afterwards.

"We must find out who she is, of course, before we call," said a lady, the Honourable Mrs. Seton, who had a large family of daughters, and had been one of the most interested in the discussion going on. "When one has daughters it is impossible to be too careful."

There was a sudden cessation of music at the other end of the room as Daisy Rashleigh rose from the piano. In the sudden stillness, the clear, high-pitched voice of the Honourable Mrs. Seton was distinctly heard.

"I'm growing quite tired of Miss Laurent's name!" explained Daisy petulantly to May Freeling, as she shut up her music. "I can't see why they all want to talk about her so much!"

"They would be considerably surprised if they knew who she really is," exclaimed May Freeling unguardedly; "I should like to see Mrs. Seton's face if I told her."

"You know who she is!" exclaimed Daisy quickly, "and there's something queer about her, I can see, by your manner."

The next second she had turned and faced the room, the swift movement prompted by pique and wounded vanity.

"What do you think, Mrs. Linton?" she exclaimed, in clear, distinct tones. "May Freeling knows all about Miss Laurent. Do make her tell us."

Everybody looked towards the piano where stood the two girls.

"I don't know if I ought to tell you," said May, in answer to half-a-dozen questions. Then her strong inclination to amuse, stimulated by Daisy's subtle prompting, combined with the flattering interest of the whole room, overcame her generous resolve to keep the story to herself. "You mustn't let what I am going to say prejudice you against her, for I am sure it was only wicked gossip when people said she knew more of it than was right. Do you remember a dreadful murder, committed in Baltimore two years ago? But I don't think it was put in the English papers. It was Amy—my brother Malcolm's wife—who told me all about it. She is an American, and came from Baltimore; and the murder was the talk of the town just before she left. A poor old lady

was murdered one night there. And, to make it more dreadful, murdered by a man to whom she had been very good. His name was Townsend, and Miss Laurent is his daughter."

There was a murmur of shocked incredulity.

"She has changed her name, naturally," went on May, forgetting everything but that she had a very interesting story to tell. "Poor Miss Metcalfe was found murdered in her sitting-room. Mr. Townsend had come in late that evening to see her, and no one saw him leave. But when about twelve o'clock at night her maid went to see why she had not come up to bed, she found her dead. It was proved against Mr. Townsend. He was condemned to death, but died suddenly in prison. He had a daughter, but no one even knew her by sight, as she was still at school. But as it happened, she was staying for a week with Miss Metcalfe, just before the murder. She disappeared the day before, and was never heard of or seen again, though every enquiry was made. The worst part was, that when Miss Metcalfe's will was read, it was found out that she had left the whole of her property to this girl. It certainly all looked very suspicious, and it does seem funny that that girl should have come so secretly, and be living there in such a big house."

"Oh, May," exclaimed Violet, who was listening too at the farther end of the room; "it sounds so dreadful, when you think of Miss Laurent. It can't be the same girl."

"I think Miss Freeling must be mistaken," said a stern voice. And Cecil Linton, who had been sitting near Violet, rose, and looked across the crowded room to where May Freeling stood by the piano. May flushed hotly. Then the feeling that she was being called to account before the whole room, irritated her.

"It is not likely I should make a mistake about such a matter, Mr. Linton," she said hotly. "Amy pointed her out to me one day in London. She knew her by sight, because she happened to be at a railway station in Baltimore the very day that Miss Townsend arrived. She heard Mr. Townsend introduce her to another man as his daughter just home from school. She was only about sixteen, but Amy noticed her then specially, because she was so lovely. Of course, after the murder, she remembered her well."

"It is a terrible story!" exclaimed Mrs. Linton, coming hastily to the rescue.

and with a look at her son not to continue so unpleasant a subject. "And the less said about it the better. I think we had better keep it to ourselves. We shall soon be able to judge what Miss Townsend or Laurent, really is."

But Smallcross society, constituted after the fashion of other societies, could not keep so interesting a piece of information to itself.

Miss Laurent's history, as given by someone "who knew her very well," was carried away from Mrs. Linton's drawing-room that night, and spread by energetic repetition through the county. The Honourable Mrs. Seton, the social leader of Smallcross, gave out that it was impossible for respectable people to call on her.

And the history, percolating downwards from "the county" proper through all grades of social standings, reached at last even the country folk, whose information, gathered from relations acting as servants in high places, took strange and varied shapes. By the end of a fortnight it was known as a positive fact that Miss Laurent, living at The Croft under an assumed name, had helped to murder Miss Munro, after forging the will which gave her the property.

CHAPTER III.

ABOUT a fortnight after their first daffodil expedition, the four girls staying at Oaklands, made their way once more through the woods in the direction of The Croft. They were alone this time, and their faces were very grave, while more than a suspicion of tears stained May's and Daisy's eyes. But for once neither thought of appearances.

"She won't see us, I know," exclaimed May with a catch in her breath, as they drew near the grey wall. "She will have been sure to find out that it was I who started the reports. How was I to know people would behave so rudely to her?"

"It wasn't all your fault. It was mine quite as much!" exclaimed Daisy. "It all came of wanting to be first, and then being mean and jealous."

"Yes, it was," was on the tip of Hyacinth's tongue, as a passing thought of the defection of her promising disciple stung her. But she checked herself. Personal feeling was out of place in the general repentance of the moment.

"We have all been enjoying ourselves too much, that's my opinion," she said instead. "It has made us selfish. If only

we had stopped to think that disappointment follows every pleasure, we should not have been so wrapped up in them, so as to forget to be considerate to other people."

And for once—made to reflect in the presence of another's shadowed life—these "careless daughters of ease" discerned the principle of truth which lay buried beneath the affectation of Hyacinth's pessimist philosophy, and forbore to mock at it. It was Violet Damer who had prompted this expedition with the object of trying to atone in some way for the harm they had done the girl. "We can beg her pardon, I suppose; that is all we can do," she had said, when the others, shy and ashamed, would have held back.

It was Hyacinth's suggestion that they should go to the same place, and see if they could find her there, lest, if they went up boldly to the hall door, she might, thinking their visit an impertinence, refuse to let them enter. They had never been here since that first day. The narcissus-flowers had faded and withered in stifling rooms of the East End, and none of their fresh sweet sisters had been sent to take their places. For the last fortnight of their visit to Oaklands had been spent by the girls in a whirl of gaiety, and they had found no time for such far-off charities; while life had been displaying its other side to Hyacinth's melancholy eyes, and there had been nothing to prompt new experiments. It was only this morning that they found out really how far and wide Miss Laurent's history had spread, and how much harm it had done her.

They felt now that their absence after their promise to return, would be interpreted after the bitterness in Miss Laurent's own heart.

"I wish we had told Mrs. Linton that we were coming, and asked her to come with us. Of course Miss Laurent will think that we stayed away just for the reason the others did," said May.

"Well, we must put up with it," answered Violet laconically. "If you like to go back I shall go on," unconsciously giving the key-note to her character.

But if they had wished to, it was too late.

They had just reached the doorway in the wall when it was pushed open, and the girl they had come to seek, stepped out into the wood.

She had her hat in her hand, and the sunlight falling on her from between the branches overhead, lit up her hair into a wonderful glory. But her face was so

white, and there were such heavy circles round her eyes, that the girls could only stare at her for a second in shocked surprise. If they had wondered whether she had heard all the reports spread about her, her looks answered them. At the sight of them, a hot, scarlet flush dyed her face and throat with the agony of shame, then with a swift gesture she drew back. But Violet recovered herself and ran forward.

"Oh! do you mind waiting a minute!" she exclaimed, scarcely knowing what she said in her anxiety to keep her. "We came to see you——"

Miss Laurent turned at the pleading voice, and faced the girls.

"To see me?" she asked. "Why do you want me?"

If the girls had been shocked at the physical change in the beautiful face, they were still more startled at the mental transformation. They had thought of her through it all, as troubled and full of sorrow, with the tender pathetic appealing, almost child-like, in the grey eyes, which had been there on the first day they saw her. This girl, with her hard face and repellent bitterness, abashed and discomfited them. If there had been any condescension of pity in their repentance, it was slain by her scorn. Even Violet drew back ashamed.

But May, whose every moment was ruled by impulse, flung herself into the gulf suddenly opened between them.

"Oh, you hate us! And I don't wonder," she began passionately; "I hate myself!" And the next second, with choking words and broken sentences, she poured out all her share in what had taken place.

Miss Laurent's face grew paler, but she did not say a word.

"And if I lived for a hundred years I should never forgive myself!" wailed up May, sobbing outright at last.

Miss Laurent looked at her for a second. "I don't know why it should trouble you so," she said in a clear, hard voice. "But I am glad you came. It gives me an opportunity of explaining. I ought to have told you the other day who I was. I know now that things like that can never be hid. I knew it before, only I was over-persuaded."

"I'll never repeat anything again as long as I live!" sobbed May, in the depth of helpless repentance.

"Please don't take such a rash resolution on my account. Life would not be half so amusing," she said, "and as I said before, I have nothing to forgive."

"We don't ask for your forgiveness!"

said Violet, flushing shyly but speaking bravely; "or rather, we ask for much more. We ask for your friendship. We are all going away to-morrow. But we want to feel, that when we come back again you will be here to hold out your hand and welcome us."

A faint flush tinged Miss Laurent's white face. The earnest proposition, with its genuine feeling, pierced the hardness of pride which wrapped her in. Violet saw the startled wonder and the softening, and went on more earnestly.

"If we did not come back for twenty years, we would still ask you the same. Be generous and believe us!"

"Twenty years! A great many things will have happened in twenty years, and one of them will be, that you will have forgotten me!" The hard voice grew strained and hoarse. Then with a slight gesture of self-contempt she exclaimed: "After all, what does it matter? It is not likely that we shall ever meet again."

"None of us may ever meet again," said Hyacinth, with melancholy solemnity. "How can we tell what even one year may bring us?"

Daisy gave an impatient little shiver.

"How gloomily you are all talking! If life does not mean brightness I don't think it is worth living! And I am sure it is our own fault if it does not."

But May, in her impulsive fashion, had caught at an idea.

"Why should we not prove our theories?" she exclaimed eagerly. "Twenty years! It is a long, long time—long enough to prove anything. Suppose we agree to come back here in twenty years' time to tell each other what life has been to each one. And you," turning swiftly to Miss Laurent, "you too, will come back to tell us that bright days have come to you as well."

Miss Laurent shook her head. But the others took up the idea as eagerly as May.

Twenty years from this spring day, they, girls no longer, but women who would have proved the things that life brought them, should, if they were living, return to that place and give an account of their lives.

"Why should I promise to come?" exclaimed Miss Laurent, in answer to their entreaties. "Our lives are set so far apart that they cannot join again. You ask for my friendship now—because you are sorry. In a month's time—even less—you would be ashamed of it, if I gave it to you. I will not take advantage of an offer you will regret to-morrow."

"Come only, and see!" cried the girls. She looked at them, not bitterly now, but very sorrowfully.

"No," she said, "I will not come, unless life has given me something else to say."

Then she turned and went back into the Chase, shutting the door behind her.

A silence fell on the girls.

"Is that life?" asked May, breaking it, in quick half-frightened tones.

"Yes!" sighed Hyacinth.

"Perhaps!" said Daisy.

"No!" said Violet.

Then they too turned and went their way; and as they passed out of hearing, earth's glad voices broke out once more:

"From Shadow to Sunshine! From Silence to Song! Oh, Persephone, teach us the patience of waiting!"

THE LADY OF DIS.

CHAPTER I.

THE parish church of Smallcross was unusually full. The beautiful May day had attracted all the world, and gentles and simples poured from the sunny, thyme-scented world outside, into the quaint old church.

The bell was stopping, when a girl entered the church alone.

She came up through the sunshine which fell on the broad aisle through the stained windows; and, ominously enough, as one nervous old maiden lady distinctly observed, one crimson ray fell in a patch of red light upon the black gown, even staining for a second the round white throat. There is a different way of looking at most things; and while the poor old lady descanted upon it afterwards to her friends as a direct sign that she ought to be avoided, one young man thought of the martyrdoms which were being suffered every day by the innocent for the guilty. This girl's father committed a horrible crime, and all the world tried to slay her life too. But then he was a foolish young man, who had, hidden away under a rather selfish exterior, certain views upon chivalry and honour. But Cecil Linton, being outwardly no better than most of his fellow-creatures, and having, after the generality of his sex, a very good opinion of himself, did not always gain credit for these hidden depths of feeling. And very probably, as man is weak, it was the beauty of the girl which brought them to the surface this morning.

It was the first time Miss Laurent had appeared at the parish church since her arrival at The Croft, a month before. But she gave no consciousness of all the curious eyes watching her as she made her way to the pew belonging to The Croft. She did not even turn her head, when a momentary disturbance at the back made the rest of the congregation look round. It was caused by one of the schoolboys, who, in his anxiety to see more of her, had climbed up on to a pile of books he had arranged on the footboard, with the result that the books and himself lost their balance and rolled to the bottom of the pew. He was marched out ignominiously to undergo his punishment. The service came to an end, and the congregation began to disperse. Outside the porch door stood a raised flat stone, whose original use was unknown; but it had been turned to an ingenious account by one of the churchwardens, whose devotions and sense of personal dignity were apt to be disturbed by refractory conduct among the school children. When, as had happened to-day, any boy or girl had distinguished himself or herself in the wrong way, he or she would be stood on this stone as in a kind of pillory, in the sight of all the out-going congregation. This morning the pillory was graced by the luckless wight whom curiosity and restlessness from heat and weariness combined, had led to his so signally disgracing himself during the service. The sight of his good companions hurrying off to their dinners while he had to stand there, with the prospect of a long sermon from the aforesaid churchwarden, in addition to the durance vile, awakened in his soul such a sense of personal injustice and grievance generally, that it proved at last too strong for his self-control. The sight of Miss Laurent at the church door was the spark to the tow. The rage and defiance pent up in his bosom went forth in one shrill cry:

"Who killed Miss Munro and forged her will?"

The next second his voice choked in his throat, as he was lifted bodily from the tone by a strong hand inserted in the collar of his coat. The continuation of the scene, to his confused senses, was a violent haking—a vision of a pale, stern face bent low to his, muttering some words so fierce in their tone and import, that he thrust up a defensive elbow—of a shocked murmur of voices—and the being handed over by

the same powerful hand, to the schoolmaster for condign punishment.

Smallcross, really shocked by this public expression of its private opinions, broke up into groups and families, to discuss the painful scene on the way home. The young man, who had fallen upon the culprit with such swiftness of wrath, was already striding down the lane outside the church, and scarcely conscious himself of what he should say if he did overtake the slender, black-robed figure passing swiftly on in front of him. He was recalled to his senses by a hand laid on his arm. His companion, Sir Charles Danvers, had caught him up.

"You can't do any more, Linton. She'd hate you if you spoke to her now. I could see that in her face. It is all the pig-headed narrow-minded idiots of Smallcross she has to thank for that young one's impudence, confound them!"

CHAPTER II.

"YOU had no right to go without me. I told you to wait till next Sunday. If only I had gone this morning, only my head ached so."

Miss Laurent, standing in front of her companion in the drawing-room of The Croft, with her things on just as she had come straight in from church a few minutes before, laughed a little grim laugh of half-amused, half bitter scorn.

"What would you have done? You would only have borne it. There was nothing else to be done. There is nothing else to be done, as long as life lasts!"

"Don't be tragic, Narcisse! It is silly and bad form," exclaimed Miss Owen, angrily. But the anger was only the outcome of her sympathy for the girl, who had been so shamed and hurt. "What did you go for? You should have gone into the town as we have been doing."

"I thought I had courage to face a little place like Smallcross. But I don't think I shall ever be able to again. It was bad enough to know that it said such things; but to hear——"

"Smallcross is only a corner of the world. Surely you didn't think you had strayed on a new planet, with a new order of beings who didn't talk."

"No," said Miss Laurent, and she laughed bitterly again. "It is only the sameness of the things they say and do which upsets me. If only they would sometimes be generous and—forget."

"But you are so impatient. You don't give them time; you expect too much of

human nature. You must remember that things are against——”

A sudden change swept over the girl's face, lighting up the bitter pain of her grey eyes into a passionate blaze.

“Don't, Miss Owen! You are forgetting your promise, that whatever you might think in reality, you are to act and speak as if there were no such dreadful thing as that background to my life. If I did not live with some one who believed, as I believe, that my father was innocent, I should go mad—mad!” The words ended like a stifled cry.

It was not often that Narcisse gave way like this; but the one or two glimpses Miss Owen had had behind the veil of a certain defiant hardness, in which the girl generally wrapped herself before the world, showed her how terribly she suffered beneath the shadow of that dark past, and Smallcross, where her lot was cast, was not going to make the shadow any lighter.

CHAPTER III.

BUT the next afternoon an event occurred which filled Miss Owen with triumphant pleasure and hopes for the girl's social future. As Miss Laurent returned about five o'clock from a walk in the grounds, she was met at the door by Miss Owen in a perfect flutter of excitement.

“Who do you think has called this afternoon? Mrs. Linton from Oaklands, that big house at the other side of the wood, and her son came too; and she has been ill ever since you came, or else she would have called before. You can't think how delightful she is, and he——”

“I've seen him before; he's very conceited,” was the ungracious reply. But Miss Laurent had flushed hotly at the mention of Mr. Linton's name, for he had been very pleasant, too, that day in the woods. Yet he had forgotten her as the girls had done.

And now he came to-day with his mother out of pity. Had not they done the same? Trying to make reparation when it was too late.

“But the worst of it is,” went on Miss Owen as carelessly as she could, feeling that this was the vulnerable point, “she is leaving Oaklands to-morrow, for good, I fancy. She was evidently in great trouble. It is such a pity for your sake; she would have been just the friend for you to have.”

But the girl was hurt to the very soul.

“Ah, I see why they came; only be-

cause they are going away at once. I wish they had not called; I hate them for calling——”

“Hush, Narcisse, my dear child!”

Poor Miss Owen gazed aghast, past the girl to the open door, in which stood a man's tall figure. He had come up unobserved, and must have distinctly heard Narcisse's indignant speech; but if he had, his face gave no sign. It was quiet, and tinged with a certain lazy self-superiority habitual to it, which Miss Laurent had set down to conceit.

“I must apologise for coming back to bother you,” he said politely, as he raised his hat to the two ladies gazing at him, “but my mother found after we had driven a little way, that she had lost her card-case, and she thought she might have dropped it here. As she has several more visits to pay she sent me back to see.”

Miss Owen caught eagerly at a way out of the embarrassment. It was so very awkward that, just at a time when Narcisse wanted friends, she should risk losing them by her hotheadedness.

“I dare say it fell among the cushions,” she exclaimed hastily. “She was sitting on the couch over there. Narcisse, this is Mr. Linton. I will go and look.” And the good lady bustled off, feeling that Narcisse ought to be shaken for her folly.

The two, standing near the door, bowed to each other at the informal introduction, Narcisse stiffly, the young man pleasantly.

“I am sorry to give you all this trouble,” he said, as she stood still and ungracious, while her companion turned over the cushions at the other end of the hall.

“It is no trouble,” she said stiffly.

A slight twitch at the corner of the young man's mouth betrayed his sense of the position.

“It is very tiring looking for things on a hot day like this,” he said, then added with hasty politeness: “I had better go and help Miss Owen.”

The next minute he was actively engaged hunting under cushions, shaking fur rugs, and peering under furniture with the keenest anxiety to find his mother's card-case.

“It is most extraordinary! Mrs. Linton said it was so beautifully cool here that she would not go into the drawing-room, Narcisse. I was sitting here reading when she arrived, and—where can it have gone to, Mr. Linton? It must be here somewhere.” And Miss Owen, standing up,

flushed and flurried with her energetic search, appealed in puzzled conviction to that young man, as his head appeared, too, from the other side of the arm-chair, under which as a last possible place he and Miss Owen had both been searching.

"It is most extraordinary!"

"It is," said the young man promptly. "Some evil spirit bent on the destruction of morning calls must have spirited it away."

As Miss Owen and the young man stood up now, politely exchanging regrets concerning the trouble, and expressions of disappointment that the search had been vain, Miss Laurent looked straight at the young man.

He met her gaze steadily enough for a second, then the corners of his mouth twitched again, then he grew very red.

"I must not keep you any longer," he said hastily. "I am afraid I have given no end of trouble."

"Why did you do it?" asked Miss Laurent gravely; but there was an odd flickering reflection in her own dark eyes, of some light in his. "You really have given Miss Owen a great deal of trouble."

"Oh, Narcisse!" exclaimed poor Miss Owen, shocked beyond measure. "Please tell Mrs. Linton that I will look again, and that it shall be sent up at once if it is found."

"Please don't trouble any more!" exclaimed the young man, with quite alarmed earnestness, as he shook hands with the good lady. "I shall never forgive myself if you do."

When he reached the door he hesitated, a melancholy penitence pervading his manner and appearance. Miss Laurent gravely held out her hand.

"I hope Mrs. Linton has not been waiting all this time," she said politely.

"No," he answered hastily, his face brightening visibly as he took the hand held out to him; "I begged her to go on. I am going to take a short cut across the fields, and meet the carriage at the vicarage."

Mr. Linton walked down the drive with the same becoming gravity, till a curve in the avenue shut him out from view of the hall door. Then he laughed outright.

"Could she have seen me pick it up from beneath poor Miss Owen's very nose?" he exclaimed to himself. "Surely it wasn't sticking up out of my pocket for her to see all the time!"

With anxious alarm he felt his pocket. No. There at the bottom well hidden, by the case, as he had hastily thrust it away when he had caught sight of it the instant he began his search.

"It was awfully mean of me! Poor Miss Owen! But I couldn't help it! I wish I could have kept it up longer! How lovely she looked in the doorway, with the sunlight on her like that! She is a girl who ought always to stand in the sunbeam. How angry she was at our calling! If she only knew how willingly we would do more for her! And now even that is beyond our power."

The young man's lips contracted with sharpest pain. He had told his mother, who had not been at church, of what had taken place yesterday, and shocked as much as he had been, she had called this afternoon upon the girl. That one short visit was all she could do, for already Oaklands had passed from their hands. She was leaving the next day, the doctor having insisted upon her going away at once, while all the final preparations and arrangements for giving up her old home were made. Cecil Linton was to stay on a little longer.

The young man did not join his mother at the vicarage after all that afternoon.

The thought of what the morrow was bringing, drove away the haunting grey eyes of the girl who had raised it. As yet he had known them for so short a time, but the home of his fathers had been with him from his birth. It was a bitter cup to drink, this having to give up, for no sin nor folly of his own; and he drank it to its very dregs as he wandered aimlessly that May afternoon through fields and lanes.

It was nearly dinner-time when he found himself in a copse on the borders of the Oaklands grounds. The nearness of the home brought back the remembrance of the card-case.

He pulled it out of his pocket and looked at it with a comic ruefulness stealing into his pale face.

"What on earth am I to do with it! If I give it back to mother, it might come out that I had it all the time. Miss Owen was so bent upon finding it, that she might come up in the morning to inquire for its welfare. I wish I hadn't done it. How angry poor Miss Owen would be if she guessed! I should never dare appear there again."

A clump of late daffodils, springing up from a soft bed of moss, caught his eye.

A sudden inspiration seized him. The next second he had dug a hole with his stick and buried the little leather case under the moss, the clump of daffodils marking its hiding place.

"An appropriate ending to a fool's search!" he said. "For I was a fool to linger even that short time near those grey eyes. What have they to do with me as my life now is?"

CHAPTER IV.

SIX months later, Oaklands was given over to cleaners and decorators, and when they had departed, the new owner, Sir Charles Danvers, accompanied by a maiden aunt, took possession.

They had been at Oaklands about a month, when one morning at breakfast, Sir Charles looked across the table to where his aunt sat pouring out the coffee.

"By-the-bye, I want you to call on Miss Laurent, at The Croft, to-day, if you can; for I mean to ask her to the ball, if I give a house-warming."

Miss Nash stared at him over the coffee-pot.

"But, Charles—I really wouldn't. In the first place, it isn't for me to call on her first, and—in the second— Oh! I couldn't think of such a thing. I have heard no end of things about her since I came. Nobody calls on her."

"That's why I want you to go there. For naturally, under the circumstances, she won't come here."

"But I couldn't! It wouldn't do to take up people like that. Besides—she is so impertinent too. Some people did call on her—second-rate sort of people, you know, who I suppose are glad to know any one—and she would not receive them, and never even returned their visits. And it was the same with the Vicar's wife, who called out of charity. Mrs. Seton says she is most objectionable. She gives herself such airs, and passes people when she does meet them as if they were dust under her feet."

And Miss Nash grew quite brave and decided as she expressed her opinion on such a subject.

"You mean that instead of taking all the Smallcross insults meekly, she defies them," said her nephew carelessly. "It is shocking taste, I admit."

"Rather, Charles, you must own. A girl whose father was hanged, and who herself—"

"Her father died, and was not hanged, and there was no prospect of Miss Laurent being hanged, if that was what you were going to say. That is a deliberate little invention of Smallcross to give flavour to its tea."

"I don't care," said Miss Nash quite doggedly. "I have never called on criminals, and can't begin now. Poor as I have been, I have always managed to keep up my position."

"Very well," said her nephew carelessly. "You can do as you like, of course. I asked you here to be civil to my friends. If it is too troublesome a task you can always leave. You must please yourself."

The perfect indifference of his face, almost cruel in its coldness, spoke more plainly than his words. His aunt's thin face, faded and lined with weary poverty, flushed, and her lips suddenly trembled.

That afternoon, in fear and trembling, sitting well back in the corner of the brougham, lest she should be met or seen by the Honourable Mrs. Seton, Miss Nash drove to The Croft.

Miss Owen happened to be sitting at the drawing-room window as the Oaklands carriage drove up.

With a sudden, desperate impulse, she flung down her work and hurried out into the hall, to waylay the servant going to open the door.

"We are at home, Simpson," she said breathlessly, then rushed back to her seat and caught up her work, trying to look as if she had not moved.

"Narcisse will be very angry," she said to herself. "But things can't go on like this. The girl's character is getting completely spoilt by this unnatural hardness and defiance."

Miss Nash had perfectly described the attitude taken by Narcisse Laurent. Mrs. Linton's visit had not been accepted by Smallcross as a precedent. It had kept aloof, treating the girl with marked suspicion and coldness. Perhaps matters might have improved if the girl herself had been patient. But she was hot-headed and passionate. The shadow on her life had made her bitterly sensitive. Instead of waiting, as Miss Owen counselled, she grew rebellious and hard, and never lost an opportunity of showing her disdain. She refused to have anything to do with Sunday schools, or blankets, or mothers' meetings, all of which her companion, without the least consciousness of mixing up worldly and charitable wisdom. en-

She had rigorously excluded all the men from the party, and had only yielded after much persuasion to the entreaties of Cecil Linton and Sir Charles Danvers.

A little cloud, in spite of the success of the daffodil gathering, seemed to rest still in some intangible way upon the party. Perhaps the girls were tired with their long walk. Perhaps the vague sense of antagonism between Daisy and Hyacinth affected them all; but, at any rate, they were all rather silent, and some of them decidedly cross that night at dinner. Sir Charles Danvers, seated between Daisy and Hyacinth, was lazy, and only roused himself to expatiate on the beauty of the new acquaintance they had made that afternoon. And the girls, with the quickness of girls in such matters, saw that his fickle man's fancy had been taken captive, and that their own fascinations were vain. Though neither really cared a bit about him, this desertion piqued their vanity. It was only a passing phase of feeling, one of those cross-currents which are always in some way or another disturbing the steady flow of daily life; but it is these eddies which by their very unexpectedness, sometimes cause the greatest shipwrecks.

A large party had been invited for music and dancing at Oaklands that evening. The guests came from all the neighbouring houses, and as they sat listening to the music and talking, one of the chief topics of conversation was the arrival at The Croft, and the new acquaintance that the daffodil gatherers had made that afternoon. Everybody in the room was interested, the closing of the house twenty years before, having been a county wonder. On the death of the last owner, a Mr. Munro, the place had been left by him to his only child, a daughter, who had already shown signs of extreme eccentricity. The first thing she did on her inheritance, was to shut up the place, leaving in it only two servants, and then disappear herself.

From that time no one had ever seen or heard anything of her. To-night, everybody had something to suggest or ask. Was Miss Munro really dead? Was the new arrival any relation to her? Perhaps Miss Munro had married in her curious retirement, and this might be her daughter. If so, why had the girl taken possession so suddenly and secretly? As was natural, considering that no one knew anything at all about it, no definite conclusion was come to. Only one person took no part in the conversation; and yet, as she heard all

the vague speculations, it was the hardest matter in the world for her, to keep back the information, with the desire to repeat which, she was bubbling over. It needed to be a strong doubt indeed, to keep May silent. As a rule, she said what she thought first, and repented afterwards.

"We must find out who she is, of course, before we call," said a lady, the Honourable Mrs. Seton, who had a large family of daughters, and had been one of the most interested in the discussion going on. "When one has daughters it is impossible to be too careful."

There was a sudden cessation of music at the other end of the room as Daisy Rashleigh rose from the piano. In the sudden stillness, the clear, high-pitched voice of the Honourable Mrs. Seton was distinctly heard.

"I'm growing quite tired of Miss Laurent's name!" explained Daisy petulantly to May Freeling, as she shut up her music. "I can't see why they all want to talk about her so much!"

"They would be considerably surprised if they knew who she really is," exclaimed May Freeling unguardedly; "I should like to see Mrs. Seton's face if I told her."

"You know who she is!" exclaimed Daisy quickly, "and there's something queer about her, I can see, by your manner."

The next second she had turned and faced the room, the swift movement prompted by pique and wounded vanity.

"What do you think, Mrs. Linton?" she exclaimed, in clear, distinct tones. "May Freeling knows all about Miss Laurent. Do make her tell us."

Everybody looked towards the piano where stood the two girls.

"I don't know if I ought to tell you," said May, in answer to half-a-dozen questions. Then her strong inclination to amuse, stimulated by Daisy's subtle prompting, combined with the flattering interest of the whole room, overcame her generous resolve to keep the story to herself. "You mustn't let what I am going to say prejudice you against her, for I am sure it was only wicked gossip when people said she knew more of it than was right. Do you remember a dreadful murder, committed in Baltimore two years ago? But I don't think it was put in the English papers. It was Amy—my brother Malcolm's wife—who told me all about it. She is an American, and came from Baltimore; and the murder was the talk of the town just before she left. A poor old lady

was murdered one night there. And, to make it more dreadful, murdered by a man to whom she had been very good. His name was Townsend, and Miss Laurent is his daughter."

There was a murmur of shocked incredulity.

"She has changed her name, naturally," went on May, forgetting everything but that she had a very interesting story to tell. "Poor Miss Metcalfe was found murdered in her sitting-room. Mr. Townsend had come in late that evening to see her, and no one saw him leave. But when about twelve o'clock at night her maid went to see why she had not come up to bed, she found her dead. It was proved against Mr. Townsend. He was condemned to death, but died suddenly in prison. He had a daughter, but no one even knew her by sight, as she was still at school. But as it happened, she was staying for a week with Miss Metcalfe, just before the murder. She disappeared the day before, and was never heard of or seen again, though every enquiry was made. The worst part was, that when Miss Metcalfe's will was read, it was found out that she had left the whole of her property to this girl. It certainly all looked very suspicious, and it does seem funny that that girl should have come so secretly, and be living there in such a big house."

"Oh, May," exclaimed Violet, who was listening too at the farther end of the room; "it sounds so dreadful, when you think of Miss Laurent. It can't be the same girl."

"I think Miss Freeling must be mistaken," said a stern voice. And Cecil Linton, who had been sitting near Violet, rose, and looked across the crowded room to where May Freeling stood by the piano. May flushed hotly. Then the feeling that she was being called to account before the whole room, irritated her.

"It is not likely I should make a mistake about such a matter, Mr. Linton," she said hotly. "Amy pointed her out to me one day in London. She knew her by sight, because she happened to be at a railway station in Baltimore the very day that Miss Townsend arrived. She heard Mr. Townsend introduce her to another man as his daughter just home from school. She was only about sixteen, but Amy noticed her then specially, because she was so lovely. Of course, after the murder, she remembered her well."

"It is a terrible story!" exclaimed Mrs. Linton, coming hastily to the rescue,

and with a look at her son not to continue so unpleasant a subject. "And the less said about it the better. I think we had better keep it to ourselves. We shall soon be able to judge what Miss Townsend or Laurent, really is."

But Smallcross society, constituted after the fashion of other societies, could not keep so interesting a piece of information to itself.

Miss Laurent's history, as given by someone "who knew her very well," was carried away from Mrs. Linton's drawing-room that night, and spread by energetic repetition through the county. The Honourable Mrs. Seton, the social leader of Smallcross, gave out that it was impossible for respectable people to call on her.

And the history, percolating downwards from "the county" proper through all grades of social standings, reached at last even the country folk, whose information, gathered from relations acting as servants in high places, took strange and varied shapes. By the end of a fortnight it was known as a positive fact that Miss Laurent, living at The Croft under an assumed name, had helped to murder Miss Munro, after forging the will which gave her the property.

CHAPTER III.

ABOUT a fortnight after their first daffodil expedition, the four girls staying at Oaklands, made their way once more through the woods in the direction of The Croft. They were alone this time, and their faces were very grave, while more than a suspicion of tears stained May's and Daisy's eyes. But for once neither thought of appearances.

"She won't see us, I know," exclaimed May with a catch in her breath, as they drew near the grey wall. "She will have been sure to find out that it was I who started the reports. How was I to know people would behave so rudely to her?"

"It wasn't all your fault. It was mine quite as much!" exclaimed Daisy. "It all came of wanting to be first, and then being mean and jealous."

"Yes, it was," was on the tip of Hyacinth's tongue, as a passing thought of the defection of her promising disciple stung her. But she checked herself. Personal feeling was out of place in the general repentance of the moment.

"We have all been enjoying ourselves too much, that's my opinion," she said instead. "It has made us selfish. If only

treated her to undertake, as a borderland where she would have the opportunity of meeting "the county." But Miss Laurent was not to be persuaded.

But this afternoon Miss Owen took the matter into her own hands. All this was telling on the girl. She was growing paler and thinner. The beautiful colour seemed to fade at times into a red stain beneath the eyes, and the grey eyes themselves were brilliant with a light that was not a girl's laughter. This isolation must be broken down by some means.

A few seconds later Miss Nash was announced. She was scarcely seated when Narcisse entered the room. A warning, appealing glance from her companion checked her annoyed astonishment at seeing a stranger there.

"This is Miss Nash, Sir Charles Danvers's aunt, Narcisse," she said quickly, after having introduced her to that good lady.

"It was very kind of Miss Nash to waive ceremony by calling on us first," said Miss Laurent quietly, with a manner such as a duchess might have used when correcting an unwarrantable impertinence. The discomfiture of poor Miss Nash was complete.

Perhaps her helpless confusion and the honest distress of her eyes, touched the delicate good breeding that was innate in Narcisse's heart; perhaps Miss Owen's appealing face had something to do with it. Whatever it was, the next second Narcisse was sitting by Miss Nash's side, bright, and courteous, and fascinating, as she only could be. Half an hour later, Miss Nash drove home fairly bewildered, torn between two diametrically opposed convictions—that the county must be right, and that a girl of such dainty high breeding could not possibly be what the county had said she was. Miss Nash's reasoning powers not being of the strongest, she found it perfectly hopeless to try and reconcile these two contradictions.

CHAPTER V.

THAT visit was only the beginning of the intercourse between Oaklands and The Croft. Smallcross's indignation knew no bounds when it saw Sir Charles Danvers a constant visitor at the latter place. For Miss Laurent had changed her mood, and "the shameless way," in Smallcross parlance, in which she did her best to establish a footing in the county by ingratiating herself with Sir Charles, was a scandal. Many were the lectures poor Miss Nash received,

the voice of the Honourable Mrs. Selam expressing public opinion. But poor Miss Nash was fairly ruled by her iron-willed nephew, while, though she dared not confess it, the fascination of the girl herself was strong upon her.

The discovery that invitations had been sent to The Croft, for the great ball that Sir Charles was to give as a house-warming, was the climax to the general dismay. Even Miss Owen was doubtful on the subject. She was surprised at Narcisse accepting the invitation, and wondered how she would go through the ordeal. But she need not have been afraid. The spirit that had made Narcisse accept, gave a recklessness to her courage, as it gave a brilliance almost startling to her beauty. As she entered the ball-room that night her dazzling loveliness amazed even the two men standing near Miss Nash as she received her guests. They both came quickly forward; but while Sir Charles eagerly asked her for dances, the other only shook hands and then moved away.

"I did not know Mr. Linton was to be here to-day," she said with a bright smile, as she and Sir Charles joined the dancers.

"I met him in town yesterday and made him come down," answered Danvers carelessly. "Perhaps it was a little hard on him. I didn't think at first. I wonder he came. But how awfully well you look to-night!" in a different tone. "Only you are not wearing my flowers."

The tone jarred upon the girl. It always did, and to-night, in her over-strung mood it was intolerable.

"My maid said they spoilt my dress," she said with almost insolent carelessness. "They had yellow centres, and she said I was to wear only white."

Callous as the man generally was, he winced; but when he looked down again into her face he forgot the hurt of her insolence.

"Your maid was right," he said. "Even to see you wearing my flowers, I would not have you change one single thing in your toilette to-night. There is not a woman here who can stand by your side."

She knew that he was thinking of her position in the room—unrecognised, unknown—there, at his wish alone. She was thinking of it herself. The feeling that all eyes were watching her and all tongues criticising her, was like the cutting of a knife into her living flesh, and as she danced, or spoke, or laughed, its hurting never ceased.

But it angered her that he should think of it.

"What difference can it make to you whether I am well-dressed to-night or to-morrow, or the day after?" she said with hot disdain.

"A great deal—and you know," he began, roused out of himself by the power of her loveliness. For the half cynical admiration with which he had first regarded her, had developed into the nearest approach to love, of which his selfish unbelieving nature was capable. He did not believe even in her. Though she had encouraged him, he was clever enough to know, that it was only another way of resenting public opinion. But for all that, because she was the only woman who had ever been to him what she was, and because he never failed to gratify a selfish desire, whatever it might cost him afterwards, he meant to marry her. But he must wait. He felt her shrinking away from him now at the very sound of his passionate words.

"I am tired of dancing," she said; "take me back to Miss Owen."

He submitted, and took her back without another word. He understood her better than she did herself. He could afford to wait.

As the evening wore on there was not a girl in the room who seemed to enjoy herself more than Narcisse. Sir Charles, without forcing himself upon her notice, surrounded her with care. He even saw that his aunt talked to and looked after Miss Owen, who sat lonely among the chaperons. But that good lady did not trouble in the least about any slights to herself. She saw Narcisse besieged with partners; the men, long before the evening was half over, basely going over to the enemy's camp in crowds, fairly fascinated with the girl's beauty and brilliance; and Miss Owen triumphed at Narcisse's success. But as the dance went on she grew doubtful.

In Miss Owen's young days to dance twice with a man was all that was permitted; yet here was Narcisse giving away half-a-dozen waltzes to one man, and sitting out two or three with another, and then throwing one half of her partners over for their dances, to give them in capricious favour to others, after a fashion which utterly shocked poor Miss Owen's old-fashioned notions. Was the girl's head turned with all the homage of the men? Was she growing perfectly reckless of public opinion, careless that she was

shocking the women and driving them more and more away from her? Driving away others, too, for her chaperon noticed that Cecil Linton never once went near her all the evening.

Perhaps he, too, was thinking how his mother, whose gentle high breeding had taken Miss Owen's heart captive, would disapprove of these proceedings.

Miss Owen's distress growing every dance, began to display itself in irritation; the result of which was that, when Linton came up to ask if she would have any refreshments, she answered him very snappishly in the negative.

He looked a little surprised, as well he might, for the last time he had spoken to her she had been very pleasant. But he took no notice, only lifted up a flower-covered fan by her side and sat down.

"I am afraid chaperons have rather a dull time," he said.

"I should think the dancers sometimes have a duller, judging from their partners. How Narcisse can have had the patience to dance three times running with that horrid man I don't know."

Linton looked up. Narcisse was just passing them. She nodded and smiled to them, and was swept on again.

The young man watched her for a second or two, and then his eyes fell again to the fan which he was still holding.

"She seems to be having a good time," he said.

"A good time! I suppose you call a good time for a girl dancing with any goose in the room. Apparently, it isn't a man's idea of a good time, as you have stood out half the evening," said Miss Owen, very irritably indeed.

"I have danced as much as I wanted to," said Linton, who, after the fashion of young men, only danced when and with whom he pleased.

But he looked tired to-night, and perhaps there was some excuse for his laziness. The waltz was ending, and both suddenly seemed to forget their conversation, in watching Narcisse.

There was a look of relief in both their faces as they saw her, instead of following the other dancers out of the room, come towards them.

Linton knew the man, and hated to see any girl of his acquaintance dance with him; yet Narcisse had given him three, and had even thrown over another partner for him—Linton had heard her doing it. Narcisse dismissed the man with a careless

smile, as she came up to where the chaperon was sitting.

"How could you dance with that horrid man?" exclaimed Miss Owen as he moved away.

"I don't know, I am sure," replied the girl carelessly. Why did I, Mr. Linton? you look as if you knew."

"Because you hated him," he said.

Their eyes met full for a second; then hers fell, and with a little impatient gesture she sat down.

"Give me my fan," she said, "it is better than your suggestion."

"Shall I recall it?" he asked with a smile, as he stood looking down at her.

She did not want to meet his eyes again. Something in their cool searching, in their steady disapproval, had changed a dull disappointment which had haunted her all the evening into something like anger. Why should he call her to account?

But some other feeling conquered her, and she looked up; and as her eyes met the smile in his, her own flashed into sunshine.

"I danced with that man because I was angry and cross," she said, "and I did it out of perversion of spirit. I hated him all the time."

He laughed. "So I was right. Will you give me this dance, to prove that you aren't angry?"

Miss Laurent was already engaged to three men for this particular waltz. But she scarcely hesitated a second, and then the hesitation was not caused by the thought of her other unfortunate partners. She was only wondering again why he had not asked her before.

A few seconds later she was whirled down the long hall, now guided by the strong arm of Cecil Linton. Neither spoke a single word. As the tender melodies of the waltz gathered themselves up into a breath of plaintive minor chords he drew her quickly from the room. He led her down a corridor, till they came to a recess in which stood two seats.

"Was not I right?" he said, when a few seconds later they heard voices and laughter, and frou-frou of women's dresses, as the dancers streamed out of the ball-room. "I always think that rush and noise at the end, spoils a waltz such as that was—to me."

She laughed a little nervously. He was holding her fan again.

"I don't think you ought to wear these things," he said, touching a trailing spray

of white orchids on it. "You should only have narcissus-flowers. Do you know I always think of you gathering yellow flowers in the sunlight, behind that old grey wall. I hope you still do it?"

"Not now," she said; "it is winter."

"It ought to be always spring where you are, then. It was always spring when Persephone appeared on the earth."

"Persephone!" she said, with a quick catch in her breath. "Don't liken me to Persephone. Don't you remember that she had another name too. 'The Lady of Dis.' Don't you remember how one half of her life was spent in that land of darkness. Have you forgotten that mine—"

He looked at her quickly.

"Hush!" he said quickly, "you must not say any more. Your life need not be spent in the land of darkness. Don't you remember how Persephone ate the pomegranate seeds? It was foolish of her!"

"And you think that I am wilfully eating the pomegranate seeds too!" she said with an odd little laugh, as she sank back again in her chair. "Perhaps I am. For I have been hard, and angry, and bitter, and—do you know that I thought to-night that even you—who were once kind to me—had gone over to the other side, and were misjudging me like the rest? And you had known me a little—while the others—perhaps I have expected too much."

He did not lift his eyes from the fan, whose flowers he was arranging with a lingering touch.

"It was because I had known you that I did not," he said in a strained voice. "I did not dare. I was no longer master—I had no right."

It was a mistake that he did not look up, for such a lovely light flashed into her face, that had he seen it, he would have dared all, even to asking her with her wealth to share his ruined fortunes. But it passed in a second.

"I should think, Sir Charles, that you have had a taste of asking such people to your house. Anything more disgraceful than Miss Laurent's conduct would be impossible."

The Honourable Mrs. Seton, sweeping down the corridor with Sir Charles Danvers in attendance, came suddenly upon the two sitting half-hidden by the palms and ferns in the recess.

She had not seen them. There was an almost imperceptible pause of discomfiture

as her eyes fell on the girl; but before, haughtily drawing herself up, that stately matron could pass on, Miss Laurent rose and stepped out of the recess.

"I think it is time we went home, Sir Charles," she said, looking up into his face with her most brilliant smile.

"Must you really go?" the young man exclaimed eagerly. "I will go with you, and order your carriage. Linton, will you take Mrs. Seton back to the ball-room?"

That young man had risen too, as Miss Laurent had hastily left his side. He appeared pale under the light of the lamp overhead, and his eyes looked a little bewildered as they rested on the face brilliant with mocking disdain, which a few minutes before had been uplifted pale and tender to his. Was it the same girl?

A little later, as Sir Charles was carefully wrapping up Miss Laurent in her furs and putting her into her carriage, Linton came back to the seat. The flower-fan lay there as he had put it down when he rose. She had forgotten it. Linton broke off a spray of the orchids.

"She will not miss it," he said, "and if she did, she would be too good to ask for it back. Another second, and I should have made a fool of myself. She saw it and was merciful."

Merciful! Was Persephone merciful to the sons of earth when, in wanton wilfulness, she ate the pomegranate seeds, whilst they were waiting with longing eyes to behold her amongst them once more?

Two days later, Miss Nash started forth on a round of visits, to announce the news that a marriage had been arranged between her nephew, Sir Charles Danvers, and Miss Laurent, of The Croft.

CHAPTER VI.

SIR CHARLES and Lady Danvers went abroad for three months after the wedding, and it was a day in the beginning of June when Sir Charles brought his wife back to Oaklands. Miss Owen and Miss Nash, between whom had sprung up a very genuine and unexpected friendship, were waiting at the house to receive them. After dinner they went back to The Croft, where it had been arranged by Narcisse that they were to live, and husband and wife were left alone in the house which was to be the home of their wedded lives.

Was Narcisse wondering what sort of home it would be, as she stood alone after dinner in the great drawing-room, looking round it?

She was still standing there when her husband entered. He laughed a little as he saw her.

"You don't look real, somehow, Narcisse," he said. "Perhaps it's that white frock, which gives you a kind of diaphanous appearance. Perhaps I am not used to seeing you here yet, and expect to see you vanish like a spirit."

"But I can't," she said. "I'm here for always."

"I suppose you are," he said, laughing again, and putting his arm carelessly round her. He had not tired yet of her beauty, but its winning had cooled his admiration. "It's a fine room, isn't it? It was awfully rough on the Lintons having to give it up. Do you know it was in this very room I heard all about your story? That little Freeling girl entertained us with it the evening after we met you. I shall never forget what a rage Linton was in about it. But I don't believe the girl meant any harm. She was only a little chatterbox. Awfully amusing, too."

Narcisse had withdrawn herself from his arm as he spoke.

"She must have been," she said with intense bitterness, looking suddenly away, "for the people could not forget it."

"Come, I say, Narcisse, you mustn't be too hard on people. After all, it was rather startling to hear that you had been mixed up with a murder. Half the people fancied you had helped to administer the poison yourself."

"Don't!" cried Narcisse passionately. "Do you want to make me wish that I had never been born?"

He stared at her in amazement.

"What a little spitfire you are, Narcisse!" he said impatiently. "It is impossible to know how to take you. One minute you laugh; the next, you blaze up like this, and there's never any more reason for one mood than the other."

"It is my nature," she said. "You knew what I was like. Why did you want to marry me?"

As yet she could not offend him very deeply, and his ill-temper vanished.

"Because I couldn't help myself, I suppose," he said, laughing lightly. "You bewitch a man before he knows there is danger."

He would have kissed her, but she had moved away; and he flung himself down into a chair and took up a book; but he did not open it, for happening to glance, still angrily, over to where Narcisse stood by a

little table, he sat upright and stared at her.

He had bought an early edition of an evening paper as they came down from town that afternoon. As it happened, neither of them had looked at it. It had been brought into the drawing-room with some books of Narcisse's, and when she had turned away from her husband she had taken it up. She was holding it now in her hands, looking at it.

"What is the matter, Narcisse?" he exclaimed in alarm, as he rose and went quickly over to her.

She raised her eyes to his, with a dazed look in them, and an awful whiteness on her face.

"Nothing," she said in a still, hushed voice.

"Nothing?"

A paragraph caught his eyes as he looked down at the paper in her hands. It was headed: "Strange confession of a murder," and was an extract from a Baltimore paper.

In a few lines it gave a graphic account of the murder of a Miss Metcalfe some two years before, for which an innocent man had been condemned, only escaping the extreme penalty of the law by dying suddenly of a heart disease. The real murderer, a good-for-nothing connection of the poor old lady, and who had managed to escape all suspicion, had confessed to the deed a few days previously, as he lay dying from a wound gained in a drunken brawl. The names were given, with a few remarks upon the melancholy miscarriage of justice, which had dishonoured and virtually slain an innocent man.

Sir Charles read it through.

"Nothing!" he echoed. "Do you call that nothing? To have your father proved an innocent man!"

But with a dull, moaning cry, which sounded like "Too late," she fell forward in a dead faint.

CHAPTER VII.

SMALLCROSS always looked upon the insertion of that paragraph in the "Smallcross Gazette," for it also appeared the very next morning, after the return of Sir Charles and Lady Danvers, in that extensively circulated journal, as a *Deus ex machina*. In those few dozen lines lay the kernel of the hard nut it had been trying to crack. Smallcross swallowed that kernel in one mouthful of relief and thankfulness, and with it any envy and spite which

might have added to the difficulty of the cracking, and straightway besieged Lady Danvers's doors.

Lady Danvers received them with a quiet manner which touched Smallcross, not expecting it, and affected its different members after various ways. Only it was agreed upon one point that, though it would have been very unpleasant to have to avoid a house like Oaklands in its daily life, it would have been still more unpleasant for Lady Danvers to have been so avoided.

There was only one person of all them who knew her, who read another meaning than meekness in that unexpected gentleness. Miss Owen, understanding the girl as no one else did, and learning by familiar intercourse to understand the man who was her husband, began to be afraid.

It was wonderful how much information Smallcross picked up in a week about Lady Danvers's previous history, when it had once made up its mind to look at it from more than one point of view.

It found out that Narcisse Laurent, whose mother was a French Canadian, was a distant connection of Miss Munro. That eccentric lady was still alive, living in a distant town of America, no one knowing of her existence but her lawyers in England, who, on pain of her displeasure and loss of business, were forbidden to mention her. She had hated Smallcross as a girl, and hated it still, connected as it was with a love story which had ended all astray. She had come across those distant connections of hers in America, and had been good in her way to the girl whose mother had died when she was a baby, and whose father, a gambler and a spendthrift, had little to do with her. In fact, the only home life Narcisse, who grew up in schools, had ever seen, were the occasional visits she paid to Miss Munro and Miss Metcalfe, an acquaintance of her father's. She had been on a visit to the latter, having just left school for good, when the terrible event took place. As it happened, she had left her suddenly the afternoon before the murder to go to Miss Munro, to ask help for her father who was in great difficulties at the time. It was nearly three days' journey, and when she arrived she found Miss Munro nearly out of her mind with the news of the murder. The discovery of the will, leaving all Miss Metcalfe's money to the girl, was the last stroke. She refused to believe in her kinsman's innocence. She almost accused the girl herself. She insisted upon her staying

there, declaring that she would only make matters worse by appearing at the trial, as she would only be another witness to his desperate straits at the time of the murder, and as her father also wished it, Narcisse stayed. As Miss Munro lived in strict seclusion, no one knew that she was any connection even of Peter Townsend's. When the trial was over, and Narcisse's father condemned, she made the girl change her name; and Narcisse, still refusing to believe in his guilt, took her mother's, saying that she at least would not have been ashamed of her bearing it. After his death in prison, Miss Munro sent her to Europe to a school in an out-of-the-way German town, as far from herself as she could, declaring that she would not be disgraced by having such connections near. After two years, with one of those sudden caprices which governed her mode of living, she sent for her to return to England, and gave instructions to the lawyers that they were to find her a companion and send her down to The Croft, the only reason to be given for her residence there being that the place had been left her.

But her pleasure when she heard that the girl whom she had really cared for, in spite of her apparent hardness, had done so brilliantly for herself, overcame all other feelings when the news of the marriage reached her, and the first thing she did was to settle The Croft upon her as a reward of her success.

Smallcross also found out, by dint of judicious inquiries and reasonings, that the part of Miss Freeling's story relating to Miss Laurent's enjoying the fortune of the dead woman was but a repetition of scandal which had been rife at the time. Miss Laurent had never touched the money. It was left in the hands of the executors, she refusing to have anything to do with it. Miss Munro's allowance was amply sufficient to keep up The Croft. All these details were wonderfully entertaining gossip for Smallcross, and it discussed them as it discussed anything that came into its midst, and when it had done with Lady Danvers's past it turned again to her present, and found still more to say thereon. For a great change had come over her. She and her husband went up to town for the end of that season, and even in that short time London went wild about her. Her beauty, her toilettes, her brilliance, carried everything before her. Before three years she became one of its

leaders of fashion. People schemed and struggled to get invitations to her house. Invitations poured on her.

"You are killing yourself," Miss Owen remonstrated with her one day, after two years of this life.

"I am not," she replied; "I am only eating the pomegranate seeds."

"I don't understand you."

"It is better for a woman when she does not understand such things," said Lady Danvers, with a little catch in her breath.

"It is that wretched husband of hers!" thought Miss Owen, more disturbed than ever. "It is he who is driving her to this. If it were not for her child she could not bear it."

But it was not the husband's selfish neglect and worse which had driven Lady Danvers into this vortex of excitement and amusement. It was as she said—she had eaten one pomegranate seed, why should she not eat the rest of their bitterness?

CHAPTER VIII.

"BY-THE-BYE, Narcisse, whom do you think I met in town yesterday? Linton. He has been knocking about all over the world since his mother died two years ago. I made him promise to come down here to-morrow."

There was a large party of guests at Oaklands, who had come down from town for the recess. As they all sat round the luncheon-table, chattering and laughing, they scarcely heard the careless remark made by their host to his wife. It scarcely seemed as if she heard it herself. She made no reply, and the next second one of the guests asked her some laughing question, and she turned and answered it. And she laughed too, but the sound seemed far off and strange in her own ears, and the next moment she even wondered why she had laughed.

When the luncheon party broke up, Lady Danvers, with a dim, dazed look in her eyes, went away to her room. She was scarcely conscious where she was going, she was scarcely conscious of anything. She had forgotten her guests, she had forgotten her husband. Her brain had only room for one thought. Cecil Linton was coming to-morrow! She could form no other thought—what she would do, what she would say. How would she meet him? He was coming—that was all!

With blinded eyes she went on.

Her feet stumbled as they struck against something on the floor. A child's broken

doll was lying in her path. Disfigured, and paintless, and armless—a poor dilapidated object, yet brought to this very dismal condition by the eager affection of the baby whose plaything it was. The child had dropped it in coming or going from her mother's room. Mechanically Narcisse stooped to see what had made her stumble. With a little inarticulate cry, she caught up the poor waif of dollhood, with its staring eyes and tangled flaxen hair, straining it to her heart in a shock of remorse, and fear, and pain, as if it had been some living, sacred thing. Was not it sacred for the baby arms which had nursed it and carried it? And her straying, careless feet would have trampled on it as they went blindly on in their despair.

"Oh! how wicked I have been!" she said as the tears rained thick and fast upon the broken plaything. "How wicked I am!"

Cecil Linton came down the next day. He arrived in the afternoon, when Lady Danvers and all her guests were assembled in the great hall for tea.

They had not once seen each other since the night when they had parted at the ball. They met quietly, almost like strangers. It was easier to meet like this before all these other people. Narcisse, with all those listeners round, could talk to him and ask him about his life, and laugh at his adventures as she would have done to any other man. Her social training stood her in good stead. And yet, as she caught every now and then, when he fancied she was not looking, a searching gaze, with something in it very like shocked wonder, she nearly faltered.

What was he seeing in her to study like that? The evening passed away, and the next day. And the day following he was to leave.

Narcisse counted the hours. The agony of them was almost insupportable. But the agony of fear mastered the pain of his presence—fear lest she should by look or word betray herself to him. None of her guests who heard her laugh and talk, and saw her the most brilliant of them all, guessed what torture she was going through. Linton neither sought her nor avoided her. He went his way with the other guests, and made himself popular and agreeable in the old rather lazy fashion. He had still the manner which made some people call him conceited, and perhaps this manner, with its complete coolness and self-contentment, helped Narcisse to fight

the battle against herself better than anything else. She no longer wondered why he had come down. He had long ago forgotten that folly for which she was paying so dear to-day. The morning of the day that he was to leave, he came into the morning-room where she was. For the first time since his arrival he found her alone, she having always surrounded herself by her guests, to avoid any such meeting. She was standing near the window looking out, with her walking things on. He sauntered up to it.

She did not look round till he was close to her, though she heard him coming. As she turned, the strong light fell on her face. He started, and again that almost shocked question came into his eyes.

With a little impatient movement she pulled forward the curtains to shade her face from the too-searching sunlight.

"What do you see in my face?" she said. "Wrinkles and crowsfeet already! I am not twenty-two yet."

He smiled slightly.

"Did I look as if I meant to ask such an indiscreet question?" he asked.

"You looked as if you thought I was a fright. Charles says I am. He told me yesterday that I had fallen off dreadfully. I think he was quite angry about it. He told me that if I did not get any colour I ought to rouge."

The young man looked at her keenly, but he still smiled.

"Are you going to?" he asked.

"No," she said shortly.

He looked out of the window for a second or two. Then he turned and glanced round the room. It had been his mother's favourite room, this low-ceiled, high-wainscoted apartment, with its view from the windows of sweep of lawn and clumps of stately trees. His father had brought her to the house a bride, just as for generations his forefathers had brought home here their brides. Now he stood there an alien, and—

He passed his hand over his moustache and stood for a second pulling it after a fashion he had.

Then he turned suddenly to Lady Danvers.

"I will tell you what I think of you," he said cheerfully; "you are the least curious woman I ever met."

"Am I?" she asked, laughing a little in her relief at his tone. For there had been something in his face, as he looked out of the window, that had made her afraid

again. In some way, though she could not define how, the expression recalled the one she had seen on his face as he came forward that night to take Mrs. Seton back to the ball-room.

"Yes," he said triumphantly; "you are proving it. You don't even ask why I think so."

"I will then now—to prove you wrong."

"Ah! but you don't care in the least for all that, do you? Do you mean to say that you never wondered in the least little bit what became of that card-case?"

She stared at him, then broke into a merry laugh.

"I know you found me out," he said, with melancholy remorse. "If it is any expiation I can tell you that I have never ceased to be haunted by the recollection of Miss Owen's energy and kindness that hot afternoon."

"If I remember, you gave yourself a great deal of trouble too. What did you do with it?"

"I buried it," he said. "Will you come out and look at its grave? I could take you straight to the spot. So much does remorse for an evil deed impress it on the memory."

She looked out at the garden, then up at him.

"I will go and visit its grave," she said brightly.

They stepped out of the French window and went down laughing and talking together to the copse. The birds were singing in the branches, sunshine and shadow chased each other like fairy feet across turf and moss. Daffodils made all the world look yellow.

They reached the spot where he had hidden the card-case.

"Do you see how the flowers have sprung out of its grave?" he said tragically, pointing to a great cluster of daffodils.

"A Basil plant," she said laughing.

"No. A beautiful possibility changed at its death into flowers," he thought. But all that he said aloud was: "Unfortunately for the sentiment of the thing, there were some flowers here before. I used them as its tombstone."

He began to dig with a piece of stick, while she stood by, wrapped up in her mantle, watching him.

But, alas, for the card-case!

After a careful search, all that could be found were a few mouldy shreds, which required a great deal of imagination to convert into the dainty thing he had buried.

He stood ruefully inspecting them as they dangled on the end of the stick.

"Would you please tell me what you did such a very foolish thing for?" she asked, gingerly touching the mouldy remains with her finger.

"It was foolish, was not it? But I was a fool, and I suppose a fool is known by his ways, and you would hardly believe it, but these ruins make me think of ghosts."

She drew back quickly. The hasty movement made him look up. The next second the stick was tossed away and the remains forgotten.

"What is the matter with you, Lady Danvers?" he asked in eager distress.

"There is something, I am sure. I saw it the moment I arrived. You are ill!"

"I am not ill," she said almost harshly.

"What is it, then?" A sudden remembrance of the character of the man she had married made him turn white to the lips. "If I thought you were unhappy," he said in savage passion, forgetting his self-control in the sight of the terrible delicacy of the beautiful face, for whose happiness he would have died, "I would——"

What would he do? His anger died away in a muttered exclamation as he acknowledged its impotence even to himself.

"No—you can do nothing. I have eaten the pomegranate seeds and there is no change for me for evermore. Do you remember warning me that night? It was too late then—everything came too late—even that paragraph in the paper. Oh! I know. It was you who had it put in for my sake. I found that out afterwards. Oh, why were you so good to me, when I was so weak and so wicked?"

The strain of the last two days told on her at last. The breaking down of his calm being the last touch her overstrung nerves could bear. She did not even know what her words were betraying.

They stood looking at each other over the bed of narcissus-flowers.

Perhaps she read in his eyes what she had betrayed, for she buried her face in her hands with a bitter crying. He looked at her as a man looks on the face of the dead. And there was that in his eyes which can only be there once in a man's lifetime, lest his heart should break outright.

"There is one thing I would like to say," he said at last, in a hoarse, strained voice. "It is not much; but it is due to you—and myself. I did not know this—or I would have died rather than have

come to Oaklands. I thought if there were pain—it would be only for me. I did have that paragraph put in the paper, and I came to see that it had made your life happier. Now there is nothing I can do to mend the mistake?"

"Yes," she said, looking up with eyes so full of tears and shame that he could not meet them; "you can do one thing. You can go away and never see my face again."

And so Cecil Linton turned away and left her standing alone among the narcissus-flowers. But he could never think of her again as Persephone. To him she was the Lady of Dis for evermore.

HEART OF FEATHER—HEART OF LEAD.

CHAPTER I.—HEART OF FEATHER.

"A PICNIC is of all weary forms of entertainment the weariest."

"Why come to it then?"

"Want of resolution to refuse, in the first instance; and in the second, a premonition that you would be here."

"But you didn't know me, Mr. Cuthbert."

"But my garrulously-given cousin, Mrs. Langham, has had that privilege for about a month I believe, and during that month I have been her constant guest, and you have been her constant theme."

"I'm very sorry that her mention of me should have led you into the error of coming here to-day as you don't like it."

"Pardon me, Miss Rashleigh, I like it extremely. I am surrounded by most of the comforts and many of the luxuries for which my readily-satisfied soul craves, namely, fresh air, lobster salad, sunshine, beautiful women, beautiful scenery, and—need I go on with my list, or are you satisfied with my reasons for my being happy though here?"

"Quite satisfied. I don't want to trouble you to utter another word."

"In fact I don't amuse you?"

"You do not; but why should you? If you amuse yourself, you fulfil the one great aim and object of man."

"Of the majority of men I grant. I am the amiable exception to the selfish rule; my chief aim and object, for so long as we both do picnic together, will be to amuse you. Do you think that anyone will attempt to interfere with my praiseworthy ambition?"

The words were frivolous enough; but the man who uttered them looked anxious, and the girl to whom they were addressed looked uneasy.

"There is no one to interfere between me and anybody—who should there be!" she was asking more earnestly than the circumstances seemed to warrant. But the ready answer that was rising to Cuthbert's lips was interrupted by a disturbed movement among those assembled rather nearer to the well-covered table-cloth than this pair, and by a general cry of "Mr. Dunstan," and a special exclamation from the hostess, Mrs. Langham, of

"So glad you're come, Mr. Dunstan. Daisy said there was no chance of your getting out to us."

The new comer was a short, thick-set man of about twenty-five or six. A man whose otherwise plain face was rendered interesting always, fascinating often, by its vigorous and refined intellectuality and brilliant animation. That he was a favourite, and of a certain importance in this circle, into which he had come abruptly and unexpectedly, was evident. Nevertheless, a disappointed, discontented expression flashed across his face as he turned from the greetings the others were offering him, and glanced in the direction of the little group of two whose conversation has just been recorded. Simultaneously with his glance in their direction, the man whom Daisy Rashleigh had addressed as Mr. Cuthbert was muttering:

"You are answered! You ask, 'Who is there to interfere between you and anybody,' and the voice of the assembled multitude replies, 'Mr. Dunstan.' See, he's coming to claim his own, and put me in my proper place somewhere out in the cold."

He spoke lightly, almost mockingly; but there was a look of pensive pain and chagrin in his eyes. A warmer tone of colour overspread Daisy's pretty face, a softer, sweeter light came into her golden hazel eyes, and her delicately-moulded lips parted tremulously in a manner that was perniciously gratifying to the vanity of the man who had called the emotion she betrayed into existence. But she raised her handsomely-poised little head defiantly, as she felt rather than saw Dunstan approaching them, and murmured softly:

"Supposing his claim is not acknowledged?"

"Don't tempt me to dispute it, Miss Rashleigh, unless you are prepared to

reward the attempt," he was murmuring eagerly when Mr. Dunstan's decided and rather authoritative tones interrupted him.

"I have obeyed you, you see, Daisy; and now, as I've lost more than half-a-day's work to please you, you must come and show me the chief objects of interest in this part of the forest. The tree that made the arrow glance aside that slew a King is somewhere about here, isn't it?"

He spoke smilingly and brightly; but even Cuthbert, who saw him for the first time, clearly discerned the bitterness which was beneath the bright, kindly surface.

"I've looked at the tree, and failed to find the arrow already this morning," Daisy answered carelessly and coolly, "so I think you must excuse me if I decline to tramp off in the sun to do it again."

"You forget that you will be in the shade all the time, if you—when you walk there with me," Mr. Dunstan said gently. And, as he spoke, he held his hand out to the girl to help her to rise from the fallen trunk of a tree on which she sat, with Cuthbert stretched at her feet.

"And you forget that it's not a very polite thing which you are asking me to do," she said pettishly, turning her eyes from him with a look of aversion that was not lost either upon him or upon the man at her feet. "Mr. Cuthbert, let me introduce you to him." Cuthbert rose, and the two men raised their hats with a rather aggressive air on each side. "Mr. Cuthbert has been ministering to my many wants all through luncheon; and now, just as I was going to try and repay his kindness by doing a little sketch of that glade for him, you want to swoop me off."

It was the first mention made of the sketch, but Cuthbert's heart throbbed gratefully at this stroke of her inventive genius.

"You told me you were coming here to-day to forget everything connected with your calling; and when I suggested that a few sketches of the New Forest trees would be of use to you, you said you 'wouldn't be so shabby as to lug a sketch-book to a picnic.' I quote your own words."

"I detest having my weak words of the morning dished up for my discomfiture in the afternoon. Mr. Cuthbert, you shall not carry away the impression that I'm a mere feather-headed person; and that is the impression you would have of me if I cast my resolution of making a sketch of that glade for you

to the winds. Mrs. Langham will go with you to look at Rufus's tree," she added, turning to Mr. Dunstan; "you're such a favourite of hers that I believe she would walk from one end of the forest to the other with you."

Mr. Dunstan's eyes sparkled hopefully. Was Daisy a little jealous, perhaps, of the woman with whom he was openly such a favourite? If such was the case it would account, in the most satisfactory way, for the unbecomingly pronounced way in which she was deporting herself with this long-legged, cynical-looking, unknown fellow. The possibility of its being so, softened a certain asperity which was beginning to creep into his manner, and threw him off his suspicious guard for a short time. But still he did not feel inclined to go and verify Daisy's statement as to Mrs. Langham's readiness to accompany him to Rufus's oak. While Cuthbert maintained his proximity to Daisy, Daisy's betrothed feared his fate too much to leave her.

Meanwhile some of those who had finished luncheon, the scenery, and the best bits of scandal of the day, began to find monotony prevailing, and so turned to the discussion of Daisy Rashleigh's imprudence.

This was a well-worn theme with the majority of her friends and acquaintances of the gentler sex. Popular as she was in the society in which she moved, there was an independence that sometimes savoured of recklessness about this girl of twenty that provided many a succulent tit-bit of doubting conjecture, many an appetising little dread of what would be the consequences of her imprudence, for the consumption of the friendly clique. In short, popular as she was, Daisy Rashleigh had the art of attracting more condemnatory attention from her relations and friends than is bestowed upon the majority of well-meaning or even of ill-meaning girls.

Twenty years ago there were not so many young lady artists in London as there are in this present year of grace. Daisy Rashleigh was among the first of those who owned a studio and a reputation all her own, and the pretty young pioneer had a period of glittering happiness, the mere memory of which helped her through many a sad-coloured year in the future. She had been engaged to Mr. Dunstan about six months, when she went to the picnic in the New Forest, and met a man who, with a few quickly-given looks, a few

abruptly-spoken words, shook the false god she had tried to worship on his pedestal, and made her long to be free to win and to be won by this Edward Cuthbert, of whom she had never heard two hours before.

The longing was upon her as she sat on the fallen trunk of the tree, midway between the two men who stood on either side of her. And, as her friends at a short distance marked the situation, some of the following remarks showed their keen appreciation of it.

"Daisy Rashleigh wants a word of friendly advice, why don't you give it to her, Mrs. Langham? She has been making herself ridiculously conspicuous with that Mr. Cuthbert all the day, and now Mr. Dunstan has come, and there's an awkwardness."

"Daisy Rashleigh is worlds too nice to throw herself away on a fellow like Dunstan, who knows how to deal with a dead language better than with a living girl."

"Pardon me," interposed Mrs. Langham. "I think, myself, that when a girl is engaged to a man of whom she may well be proud, she should behave herself as such."

"Why should Miss Rashleigh be proud of being engaged to that little man, Mrs. Langham?"

"How can you ask, my dear Miss Desmond? He has a European reputation, besides being one of the best men that ever lived. If I had a daughter old enough for him I should grudge him as a son-in-law to Mrs. Rashleigh," Mrs. Langham said warmly.

"It seems to me—I know very little of them, only what I have seen to-day, you know—that Mr. Cuthbert interests that pretty girl much more than the man with the European reputation will ever have the power to do. And I don't wonder at it," she continued decidedly.

"It's to be hoped that you won't get intimate enough with Daisy Rashleigh to implant any of those sentiments in her mind," Mr. Dunstan's firm ally and advocate, Mrs. Langham, said severely.

"Don't be afraid for her," the girl laughed. "I never do works of super-erogation; the sentiments are there, and of a flourishing growth already. See! she has held her own against his irritatingly clumsy importunities, and is staying there with Mr. Cuthbert, in spite of her affianced's ungainly efforts to assist her to rise from her seat. What is Mr. Dunstan, that he

is so curiously devoid of everything approaching manliness in manner and appearance?"

"A man whose fame will last as long as English literature itself," Mrs. Langham explained, and then someone else joined in with the laughing remark:

"I've heard that Dunstan pleases himself with the gentle fancy that Daisy has succumbed to his manly prowess and personal appearance irrespective of his literary attainments and reputation altogether. He told me the other day that Miss Rashleigh regarded the six-foot, stalwart type of Englishman with positive aversion? Looks like it just now, doesn't it?"

The others glanced in the direction of the discussed two as the last speaker finished, and saw that Mr. Dunstan was coming towards them rapidly with a jauntiness of step and manner that was belied by the mortified expression on his clear tell-tale face. With all the man's cleverness, and for all his sensitive vanity and self-consciousness, he did honestly and deeply love the girl who was now openly preferring another man to himself. He could not help loving her, any more than he could help seeing that she was lapsing from him. And so love and fear worked their worst in him, and made him act foolishly.

"I shall take Daisy home in about half an hour," he began with feigned hilarity to Mrs. Langham. "I have an appointment with two or three of the staff about five, and Mrs. Rashleigh will be distressed if I leave Daisy here by herself."

"She would be with us, she wouldn't be by herself," Mrs. Langham remonstrated, fearing, reasonably enough, that any ill-advised attempt on his part to exert authority over Daisy, might result in the girl's defying it at once.

He looked uneasily at the pair, who were by this time bending over the sketch at which Daisy was working with steady, skilful fingers; and as he looked his brow darkened.

"Daisy is too unguarded in her manner for it to be well for her to be thrown upon the companionship of miscellaneous men. She is too apt to treat all men as gentlemen."

"My cousin, Mr. Cuthbert, is one," Mrs. Langham interposed, blushing and angry in spite of herself.

"Your cousin, is he? Well, I have no doubt he is a most admirable young man, but still he is hardly the man I like to see

monopolising Daisy. Will you tell her that her mother wishes her to go back with me by the next train?"

"You had better leave her with me. Really you had better trust her!" Mrs. Langham whispered in earnest entreaty; but his jealousy and longing to show his power over the girl were all in arms, and Mrs. Langham's counsel was disregarded.

"I would leave her willingly, but I cannot disregard her mother's wishes," he said with an air of frank sincerity and indifference, that failed to deceive anyone, and that contrasted funnily with the sharp, quick, distrustful glances he gave surreptitiously to Daisy and her companion. At that moment Cuthbert was saying:

"Your name was the first my eyes lighted on when I opened the Royal Academy catalogue, and your picture was the one I made for the minute I got into the room. That was before I had ever heard you spoken of, remember. So we must regard it as a direct interposition of the finger of Fate."

"Did that same finger indicate me, as I stood a few yards off, hoping to hear someone say a good word for my first exhibit?"

"No; you couldn't have been there on the occasion. I should have recognised you as the artist at once, and should have introduced myself, and——" He paused, and she asked:

"And what then?"

"I should have gained all the weeks that have intervened between that first of May and this tenth of August, instead of having all my work before me."

"What is your work, Mr. Cuthbert?"

"A labour I shall delight in—still I don't think that it will physic the pain I shall feel if it fails to be rewarded."

"Is the labour legal or literary? Someone told me you were a barrister, who did nothing but write for magazines, and someone else said you were a magazinist who did nothing but suppress all impatience for briefs; which is true?"

"The labour to which I purpose devoting myself is of a more exciting nature than either law or literature."

"Can you tell me anything about it?"

"I shall probably tell you a good deal about it."

"Then it won't be a secret."

"Not from you."

"Is it—commercial—perhaps?" she suggested, half timidly looking up into the face that was half flushed with colour and quivering with emotion like a girl's.

"It's a venture on which I shall stake

all I prize most. If I win I shall be an awfully lucky fellow, and if I lose——" he checked himself, and she impulsively put her hand on his arm.

"And if you lose, what then? Do tell me."

"I shall be considerably worse off than I was when I saw you first this morning."

"Poor fellow!" she said softly; "though I don't know why I say, poor fellow! for you may be very well off already, only somehow I don't like to think of your failing in ever so small a thing. I should like you to succeed."

"If you wish me to succeed I shall."

"Then with all my heart I wish you success," she said heartily, putting the pencil into her left hand and giving him her right one fearlessly.

"Daisy, Daisy!" he murmured daringly, "I have heard that your memory is bad for the promises you give in thoughtless kindness; and I've heard something that's harder still—that you're engaged. Is it so?"

"Is which so? And why do you care?"

"Are you capricious, and are you engaged?"

"A little."

"Do you mean a little capricious or a little engaged?"

"A little of both. Here, take the sketch, it's vilely done, but it will help to remind you of the day you came to the resolution that you would really labour, and—of me."

"If it pleases you to think that I shall never forget you, that, let what will come, you'll be the sweetest memory of my life, take that assurance at once."

She threw her head up and looked at him, her eyes sparkled, and then softened dangerously, flatteringly, and her breath came quickly.

"And I feel that it's worth having lived only to hear you say that," she said desperately, and then she added, "to think that all this—this, which will alter my whole life, should have come about at a picnic, where we met as strangers an hour or two ago."

"How soon may I see you again?"

She shook her head despairingly, and he saw that Mr. Dunstan was advancing, accompanied by Mrs. Langham.

"Your mother has commissioned Mr. Dunstan to take you home by an earlier train than the one we have arranged to go by; so, as I dare not disregard her wishes, we must say good-bye to you, Daisy," Mrs. Langham began, and Mr. Dunstan added:

"If you had not insisted on my coming here to find you, you would have had a few more hours' liberty. As it is, I am afraid we shall have to drive fast, in order to catch the train."

"I am coming, as my mother wishes it," she said without raising her head, and going on, added a few touches to the sketch. Then at the bottom of it she rapidly scrawled her initials and address, and gave it to Cuthbert.

"Let us see your sketch, Daisy," the authorised lover asked uneasily.

But Cuthbert had put it in his pocket and turned away, and was now apparently oblivious of all things, save the lighting of a cigarette. Nevertheless, as Daisy passed him presently, when Mr. Dunstan was fussily hurrying her away, the girl heard him breathe the one word, "Tomorrow," and, as their eyes met, hers looked assent.

The recollection of that word, and of the way in which it had been breathed, supported Daisy considerably during the tedious run up by rail to town.

As the train shot out from the station, Daisy had turned her face to the window, in a way that implied that silence would claim her for its own if her inclinations were studied. The excitement which had possessed her during her brief intercourse with Cuthbert had given place to depression and vague disappointment. She had allowed herself to fancy; she had almost permitted herself to hope; that something definite would transpire before she parted with Cuthbert this day, which would enable her to easily free herself from Mr. Dunstan. What she fancied might be, and what she hoped would be, was not very clearly outlined in her ill-regulated mind. Only she felt sure that Cuthbert could help her to be honest, and true, and brave enough to declare her independence, and confess to the man to whom she was pledged that her contract with him was an unceasing source of mortification to her. She felt sure that Cuthbert could do this, she felt equally sure Cuthbert wanted to do it. But Time had been unkind, and had cut short opportunity.

So now she felt greatly disappointed, and, as is the case generally with girls of her mental calibre, as soon as she felt the sting of disappointment she collapsed and felt despairing. As she shrank away from Mr. Dunstan, and gazed out of the railway-carriage window, she seemed to have eyes in the back of her head for his

unimpressive presence; and the conviction that his presence would probably overshadow her for the remainder of her life seemed to afflict her with an actual physical pain. It had been pleasant enough to flirt with him; it had gratified her vanity to see that she had the power to lead him on to love her to the best of his ability. At first, even, it had thrilled her agreeably to have it known that the sensible superior man of letters was ready to make himself very silly about her. But these soothing sensations had soon vanished, and Daisy Rashleigh felt wretched, remorseful, and terribly wasted. Silence had reigned for an awkward long time between the affianced pair before Mr. Dunstan broke it. Then he spoke in a way that roused all that was rebellious in Daisy's nature.

"I wish that you would cease to make yourself ridiculous and conspicuous with every cad you meet in miscellaneous society."

She was too indignant to either parry this thrust or blunt the edge of it by receiving it on a shield of indifference. She fell into the error of retorting and trying to defend her action.

"Mr. Cuthbert is a barrister and a gentleman, and the miscellaneous society I met him in is a picnic got up by your friend, Mrs. Langham, who is his cousin. Besides, I didn't make myself either ridiculous or conspicuous with him."

"If your poor mother were more versed in the ways of the world than she is, I should request her to remonstrate with you," he went on, disregarding her disclaimer. "As it is I am compelled to take the unpleasant task upon myself, as I have no desire to see you fooled by that man Cuthbert, or laughed at by his friends, however ready you are to respond to idle and frivolous attentions from any man who offers them to pass away an idle hour, Daisy."

His tone was goadingly contemptuous in its affectation of tolerant superiority. Daisy hated him at that moment.

"You shall see whether his attentions are idle and frivolous, or not. If you find that they are, you may have the right to despise me," she said passionately. "As it is, till then keep your derogatory opinions about Mr. Cuthbert and me, and your remonstrances concerning my conduct with him, to yourself."

"I certainly shall not attempt to interfere with either again, until you have

arn't to distinguish mirage from reality, asel from gold," he said loftily.

And Daisy heaved an impatient sigh, and answered:

"So be it; only don't worry my mother out it. Let her think that we are—"

She hesitated in confusion, and he asked sarcastically:

"What are you good enough to wish her think about us?"

"Don't let her think we have quarrelled, at yet, till I've had time to—"

"Bring Mr. Cuthbert to the point of proposing to you, I suppose you mean. ah! he will amuse himself well enough without doing that. He's a mere shallow, common-place, male flirt, a poor specimen of a despicable genus! Forget him, Daisy, my darling; and forget that we have early quarrelled upon our different estimates of him."

The train was stopping as he spoke; here was confusion on the platform, and in Daisy's mind. Desperately did she read the doleful hours of affectionate rebuke and expostulation which would surely come when her mother should hear that she (Daisy) had lightly lost the staunch but unprepossessing lover, and lightly won the frivolous but too-fascinating stranger. She could have parted with Mr. Dunstan on the spot for all time without compunction, had not the thought of the way in which her mother would vex her soul over the scandal of a broken engagement, restrained her. As it was, she sought for a reprieve in a cowardly way by saying:

"As you like; only don't stay and say anything this evening."

And as he had a special engagement with some men of "light and leading," he acceded to her cowardly little prayer for delay.

But before Daisy slept that night, Mrs. Rashleigh's seldom dormant fears for her daughter's fidelity and loyalty to an avowed lover, were aroused and in arms. And this though Daisy gave no expression to her wish to be off with an old and on with a new love. But straws show the direction of the stream; and it was significant enough, dangerously symptomatic enough to the mother, when Daisy said, in answer to her (Mrs. Rashleigh's) enquiries about the guests and their dresses:

"I can't remember what they all wore, or who they all were. Mrs. Langham's

cousin and I spent all the afternoon together, talking and sketching."

"Is she a nice girl? Will you ask her here?" Mrs. Rashleigh asked, beaming with delight at her child having made a new congenial girl friend.

"The cousin is a man, mother, a Mr. Cuthbert, and I liked him well enough to feel glad when he said he would call to-morrow."

"Oh, Daisy, Daisy! another idle flirtation! What will Mr. Dunstan feel? Why trifle with the affection of so good, so faithful a heart as his?"

"Let this—this friendship, liking, whatever it is, for Mr. Cuthbert quite alone, dear mother," Daisy pleaded with burning cheeks and swimming eyes. "I have been very silly very often, I know that. I have been a fool about Mr. Dunstan—it makes me shudder now to think that I ever might have married him! But this—this will be different. This will be real and lasting if you'll only let it alone."

A few reproaches, a string of tremulous surmises as to what people would say, if Daisy persisted in her fickle course, a tear or two dropped at the prospect of being deprived of a son-in-law, who consistently treated her with suave attention, and Mrs. Rashleigh's efforts to stem the current of events came to an end. She agreed to let "this" alone, and Daisy told herself that if it remained as it was, even without progressing one step, she would still be infinitely happy and contented; so fair, sympathetic, and perfect a thing did her lately-born friendship seem in her eyes.

But it grew! That it should do so was inevitable, for they met frequently, and Daisy went into the most blissful bondage of her life—a satisfied, fearless, engrossing love for Mr. Cuthbert, who was radiantly and complacently happy that it should be so. It did not occur to either of them that it was necessary that their relations with one another should be altered. The selfishness of the man and the unselfishness of the girl, caused them both to gather their roses while they could, without fear of consequences, and without reproaches from onlookers, who were rather amused than otherwise to see Daisy Rashleigh entangling her own feet in the same net which she had frequently of old time cast about the feet of others. For of all the coterie, Daisy was the only member who was ignorant of the fact that Mr. Cuthbert was only her slave, her knight,

her lover for so long a time as he could play at being these things with impunity.

Poor Daisy, giving her gold for dross, little recked that Nemesis was near at hand during that bright, blue-skied summer in which she lived her brief romance. Mr. Dunstan had gone abroad, more disgusted with her lack of appreciation of himself than solicitous as to her welfare, and the momentous question of the autumn outing was the vexed one in the minds of the majority.

And still Cuthbert and Daisy were all in all, and—nothing! to each other.

CHAPTER II.—HEART OF LEAD.

THEY met one evening—how vividly she remembered it through many long years!—at a little hastily got up dance at Mrs. Langham's house. Daisy had the impression, as she entered rather late, that many of those whom she knew regarded her curiously, and that Maud Desmond, with whom she had grown very intimate since that picnic day, had a strange expression of kindly pity in her eyes. But all speculation as to the curiosity or kindly pity vanished, as she caught sight of Cuthbert standing in a far off corner, from whence he did not emerge instantly as usual to meet her. She was standing between the curtains that draped the archway that led into the back drawing-room, pausing to speak to some utterly immaterial person only to give him the opportunity of coming to meet her. But this evening, though she felt his eyes light upon her for an instant, there was none of that glad recognition in them which was wont to thrill her, and a curious sensation of coming evil weighted her heart, as she presently saw him claim another partner and slip off into the little crowd of waltzers.

Those about her saw her face whiten for a few moments to the lips. Then by a strong effort she recovered herself. Colour, spirit, and vivacity came back in a rush, and the next minute she flew past him in the arms of a man who established a claim on her gratitude for ever, by claiming her opportunely for a dance.

As she passed Cuthbert she heard his partner say to him:

"That's Miss Rashleigh, Ned, the artist you know; isn't she pretty?"

The remainder of the girl's speech and his answer was lost to her, but she had heard enough to gather that the slim, graceful young girl with whom he was dancing was

intimate with him, and that she, Daisy, was being tacitly disowned!

As the last bars of the waltz were played, Daisy felt her feet lagging, and her head growing light. In swinging round she had come into collision with Cuthbert, and the tone in which he said "I beg your pardon, Miss Rashleigh," showed her that he was not only going to say "good-bye, sweetheart," but intended saying it in the coldest manner. The conviction struck her with numbing force, and she felt that her lips were quivering with mingled pain and weakness. Had Mr. Dunstan ever felt the same when he found that she was ebbing away from him? she wondered.

Had she been faint? She did not know; but she found herself in a chair in a little side room, with Maud Desmond by her side, and Mrs. Langham proffering all sorts of remedies. Maud's hand pressed her shoulder firmly, and helped to restore her composure, while Mrs. Langham fussed about her, speculating loudly as to what could have upset her so suddenly. And presently the kindly pressure strengthened her into steadiness as Mrs. Langham went on with badly-concealed agitation:

"I hope you will feel better and able to come back into the room soon, dear Daisy. An attack of this kind is apt to throw a damper over a party, and I particularly want everything to go off brightly to-night, as it's the first time Ned Cuthbert's fiancée, Miss Wilton, has been at my house. That, that's right, make an effort, and your spirit and colour will quickly come back again."

The words must have been prophetic. Daisy's colour and spirits came back with suggestive speed as the stimulating sentence was uttered. Smarting under the lash of it she rose up elastically, and was back in the room almost before Maud Desmond could whisper:

"Mr. Dunstan has arrived unexpectedly; don't treat him as a 'harbour of refuge,' Daisy! You'll be better drifting about in the open sea in a rudderless boat for a time than anchored for life in safe waters where you'll be very weary."

The words were kindly meant, the warning was a wise one. But Daisy was not in the mood to appreciate either kindness or wisdom. Thrown over by the man she had come to love in unconsidered haste, she panted to show him and others that she was not forlorn though forsaken.

"Don't you know that I have been

engaged to Mr. Dunstan all this time, Maud? Have I deceived you all about him as completely as Mr. Cuthbert has taken us in about Miss Wilton?"

Then she gave both her hands and a lovely, flattering smile to Dunstan, who came to meet her eagerly, with a curious questioning look in his eyes, that was happily banished by her greeting and smile.

"She's a hardened, heartless, feather-headed flirt, nothing more and nothing less," Cuthbert muttered grumpily to his cousin a few days after this in the course of a confidential chat; "for weeks, for months I may say, she has led me to think that her engagement to Dunstan had died out, and that she would marry me as soon as I was in a position to marry her. I can tell you, Helen, I had got awfully fond of the girl, and, flirt as every one declared her to be, I could have sworn that she really meant it with me. We were never actually engaged, because she said, in the early stage of our acquaintance, that she would never marry a man who couldn't keep a carriage and horses for her. I shall be able to do that soon, and I thought I'd wait till I could tell her so, for I believed all the time that she was going straight with me."

"And thinking that, you went and engaged yourself to Miss Wilton? You have small cause enough to complain of Daisy's faithlessness."

"The instinct of self-preservation is strong within me. I have been playing second fiddle to that prig Dunstan all the time, I understand——"

"From whom, Ned?"

"From some of his own friends, from one or two fellows who were rather glad, I fancy, to be able to tell me that Dunstan and Daisy Rashleigh had a perfectly clear understanding as to how far she might go with me."

"She has gone too far for her own happiness, poor girl," Mrs. Langham said pityingly; "you oughtn't to hear it, because it will flatter your vanity, and because besides you are engaged to Louisa Wilton now; but I'll tell you because I would rather you thought Daisy a fool than a knave in this affair. She's not one of the fainting sort, as you know, but the indefinable something there is about newly-engaged people must have struck her with painful force about Louisa and you the other night. She lost her feet in the room.

and her senses before Maud Desmond and I could get her clear of it. I oughtn't to have told you, for you will marry Miss Wilton, and she is going to marry Mr. Dunstan, after all, so be a good fellow, Ned, and forget all I've told you."

The one person who was made entirely happy by Daisy's marriage, which took place very soon after this, was Mrs. Rashleigh. To her it was the realisation of her brightest dream of peace and safety for Daisy that she should be taken into the sanctuary of Mr. Dunstan's steady, unwavering heart and comfortable, commonplace home. That there was something pathetic in the girl's passive acceptance of the fate she had accepted in despair when defrauded of the lot that had been glorified by her imagination into the position of the only one in the world that was bright for her, was an element in the event that entirely escaped Mrs. Rashleigh's observation. As entirely indeed as did another fact connected with the affair, namely that Mr. Dunstan, though he never referred by word of mouth to that brief madness, that summer romance of Daisy's, treated her from the first as a pardoned person, a penitent who would have to be rigorously looked after, and treated with irritatingly watchful care.

That the system worked well after a time may be assumed from the fact that Daisy, as her old compeers continued to call her, strove and succeeded more unceasingly and better in her art than she had done during her unfettered, unmarried days. But in spite of all her efforts to avert them, there came many a period of pinching poverty, when the literary labour, which her husband rejoiced in doing, went unrewarded very often by aught but glory, and the children who brought balm to her heart and anxiety to her mind, interfered with the painting which brought grist to the mill. Still, though such intervals as these recurred frequently, Mrs. Dunstan grew into the outward semblance of a very happy woman.

People who knew her superficially said it was impossible that Daisy could be a happy woman, fettered as she was by those ever-recurring sordid considerations about household bills, and the difficulties attendant on getting the best instruction in various branches of art for the daughters who had inherited her artistic tastes. But the few who knew her better understood that the frivolous girl had merged in middle age

into a woman capable of subjugating every merely selfish and personal aim and pleasure to the pleasure and well-being of her children.

From time to time, as the years went on, she heard of the brilliant successes achieved at the bar by that old unacknowledged lover of hers, of whom it was currently said that all he touched turned to gold. And she was woman enough, and generous enough, and perhaps it may be added romantic enough, to feel a throb of exultation at every fresh triumph he gained.

For his part, he forgot her in the intervals between seeing her pictures on the walls of various exhibitions and her name in their catalogues. When he thought of her at all it was with half contemptuous pity for the frivolous blunder she had made in not playing her cards better when he had been so infatuated about her. But as he was entirely well satisfied with his own wife, there were no regrets mingled with his pity.

But when twenty years had passed since the evening he had taken his premature revenge on Daisy for a fickleness she had not been guilty of, it seemed to them both that the law of compensation worked not inefficiently in her case.

It was private view day at the Royal Academy, and Cuthbert, a Q. C. now, stood, the centre of a group of famous men and fair women, before a picture that was exciting a good deal of attention.

A little boldly designed and splendidly executed oil-painting representing a group round the bedside of a sick child, on whose state the doctor has just pronounced a hope-inspiring verdict. In the face of the mother bending over this boy, looking up with joyful gratitude as the glad words of promise are spoken, Cuthbert recognised the face of the girl who had come into his life for a time at that picnic in the New Forest twenty years before, and he was turning to the catalogue to find the artist's name, when someone said to him:

"Miss Daisy Dunstan bids fair to beat her mother on her own ground. Surely you remember Daisy Rashleigh, don't you, Cuthbert? That is the work of her eldest daughter."

Almost simultaneously someone else was saying to Mrs. Dunstan:

"Do you see that tall distinguished man over there before Daisy's picture? That's Cuthbert, the celebrated Queen's Counsel;

makes millions, I believe, and has the most charming house in town. It's a pity he has no children to inherit his fortune."

ONE DAY'S WORK.

CHAPTER I.

I HAD been a shy, shrinking child when I was first sent from home, and I had grown up a not less shy, unpopular girl. It was not that I was ill-natured, or mean, or spiteful. I never remember any such charge being brought against me; nobody could say that I had ever done an ill turn to anybody, or refused, if opportunity offered, to do a good one. I do not know that they, any of them, positively disliked me; but certainly there was no one who cared much about me. I made neither friends nor foes, and it was not that I did not choose to. I would have given anything for love; but I had not the way of winning it.

No doubt it was a gift wanting to me in the beginning, but circumstances had had their share in emphasising its absence. Had my mother lived until I was older, she, at least, might have learned to understand me; I say she might—I don't know that she would; I was not an attractive child even to her. She was so pretty and charming herself I must have been something of a puzzle and a disappointment to her, and then she had Godfrey—Godfrey, who was beautiful and a boy! It was not to be wondered at that, young and admired and in society as she was, she did not spend much time for studying the character of winning the confidence of the poor, plain little girl, whose very coming into the world had brought disappointment with it. But as she grew older, I might have come to be more to her, had she lived. She did not live; at eight-and-twenty she died, leaving my father with the two of us—I eight years old, Godfrey two years younger. My father, out of whose life all the brightness and beauty had gone with her, induced an aunt of his own, an austere elderly woman, to come and keep house for him and look after his children. In my case, it was decided within the year that the best place for me would be school, and to school I accordingly went.

My aunt Benedicta had come to the conclusion that I was slow and sulky. The latter I may have appeared; the former I do not think I was ever taken to be from the first at St. Ronan's. I was

happier and more at home in my work than in anything else, and if I awoke any personal animosity amongst my school-fellows it was because I outstripped them in it, and therefore to a certain extent in the favour of my teachers. They approved of me, if they did not become attached to me, and one of them, in her quiet way, as indemonstrative as my own, must have done this, though I only found it out when I was leaving.

She had such a hard, formal, cut-and-dried manner, and seemed to go through her work so exactly as though she had been wound up to it, that I had never suspected her of caring for me or anybody. So when, the day before I left, she came up to me in the midst of my packing, and put her arms round me and kissed me, telling me with tears in her eyes how much she should miss me, how much pleasure she had taken in my progress, and how I had never given her any trouble, only the greatest satisfaction, I was touched and surprised past the telling.

"God bless you, Violet Damer," she said. "You are a good girl, and deserve to be a happy woman. And oh! my dear, don't let people think you less good and less loveable than you are. Don't let them be afraid of seeing into your heart. One may distrust oneself too much. One finds out the mistakes one has made oneself all one's life long too late to profit by it, but one may point out the rock to others and try to prevent them from splitting upon it just the same. They say you are cold and proud, and don't care whether you are liked or not, but I know better, and life gets very lonely as the years go on, without a little love. And it is so much easier to win it whilst one is young!" the poor soul added pathetically.

She was right in what she said, and I felt it and knew it, but how was I to alter my nature? It was good advice, but it was of no use to me; indeed, I should have been better without it, for it only increased my self-consciousness. To please one must feel in oneself the power of pleasing.

My aunt remained at Fernacres about a year after my return from school, to initiate me into those domestic duties which, by her own wish, were henceforth to devolve upon me. The place was more pretentious than the establishment, which had been cut down considerably at my mother's death, and my father cannot have lived up to his income, which exceeded four thousand a year. He was a man of

quiet tastes and habits, fond of a country life and quite happy—so it appeared to me—amongst his books and papers, when he was not out and about the place. That there was more in my father than—to use a homely expression—ever came out, the influence he wielded on the Bench, and the way in which his neighbours were given to turning to him in an emergency, bore witness. He was a very just man, and had the highest standard of honour of any one I ever knew, with one solitary exception. If he was also very proud, his pride was free from arrogance or vulgarity, for he had the simplest manners and was retiring to a fault.

The quiet, happy life that we led for the first two years after my aunt left us, seems like a dream to me now. I was everything to my father, and he to me. We never said it to each other that I remember, until the time came for it to be over; we were not demonstrative people, but so it was. We grew to be necessary to each other.

It was not a particularly sociable neighbourhood, to begin with; and my father had not been at the trouble of keeping people up, so that the claims of society did not interfere with us much. It was the greatest possible relief to my father, when he found that I shrank from anything like the ordinary routine of county society as much as he did himself. My first ball had been quite enough for me. I had been shy and silent with my chaperon, and still more shy and silent with the unfortunate young men who had been brought up to me, and I had been conscious of dancing in a manner which would have set Madame Michaud's teeth upon edge, had she been there to see it. And it had not made matters better that my aunt Benedicta had distinctly disapproved of everything I wore. Nothing Lady Lorimer could say on our way to the Assembly Rooms could do away with the conviction that I was foredoomed to failure, and before the evening was over I could detect even in her suave manner a suspicion of impatience and disappointment.

"I am afraid you don't care for dancing," she remarked at the close of it. "My girls doat on it. To sit out and enjoy yourself, you must be a great flirt or a great talker—the men won't be bored with you otherwise, no matter how pretty you may be. They will be amused; that is the fact."

"Then I shall never be any good at balls."

I replied, with more alacrity than I had displayed throughout the evening, "for I shall never amuse them, it is not in me. I was the worst dancer at St. Ronan's, and I have not a notion of small-talk. I know nothing of politics, or plays, or fashionable people—how should I?"

My chaperon laughed and shrugged her shoulders, and Laura, sitting opposite us and apparently half asleep, lifted her long lashes, and regarded me with a sort of supercilious amusement.

"I don't think either politics or plays would be of much use to you," Lady Lorimer said. "There is a kind of freemasonry amongst young people, as a rule. You want to come amongst us more, and have companions of your own age. I must speak to Mr. Damer about it."

She did speak to Mr. Damer, and the result was a clear understanding between my father and myself upon this particular point. I was not required to go to any more balls, and I had carte blanche to choose my own friends, and have them at Fernacres as much as I liked, which was not much. I seemed to have no time for them; I rode with my father about the farm, or drove into Brentford shopping early in the day, and in the afternoon there was almost invariably something to be done, or studied, or seen to, together; and then after our tête-à-tête dinner, I used to play and sing with him by the hour together—for this was a thing I could do.

We had very little excitement. The one thing for which we looked forward from month to month was the arrival of the Indian mail, which never failed to bring us a letter from Godfrey, who had joined and gone out before my return from school. When I said I was everything to my father, I meant that it might be said to be so in our daily life. I was his friend and companion there, on the spot; Godfrey was the pride of his life. From the moment we heard that the regiment was ordered home, rather more than three years after it had quitted England, we thought and talked of nothing else.

It was late in the year—in November—and my father went to Southampton himself to meet his son. The journey from Fernacres was long and troublesome, and he arranged to break it in town, sleeping at Waterloo the night before the steamer was expected at the docks. It was the only sensible arrangement that could be made, though we neither of us liked—he

to leave me or I to be left—and what had seen him off from the station I drove round by the rectory, and induced one of the girls there to return with me for the night.

I had arranged and rearranged everything in Godfrey's room over and over again, and as far as I could had set out every thing about the house to the best advantage. It would be so delightful to be able to Godfrey exclaim that he had seen no place like his old home during his year's absence, and to make him feel that nowhere else in the world could he be so happy!

I heard the carriage going down the back drive as I put the finishing touches to my toilette. I did not give much thought as a rule, to my personal appearance, but I was glad that night that I was prettier than I had ever promised to be.

I remember stopping for a moment to look at my watch, and thinking that they had not allowed themselves quite as long as usual to get to the station, and congratulating myself upon the crispness and dryness of the roads. Twenty minutes I do it, and twenty to return, and say they get everything together—not quite an hour more for me to wait.

I filled up the time as best I could read or work I could not—until I heard the sound of wheels once again, and then I rushed out into the hall, to find that the old housekeeper had quietly, as a matter of course, without saying anything to me, assembled the servants together to welcome the home-coming of the young master.

As the carriage stopped before it the door was thrown open, and I stood upon the threshold, my arms outstretched to welcome.

In welcome of whom?

One person, and one only, had stepped out of the carriage, and was coming up the steps towards me. Coming up slowly and as it were reluctantly, not as Godfrey would have done, clearing them at a bound in the lightness and eagerness of his heart, not with the well-known gait of my dear father, for it was neither the one nor the other, but a stranger to me, a man upon whose face I had never looked before.

My arms fell to my side, and I fell back a step or two, with a cry of surprise and dismay. I remembered it afterwards as the first greeting Arthur Vandeleur received in the house to which he was to be made afterwards only too welcome! As I uttered it, I felt myself drawn gently back into the light and warmth of the hall.

first the strange voice that belonged to that strange face bade me not be alarmed.

"I am here in your father's stead, Miss Mer. He is quite well, and sent his love to you; but he was unavoidably prevented leaving London to-night, and he trusted me with a message for you, which he preferred sending by word of mouth to writing."

"But Godfrey!" I exclaimed. "Where Godfrey?"

He hesitated for a moment, then he said quietly and firmly:

"It was about your brother Mr. Damer which I am to see you; but my errand is to you. I cannot deliver your father's message here."

I had forgotten the servants standing round us, forgotten everything, in fact, the bewilderment of the moment; but now I led the way, with a sort of mechanical obedience, to the library. As he stood and faced me there in the full light, looking down into my eyes with a great pity in his own, I saw that he was in the prime of life, from five-and-thirty to forty—some ten years, I should suppose, my father's junior—and that he was singularly handsome.

"Tell me," I said, "for Heaven's sake, tell me! There must be something of the matter, or you would not put me off like this. It is not kind of you—my father never meant you to torture me like this!"

"Heaven forbid that I should torture you!" he said; "but I am a bad hand at breaking bad news, and it is bad news; but you will do your best to take it quietly. I know you will, for your father's sake. He had a great shock when he went on board this morning. Your brother was taken ill on the way home—within three days of our arrival—very seriously ill, and Mr. Damer found him in great danger—danger of his life," he added with slow emphasis.

"I know," I said in a hard voice, "I know what it is you are trying to tell me. Godfrey is gone, he will never come home to us any more; and you have come to take me to my father."

And so indeed it was. The poor lad had fallen a prey to dysentery, and his father had just been in time to look into the dear eyes once more, before the light of life was quenched in them for ever. It was thus that before I was two-and-twenty my dear father and I were, as it were, left alone in the world together.

CHAPTER II.

A GREAT change came over my father, after the death of his son. His whole being was shaken to its foundations, and a restlessness most foreign to his disposition took possession of him. He could no longer fix his thoughts and concentrate his attention as he had been in the habit of doing, and it was painful to see how much the effort to do so cost him. He to whom so little in the way of society or amusement had been necessary for so long, who had sufficed to himself in so many ways, seemed now in need of constant distraction to stave off a depression which threatened to paralyse all his energies.

I could only do my best to make the void in his life less grievous than it would have been without me. But there were so many ways in which I could not take Godfrey's place. For one thing, the estates were entailed. I had never given a thought to it—how should I?—nor had my father himself, during the lad's lifetime. I never suspected how strong was his pride of family, and how his heart was bound up in those old acres of ours, until he found himself confronted with the possibility of their passing away from his own flesh and blood.

"To think that when I am dead and gone there will be no one left in the old place but strangers, no home for my child to return to, if ever she finds the world without cold to her! No one to hand down the old name and the old traditions! You will say it is all vanity and vexation of spirit, but it chills me to the heart to think of it."

It was not to me, but to Major Vandeleur, the speech was made; but I overheard it, and it gave me the clue to the chief source of my father's refusal to be comforted.

"Yes, I know it is hard," was all Vandeleur said.

He was staying with us at the time, having come home from India invalided, in the same vessel with poor Godfrey, to whom he had shown the devotion of an elder brother in the last days of his life. The passion of gratitude in my father's heart may be easily imagined, and it was enhanced by the prompt and gracious acceptance of an invitation, which had been proffered with natural misgiving as to its reception. We did indeed feel that it was adding obligation to obligation to come to a house desolated like ours.

He was a charming guest and companion, and did much to cheer us up. My father delighted in him, and we both felt an interest in him, which surpassed mere curiosity. We should have liked to know far more than he cared to tell about himself and his belongings. He was not a rich man; about that, he made no sort of mystery, and he was alone in the world—far poorer than either of us, as he sometimes said, for we had each other, and he had nobody.

It was a dark day at Fernaces when he went away, and its master missed him in a manner which, had I been less uneasy, would have made me a little jealous. But people were beginning to talk about the way in which Mr. Damer's trouble was telling upon him, and I began to feel the responsibility that was laid upon me grow very heavy. He would not allow that he was ill, but he was losing flesh before my eyes, and he wandered about the place like a restless spirit. One of the persons who startled me by their comments upon his appearance, added to it a piece of practical advice:

"Why don't you induce him to shut the place up for a few months, and take you somewhere South—to the Riviera, for example?" said Lady Lorimer.

I did induce him to do as she suggested, and early in February we were comfortably established in one of the first hotels in Nica.

The beautiful climate, the complete change of life, the novelty and variety of everything around us, had the desired effect. My father, taken out of himself and roused to a certain animation, shook off in a great measure the depression which had fastened upon him. Little by little, he began to respond to such advances as were made to him, and made friends with some of the English colony, which had, even in those days, waxed considerable. Amongst them was a family of the name of Fraser, with whom lived, in the two-fold capacity of governess and companion, a certain Miss Dalrymple.

What can I say that will give any one, never having seen her, an approximate idea of the subtle, indefinable charm, that made Janet Dalrymple more attractive than many a beautiful woman? For she was not beautiful; though graceful she certainly was above most people. She could not otherwise have carried off her height so as to acquire an air of distinction from it, which she did. I don't know what there

was in the small, colourless face, with its aureole of reddish-auburn hair, its grey eyes and fair lashes, to challenge attention and not unfrequently admiration, unless it were a certain calmness of expression that characterised it. It was I think more in her voice, than in anything else about her, that the secret of her fascination lay. It was so soft and sweet, with a caressing tone in it, which seemed to take one into her heart and confidence at once. I admired her greatly, and admiration was not confined to me. My father, to whom there is no doubt the possibility of re-marrying and securing the estates in the direct line had suggested itself after the death of Godfrey, proposed to Miss Dalrymple, and was accepted by her, before we left Nica.

She received his addresses and conducted herself throughout with the greatest tact and delicacy. His wealth and the position to which it would be in his power to raise her seemed scarcely to affect her at all. That he should have loved her enough to single her out from amongst other women to share them, seemed to be the one thing she allowed herself to dwell upon. She told my father all about herself, which was not much. There had been a good home, and an ignorance as to ways and means, which was bliss whilst it lasted, as long as the Reverend Mr. Dalrymple lived. When he died, the slender provision that was left to his widow did no more than keep her from want, during the brief period for which she survived him, and then Janet and her sister had to shift for themselves. The latter had already been married two years when the Frasers first had the good fortune, as they deemed it, of meeting with Janet; and Mrs. Daintree and her husband were present at the wedding, which took place almost immediately upon our return to England.

The county was taken by surprise. People had thought it likely enough that my father would seek some such solution of the difficulty presented to him after a time; but they had not contemplated his making up his mind so quickly, nor, I think, were they altogether well pleased at his having gone so far in search of a wife. They greeted the new Mrs. Damer civilly enough; it would have been hard to snub her in any society, and, after all, she was an improvement upon me, if only in that she seemed less averse to society. She showed, indeed, a decided inclination for it, and her husband, disposed to indulge her in every way, put no obstacle in the way of her

entertaining and being entertained after a fashion long out of date at Fernacres. She appeared so perfectly happy and contented, that it was a pleasure to him only to feel that he had put her in the possession of so much enjoyment. But he could not shake off so completely the habits of a lifetime as to enter with any real zest into the more public part of her life. She and I went about a great deal without him; and though I would rather half my time have been with my father in his study, I comprehended that the time for all that was over for both of us. Janet made no pretence of caring for learning or lore of any sort; she had had too much teaching, she used to say laughing; but she never interfered with her husband's pursuit of it. Whatever he did was right, and it never occurred to him that, had she felt any real want of his companionship, she would have been more jealous of his books.

They had been man and wife little more than a year when my father's hopes were dashed by the birth of a daughter. His wife, too, was greatly disappointed, and nobody cared or troubled much about the baby but myself. To Janet, when once she was about again, it was more of a tie than a pleasure, and my father took little notice of it. To me it was a new nucleus of affection, and one I was in need of; for I had lost the first place in my father's heart, and I was slowly though surely becoming alienated from his wife.

One thing she had already done: she had made Fernacres as popular as it had been in my mother's lifetime. It was Mrs. Damer's pleasure to bring young people together; so she used to say with a pretty matronly air, and as the young people did not object, we generally had a house-full. I was amongst the objects of her solicitude in the beginning; but I was too impracticable for her, and she had given me up in despair, when, with Lady Lorimer's party from Claverton Manor, there chanced to come to one of our garden-parties a certain Gerald Guildford, barrister-at-law.

He was the life and soul of the entertainment that day, and of all the parties in the neighbourhood for many a day to come. Neither in his profession nor in anything else was he much in earnest in those days; he was overflowing with life and spirits, and as full of enjoyment as a child. Everybody laughed at him, and with him, and his handsome face was welcome wherever he went. Whether it was that my shyness and coldness

piqued him, and made him resolve to overcome it, or how it was, I know not; but whilst everybody else ran after him, with the perversity of human nature he ran after me.

But I would not have anything to say to him, and I told him so, until he set to work at his profession, and showed that there was something in him. If I were worth the working and waiting for, well and good. I let him speak to my father, because I would have no secret from him, but I would not call it myself, nor allow him to regard it, as an engagement binding upon either of us. I was very fond of him, but I had made up my mind that I must be more than very fond—that I must be proud of the man I married. So back went my lover to his chambers in town, to set his shoulder to the wheel in earnest, and I stayed on at home, happier in the prospect that lay before me than I would acknowledge even to myself.

CHAPTER III.

MAJOR VANDELEUR had not had occasion to return to India on the expiration of his sick leave, his regiment having been ordered home in the meantime; but my father had been married more than two years before his visit was repeated. He found a very different house to that which he had left, and he congratulated its master with great warmth upon the step he had taken. From the first his admiration of my stepmother was of the frankest description, and she on her side pronounced him delightful. He was at Fernacres more than a month, and went away more decidedly a friend of the family than ever. That was in the autumn, the third year after our return from Nice; in the following spring we heard with some surprise that he had carried out what we had thought would prove to be an idle threat of retiring from the service, and was coming for the benefit of sea air to Claverton, three miles from us.

"If it be sea air he wants, we can't give him that here," my father said when he read the letter; "but the house is open to him whenever he likes to come, and I shall write and tell him so."

"I don't think I would, if I were you," Janet said quickly. "You know best, of course; but there will be nobody else here just yet, and I should think it would be better if he were to come and go like anybody else in the neighbourhood."

"Just as you like, my dear. I thought he was too great a favourite to be in anybody's way, and Claverton always seems to me the end of the world; but no doubt you know what will be best for all of us," my father replied, with a surprise not untinged by annoyance. "If we don't ask him, the Lorimers will, ten to one, when they find him putting up at the Marina."

Janet made no answer. She looked pale and put out, and all that day she was unusually silent. I noticed it at the time, and wondered at it, but it was not until long after I understood the meaning of it, and gave her credit for at least one effort in the right direction.

The Major did not accept the Lorimer hospitality, if it was offered him; but he did come and go to Fernacres scarcely less constantly than a son of the house might have been expected to do. He was a good deal with my father, who was as fond of him as ever, and I, as well as my stepmother, saw enough of him to learn to take his frequent appearances as a matter of course. But I never thought of connecting them any more with Janet than with myself, until one evening I found her sitting in the boudoir from which he had issued only a few minutes previously, crying bitterly. What he had said to her so to move her, or indeed that it was anything that had been said, she would not acknowledge; but for the first time a feeling of distrust sprang up within me. I began to watch Janet—I do not mean in her comings and goings—but in her moods, and the watching did not make me happier. She was less sweet and even-tempered than she had been, and seemed to care less about anything. With the child she was strangely capricious, sometimes making so much of it, and after such a fashion as would have led one to suppose it neglected in her estimation by everybody else, sometimes and more frequently leaving it almost unnoticed for days together. Nor was she what she had been in her manner to my father—not that she was ever ungracious to anyone, much less to him; but the warmth seemed to have gone out of it, and I fancied he was aware of it, though he was possibly too proud to say anything.

In the meantime I was quite happy on my own account. Gerald's letters were full of belief in himself and devotion to me, and the course of true love seemed for once likely enough to run smooth. We had opportunities too of meeting, though Gerald's running down often to Claverton would not

have been compatible with the hard work I so inexorably demanded of him, and would, moreover, have given more publicity than I cared for to the relations between us. I always believed Major Vandeleur was in the secret, and so I suspect were a good many others, but I escaped little speeches and innuendoes as a pleasanter girl would not have done.

The summer came and went, and Major Vandeleur still stayed on at Claverton, only he had given up his rooms at the hotel and gone into lodgings. Things at Fernacres, if they got no worse, did not improve. Both master and mistress seemed out of spirits, and the little girl was not thriving. Early in the autumn she died, and nothing could have shown more plainly the gradual estrangement that had taken place between them than the way in which Janet, in whom the loss of the child had apparently awakened at last something like a motherly instinct, refused to be comforted by its father.

"You never cared for her," she cried passionately once—and there was enough truth in the shaft to send it home. She would have as little of my sympathy as of my father's, and it was by herself and at her own suggestion she went up to town in her first deep mourning, to stay with her sister. It was then—in her absence—I discovered with something like a shock—half disappointment, half surprise—how completely her husband's heart, in spite of the coldness of manner her own latterly had evoked, was bound up in her. What was it that seemed to prevent him from showing her half he felt for her when she came back? Was it that she seemed herself so chilled through, that the very touch of her lips froze the tender words upon his?

Major Vandeleur had been to and fro as usual during her absence; but he had begun to talk of going South for the winter, and I was glad of it.

Janet said little or nothing, and she had appeared to me of late to avoid the Major. The only one of the three of us who expressed any regret, when the time really came, was my father.

It was early in November when he took his departure, and about a fortnight later my father had occasion to go, on business connected with one of his farms thereabouts, to Cranford, a country town some twelve miles from us at Fernacres. He had spoken of the necessity of going some days previously; but it was not until the

before we were told he had arranged the Thursday, and I was struck by the stilled look in Janet's face when it was mentioned. As usual, when he went on any of these expeditions, he had breakfast early by himself, and I, though I was down in time to see him waited for my stepmother. She was in making her appearance, and when she did make it, she was in her walking dress and had her bonnet on. Which surprised and dismayed me most—the sight of the bonnet or the wan, worried expression of the face beneath it, I cannot say.

"What can be the matter?" I exclaimed. "Where are you going? You look like a ghost."

"So would you, I expect," she replied, "if you had slept as badly. But I have no time to think about myself. I have had a telegram from Kathleen. She is in a difficulty of some sort, and wants me to go up immediately."

"I am sorry," I said; "and just the very time when papa is not here to take you himself. I should be in your way, I suppose; perhaps you would rather Brennan went with you anyhow?"

"I am not going to take Brennan," she returned curtly. "I am quite capable of taking care of myself; and as to your coming, my dear Violet, although it is very good of you to suggest it, I do not imagine they could thank me for taking anybody to the house if they are in trouble."

"But you cannot travel alone after dusk, and you will scarcely get back before," I ventured to suggest.

"I shall certainly not come back after," she retorted with a cold little laugh. "Matters will scarcely be so bad but that they can give me a bed."

That matters had not been at their best lately at Mr. Daintree's I knew well enough, my father having come to the rescue, and that not for the first time since his marriage; the puzzling part of it to my mind, and that I could not express, was of what possible use Janet could be, if the trouble really were of this nature, without the assistance of her husband. The brougham had been ordered, however, and was at the door before we had finished breakfast. I noticed, as she stepped into it, that she had taken the precaution of providing herself with a valise large enough to contain a change of things, and asked her once again what we were to do about sending to meet her. We were to wait for a telegram, she said. So she drove away

by herself, and I went back with a strange feeling of sudden desolation into the deserted house.

The door of the study was open, and I went listlessly in, as to the first place that offered. The table was strewn with books; but the desk, at which my father wrote his letters and transacted his business generally, was, as usual, a model of neatness. His morning's correspondence had been disposed of, according to his invariable custom, even when, as on the present occasion, it involved his rising an hour or so earlier than usual, and anything the post had brought had already found its way either into its appropriate pigeon-hole or into the waste-paper basket. One letter, nevertheless, lay there awaiting him—a letter from his wife.

My first impulse was to wonder why she had not left her message, whether written or verbal, for me to deliver to him; my second to wonder still more at the bulk of it, for it was quite a thick letter.

And then, suddenly, a dreadful fear took hold of me. Her disturbed appearance—the vagueness of what she had told me—her refusal to be accompanied—all rushed back upon my mind, and seemed to point the same way. She had so wearied of us that she had left us—and yet no! She could not—it was wicked of me to think it of her even for a moment—she could not have done this thing by my father!

How could I dare to entertain the thought of it? Why, it would break his heart, it would kill him! And I had been base enough to suppose that she, his wife, could be guilty of it!

And yet the mere sight of the letter seemed to sicken me. I went out of the room, away from it, and upstairs. In the corridors leading to the bedrooms I felt my skirts carrying something along with them, and stooped to pick it up. It was a piece of pink paper, crumpled up into a ball. At no other moment should I have given it a second thought; under no other circumstances should I have done what I did.

To begin with, I should not have taken it, with that sudden flash of conviction, for what it was—to go on with, I should not have considered it any business of mine to enquire into its contents. But as it was, I smoothed the paper out, and read what was written upon it. It was the telegram Janet had received that morning. It ran thus:

"From Arthur, Charing Cross, to Mrs. Damer, Fernacres, Redford.—Just received. Meeting at terminus inexpedient. Come direct to hotel, and await me there."

As I stood there, like one petrified, I was startled back into life, as it were, by the voice of Janet's maid, close behind me.

"If you please, Miss Damer, you are not to be frightened, for there is not much the matter; but the master met with a slight accident at the station. He slipped and fell getting into the carriage, and as they were bringing him home they met the brougham with Mrs. Damer in it going to the train, and she sent me word by Dr. Walters to come and tell you at once."

I did not stop to ask the woman where her mistress was or how; my first, for the moment my only thought was for my father, whom they had already carried into the study, and laid upon his own sofa. My relief at hearing the little low laugh, which was ever with him the surest sign of pleasure, was almost too much for me, and I fell back before he had so much as seen that I was there, laughing half hysterically myself. He neither saw nor heeded me; for the time being he had eyes and ears for one person only—the woman who was kneeling at his side, with a face on which the smiles and tears seemed to be succeeding each other in true April fashion.

"I tell you it is nothing," he said. "It is nothing but a sprain, Walters says so—don't you, doctor? And it is worth all the pain to be made so much of on the strength of it," he added, with the happiest ring in his voice I had heard there for I knew not how long.

And then he remembered me.

"Where's Violet?" he said. "Has anybody told Violet?"

And as he spoke, Janet rose to her feet and made way for me. Her lips were quivering, and there was an indescribable blending of pain and pleasure in the expression of her whole face. In that of mine there was something that frightened her. I could see it in her change of countenance, and in her sudden shrinking away from me. I was a bad hand at disguise of any sort, and the passion of pity for my father and indignation against her that possessed me at that moment, I could have found no words strong enough to express.

What he had said about himself the doctor, who had accompanied him home, corroborated. There was really nothing the matter that rest and quiet would not

set to rights. Janet and I might make ourselves quite easy. What little there was to be done would not take ten minutes, and the sprain would require no greater skill in its after treatment than the old valet, who had been with my father ever since I could remember, would be able to bestow upon it.

So far so good, as far as the husband was concerned; but what of the wife!

What was I to do with Janet? What was it that had brought her back? If, as I suspected, she had simply yielded to the sheer terror of the moment, and the all but impossibility of leaving her husband under such circumstances, what guarantee was there of her permanent return to the duty she had been on the point of discarding? Who could say whether the tears, of which there had been so copious a shedding, were tears of genuine repentance, or merely the natural, involuntary outcome of mingled fear and excitement? One thing only was clear to my mind. At any cost and by what means soever, my father must be spared the sorrow and disgrace which had so nearly fallen upon him—spared so much as the knowledge of his narrow escape of them.

I cannot recall now the words in which I broke to her my knowledge of her plans. I know I showed her the telegram and the letter, which last I had possessed myself of whilst my father was yet lavishing his endearments upon the writer, and that I alternately coaxed and threatened, entreated and stormed, at her with a vehemence as surprising to myself when I come to look back upon it, as it must have been to her. I don't think it was needed; I don't think that anything I may have said to her made any difference; I think my father had done for himself what I could never have done for him, and that she loathed and despised her own weakness more than I could loathe or despise it in her; but I did not wait to listen to her, until I had had my own say out.

"You are quite sure," she said then, "quite sure that you know his heart, and that he does love me, does want me, though I have brought him nothing but disappointment? It is not only the family pride you are thinking of, and the family name? It was not for his old name nor his broad acres I married him," she cried passionately, "but for himself! And then to think that he had but the one object, the one hope, in marrying me! Oh, Violet, it was too much for any woman to bear!"

Arthur Vandeleur had played only too ilfully and unscrupulously the part to which his infatuation had committed him. His first and favourite amongst my father's friends, it had seemed so natural that he should be made the confidante of his real feelings; and Janet herself, morbidly sensitive on the score of the one thing wanting in her married life, had been all too ready to listen and believe. Would it not be better for everybody, her husband included, that she should, by her own act, set him at liberty from a yoke which had become burdensome to him?

How completely the man must have dominated her before he brought her for one moment to regard things in his light, and how miserable a life she must have been leading for long past—it was terrible to think! To this day I am at a loss to understand the precise nature of his influence over her; that he had a passion for her there is no doubt—a passion, of which he was as much the slave as she was his—but the mysterious power, by which she was drawn towards him, seemed to have in it far more of fear than of love. It was not that. She loved him, she was fascinated by him, and she knew so well herself how it was with her, that her one wild appeal to me now was to keep him away from her.

"I never want to see him again," she cried, "never, never! But what am I to do? There is nothing he may not do in his rage and disappointment when he finds I have failed him. Oh, Violet, Violet!" she burst forth sobbing, "I am the most miserable woman in the world, and I might have been so happy! I was so happy, in spite of it all, when I saw my fears had misled me, and that your father was not lost—not lost either to life or to me. I forgot everything else in the joy of that; but now, when I come to think——"

"It is of no use thinking," I said harshly—almost cruelly—for I could not forgive her for the weakness which had been so near wrecking my father's life. "What has to be done is to act. Major Vandeleur expected to keep you waiting for him. He must not mind waiting for you instead. There is still time to catch the next train, and there is a long enough delay at Swindon to send a telegram thence, which will ensure his expecting you by it. But there is no time to be lost."

For a moment she stood and stared at

me, with an expression I shall never forget, in the horror and incredulity gathering on her face. Then she spoke quite calmly.

"Never!" she said. "Not if I am driven to take all my sorrow and my shame to my husband's feet, and lay them there, for him to spurn them and me, if so be he cannot find it in his heart to forgive me—not if you drive me to that!"

"Janet," I said quietly; "you don't understand—you have not heard me out. It is not you whom Major Vandeleur will have the pleasure of receiving this afternoon, but me."

It was thus that I was led to take the step, which was fated to change the whole aspect of my life.

I saved Janet from the consequences of her folly, and my dear father from the knowledge of it, for my meeting with Arthur Vandeleur that day was the last that ever took place between him and any of us; but I paid very dearly for it.

We were standing—our interview over—on the steps of the Charing Cross Hotel, waiting for the cab which had just been hailed to convey me to the Great Western, when a hand was laid on my shoulder, and turning round I found myself face to face with my lover's nearest relative and guardian, Sir John Lorimer, his comely countenance wearing an aspect so unwonted, and his eyes searching my face after so strange a fashion, that I felt my heart sink within me as I met them.

"I find I have not been misinformed," he said, "though I was very unwilling to believe that the lady of whom Major Vandeleur was in charge was Violet Damer. But as it is so, he will, I trust, excuse me for claiming the privilege of an older man and an older friend, and taking you under my protection."

Vandeleur was quite equal to the occasion.

"My meeting with Miss Damer was purely accidental, Sir John," he said stiffly, "and she had just refused my escort. If, as I suppose, you are going home to-night, nothing could have happened more fortunately for her."

He raised his hat, and was about to move away, when the old gentleman, obedient to what appeared to be an irresistible impulse, called him back.

"I did not mean to say anything to you about it," he said. "It is no business of mine, but perhaps it may save future pain and trouble in other quarters, if I tell you at once that I dined last night at Mrs.

Bentinck's, and was made acquainted with your connection with that family."

The other gave a slight start.

"I am not aware that I ever denied it," he replied haughtily; "that I do not take either pride or pleasure enough in it to publish it, must, I should think, be self-evident to anyone."

Sir John looked at him hard.

"One word," he said. "I may be doing you an injustice. To me and mine you owed no particular confidence. Is or is not Mr. Damer aware of what was told me last night?"

"Well, really, Sir John," Vandeleur began with a short laugh.

"I see," the old man broke in quickly, as he stepped into the cab after me, "he is not. Good-day to you, sir."

I was shivering as I sat, foreseeing the explanation which would be required of me, and which I should be unable to give; but I plucked up courage to ask my companion what it was, the knowledge of which had been withheld from my father. He hesitated before he answered me; then he said briefly:

"I won't pay you the bad compliment of supposing that you can be affected one way or the other by the hearing of it; but your friend Vandeleur has been sailing under false colours from the beginning. There is a Mrs. Vandeleur—the poor thing went out of her mind ten years ago, and has been in an asylum ever since. One would have nothing to say against him on that account, Heaven knows—one could only pity him—but he had no right to deceive people as to his real position. And in your case——" He paused, and leaning suddenly forward, took both my hands in his and held them hard.

"My dear," he said, "I don't want to be hard on you. I have girls of my own, and I don't expect old heads on young shoulders. You have been very silly, very indiscreet, it is no good denying it. You were seen to come into the hotel, and as to what was told me just now about your having just met by accident, I would not take that fellow's word upon oath. I am not going to him for an explanation; but all the same, as Gerald's father, or as good as his father, for he has had no one else to look to since he left college, I have a right to one, and I must have it. I want to know what you were doing up in town by yourself to-day, and what chance—for chance it must have been—put you in the position in which I found you?"

It was impossible for me to tell him; to do so would have been to put not merely my father's wife but my father's honour at his mercy; and I was too proud to plead for my own happiness as I might have done, or as others, cleverer than I, might have done in my stead. And then, I was so mortally afraid of his telling my father how and with whom he had found me, at the very time when I was supposed to be making up to Mrs. Daintree for her sister's non-appearance!

"I am grieved to my heart," Sir John said at last, "that there should be any mystery where my old friend Damer's daughter is concerned—that is bad enough—but I am resolved there shall be none in the case of my boy's wife. If I am to hold my tongue as to what has taken place to-day, it is upon one condition only. You may put it how you like—upon any pretext you choose—but there must be an end to the engagement between you. Where there is nothing to be ashamed of, there can be no need of concealment."

Nobody who had read that cold, abrupt little letter, would have guessed what it cost me to write it. I had changed my mind. I had been mistaken in my own feelings. I had not, and never should have any wish to marry. Never mind what he wrote back to me. The words burned themselves into my brain, and made me feel as though in saving one life, as it were, I had sacrificed another; but as time went on, drawing my feet father and his wife nearer to one another and to me, bringing with it at last these so long and so earnestly looked for—in the face of all this, I say, I lived down the pain.

And God was good to me. For when, after ten years, Janet and I were left alone with the little heir of Fernacres, the first use she made of her liberty—if I may so speak of what was so true a widowhood—was to tell him whom it most concerned the true story of that strange day's work. Had he ever shown any disposition to console himself elsewhere, it would have been another thing; but as for me there had been but one man, so for him there had been but one woman in the world!

IN THE MAY TIME.

CHAPTER I.

"A WOMAN with a history——"

No, I am certainly not that; Aunt Mary may be.

But Aunt Mary's story is not the one I am going now to tell. Bits of it may crop up here and there; but most of it she has got locked away where we cannot get at it. My story is only of me, baby May, the youngest child of the town's greatest man!

There goes one of my slips. Now in my grave middle age I keep my tongue more quiet; but alack and alas! who shall ever drive out the old Adam! And my tongue was, to use the words of an old man-servant of ours, "just slung in the middle, and so went 'clack clack' at both ends!"

Naturally, I thought my father the greatest man in Westbury. He was Dr. Freeling of Westbury, a small midland town; but twenty years ago I did not know much of the world, and the doings and folks of our county filled my actual horizon.

I dare say in the beginning I was spoiled. When one is the youngest of eight, and when, above that youngest there has been an inroad made by Death, the spoiling and petting of "the baby" may be harmful, but must be natural.

I do not remember the spoiling, however. What I do remember was that I had a very good time of it generally, and "high jinks," as the boys and I called it, when those same boys were home for their holidays.

I could climb trees as well as they. I could fish and row as well as they. At cricket I was their match, for a girl is deft and quick of hand and eye and fleet of foot. Gradually, of course, time ended many of these delights; but I managed to fill their places with new ones.

I was nineteen. The boys were no longer boys. Hugh was at Aldershot, and Malcolm had just been made partner with my father. All the rest were married.

Hugh had a week's leave, and he and I were thoroughly enjoying ourselves.

Of course he was only a lieutenant as yet; but I specially remember one walk of ours. He had been telling me of his last love. Hugh's loves had been many, and I paid little real attention to this tale of his. I was in one of my wild fits, and my ears heard without my mind taking in one bit.

Hugh and I were up by the canal, which engineering of some fifty or more years back had carried along some upper ground. In fact, it rose so high above it, that our dear lazy river ran beneath it at one place, where, by engineering

skill that I never troubled my head about, the canal waters were carried by some dozen yards or so of aqueduct above the river waters. The point that struck this fact into my mind was the popular belief that, if ever this bridge should burst, Westbury would be swamped.

I was wild and fearless; but bits of superstition terrorised me, and vague horrors did the same. I never crossed that bit of canal-path where I could look down upon the reedy river, without shuddering nerves and hurrying feet.

It had been so on this May morning. Once again off the iron pathway and on terra firma, I turned round abruptly on Hugh and shouted to him to "hurry up."

Then I careered alone a bit forward, to where the lock-house stood, and still Hugh was loitering on the bridge. I again shouted, and then I heard him shout; but not to me, and he flourished his straw hat.

Naturally, I ran back to him.

"Go round," he called to me; "it's Jim Conolly. I'll meet you." He came a bit nearer, and I understood that he was going to swing himself over the railing and scramble down the bank to the river.

"Make him come round," I answered. "Who is he?"

"Have you been deaf? He is Nan Conolly's brother." He was gone, and was flying down the tangle of rose bushes and blackberry bushes and white May.

"Conolly, Conolly," I mused, as I walked on my way. "There are no Conollys here; what has he come for?"

I was recalled by Hugh calling to me. He and a young man were on the opposite bank, and the young man had a long branch of white May in his hand.

The next moment I was introduced, and by-and-by the stranger began talking about my name—"May."

"If you want to know the truth," I said bluntly, "I am nothing but prosaic Mary, only Maries abound in our family, and I was born on May-day, so I am to be known as May Freeling—at your service." Here I made him a curtsy.

An amused look sprang into his eyes, and immediately afterwards a grave look.

"I am glad you see the gravity of the situation," I cried. I had no reason for what I said; in actual truth the words had no meaning, beyond the notion that they might somehow fit the sudden gravity of his face.

Again another rapid change came, and

from distressed seriousness he plunged into merriment, and met me on my own ground.

"Yes," he laughed, "it would be a situation of intense gravity—'Miss May Freeling, aged 90,' on your tombstone."

"Dear! I don't mean that! It is more likely to be 'May half-a-dozen things,' long before ninety comes!"

"Fickle woman!" and he tossed his dark head with a mimicry of sarcasm, and waved his branch of white May.

Hugh was striding a few paces ahead. "We want Shaw here," he put in grimly; "clack clack at both ends."

"Mystery!—there is a tale—tell it to me."

As Conolly talked in this way, he kept time to his short sentences by plucking the white bunches of May-flowers, and gathered them together in one hand, making them into a snowy ball.

"Yes," I said, "it is the mystery of the family. Beware how you play with it."

"I feel I must make this mystery my own—my very own!" Again he made a show over the empty words.

Empty words! A meaning suddenly made them full to overflowing, and my face at once was scarlet.

"What rubbish you two are talking!" said prosaic Hugh, turning round again, and waiting until we stood there abreast.

Was it likely my spirits should be so snubbed? Not at all! I covered my momentary discomposure by tossing my head wilfully, and by frowning upon Hugh in a mock-tragic manner. "Do not interfere with Mr. Conolly's and my conversation," I said. "He has scented the mystery of Westbury, and declares he will have it for his own——"

"Stop, May."

"For his own," I repeated. "And I am going to give it him."

"You must go your own way."

"I generally do," was my answer. "'Clack, clack,' were the words of the mystery."

"Yes!" Conolly's attention seemed gone from my story to the bunch of flowers he was trying to tie together with a bit of grass.

"Well, translate them, and you will find they mean 'swish, swish.' That, explained, will be found to mean the sound our ghost makes."

Conolly's eyes were laughing. "A real ghost?"

"Certainly. We'll go in at the back

gate and up the laurel walk, so I'll show you the hunting-grounds of our ghost, only—don't try to see her!"

"A she? Why not see her?"

"Because," and I screwed my mouth into a show of sad pensiveness, "I should be grieved to think I had spoiled your life!"

"You could not; you could only——"

"She's talking the most outrageous nonsense," Hugh began.

"Now, please be quiet. I am giving the legend exactly. The ghost, a departed Freeling of Charles's time, only comes to foretell evil to the people who see her. I wouldn't see her myself for the world!" Here an attack of superstitious fear came upon me, and by some strange bent of my nature I actually trembled and felt cold. I clasped my hands together quickly.

"We'll change the subject," Conolly said quickly. "Have I not made a lovely snowball?"

"Yes."

"It is for you. Will you not have it?"

"Oh! no, no!" I shuddered and drew away.

Conolly looked at Hugh and then at me.

Again the hot colour surged over my face. "Don't you know," I cried, "that if you give May you give bad luck? And if you carry it into a house you carry evil fortune into that house, don't you know?"

"Then here goes!" and he lifted his arm to fling the thing into the water.

Again a new humour seized me, and I felt I could not so hurt a man who was simply showing me a kindness. "Let me smell it," I said, "first."

"No." How firmly he said it!

"I will! You are angry with me!" and with a spring I caught his uplifted hand, and had the white snowy ball of May under my nose. What next freak would take me? Apparently no freak at all, for I quietly gave the thing back into his hands.

"Now you have given me bad luck!" He shook his head and laughed. "Never mind, we'll throw it away; we'll command good luck."

CHAPTER II.

THE week of Hugh's leave was also a week of Mr. Conolly's visit. To put a large amount of domestic history into a small space it must be told that Hugh had made acquaintance with the Conollys in London, and that he had entirely lost his heart to

Nan Conolly. Hugh meant business this time, as we found out, and he meant that Conollys and Freelings should become friends.

It was the last day of his leave.

For some reason of my own I had taken myself off to the apple-orchard, rosy now with lovely blossom. I was standing under a tree that was literally a mass of pink flowers; a few yards from me was Silas Shaw, our old gardener, inspecting his various charges. I had not spoken to him yet, for my own affairs filled my mind, and I was simply acting out a wild piece of coquetry. Yes, it was as bad as that.

The week had been a week of marvels; but now the end was come all the marvels seemed quite natural things. Malcolm said that I "had been going it rather too strong!" And the words were applied to the manner in which I had treated Hugh's friend, Mr. Conolly.

He amused himself with me, why should I not amuse myself with him?

But, alack! alack! I was feeling horrid now to think that he was going away.

Now, putting various things together, and feeling really a sorrow in my heart, would such a wild girl as I look meek before him, and show a man that she—she—cared for him? That she wanted him by her side? That she would, the moment he had gone, fly up to her room and weep her first tears of real woe? Not I, indeed! May Freeling would never show any man any such weakness.

To be wild was the best antidote for any weevil feelings down in the depths of my heart; so presently, having faced my difficulty prosaically, I marched from under the shadow of my rosy tree, and made for Silas Shaw.

If I did not seek somebody, somebody would seek me, I knew. So I stayed out of doors.

I chatted with Silas, and at last I heard Hugh's voice calling: "May! May! Where are you?"

"Here she be, Muster Hugh!" Silas lifted his voice.

"Be quiet!" I commanded. "If they want me they can come for me."

"They!" the old man repeated, and actually winked.

"Is't another weddin', missie, eh? Weddin's be rare good days."

"One of your grandchildren going to be married? Is that it?" I pulled down a rosy bough, and, plucking off a cluster of bloom, stuck it in my belt.

"Law, Miss May! Five good codlins gone there. Now, don't do it, dearie!" He looked almost tearfully at my bunch of pink flowers. "Eh, I think it'll be a weddin'."

"Do you?" I laughed. "I don't. Yes, I do."

"Contrairy, Miss May? He's a smart young chap, doant'ee be that?"

"Nonsense! I'm talking of Hugh's wedding. Has Hugh told you nothing?"

"Muster Hugh 'ave said what he 'ave said. It's Muster Hugh's friend as I'm thinking of now—don't anger him, missie."

"As if I could!" I cried scornfully. "As if I should care even if I could! What is he to me?"

"Law, missie!"

"Just that!" was my empty boast, and I blew a leaf from between my fingers. "Ah, there he is, and we'll have a good-bye all together!" I must have been mad, for I know I made a sort of dance as I ran from Silas to Mr. Conolly.

What was the matter? I could not explain his look.

(I know now that he had not come out with Hugh, but had really been within hearing of my idiotic parade of nonsense.)

"You look quite melancholy," I cried. Some feeling made me twist my fingers together, and lift my head gaily, and cry out these foolish words in hot haste.

"I confess I am not glad to go." He was throwing off that strange look.

Then I thought: "Oh, he cares nothing at all; he is quickly pushing off his interesting melancholy. I should be ridiculous if I looked grave over him."

The thought flashed through me, and my retort was the gayest of the gay: "How flattering! But we are so accustomed to hear the same thing. All our visitors weep on the door-step."

"Do they? I could not do that. Do you weep over them?" He talked gaily, but his eyes had a strange look in them.

"Oh, yes! We treat them all alike."

"Do you mean what you say, or are you playing?"

"Playing!" And I put wonder in my face.

There was a moment's silence.

All at once I saw my mistake. But could I go back? Could I confess? Could I sue to an undeclared lover for love? Say that there was one visitor who could make me forget all other visitors?

Some change passed over James Conolly. He spoke differently. He came forward

to Silas, and I think he talked now as much to Silas as to me.

"Were you in the laurel path just now?" This was to me. "I turned down there and followed some one who I thought was you."

"Eh, sir——" Silas began.

"Is your ghost a morning or an evening ghost?" Conolly was coolly careless. Then he turned back to me: "Were you playing me a farewell trick?—playing the ghost for—my misery?"

"I hate practical jokes!" was my answer. "No, I have been here since breakfast."

Had he really seen the ghost?

In a quarter of an hour after this Hugh and Conolly drove off, and I—I was in my own room, and crying my eyes out.

Woe would surely come to James Conolly through me. I should have stayed with him and Hugh after breakfast, and then we should have strolled out to the orchard together, and—and—things would have turned out differently.

CHAPTER III.

AFTER that, perhaps, I changed a little and became less wild. Anyhow, I fell for a few weeks into some foolish ailing condition, that was quite foreign to my robust nature. Aunt Mary, as usual, had the nursing of me, and I know I thought her hard-hearted over me—she ordered me, and she actually lectured me; then one day I saw what she had in her mind.

She thought I was pining for James Conolly.

Horrid! and my spirit flashed out in rebellion. I got well by sheer force of shame from that day.

She had said to me: "There are two to be thought of, May, dear; and men naturally repress certain feelings. If a girl wounds these feelings by her frivolity the man will suffer, but he will not show that he suffers."

I had taken up my wild manner as my best armour, and here cried: "You put it so clearly, Aunt Mary! You must give me chapter and verse!"

Then I was surprised. She did give me chapter and verse. In plain English she told me how in her youth she had been as wild as I, and that she had had a lover, but had trifled with him just one degree too long. She had been left alone, she had had to bear a great sorrow; he had gone away silent, and she knew that

till the end of time he would be silent to her. Through her he had grown bitter against women; through her he had plunged into a wild, reckless life; but—here Aunt Mary's grave face lightened—he had a nobility within him, and he had won strength at last to conquer vice and sin. Two years ago, only two years ago, when he had grown to be an old man, he had married—married the widow of the friend by whose help he had been saved from himself.

At the moment her face held me quiet; but in reality I rather scouted the prosaic dulness of her story's ending.

Such was not likely to be the fate of my love. No! Surely I could bring James Conolly back to me when I chose?

Only I must meet him.

And the summer came and went before I did meet him.

November came, and on the twenty-fifth Hugh was married to Nan Conolly.

Being Hugh's only single sister I had to act as bridesmaid; and it was James Conolly who was told off as my escort.

We were always in a crowd. In a London drawing-room who can find nooks such as one has in abundance in the country? Once I saw a chance for a quiet word, and—my tongue was tied.

After that moment it came that the bride and bridegroom drove off amid showers of rice and of satin shoes, and as the carriage rolled away I heard these words:

"After this great scene I might as well get over my small one."

Every one was turning inwards to the warm rooms, for, though the exigencies of a wedding are many, not one of them can make the air of a raw November day genial.

Conolly turned like the rest, and I turned with him.

"Are we, each of us, supposed to get up a scene because those two do?" I asked gaily.

"I think not," was the apparently careless answer. "My scene is not only small, but prosaic in the extreme. I am, you know, under orders to join at Portsmouth to-night."

"I don't know," was my involuntary cry. "Join? What do you mean?"

"There! was I not right in saying my scene would be prosaic? You have not even heard my news. Would a man going to his work be anything but prosaic when set in comparison with wedding sights and scenes?"

"And where may you be going to work?" I cried.

"In India. I have exchanged."

My heart fell.

"No, no; you have not! You are in the same regiment as Hugh."

"I was."

"Then I must speak. Why have you done that?" I cried. "Have—has any one behaved badly? Has there been some mistake? Has any one said just the very thing they ought to have left unsaid?"

This was a strange jumble, but I had no time to consider.

"Oh, no," and Conolly straightened himself proudly. "We all say and do ridiculous things now and again; and if by chance one stumbles on an unpleasant truth, it is none the less a truth."

He was so proud and cool that I could say no more. In hot shame I felt the fiery colour burn my face, but I managed to turn away, and when I turned back and faced him I was cool too.

"It must be the Westbury ghost," he went on, "that has upset the whilom order of my going. I think it was on the very day of my seeing her that I first decided to exchange for Indian service. I want money—one gets better pay out in India."

"Is that your reason?"

"Is it not a good one? There is my old mother, she will tell you the same!" And then over whatever had been expressed on his face before, I saw that a genial brightness took its place, and for his mother he would be her brave soldier.

Dear old lady! She was brave too. She said "Good-bye" to him after he had shaken hands all round; but, before his cab could have carried him out of the square where the Conollys lived, she was back amongst us, and only showed us the remains of some tears.

I shut up the book of my youth that day.

CHAPTER IV.

SUMMERS and winters came and went, and nephews and nieces were born, and on the whole the Freelings were a family who might fairly be considered prosperous.

The dear old father was, as I always said, the first man of Westbury; mother was gently becoming more fond of her easy-chair; Aunt Mary, perhaps in consequence, became a little more the useful aunt; and for me, I was the unmarried

daughter of the house, and I meant to remain so.

I, of course, had dropped my childish wildness, and I faced life. To be fearless and to have a kind of boyish bravery had been my nature, and happily that part of my nature stuck to me. I saw what I had done, and I saw also that my mad utterances on the day of Hugh's marriage had been the maddest folly of my life.

So I went through the time with the growing gravity of years, but not love-lorn. No; certainly I would never let the Westbury world say that of May Freeling.

I do not know what my charms were; surely I gave no heed to them, and whatever they were, they were natural ones. Something, however, must have kept me pleasant enough in the eyes of my world, for I still had lovers who would be alaves.

I sent them all away. Yes, sent them all away as soon as they showed the least tendency to pronounced love-making.

In course of time I was twenty-six—an old girl. So I considered myself.

Again May-day had come round, and the lovely white flowery drift swept the hedgerows. Again, too, I had strolled down to the river banks, this time with Ruth, Malcolm's little girl, so that we might carry home a bunch of golden marsh-marigolds. What a sweet, white angel the child looked in her snowy coat and hat, having her baby-arms full of the golden river beauties!

My birthdays have strangely been, more than once, the days of my fate. Before that May-day was over, a letter had come to me, out of which there grew how many events of the future! Nay, two letters came to the house, which in this case, made an important difference to the turn of affairs. My own letter I could have answered decisively, and no soul in the house be the wiser—was it not only another lover's effusion? But my father had one from Sir William Hibbert (the lover) at the same time, consequently the family had a say against my own private decision. Sir William was a man nearer fifty years of age than forty, he was the greatest landowner near our county town, he was a good man. That is enough.

They made me miserable.

I knew what I knew, but the reasons that I spoke did not satisfy any of my family.

They wearied me, and I grew in the next following weeks quite old! Aunt Mary's experience was as nothing in com-

parison to mine—I told her so. They had left her alone.

"Child," she said gravely, "it is not well for a woman to be alone. I think I could have been a good wife to a good man—perhaps romance fades."

One day my father made what he called his "last stroke for Sir William," I simply walked away from him and from his study in lofty dignity.

I went up to my room. This was no matter for tears, tears belonged to the olden time; but now my spirit was rampant, and I said simply to myself, "I do not care—they may as well cease talking. I will never marry to please them."

I walked to the window-seat, and, leaning sideways, spread my arms on the window-ledge and gazed idly over the old garden. There swept the laurel walk away from opposite the drawing-room to the lane which made a short cut to the meadows; right under me were the terrace, on to which the drawing-room opened, the side rockery with its great plumes of fern, the gray old steps and the two bulky stone vases. Silas Shaw was leisurely cleaning these out and preparing them for their adornment of scarlet geraniums.

My mind got over its anger, being, you see, so firmly settled, and I easily took an interest in watching the old man.

Presently I saw him take a newspaper from off the garden seat and read. Next, I saw him screw up his mouth and heard him whistle. Next he looked around and down and up. Then he whistled again and put the paper into his pocket.

Cool! It was our paper, not his!

I was a heedless girl again for a moment, and I called to him from my window.

"Silas!"

No answer, but the old man had suddenly cocked up one ear involuntarily—he was not as deaf as he seemed.

Twice more shouting "Silas!" brought him to look up again.

"Eh! missie—were't you a shoutin'?"

"It was—is that 'The Times'?"

"Where, missie?"

"Sticking out of your pocket. Throw it up to me. I'll catch it."

"Eh, no, I'll bring it round when I've done this here vase."

Opposition always had roused answering opposition in me, and I ran downstairs and was by Silas's side in a trice. Why should he withhold that paper from me?

Presently I read down the "Births." Next the "Marriages"—ah!

"On April 3rd, at Bangalore, Ind., James Conolly to Ethel Stewart."

"Affectedly short." I really cried the words aloud.

Then the sound of my own voice struck me as strange, and I fumed with fits of jealousy. The next moment I was cold as ice. A great bitterness, and scorn, and rebellion, and haughty pride, all mingled together and made me act.

I never can quite remember the sort of scene I made of it—very likely I made a scene at all, but was simply cold and supremely dignified in my manner.

Anyhow, the act I achieved was to go down to my father's study and to signify my intention of accepting Sir William Hibbert.

In a month from that day I was Lady Hibbert, and I am sure no one had the vestige of an idea that I was not a serenely satisfied bride.

CHAPTER V.

WAS I satisfied?

Well—we will let that question wait a few years for its answer. Also we will let my brilliant bridal life slip into the past, the past that looks filmy and calm when ten years have aged it.

For the last three years Sir William and I, and Dorothy—Dorothy was our one little girl—had all been frequent travellers. For that time one and another attack of illness had made it necessary that Sir William should spend the winter in warmer air than could be found at "The Knoll." We began by going to Cornwall and then to Devonshire, the third winter found us in Nice, foreigners in a foreign land and yet having such tribes of English about us to make us almost wonder whether at times we were out of England or in it. Stay, the sun said "no" to this fancy of mine, and Dorothy—nine-year-old Dorothy, was talking French like a little French girl—another very decided "no."

My husband was so much better, who could regret coming away from home? Nay, I was blessing every day the kind fates in the shape of remorseless doctors, who had forced us away from our land of fogs and mists.

All the world, however, was talking of going home—when Carnival comes one does talk so of "going home," because then I suppose there is a feeling that March will soon have blown himself away and boxes may be packed.

We had been out all three together; then

r William had gone back to the hotel—
 e were almost forgetting he was an in-
 lid—because Dorothy had a secret pur-
 chase to make. It was her father's birth-
 day, and with her own money she had
 made up her mind to buy him some "real
 English lilies." Of course every shop was
 out, for was not all the world promenad-
 ing, or racing, or chatting with friends out
 in the grand sunshine? Music was blaring
 forth from brass bands innumerable; chat-
 tering, and laughing, and shouting went
 on till the streets were a perfect Babel.

Dorothy would not go back empty-
 handed. No; she knew where the flower-
 sellers would be, or rather might be, and
 of course I let the child have her way.

She had run in under a low passage
 way, where a girl had flowers piled up for
 sale, and amongst them a big bowl of
 lilies-of-the-valley. As happy children do,
 Dorothy had told me "not to listen, and
 not to look," so I had obeyed, and with
 my back to her stood looking outward,
 thoroughly amused. Suddenly I saw a face
 —James Conolly's face!

If it were he, he did not recognise me;
 but, fool that I was, I made a quick,
 sharp cry. Alack! for my impulsiveness.

I could no more have helped doing this
 than I, standing there, could have stopped
 the life-blood coursing through my veins.
 The next instant our hands were locked
 together.

I think he talked; I do not know.

I did not. I was gazing—duty, honour,
 faith—all were lost in the old love! Then,
 suddenly, I seemed to hear these words:

"May Freeling! and yet not May Free-
 ling!" Conolly spoke them as with a gasp
 and in a whisper.

The words recalled me to myself.

"No," I said, and I drew away my hand
 and fell into a proud stillness. "No—why
 should I remain May Freeling? We have
 oddly matched our lives—we each married
 in the same year."

"Married!—I? I never married!"

"Does 'The Times' condescend to a hoax
 of that sort?" My head rose in pride—
 happily it could do so, for sudden fear had
 stricken me.

"It would be a sorry joke." Conolly's
 face grew stern.

I read it: "James Conolly to Ethel
 Stewart." My lips and my throat were
 dry.

"At Bangalore?"—he tossed his head
 with a fiery, helpless gesture. "I was miles
 away among the Afghans when that mar-

riage took place—that James Conolly and
 I haunted each other for years."

"What?"—my gasp was scarcely a
 word.

"I got his letters, and he got mine—
 bah!" he turned on his heel. The in-
 stant after he had wheeled round and
 was facing me again with eyes that spoke
 what mine should never have dared to
 read. "Do you mean, May—do you
 mean that if—if you had not seen that
 you would have waited?" Again he caught
 my hand.

I could not speak. And before my tongue
 would move Dorothy came running out
 crying, "Look, mother darling, such a
 bunch, and all for my two francs! Will
 not father love them? Are—are you ill,
 mother?"

Still I could not speak.

And I helplessly stood while I heard
 Conolly telling the child something about
 his "frightening me, because he was an
 old friend I had not seen for a long time,
 and he had come upon me suddenly."

"Did you make her white like that?"
 she asked.

"I am afraid I did, May dear; do not
 be angry with me!" He actually pleaded
 with the child.

"I am not May," she said stontly. "I
 am Dorothy. May is mother's name."

I collected my senses. I moved on, and
 I listened to the two talking.

I saw once and for all that Dorothy was
 my salvation. My own child had saved
 me!

From what?

Heaven only knows from what!

Was it possible my tongue could have
 spoken words I should have repented all
 my life?

Perhaps a man would preserve more self-
 control than a woman could do at such a
 scene as I had made. Whether this be so
 or not I can only say that Conolly could
 talk and did talk to Dorothy. Presently I
 heard this, and it struck common-sense
 into me:

"There is father watching for us on
 the balcony! He will wonder who you
 are."

Yes. But I could not have the two
 meet then. With a great effort I forced
 myself to say just this: "You will come
 to see us some time; come this evening."
 I put out my hand.

And just then a band in front of our
 hotel burst forth with a louder clang, and

a troop of merry maskers dashed past us. It was a new excitement for Dorothy, she danced for joy.

I told my husband all. Yes, all. Was I a coward, or could I be a false wife?

To my dear husband!—to William Hibbert? Never!

CHAPTER VI.

If this were the beginning of a sensational story, one can see very well how one could have drifted onwards and downwards; but it is not a sensational story, but only a plain telling of one's life.

As Aunt Mary once had told me, "romance could die."

Love as a passion, as a girlish frenzy, was quite done with; but love that had grown with years of companionship and of devotion, was in its place.

Time went on, and Conolly and Sir William were acquainted and friends. There was no fear of the old, dead story ever coming into troublous life again; and yet, when Conolly wrote one day to say he was off to Gibraltar, and that he could not run down to say good-bye, I felt a something like relief.

After that we lived our happy home life at The Knoll. The summer was a grand summer, for we had innumerable friends about us, and Dorothy had a perfect time of it with first one set of cousins coming and then another.

One day someone broached the subject of our next winter's sojourn. I think it was the doctor. I know it was on a scorching August day that the talk took place; also I know that I said:

"I vote for Nice again—do not you, dear? No place did you so much good."

"No—but don't you call me a perfect cure, doctor? I have a mind to stay at home, I am growing lazy." And Sir William made much of a yawn, as if he would ridicule his own weakness.

But I saw the moment after that there was no gay acting in the languid way in which he involuntarily leant back in his easy-chair, and the hands, which by habit fell on the arms of the chair, had never looked so transparent.

My heart fell.

"I can't allow that, Sir William; can't allow that," the doctor said fustily. "The hot weather makes us all limp as wet rags; but we'll not give in—not give in!" He himself was as spry and alert as any small viry man could be.

The cooler weather came, but it brought no bracing, and we made no move for the winter because we could not.

Then, when the great trees about The Knoll were swaying under November winds, and when the woods were bare and brown and fluttering their last flags of scarlet and yellow leafage, Dorothy and I were alone.

Ah, me!

More than two years went by, and Dorothy was growing. I must make a change of some sort for her, and I must have a new governess for her. My little Dorothy must not be behind the rest of the world, her father's daughter must be an accomplished woman.

We were talking about it when the post brought me a letter, a letter from James Conolly in London.

"Might he come down?"

I said just that much of the letter's contents to Dorothy.

"Yes, mother, yes! And he will help us out of our difficulty. He will know somebody nice to come and teach me and make me as wise as—as—as you, mother!" Her arms were round my neck.

He came down, and we met him at the lodge and walked through the gardens with the radiant white spring light about us.

Chance—no, not chance, threw him alone with me. What can I say? Aunt Mary's dictum that "romance could die" was not true. Romance, my romance, would live for ever.

"But, Dorothy?" I murmured.

And at the moment Dorothy came springing to us with her hands full of flowers. "These are for your room, Major Conolly," she said. "I am going to run with them and arrange them for you."

"My room?—I am not going to stay."

"No!—yes you are. Mother, is he not?" The child's face fell.

"Not to-day, dear. Perhaps he will come another day." What would she say?

"That is not as good as to stay to-day!"

"It is to-day, or not at all?" How grave he was for such light talk! "Eh! Dorothy."

"No, no! I do not mean that. Ah! I see, you are smiling." Her face was radiant. "You will come soon and stay, stay for a long time! You will promise?" And with a quaint, wise grace, Dorothy freed one hand from her flowers and held it out for him to grasp. It was a compact. So he did come.

HYACINTH'S ATONEMENT.

CHAPTER I.

A WET November day; gusts of rain lashing the leafless trees, and little rivulets of water eddying along the curb-stones.

In the silent hall of a fashionable house in West London a woman stands motionless, looking out through the glass panel beside the door at the driving rain. She is dressed in black that has long degenerated from the stage of shabby gentility, and has become absolutely poor, and on the floor beside her a brown-paper parcel, which she evidently means to carry, is lying. A footman hovering in the distance is watching her suspiciously, and the woman knows this, and does not care. It is years since she felt conscious of having any susceptibilities to wound.

The footman has cleared his throat several times, with the idea of suggesting to her that since the storm is abating she had better go, but something in the silent upright figure deters him, and, reluctantly, he allows the minutes to pass.

Suddenly there is the sound of a soft step on the thickly-carpeted stair, and a tall, handsome woman descends.

"Has the rain detained you, Mrs. Erle?" she asks kindly; "it is clearing off a little, I think, but you had better come into the library and wait. There is a fire and a comfortable chair there, and you must feel tired."

"Thank you, you are very kind," the woman answered gratefully, "but I shall do very well here."

"Oh yes, very well here, but better there, come." There was a pleasant insistence in her voice, and something in the brightness of her smile that compelled the other who followed her, half reluctant, half gratified.

"And your parcel, I shall have that sent for you," Julia Ryder went on in her authoritative, kindly way. "Oh, but I shall!" silencing the other's protest. "Mrs. Sidney has so many servants, that it will be a charity to find them something to do."

"Mrs. Sidney may not like it."

"Oh yes, she will, when it is suggested to her. Mrs. Sidney is like many other women—merciless only through want of thought."

That was the beginning of Miss Ryder's acquaintance with Mrs. Erle, the woman

who came periodically to take home plain sewing from Mrs. Sidney's.

Miss Ryder was Mrs. Sidney's guest, a guest who snubbed and tyrannised over her hostess a good deal, as heiresses of independent character sometimes get into the way of doing.

With the general public the heiress passed for eccentric. Everyone knew she was wealthy, most people saw she was handsome, and a good many asserted that she held "strong views," than which surely nothing can be more damaging to a woman. At any rate she had lived unwed till she was now over eight-and-twenty, managed her maiden establishment very wisely, kept a duenna for form's sake, cultivated a number of amiable matrons as friends, and snubbed these when they needed it with a comfortable consciousness of superior mental power.

This was the lady who had been adding little final touches to a water-colour sketch, while Mrs. Sidney was discussing paper patterns with her sewing-woman.

Mrs. Sidney kept a maid who could alter fashionable garments for herself, but the maid limited herself to certain duties, and so Mrs. Sidney was in the habit of employing a sewing-woman for the children.

"She is so honest and industrious, and so deserving," Mrs. Sidney said, nestling down in the cosiest chair in her morning-room, and picking up her art needlework as the figure in shabby black quitted the room.

"That woman has seen better days," Miss Ryder answered with sharp brevity.

"So have I," Mrs. Sidney said, quoting Charles Lamb with a little shiver, as the rain lashed the window-pane.

"I mean she has a story!"

"Story; what woman of over thirty has not a story, I should like to know."

"But your sewing-woman is a lady."

Miss Ryder did not know this till she stated it; having done so she was convinced of it.

Mrs. Sidney dropped her needlework into her lap that she might laugh at her ease. It was years since she had learned what a girl to discover mares' nests dear Julia was, but this new fad about Mrs. Erle had the charm of absurdity added to its novelty. That poor jaded creature whom she had known for years, three or four years at least, as a perfectly reliable person who always carried her own parcels, and might be trusted with material in the piece—that a lady!

"Then you had better visit her and make her acquaintance. Possibly you might find her more entertaining than your old friends," Mrs. Sidney suggested with the merriest little laugh.

"If not she would be—dull," Miss Ryder answered, with grave, fine lady impertinence.

So that led to her following Mrs. Erle downstairs, and taking possession of her in her own way. Later in the afternoon she had out Mrs. Sidney's brougham, and drove to Bowdler's Rents, with the brown-paper parcel on the seat beside her.

"Thank you, no, I wish to go inside," she said, declining the deferential footman's services, "but you may carry the parcel up to the door for me."

Her first instinct had been not to permit this, but as George's face already expressed the utmost horror, she thought a touch more would do no harm.

Up the rickety staircase, past squalid children, with distressing sounds in her ears and distressing odours in her nostrils, the heiress piloted her way to the fourth floor, where her authoritative tap twice repeated brought the cautious question: "Who is there?"

"It is I—Miss Ryder. I have brought your parcel, Mrs. Erle."

The door opened quickly, and the sewing-woman, with a flush like two patches of flame on her haggard cheeks, stood on the threshold.

"I thought I should bring it myself. You may go, George," to the footman.

"Then perhaps you will come inside."

"Thank you."

The interior of the room was miserably poor—a floor of bare boards, patched here and there with newer wood, a deal table and a couple of chairs, a small bedstead in one corner, and a tiny wooden cupboard in the other, with a wash-tub beneath it. But on the window there was a snowy muslin blind, a linnet hung in a cheap cage near the light, and by the table, filling up outline prints from a box of colours, was the loveliest child Miss Ryder had ever seen.

"Oh, Mrs. Erle, what a cherub; is he yours?" the visitor cried enthusiastically.

"Yes, he's mine; six years old yesterday," with a touch of pride. "He had that paint-box for a birthday present."

"But he can paint. See, that is as well coloured as I could do it," pointing to the copy-book.

"Oh, I did that to show him how; but

Frankie will learn quickly, because mother likes to see him busy and happy," stroking the golden head as she spoke. The child caught her hand and pressed it against his cheek with a shy gesture of unutterable fondness.

"That woman has a story to break one's heart," the heiress said to herself as she drove back to Eaton Square.

A week later she returned home, and on the following day she paid her second visit to Bowdler's Rents. This time she took a picture book and a box of sweets for Frankie, and a bunch of asters and a china bowl to arrange them in for the mother.

She stayed half-an-hour that day, and before she left, she had made Mrs. Erle promise that when she came again she should not disturb the routine of the sewing-woman's bread-winning. "You are to work just as if I were not here," she said, "otherwise I shall feel I am an intruder."

"I suppose her life is quite spoiled," the girl said to herself regretfully. She had spoiled her own life a good deal, and so was always wondering about other people's histories.

But she was not to discover Mrs. Erle's for many a day, and then only fragmentarily, as life stories are always told.

Once she brought Frankie a little suit of pretty blue cloth, which his mother looked at with sparkling eyes. "I should like it for him, and you are very kind," she said; "but he could not wear it. The boys in the court would ill-treat him, or perhaps steal it from him."

"Then you let him out alone?"

"I have to sometimes; he has just begun to go to school."

"Is that safe for him?"

"Not very; but I must be law-abiding. If I kept him at home I should very likely be summoned and fined. I wonder would the magistrate give me an easy or hard sentence," her eyes sparkling a little.

"Why?"

"Because one of the magistrates sitting, I believe, for this borough, is my father."

"Oh!" Miss Ryder felt a powerful shock; but she did not show it. "Then your father is a rich man?"

"Very rich; worth hundreds of thousands I believe; and I am his only child."

Miss Ryder sighed. She thought she understood, thought she saw here a sorrow beyond hope. "Then Heaven help you!" she said gently. "You must have suffered more than I knew."

It was a Sunday morning, six months

ater, and May, lovely everywhere, was perhaps loveliest in London, when Miss Ryder, in one of her prettiest spring dresses, had her landau driven into Bowdler's Rents. "I have come for you and Frankie," she said, entering the little room with her free elastic step. "I think giving you a lay in the country will be a better form of worship than going to church."

"How good you are; always so kind and thoughtful; but thank you, not to-day. If you will take Frankie it will be a great pleasure to him I know; but as for me, no, I could not."

"Is anything the matter?" laying her hands on the other's shoulders, and pressing her into a seat.

"Nothing more than usual. I dare say most of us have a day that is a painful anniversary. Mine is to-day, that is all."

"Will you tell me?"

"It is only that I show Frankie his father's portrait every Sunday morning. I can't teach him anything better than to tell him what his father was, and then when I remembered that to-day was the anniversary and looked at that," pointing to a miniature so minute that it had evidently been extracted from a locket, "I felt I had borne all I could bear."

"Frankie, dear, I want you to put on your hat and go down to that tall man standing on the footpath beside the carriage, and say to him that Miss Ryder says he is to take you for an hour's drive, and then come back for her. Now, remember, an hour's drive, and then come back for her."

Dismissing the delighted child to scramble carefully down the break-neck staircase, the girl returned to the mother.

Mrs. Erle sat by the table, her hands lying limply in her lap, her eyes fixed on the fireless grate. Julia Ryder drew another chair close to her, and took one of the chill, limp hands in hers. "Won't you trust me enough to tell me about it?" she said. "Was it to-day he died?"

"It was to-day, six years ago, that he went away," the woman answered in a hollow, toneless voice; "but I don't know if he is alive or dead. I don't know anything about him. He left me his watch and his three months' salary on the little table in our sitting-room, as if he thought that was what I cared most for, and then he dropped out of my life."

"How terrible!" Julia whispered huskily.

"Yes, terrible. is it not? His patient

face, my cruel words, and then a blank; and I have been able to bear it for days, and months, and years! Oh, I must be a heartless woman."

"God help you!" the girl said through her tears.

"He does help me, to expiate. Every day I live here, every menial service I perform for Frankie and myself, every meal from which I rise hungry, seems to me a part of the atonement. And sometimes I feel as if, when I have stoned enough, I shall be permitted to die. When you came here, and seemed to understand, I thought you had been sent as a protector for Frankie, and that my release could not be so very far off."

"If there was need I hope you know how to trust me; but your own father, do you owe him no duty? Surely he would be glad to help you."

"Yes, he would now. But can you not see that I could not bear it? But I must go back to the beginning so that you may understand. My father is Mr. Craig, a rich City man. I was his only child. In his way and as well as he knew how, he was very kind; but he spoiled me. I dare say I had good instincts; but I was selfish and autocratic, as only selfish girls can be.

"When I was nineteen a friend of my father's introduced me to society. I spent a season at her house, having no mother to chaperon me, and there I met Frank Erle. He was three-and-twenty then, the only son of a country gentleman, and a man of old and excellent family. We fell in love with each other with all our hearts, and Mrs. Gautorp, my hostess, approved. I have reason to believe that she informed father how matters were progressing, and that he approved too.

"If I had been living at home I dare say Frank would have spoken to father first; as it was he spoke to me, and I answered him with affection as hearty as his own. This was very shortly before he was summoned home to find unexpected disaster awaiting him there. Lead had been discovered on his father's estate, and an enterprising trickster had started a mine, made poor Mr. Erle director first and bankrupt afterwards, and then decamped with all the money he and other dupes had invested in shares.

"The shock broke the old man's heart; he died a month afterwards. The estate was sold to pay his debts, and Frank was left penniless.

"Of course Frank wrote and told me to

forget him, and of course I replied that I never would.

"He had been well educated, had taken a degree at Oxford, and now, instead of bewailing his misfortunes, he made the best use of what he possessed. He obtained a situation as classical and English master in a boys' school at Hackney, and from his lodgings in the neighbourhood he wrote to me again to forget him.

"But I would not. Was I not rich? Then what did his poverty matter?

"I wanted him to elope with me, and confess afterwards, but he would not. 'It would not be right, Hyacinth,' he said, and I began to learn that right mattered most of all to Frank Erle.

"He came and told my father everything, and my father showed him the door, and forbade me ever to speak to him, and that evening I ran away to him. It was all my doing, and he had not the strength of mind to resist me. He took me to Mrs. Gautorp's, and she, though strongly disapproving, received me, and three days later he married me from her house. I was twenty then, he four-and-twenty, that is eight years ago. You look surprised. You thought I was forty, did you not? No, I am only eight-and-twenty.

"We were married. In the great lottery I had drawn the grandest prize that ever fell into a woman's foolish possession, and I lost it, lost it, lost it!

"He loved me with the only kind of love that is worth possessing, but I did not realise what that meant then. He had only a salary of a hundred and fifty pounds a year, and I had nothing; but I wanted the pleasures I had been accustomed to, and when he could not give them I must have tortured him a hundred times with aimless fault-finding and foolish reproaches.

"To do myself justice, I thought my father would be sure to forgive us by-and-by, but Frank did not expect it, and he wished to be honest. He gave me all he could afford, he sold his watch-chain and the various little personal valuables that young men with money pick up, that I might now and then have a stall at the opera or a drive in the park. Oh, I wonder how I can bear to think of that and live!

"When baby was born I wrote to my father, and my letter came back unread. Then I sent Mrs. Gautorp to him, and he swore at Mrs. Gautorp, and at last I resolved to visit him myself.

"Well, he received me in his luxurious room, and was coldly polite to me, more polite than I had expected, for he had not always nice manners; but when I mentioned Frank, he said: 'Tell that black-guard, your husband, that I will forgive you when he is dead, never before.'

"Do you see how unjust it was! I, who had done all the wrong, who had forced myself on him, and who was now mean enough to come back to beg, I was to be forgiven; but he who was bearing his burden like a man, he was judged the culprit.

"I wonder what you will think of me when I tell you that I was vile enough to go back to him and repeat my father's cruel words. He was in quite good spirits that evening; he had been paid for his three months' work that day, and he meant to take baby and me for a drive next afternoon. Oh, it all comes back to me, burned into my brain as with a pen of fire.

"And how did I answer him, him to whom common things must have been more unbearable than to me, him with his fine descent and aristocratic traditions! I said I hated a stuffy cab, and I would not go for an outing to take my baby like a tradesman's wife.

"He took a turn or two up and down the room, and then he came back and tried to take my hand. 'Something has upset you to-day,' he said. 'Have I done anything?'

"Then I told him I had been to see my father; and when I saw the look of reproach gathering on his worn face, I got wild, and told him all father had said—that I was a fool, but he was a knave, and only his death would purchase forgiveness for me. He looked at me as if he was stunned. I am sure he could not understand that I could use such words unless I hated him. And then he said very gently: 'I am sorry I have made you so unhappy. I never thought that things could end this way.'

"Those were the last words I ever heard him utter. I was scathed with shame of myself. I was all wrong, and I knew it, but not being yet ready to confess, I rushed from the room. When I came back he had gone, and his watch and every farthing of his money lay on the table, and I was obliged to use those sovereigns to keep Frankie from starving, and that watch is in a pawnshop now, but I pay the interest for it regularly, and

hen I am dead I want you to redeem it and lay it on my heart, and bury it with me; redeem it with the money I have earned myself, so that it may go with me to eternity as a sign of how I have laboured to atone."

She had told her whole story in the hollow voice of one who has no tears to shed, but Julia Ryder was exhausted with weeping.

"You poor, poor darling!" the latter said through her tears.

"Don't pity me. I deserve no pity."

"Not deserve it because you did wrong? To me that makes the tragedy far more intense. If you had shown yourself in the past the good wife you are fitted to be now, the pain would have been bearable; as it is, I don't know how you have borne it. But do you know what I think? I think your husband is still alive."

"I thought that for a time, but he could not continue punishment for years and years. Oh no, he would have come back long ago."

"He is alive! where or how I don't know; but somewhere and somehow," Julia answered bravely; and as on a former occasion belief grew into conviction after utterance, so now she felt herself sure of what but a little time ago she had only fancied.

CHAPTER II.

"I SHALL go to Melbourne for a spree."

"And I shall knock about awhile, and look up some of my old chums."

"And I shall find some more work, and tackle to it. I don't see the good of loafing about and idling. What will you do, Miser?"

"I? I really don't know."

"Oh yes, you do, you old rascal; you'll count up your savings, go over your investments, collect the dividends, and invest again."

The man distinguished by the unflattering sobriquet of "Miser" smiled a slow, rather sorrowful smile, without answering.

The mining camp at Jebb's Creek was broken up. It had held together longer than many similar alliances perhaps, because the triumphantly auriferous days were over, and hard times had taught the rough fellows, drawn together from half-a-dozen different places and ways of life, not only patience but some mutual affection. For over three years these six had been living together, and now that their claim was worked out and the proceeds divided,

they had agreed to separate and look out for other modes of living.

They had been exaggeratedly cheerful all the day; more than once an unaccustomed throat had burst into a snatch of song, but somehow after a time the music fell into a minor key, and by-and-by stopped abruptly.

Now, as they sat by the fading fire, with soft moonlight through the open tent door illuminating dimly their bearded faces, any of them would have confessed that they would part with sorrowful hearts on the morrow.

But they did not confess it; instead, they talked of what they would do weeks and months and years thereafter, when they met again, and they strove to jest, calling each other by the friendly nick-names that to each man had grown more familiar than his own.

"I've half a mind to marry," one man said, with a resigned sigh. "When a fellow is nearing thirty he feels as if he would like to steady down a bit, and have somebody of his own to spend his savings on. I know a nice girl near Sydney, and I think if I married her, and settled down to farming——"

"Oh, farming, get along!" another interrupted with a laugh, "as if you could let your crops grow in peace for seeking nuggets at the roots. The girl may be all very well, but as to the farm, don't be a fool."

The aspiring Agricola sighed, but did not protest, and the other went on: "When the earth has given you gold from her very heart, to think of scratching her hide to plant crops on her is ungrateful—yes, ungrateful. No farming for me, thank you; but what I could see my way to laying my pile on is a store, where I'd sell tools and tucker—and whiaky."

"And where you'd be your own best customer for the drink! Well, don't think of that, Joey, old man. It is bad enough to spree away your earnings at other folks' bars, but it 'ud be worse to have one o' your own. But seeing you've no capital worth talkin' of, I needn't fool myself down to your level with advice. Miser there could open a store, and stock it considerable, but I don't think he will—will you, Miser?"

"No, I should have no skill in trading."

"Though jolly good skill for finding safe investments. I think you're the only digger I ever knew to make a pile and keep it, and somehow we haven't despised

you for it," he said thoughtfully, "though I own we did not approve on it at first, and only kept to you because you brought us good luck."

"And for his goodness to Stubbs," another added. "He nursed Stubbs like the tenderest woman, and prayed with him like a parson, he did, and that would have made us value him if he'd been twice as saving, and"—turning suddenly and addressing himself to this man they called Miser—"all we hope is that you've got a good pile, if owning it makes you happy."

"Yes, I'm rich," the man answered with a ring of triumph in his voice.

He was a tall man, with a sunburnt worn face, a long brown beard that hid the mouth and chin, and a pair of clear blue eyes that gazed fearlessly from under a forehead looking oddly white when contrasted with the bronzed tint of cheeks and throat. "Yes, I'm rich, though not altogether since I joined you. I had years and years of slaving and saving before I met any of you—years and years. I've been ten years in the colony, and though I had barely a pound in the world when I landed, I own now nearly ten thousand pounds."

Several of the men sighed involuntarily. "Not that ten thousand pounds is wealth as the rich reckon," he went on, "but in England it will give a man the decencies of life."

"Then you are going back?"

"Yes, I am going back."

"Well, I'm sorry, Miser; the colony could have better spared another man."

The talk drifted into discussion of the old country, and after a time the men separated for their stretchers, to sleep through their last night together.

But Frank Erle could not sleep. Through a rift in the tent roof he caught the silver glow of one star in the Southern Cross; on the soft waves of air that swept ghostlike through the swaying curtains, came the faint and far-off barking of the dingoes; but it was not present sight or sound that kept him waking on his hard pillow, with his arms beneath his head. He was thinking of his past, of the errors he had committed, and the pains he had endured, and was wondering, if it were all to do over again, should he be wiser.

As yet he did not reproach himself for his action towards his wife, possibly because there was a germ of bitterness towards her lurking in his heart still.

Looking back on it all now, he and she seemed to him two entities that he, as a third person, judged dispassionately. He had been mad to marry her, and think his love would suffice; but when he discovered that she wanted her luxuries first and him afterwards, then he had done the best for her that remained in his power; he had left her free. Her father would take her back if he were dead; so he had said, and so she had told him. Then let them think him dead, and so let her recover the things she valued.

Such had been his attitude of mind at the first; later, when it occurred to him that silence might be cruel, he had nothing cheering to tell, nothing but privations to endure, scarcely anything to hope for or promise, and before the good days dawned silence had grown into a habit.

But now that the goal of his ambition had been reached, now that he could offer her comfort if not luxury, now that he was about to move back to the life he had left, now he realised with a dull sense of wonder how changed, and old, and indifferent he had grown. His beard was streaked with grey, and it seemed to him that every feeling he possessed had aged too. Why his boy, if alive, must be almost eleven years old, and his wife would be five-and-thirty.

For a moment he wondered if it would not be wiser to let the dead past lie undisturbed, to live his own life in his own way, and not cast his shadow across her humorous present. He did not believe he loved her now, and if not, then what was the good of returning, simply to shoulder the burden of abandoned pain? For a moment he held the balance of his future in his hand, and dallied with it. To live on the solitary life that had grown natural and almost dear, or to return to the shocks and uncertainties of a life he did not desire. One course seemed almost as right as the other now.

On which side then was inclination? Was the present life satisfying or desirable? On that point he did not delude himself for an instant. His colonial enterprise had been merely a means to the end of growing rich, and now that he was, not rich, but comfortably independent, it must terminate. That his heart yearned for the old domestic ties, he could not say. They had been severed in pain and bitterness, and all that he had found so fair in them he ascribed to his own delusions; but such as the past had been, it was the best past

he knew, and curiosity regarding those who had been its centres he believed to be now his keenest remaining instinct. To see Hyacinth again, to know if she was happy among the personal comforts that, on her mind, alone made life tolerable, to learn how she had trained his boy, and if he cherished any memory of him—the father; to discover all this, himself remaining undiscovered, if possible, that was the course that seemed wise and desirable to his middle-aged, changed, and hardened Francis Erle.

"No, sir, Mr. Craig don't live 'ere; we live 'ere."

"And who are you?"

"We are Lord Barrenmoor and family."

"But Mr. Craig used to live here."

Frank Erle did not look like a gentleman as the footman reckoned gentlemen, and so he had to hold the door almost forcibly ajar while waiting for his answer.

"That may be, but Lord Barrenmoor has been 'ere ever since I came to 'im two years ago."

Frank Erle went down the steps slowly. He had been now two days in London, during which he had hunted in vain for tidings of Hyacinth. His first visit had been to the street they used to inhabit, but the small houses had made room for a row of middle-class shops, and of course not a trace of her remained there. Then he had endeavoured to discover her father's place of business, but, although it was as well known to the initiated as the Bank of England, Frank's acquaintance with his father-in-law had been too limited to teach him that the trade had been founded by Mr. Craig's grandfather-in-law, and still carried on business under the original name. When he learned later that Mr. Craig's dwelling-house had a new inhabitant, he went down the steps into the street with a sudden sense of being himself lost to name and place, and existence even.

Frank Erle had not wished himself remembered; in bitterness of heart he had told himself that it would be better for him and everyone that he should be forgotten. Even on the way home he had been doubtful if he should ever announce himself or claim his old place and associations; but now, when the door to restoration seemed barred against him, he experienced a curious thrill of anguish and dismay.

He did not know where he was going, though he knew he was advancing some-

where, with the sunshine in his eyes, and the pedestrians staring with indifferent curiosity at his long beard and badly-fitting colonial clothing. It was an hour after when he seated himself wearily beneath a tree in the park. Some children playing near spoke to each other in whispers of the old gentleman on the bench. That gave him another curious thrill. Was that how his own boy, his Frankie, would regard him if they met again?

His attitude of mind had entirely altered in the last few hours; to find his wife and child had now become imperative, essential. But how, where?

It was rather an instinct than a hope that induced him to drive back to the street in which he had spent his brief married life. Perhaps some face passing in the crowd would seem familiar; perhaps someone could give him a clue.

On the site of the little lodging-house, where he and Hyacinth had been so happy, before rough surroundings had fretted the edge off her tenderness, a greengrocer's shop now exposed its variety of fruits and vegetables, and a buxom young woman was knitting busily. Frank Erle had passed the shop half-a-dozen times hesitatingly, and it was more because he felt that the young woman was regarding him curiously than from other conscious motive that he entered.

"I came here to-day to look for a friend who used to live here," he said, after a few preliminaries, "but the street has been so altered that I find myself quite lost."

The young woman looked up at him with the brightest interest.

"Was the friend a Mrs. Erle?" she asked.

"Yes."

"Well now, that is the oddest thing. We had not been settled here a week when a young lady called, though that's a year ago now. She gave me a sovereign and an address, and told me that if ever a gentleman called here to ask about a Mrs. Erle I was to say she was living with her father and son at Parkmount Mottley, and if the gentleman never called and we were leaving here I was to send her word, so that she could give the same directions to the next people. Father said it was all such nonsense, though he bid me keep the sovereign. I'm glad now I've earned it, for I suppose you are the gentleman."

"Was the lady fair, with blue eyes?" Frank asked eagerly.

"No, tall and dark, and grand, like a queen."

The man sighed. "Well, you've executed your commission very kindly at any rate, and here is another sovereign to add to the first."

That Frank Erle was alive and would come back was an article of faith with Julia Ryder.

In the heiress's heart there was a small passion for dramatic effect. To have drifted towards her object in a humdrum way would have deprived possession of half its charm. To have gone to Mr. Craig and to have said, "Your daughter is starving in a garret, on what she can earn by her needle, and I hope you will see your way to help her, or at least in simple justice to allow her the money that was her mother's," would not have appealed to Miss Ryder at all; but to dress Frankie in plain, well-fitting clothing that made him look like a little prince, and to take him herself to Mr. Craig's office, that she might there solicit his vote and interest to place the fatherless child in a home for destitute boys, this afforded Miss Ryder the most interesting morning's work she had ever performed.

Mr. Craig had been a little impatient of the heiress's errand, for his patronage of the "home" was a bore, often involving him in visits from philanthropic females, but when he saw the child his interest was aroused in spite of himself.

"He does not look much like a needy orphan," he said good-naturedly, "but I suppose he is one since you say it."

"His mother earns nine shillings a week on an average, and lives in a garret in Bowdler's Rents."

"Well, nine shillings is not a large income."

"No, particularly when the woman is a lady by birth and education."

Mr. Craig shrugged his shoulders. This suggestion did not interest him.

"I shall remember the child when a vacancy occurs at the home. What name did you say?"

"Francis Erle; the mother's name Hyacinth Erle, widow."

Mr. Craig uttered a cry like that of a wounded animal. "Do you know—do you know that she is my daughter?" he cried.

"Yes, but I hope you will not refuse your vote to the child on that account," Miss Ryder answered demurely.

The rich man drove to Bowdler's Rents

with the heiress, and Frankie sat on the seat opposite him, staring with round limpid eyes at "grandpapa," and when the door of Hyacinth's miserable apartment was opened to them, the old man and the child entered hand in hand.

"You must come home with me," Mr. Craig said, with tears in his eyes. "I have never had a happy day since we parted."

Hyacinth sighed. To give up her poor little garret would give her a pang. Luxury had no longer any allurements for her, nor ease any charm; nevertheless, since her father wished it, for Frankie's sake and his she acquiesced.

"Why don't you wish to ride with me to-day, Frankie?"

Frankie looked up at his mother as she stood, in her dark blue habit and tall hat, buttoning her gloves, and blushed a little.

He was a handsome fellow of between eleven and twelve now, with her clear eyes and his father's fine forehead and firm sweet mouth. The years that had elapsed since he quitted London for Parkmount had developed him from a child into a well-grown boy, while to his mother they had restored much of her past youth and beauty. As she stood before him, fair and slim in her perfectly-fitting dress, she looked no more than her thirty-six years. True, her tints had lost the brightness of girlhood, and there were faint hollows in her smooth cheeks, faint lines carved by pain about lips and eyes; but no one who knew and loved the boy now would have exchanged its pale sweetness and mature beauty for the freshest charm of girlhood.

"I thought you were so fond of your pony," Mrs. Erle went on.

"I like him very well, but there is something else I like better now," Frankie answered after a little hesitation.

"And what is that, dear?" The mother was a little disappointed. It was for Frankie's sake she had endeavoured to renew her old love of the saddle, and since riding meant being with her when lessons were over, she heard Frankie's answer with a little shadow of pain.

"It is a man, a gentleman; he is stopping at the hotel in the village. Mr. Fraser knows him and likes him, he is quite wonderful. He has been to Australia, has lived in the bush, and dug for gold, and has such stories about kangaroos and opossums and black fellows."

"And where did you meet him?" Mrs.

le had sat down, and was drawing off r gloves again, and Julia Ryder, who d been reading the morning paper by a window, laid her paper on her knee d looked up with glistening eyes.

"I don't really know," Frankie answered with the distress of a child suddenly catechised about an everyday occurrence. "I think the first time was when r. Frazer and I were fishing, and he me up and helped me to throw my line. r. Frazer liked him, and we went to s rooms, and he showed us some gold uggets, and a rug made from skins of ossums that he had shot himself. I ve seen him a good many times since. n those wet days when I went out alone e met me, and to-day he said if Mr. razer would let me leave off lessons early could go for him, and we should have a plendid walk together."

"But, dear Frankie, I don't know that ou ought to go with a stranger like that," fra. Erle said gently. "He may not be gentleman."

"Oh, but he is a gentleman," Frankie answered with conviction. "I know he is, nd Mr. Frazer says it too."

"Does he know who you are?" Julia asked carelessly.

"Of course he does; all the village nnows who I am," with a child's unconscionous pomposity.

"I must see Mr. Frazer and ask about this," Mrs. Erle said, moving towards the bell. But Julia intercepted her. "Don't make a molly-coddle of the child; he's not a girl, to be followed with a veil and parasol. Go for your ride like a dear creature, and I shall accompany Frankie to interview this ogre."

Miss Ryder's heart was palpitating to positive pain as she took her way with Frankie through the park towards the village. The chances were a hundred to one that this stranger was not Francis Erle, and yet it might be he, and the mere thought set all the heiress's steady pulses throbbing.

The village of Mottley was by no means an important spot, nor one likely to attract tourists by its own charms. It consisted of such a cluster of houses as often lies on the border of a gentleman's demesne, and provides him and his household with conveniences to its own advantage. Before Parkmount had passed into Mr. Craig's hands, its outdoor servants had found residences at Mottley; its small drapers' shops had been patronised by the lady's-maid,

and its bar-room by the grooms and stable boys; but since Mr. Craig's advent the village had suffered commercially a good deal, and only that Mrs. Erle's bounty to the aged and helpless among the villagers more than compensated for other deprivations, there might have been some harmless grumbling in the matter of the new resident at the big house.

It had been Hyacinth's desire for a country home that led Mr. Craig to this purchase, and since Mottley was sufficiently close to London to permit a daily visit thither, he rather enjoyed the change. It was good for rich men to have a country house he knew, and Frankie, growing up at Parkmount, would have a position among county people such as no City wealth could procure him.

Frankie was the darling of Mr. Craig's old age—a darling that in all love and devotion he did his best to spoil; but the mother's watchfulness and the boy's own naturally sweet and generous nature had saved him hitherto. "You must grow up a man like your father," had been his mother's watchword to him, and unconsciously that thought dwelt with him nearly always. Possibly Frank Erle did not deserve the place he held in the hearts of his wife and son, but very few of us find the exact niche that suits our deserts, and stand either higher or lower than our merits with most who know us.

The hotel whither Frankie directed his steps was an inn of a homely and rural description, but in a little place like Mottley big names become essential, and so the "Red Lion" was a hotel that satisfied the inhabitants, and passed muster with chance travellers.

"Are you to ask for the gentleman?" Miss Ryder inquired as they approached the door.

"Yes, but"—with puzzled consciousness stealing over his face, "I don't know his name."

But the attendant knew very well what gentleman Frankie wanted, and took up the message that Master Erle and a lady were waiting at the door.

And by-and-by Julia Ryder heard the oddest footsteps descending the oil-clothed stairs, a step that had in it feverish eagerness and tremulous reluctance, the mingled tread of youth and age.

"It is he," the heiress said to herself, while the throbbing of her heart nearly suffocated her; and when the footsteps

reached the door and she turned round, it was not at Frankie the stranger looked, but at her, while surprise, relief, and disappointment chased each other over his sun-browned face.

"Possibly I shall make an unwelcome third at your interview," the heiress said brightly, "but Mrs. Erle wished me to see Frankie's friend. You must excuse a widow's anxiety about her one treasure."

The man winced, and she saw it, but his natural colour was slowly welling up into his cheeks again. He muttered something about regret, short acquaintance, liberty, etc., which Miss Ryder good-naturedly interrupted. Mrs. Erle would be very glad to make his acquaintance she knew, and he must take an early opportunity of visiting her at home. "She is the sweetest woman in the world," Julia said, with a burst of enthusiasm that would have been impossible but for her certainty of the identity of the man before her, "but if she were not the sweetest woman in the world discipline would be of no avail," and then, as they walked back through the Parkmount woods, while Frankie found a hundred objects of interest to take him hither and thither, birds' nests in the alder bushes, hyacinths—"mother's flowers"—in the long grass, Julia Ryder told Frank Erle all she knew of his wife, of her passionate repentance and terrible atonement for the wrongs she thought she had done him, of the absolute destitution in which she had willingly lived for years and years, while luxury waited for her with extended hands. And then she touched lightly on her own part in reuniting Mr. Craig and his daughter, and wound up by saying she thought Frank Erle lived, and had therefore done her best to leave landmarks by which he could trace his wife.

"Then it was you who gave a sovereign to the greengrocer's girl?" Frank asked huskily.

"Yes."

He stooped and kissed her gloved hand; but he neither thanked her verbally nor declared himself then.

Mrs. Erle had meantime returned from her ride, and finding Julia and Frankie still absent had gone out to meet them. The woods about the house were private, and so she went on foot with her habit gathered into her hand. She had taken off her hat, and the waning sunshine played on her uncovered hair, and with the flush of recent exercise on her cheeks, and a

smile born of the sweetness of the sunset hour on her lips, it was the girl love of Frank Erle's early days that seemed to approach him in dreamy, unconscious grace.

She was still a good way off when Frankie saw her, and set up a shout, and rushed towards her; but she repelled a little the caresses he would have lavished on her, not deeming them decorous in presence of the stranger of whom he had made a friend.

The boy had taken her arm, and she was looking down at him and talking to him, but with the consciousness of a strange presence near her flushing her face a little. She had gone over it all in her own mind as he neared her—how Julia would introduce him, and how she would thank him for his kindness to her son; but somehow Julia did not speak, though she was quite close to her, even fell back a little and left the stranger standing alone. Then she looked up into his face for the first time, and with a cry of "Frank! Frank!" that none who heard it ever forgot, fell into his arms.

If space permitted it would be interesting to tell how Frank Erle and his wife fell in love with each other all over again, and with added tenderness in each because of the pain the other had seen; how Frank wished to take his wife and child away from Parkmount and establish them in their own home; and how Mr. Craig said that Hyacinth might go and leave him alone in his old age if she had sufficiently little heart, but that Frankie was his heir and should remain with him; and how Frank, looking on the old man's worn face, had remembered that forgiveness is nobler than revenge, and pardon manlier than pride.

If a few friends of Hyacinth Erle are grateful to Julia Ryder for the part she played in the heroine's story, perhaps they will be glad to know that four years later her own story ended with a sound of wedding bells. The individual at the wedding who created almost as much interest in the hearts of the public as the bride herself was Julia Erle, the three-year-old bridesmaid. If this young lady's parents added anxiety regarding her deportment to their interest in the auspicious ceremony, it was only because they underrated her ability to acquit herself like the daughter of "the most charming married couple in the county."

THE EPILOGUE.

"How silly I was in those days!" said a handsome woman, beautifully dressed, her costly toilettes bearing a tender meaning not understood by the world—they being inspired, not by the love of dress and show, as one in a long-past youth, but by the special desire of her husband. While to both of them, though, perhaps, in different fashions, these dainty signs of a wealthy life, were the chastened recollections of an old bitterness dead.

Twenty years make a considerable difference to a woman's appearance, as she finds to her cost, and Hyacinth Erle was twenty years older this spring afternoon than she was that day, when she and four other girls had promised to come back to the woods and tell each other what answer Life had given to their questions. But, after all, it is something to find out that you were silly, when the finding out means what it did to Hyacinth. And so she thought as she made her way through the woods which their light, careless feet, had trodden as girls—careless feet which had learned to go softly as the years marked the solemn measure of time.

"I had to go through the darkness to learn to understand the light," she said to her husband, when she told him of her project, and he had suggested that the others' lives would probably be too full of babies, or cares, or pleasures by this time to remember a girlish freak of fancy. "I must go and tell them how foolish I was then, and in the days that followed."

And he had laughed a little, and kissed her, and let her go.

Hyacinth Erle, as she passed through the wood, wondered if her old companions would recognise her. She had lost sight of them all for years.

As she neared the trysting-place, she began to feel nervous, with an excitement which was half pain.

"I hope they have not forgotten," said Hyacinth; "it will be lonely if they are not there."

But, as stepping slowly, half afraid in her excitement, she came up to the old grey wall, she saw that she was not the only one who had remembered.

Three other women were standing with their backs to her, looking at the wall, as they had done that first afternoon long ago. They were laughing a little as they talked together. Then one of them turned.

"Ah, there!" she cried. "I knew she would come!"

The next second she had hurried across the mossy turf and caught Hyacinth's outstretched hand, while the other two followed her.

It was May Freeling—May Conolly now.

"I knew you would come," she said in her old quick fashion. "The others were beginning to doubt. Do you recognise them? Violet—not Damer any longer—Violet Guildford; I have not seen her for years till a few minutes ago, but I should have known her anywhere. She has not altered a bit. But Daisy Dunstan, the genius, and myself—I think we have altered a little. And you, Hyacinth—we shall be jealous. Don't you think she has really grown handsomer?" And May fell back, looking at her with laughing eyes as she exchanged greetings with the others.

"She has got something new to tell us," said Daisy, smiling contentedly enough, though there were lines and signs of anxious thought on her patient face, which the others did not possess.

She was not handsomely dressed, either, as they were. Her lines were cast in a different place. But Daisy had grown into a strong, sweet woman, whose life could no more fret itself for trifles.

"Yes," said Hyacinth, "I used to be like a child tossing a handful of dust in the air against the sunlight. I played at making clouds. Then one day the clouds came in earnest, and when they passed away, I was too glad to see how brightly the sun shone to make clouds any more."

"How silly we were!" said Daisy, with fine self-contempt, which had a touch of pain in it. "I think most of us made clouds in some fashion, either for ourselves or for others. Do you remember what Cecil Linton said that first afternoon when we came to gather the daffodils, when a rabbit ran across our path, and Sir Charles Danvers threw his basket after it? He said the rabbit was only hurrying along to see why the world was full of sunshine, and that it was a shame to shut out the sunshine from its view."

"There was a good deal more in that young man than we thought, I fancy," said May Conolly decidedly; "and while we imagined that he was only thinking of his own superior attractions, I believe he was looking round for the sunshine. I fancy if it were shut out from his view it was not he who made the clouds."

"There is someone else, of whom the

same may be said, I think," said Daisy, looking at Violet; "I think you two were the wise ones after all!"

Violet flushed and laughed.

"Life has been pleasant to me," she said. "I had no need to make clouds."

"No," said Hyacinth a little sadly. "You were stronger than we were, even that day when we made our compact. If it had not been for you, we should not have come. But where is Narcisse Laurent? Will she not come after all?"

The three looked at her.

"Don't you know?" May said gravely. "She is dead. She died nearly fourteen years ago. People said she killed herself with too much amusement."

"Some say that she died of disappointment," said Daisy; "her married life was so unhappy. Sir Charles neglected her dreadfully."

"I don't think it could have been that altogether," said Violet pityingly; "for she had her child to live for. I think there was something more that the world never knew."

So they had to sit down there in the sunlit wood, and tell their life-stories without Narcisse. And as they sat together, talking in lowered voices, it seemed as if the only thing that had not changed was the wood.

"If only experience came to us before youth and beauty left us," said Daisy, "how different our lives would be!"

And a vague, troubled pain came back to her eyes—a sacrifice offered to the days when there had been lovers and love, and she had hastened in her bitterness to bind herself with chains which the years could not break.

"Yes," said May, thinking of the lover whom she had wounded in her fair youth, and to whom now she had but the end of life to give.

And even Violet, gazing wistfully at the spring freshness of new green leaves, remembered ten long years lived apart from love.

"All things must change," said Hyacinth. "Perhaps that is the real punishment for our mistakes. If we live to find them out, we grow old."

Then the door in the wall was pushed open, and through it there stepped out into the wood, a girl, startling a faint exclamation from the other women's lips.

She carried her hat in her hand, and the

sunlight fell on the glory of her hair, and lighted up the grave grey eyes. There was a knot of narcissus-flowers at her throat, and another large cluster in her hand.

She looked at them half shyly but with questioning earnestness, while they looked at her, too startled to speak, for it seemed as if they saw in her, their own lost youth.

It was Narcisse Laurent as she had stood before them that first spring-day twenty years ago!

Then the eager questioning died out of her eyes, and she came quickly towards them.

"Mother sent me," she said with reverent gravity. "She could not come herself. She is dead, you know. But to-day a letter was given me, which she wrote before she died; and when I opened it, I found in it a message which I was to bring you this afternoon. She said that long ago, she could not say it herself, but that to-day she says it through me. And this is what she would have said to you if she had been able to come back and speak herself. The night is only waiting for the day, and darkness is but a renewing, and we are foolish to despair. For we have but to take in our hand the golden branch of patience, and with it pass back into the sunshine and light once more."

Then the women took her by the hand, and kissed her as women kiss the child of a dear friend dead. And there were tears in their eyes, too, but they were the tears of tenderness and reverent thankfulness; for the shadow had passed from them, and foolish regrets blinded their eyes no more, for the message had gone straight to their hearts, grown wiser by the waiting.

So they went back through the woods once more, leaving there for ever this last tender thought of their girlhood.

And the girl, standing only at the beginning of these paths, looked after them with grave eyes, pondering over her dead mother's words.

But they seemed so old to her, these friends of her mother's, and their youth, which had appeared so near to them in the spring woods, looked so far off to her eyes, which had not yet seen eighteen springs, that they did not interest her for very long; and she straightway fell to dreaming her own dreams, as she turned back once more to the narcissus-flowers, which bloomed as luxuriantly to-day for her as they had done for the other girls that day twenty years ago.

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CONTENTS.

	PAGE		PAGE
THE MERRY MAIDS OF WINDSOR	1	THE GUEST ON MY HEARTH	81
A BYGONE STORY	16	A MIND OF HER OWN	38
WAITING FOR ORDERS	23	"ROYAL"	48
THE LAST WHALER. A POEM	31		

THE MERRY MAIDS OF WINDSOR.

By C. L. PIRKIS,

AUTHOR OF "LADY LOVELACE," "JUDITH WYNN," ETC.

CHAPTER I. PLOT.

"THE world—that is, of course, Windsor—would be a tolerable place of abode if it were not for the——"

"Garrison," interrupted a masculine voice.

"Old maids," finished the feminine one. "Cousin Geoffrey," it added, after a moment's pause, "I thought you were in a miserable frame of mind when we set off for our walk, and now I am sure of it. I'm sorry I let you come out with me this morning."

"Ah, if you hadn't, you wouldn't have got out at all to-day. Aunt Mary is labelling creation—in other words, re-ticketing her geological cabinet; Aunt Rosie is deep in housekeeping books, an occupation from which she does not like to be disturbed to take volatile young nieces out for morning walks!"

"Volatile! as if anyone within our four walls had a chance of being anything so delightful. There's Philippa, even, grown meek and quiet as any saint, never says a sharp word, spends all her time reading Thomas à Kempis or Epps on Homœopathy. I never see her but what she has either a manual of devotion or a homœopathic instruction-book in her hand."

"Your sister is going to marry a parson. She is qualifying betimes."

"I should think it was betimes! Aunt Mary says she won't hear of her getting married till she's twenty-one—that's two years hence. It's altogether ridiculous. Why, if I were going to settle down as a parson's wife in two years' time, I should want all the fun I could get beforehand. A dance every other night at least; the theatre—well, twice a week; boating or tennis every afternoon——"

"Ah, don't you want all that now?" interrupted Cousin Geoffrey.

"And as for Thomas à Kempis and Epps, I'd put them behind the fire!"

"Make martyrs of them in company. The truth of it is, Nellie"—here Cousin Geoffrey laid his hand on his companion's arm—"the world is upside down, things are all crooked. Now let us—you and I—try and set them straight. The sun is scorching. Come and sit down a minute under this big elm—we're not due at home for another half-hour—and let's discuss things generally."

These two strolling in leisurely fashion down the Long Walk in Windsor Park, were Geoffrey Fenwick and his young cousin Ellinor.

The Fenwicks had once been a large family, now they were reduced to the small number of six: the two maiden aunts, Aunt Mary and Aunt Rosie already referred to; two twin orphan nieces, Philippa and Ellinor, who had grown un

under the tutelage of the said maiden aunts; and Cousin Geoffrey, so dubbed to distinguish him from his father, Uncle Geoffrey, still living.

Cousin Geoffrey was not a man one runs against every day in a crowd. In making him Nature had seemed, somehow, to be at a loss for a type, and so had constructed him out of the odds and ends in her workshop. She had given him the dreamy blue eyes of a poet, overshadowed by the sandy brown curls of a Scotch shepherd; hollow cheeks; a square jaw, in company with a configuration of head that would have driven a believer in Gall or Spurzheim frantic from the contradictoriness of the organs it developed. In figure he was tall and inclined to stoop; his voice was melancholy, his conversation spasmodic and jerky.

It might have seemed, to those who took the trouble to think on the matter, that Cousin Geoffrey had, somehow, caught scent of Nature's whimsicalities in his creation, and had chosen to emphasise them in his career. As a boy at Eton he had shunned football for philosophy; as a man at Oxford he had taken honours in nothing but private theatricals; and subsequently he had chosen for himself a tutor, and had read himself light-headed with mathematics. From that period he had fulfilled with more or less distinction the career of the proverbial rolling-stone, and had somehow contrived to earn for himself among his friends a very fair reputation for extravagance in matters of theory, and practical common-sense in matters of fact. It would have tested the powers of a logician of the first order to reconcile his theories with his practice. Foremost among these theories was the one that Nature in no circumstances was to be contradicted or thwarted. By inference, therefore, young people knew better than their elders what was good for them in the way of education or amusement. This notion of his, naturally enough, was uppermost in Nellie's thoughts as she seated herself beside him under the big tree. She had nothing particularly interesting to do that morning, so she made up her mind to give him a patient hearing—say to the extent of ten minutes—after she had said all she had to say on the generally upside-down condition of things.

There could be no doubt about it, Nellie was a chatterbox. She hadn't yet half done with Philippa's delinquencies.

"I don't believe Paul would be half so

prim if Philippa would only let him alone. All yesterday afternoon we were playing tennis together; he and I, and he was as full of fun as could be. Then came Philippa to remind him of the bo club, or the choir practice, or some nonsense or other. And he put down his racquet and pulled a long face immediately, said it was all my fault, and he really didn't know how the afternoon had gone.

Cousin Geoffrey, looking round at his companion seated beside him in the glaring, dancing sunlight, could easily understand how Paul or any other young man of eight-and-twenty, playing tennis with her on a summer's afternoon, wouldn't "really know how time had gone" till the sun began to set. Yet Nellie Fenwick was no Juno, but simply a tall, slender brown-eyed, brown-haired English maiden with a delicate pink-and-white complexion which a black frock and hat set off to the best advantage.

He did not put his thoughts into words, however. All he said was, "Poor Philippa!" "Poor Philippa! Poor me, you mean! Philippa never gets half the scoldings I do. Philippa may go out with Paul any afternoon she likes, and Aunt Mary never says a word to her. But, oh, the hurricane that set in the other day because Captain Archer wanted to drive me over to——"

"Archer wanted to drive you!"

"Oh, there! Are you going to take a leaf out of Aunt Mary's book! I thought you were meaning to talk over things with me quietly and reasonably——"

"Reasonably!"

"Yes; how else could I talk! Cousin Geoffrey, do have a little common-sense. I want to prove to you——"

"Oh, if you're going to prove anything, it's you who are going to take the leaf out of Aunt Mary's book. I can't stand it. Let's go in at once."

"How aggravating you are! Well, what I wanted to say—if you object to have anything proved to you—was that I can't stand it any longer, and if you can't get me asked away somewhere on a long, long visit where I can have a little fun, I shall grow desperate, and——"

"Don't. Wouldn't it do as well to get the aunts asked away on a long visit!"

"Oh, that would be heavenly! Philippa and I would keep house—I could manage Philippa without the aunts—and we would have such delicious boating-parties, tennis-parties, suppers afterwards—fancy the

suppers we would have out on the lawn in the dusk!"

"Ah, I can fancy them!"

"And dances, and drives, and rides——"

"And Archers, and dog-carts——"

"Cousin Geoffrey!" And here Nellie blushed as pretty a pink as the wild roses she had pinned with such coquettish effect in the collar of her dress. "It's nonsense your implying that I'm a flirt. I'm not the least bit in the world one. What I might be if I had a chance——"

"What, indeed!"

"I couldn't say. But with my lack of opportunity——"

"Opportunity only!"

"I'm no more a flirt than Aunt Mary herself, and not half such a flirt as Aunt Rosie could be with a little trying. She bought another new opera-hood yesterday—that's about the twenty-first this year. She must spend all her time trying them on in her own room on the sly. Perhaps someone one day when she was a girl—ages upon ages ago, of course—must have told her she looked pretty in her opera-hood, and she can't forget it, and tries to keep up the illusion that she's still worth looking at!"

"Poor mediæval Aunt Rosie! Not five-and-thirty yet!"

"Well, five-and-thirty is mediæval, whatever you may say; it's exactly middle-age—no one expects to live beyond seventy."

"They do it without expecting, sometimes."

"People do all sorts of dreadful things sometimes. They even marry at—— Oh, Cousin Geoffrey, I've got an idea!" Here Nellie, with a great start, sprang off her seat and stood facing her cousin.

"Ah, one! Keep it, make much of it," replied Cousin Geoffrey, sitting still and looking up at her.

"Oh, glorious! Oh, the fun! I can see myself in the very thick of it all."

"Let me see you in the very thick of it too!"

"You shall. I scarcely know how to tell you. Oh, make haste, get up and come home. I want to begin at once—this very minute."

"By all means. This very minute." And Cousin Geoffrey jumped to his feet, and set off at such a very rapid pace that Nellie had to trot to keep up with him, and soon came to a full stop, vowing that she hadn't breath to go another step, and wouldn't have any left for conversation for a whole year to come.

Upon which Cousin Geoffrey pulled up immediately, declaring that such a consideration would influence him mightily.

"It was so ridiculous," she panted, "just when I was beginning to explain to you what my idea was. I can tell you in one word what I want to do."

"In one word?"

"Well, in half-a-dozen then. It's this: I want the girls, just for once in a way, to turn the tables on the old maids, and instead of their arranging our love-affairs and marrying us off, I want to arrange theirs for them and marry them."

"No; you'll want bachelors, not girls, to do that. The thing will be to find them—the bachelors, I mean."

"Oh, I'll find them fast enough. I have it all in my mind, from the very first to the very last. There are always in every place a number of needy bachelors on the look-out for moneyed brides——"

"Archers, for instance," murmured Cousin Geoffrey,

"Cousin Geoffrey, how dare you?" and Nellie's face flushed an angry, not a pretty red now. "I've a great mind to leave off telling you my plan. I would, only I want your help in it."

"I'll help you, never fear," answered Cousin Geoffrey, with never so much as a twinkle in his eye.

"Well, what I mean to do is simply this—set a report going that Aunt Mary has come in for ever so much money, thousands. Aunt Rosie I sha'n't trouble about marrying off; without Aunt Mary, Philippa and I would have no trouble with her. It can easily be managed. You know dear Uncle Edward—here she glanced at her black frock—"left me a thousand pounds the other day, and Aunt Mary a hundred pounds to buy a mourning-ring. Well, I'm just going to reverse the cases, make people think it was the young Miss Fenwick who had the hundred pounds, and the old Miss Fenwick who had the thousand, only I shall turn it into ten or twenty thousand, at the very least."

"Purely as a matter of experiment, do you mind starting the report at a thousand pounds? It will grow into ten thousand before it gets to the other end of the town, and be swollen into twenty by the time it comes back to us."

"Oh, then I'll make a point of starting it at ten thousand; it will be fifty thousand before it gets to the end of the town, and a hundred thousand on its way back. Isn't that at the same rate of increase?"

Cousin Geoffrey made a wry face at her.

"Oh, well; it's near enough, at any rate. What I want is that she shall be credited with a good lump sum in ready money. I know exactly how to do it. There are three capital centres for gossip in the town: one is the St. George's Royal United Service Club; the second, the Zenana working parties; the third, Lady Sowerby's drawing-room. The first I'll get at through Captain Archer, the second through Philippa, and the third I will supply myself direct."

"Will Philippa aid and abet?"

"She will be an unconscious instrument in my hands. I shall tell her in confidence I am positive Aunt Mary had ever so much more money left her the other day than she told us, that I'm sure she kept it to herself for fear we should worry for a bigger dress-allowance or a pony-carriage all to ourselves. And I shall suggest to her that she shall put it into the head of the secretary of the Zenana Working Club to ask Aunt Mary for a bigger subscription."

"Do you suppose that Aunt Mary will stand mute, and let all these reports pass uncontradicted?"

"I suppose Aunt Mary standing mute! Good gracious! I can suppose her doing anything sooner than that! But the fun of it all will be, that the faster she contradicts the reports the faster I shall keep them stirring. I shall explain to everyone she's so horribly afraid of the men making love to her for her money, that she pretends she hasn't had any legacy but the hundred pounds that came to me the other day."

"Never mind about the fibs you'll have to tell. They won't count, will they?"

"Oh, if you call that fibbing!"

"And what do you suppose will be the end of your little extravaganza, may I ask?"

"The end! Oh, I don't care two straws how it all ends; it's the middle that'll be the fun of the thing. Seeing the men buzzing about the house making love to Aunt Mary! I can prophesy exactly who they'll be. Aunt Mary brightening up and flirting shamefully, while the girls look on reprovingly!"

"Aunt Mary flirting!"

"One never knows what an old maid can do till a chance is given her. You wait and watch the fun—that's all."

"Suppose your sport should be death to someone? In other words, supposing Aunt Mary should happen to give her heart to

one of the men making love to her for her money, what then?"

"A heart to give at forty-five!"

"Aunt Mary is not forty-five. She is a year younger than I am, and I was only forty-four last birthday."

"Well, then, she is forty-three and three-quarters, and all I can say is if a person at forty-three and three-quarters has a heart to give; and bestows it on a man who wants money, not heart; she deserves to suffer for her pains."

"That might apply to other people who are something under forty-three and three-quarters."

"Why, of course it might. I haven't a scrap of pity for anyone who hasn't the sense to find out which a man wants—heart or money. Not a scrap! it's only conceit that blinds them."

"Quite so. Not a scrap. It is only conceit that blinds them," assented Cousin Geoffrey, a curious expression passing over his thin face. "Here we are at home. There's Philippa reading in the garden. I suppose you'll set your ball rolling at once. I shall go in and have a chat with the mediæval aunts."

While they had been talking they had turned the corner of one of those pleasant bye-roads with which Windsor abounds. It was lined with old lime-trees, behind which sheltered large, detached, stone-built villas surrounded with big, shady gardens. The one at whose gate the two entered was a little larger and less regularly built than the others, and its stone façade was all but hidden from view by a glorious mass of intertwining purple wistaria and yellow climbing rose. The front door was open; it immediately faced the back entrance, also wide open. Through it was laid bare a pretty vista of garden, a big mulberry-tree in the centre of a lawn, beneath which on a wicker chair sat Nellie's twin counterpart, with a big, solid-looking volume in her hand.

"Good-bye, Cousin Geoffrey; I wish you a pleasant morning," was Nellie's rejoinder, as she made straight for the mulberry-tree and the wicker seat.

Philippa was evidently in a brown study. She barely lifted her eyes at Nellie's approach.

Nellie went round the tree and peeped over her shoulder.

"'Belladonna,' she read aloud, "'is especially adapted to persons whose brains are in a state of great functional activity, to those of amiable dispositions inclined to

become fat.' Oh, Philippa, the very thing that would suit me! I'm sure the man who wrote that must have had me in his eye. Have you any of the dear little sugar-balls handy?"

But Philippa was not inclined for fun. She shut up her "Epps" emphatically. "I do so wish you would be serious sometimes, Nellie," she said crossly. "You seem to think that girls were only sent into the world for fun and flirtation."

"Why, what else were they sent into the world for?" began Nellie. Then she recollected that if she wished to secure Philippa's co-operation in her little plan she must mollify, not ruffle her. So she turned the talk into another channel. "Where's Paul?" she asked, thinking a query as to the whereabouts of her lover must be an agreeable topic to the "engaged young lady."

But Philippa did not seem to find it so.

"Really, Nellie, you are always very anxious about Paul's doings. You never come near me but what you ask 'Where's Paul?' or 'What does Paul think of this, that, or the other?'" she answered in the same irritable tone as before.

And Nellie, looking down into Philippa's clouded face, read the truth for the first time—that her twin-sister was jealous of her.

Philippa's brown eyes, brown hair, and delicate complexion were as like Nellie's as a twin-sister's could well be, but there were certain broad lines of difference between the two girl-faces.

Brown hair can be straight or wavy, brown eyes can be demure or fun-loving. Philippa's hair and eyes belonged to the former class, Nellie's to the latter. Even the cut of their garments was opposite. Nellie affected the latest fashion; Philippa's stuff gown, with white bandage and black veil added, might have served for a nun.

Nellie's first impulse was hot indignation and open war; her second, pacification and a truce. Only in times of peace can diplomacy be successfully practised.

"I thought you would take it as a compliment," she began deprecatingly.

"Ah, I suppose that's what Paul thinks when he says, as he so often does, 'Why doesn't Nellie come out and sit with us in the garden? She can see we are all alone.'"

"Philippa!"

"It's perfectly true." And now Philippa's voice had a downright angry note in it. "All was done in sight all I do in

wrong. I've had every one of my dresses, indoor and out, made straight and plain, and now Paul says he doesn't believe my dressmaker understands her business half so well as yours does. I've left off putting my hair in pins at night to make it wavy, and only this morning he said to me he wished I had curls like yours all over my forehead."

Nellie's astonishment took away her breath. Then a light dawned upon her. Something very disturbing must have happened to bring Philippa so near boiling-point as this.

"I believe you and Paul have had a tiff," she said, anxious to get to the bottom of the mystery.

"I never have a tiff with anyone."

"Well, what I should call a tiff, if it had happened to me. Now, what was it all about?" and here Nellie seated herself on the arm of her sister's wicker-chair, and prepared to listen to a very long story.

"I don't know what you mean," said Philippa, calming down a little. "Paul brought his cousin, Sir Francis Everard, to call on Aunt Mary this morning, while you were out. I only said to him that I was sorry Sir Francis had returned from Canada, and I hoped he wouldn't keep up an intimacy with him; it was no credit to a clergyman even to be seen in the company of such a man."

"But, Philippa, Sir Francis is the head of Paul's family. They are bound to be on good terms with each other."

"But he has led a wickedly fast life. He has run through three fortunes."

"Ah, how nice to have them to run through! And possibly by this time he may be very, very sorry for it all; and now he has come into the title may mean to settle down and be as steady as old Time. What's he like? Tall and handsome?"

"I haven't the least idea. I was obliged to shake hands with him, but I kept my eyes on the ground all the time."

"How interestingly shy you must have looked," murmured Nellie.

"And," Philippa went on, savagely now, "Paul, as a clergyman, ought to be more careful whom he takes up with. He was hard and bitter enough the other day, when he spoke about the way in which you carry on with Captain Archer if Aunt Mary is out of sight."

"Indeed, I am very much obliged to him," ejaculated Nellie, beginning to get

"Yes; and I do think, Nellie, if you've no self-respect in the matter of flirtation, you might consider how awkward it will be for me by-and-by when I want to settle down quietly and do my duty in a parish to have people saying, as Paul did the other day, 'Take the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland from sea to sea, and you won't find a bigger flirt in it than Nellie Fenwick.'" And having fired this shot, Philippa jumped up from her seat and made for the house.

Nellie was nearly tilted off the arm of the chair through the energy with which Philippa had quitted it. Her face was crimson. She felt inclined to say something to the point at once, regardless of consequences. Reflection, however, brought to her mind the little project to which she had, so to speak, pledged her talents in Cousin Geoffrey's hearing. The "something to the point" could be deferred, or might be addressed very effectively to Paul himself on the first opportunity.

So she ran after Philippa, and caught her up on the doorstep.

"Where are you going in such a hurry?" she asked. "It's stifling indoors. Can't you bring your work out here? If we don't talk about the men we sha'n't quarrel."

Philippa pulled out her watch.

"I'm due at the Zenana working-party in half an hour. Paul said he would call for me. I told him, unless he could get rid of Sir Francis, he need not trouble."

Nellie had a question to put.

"How much does Aunt Mary subscribe to the Working Guild?" she asked, dropping her voice, for it occurred to her that some of the windows overhead might be open.

"Two guineas a year. Why do you ask?"

Nellie's voice dropped lower.

"Why don't you ask her to double it—or, better still, get your secretary to ask her for a lump sum down. It's my belief she ought to subscribe as much again to all the charities now."

"As much again! What do you mean? Anyone would think she had had a legacy left her to hear you."

"And so she did have a legacy. Poor Uncle Edward didn't forget her the other day."

"Oh, if you call a hundred pounds a legacy!"

"Philippa, how do you know it was only a hundred pounds? You didn't see the will?"

"Oh, Aunt Rosie told me it was somebody else did. Why, what do you mean?"

"If it were thousands do you think they would tell us? Do they ever tell us such business affairs? Don't you think Aunt Mary would say to herself, 'Now, if I tell those girls all the money that has come to us, they'll be wanting double the allowance—at least Nellie will—or a pair of ponies all to themselves, or a hundred other extravagances.' I dare say all the truth will come out by-and-by."

"I think you're talking nonsense, Nellie," interrupted Philippa. But, nevertheless, as she went upstairs to her room to put on a demure poke-bonnet for her working-party, she couldn't help thinking after all, there might be something of truth in Nellie's hints, and that, if Aunt Mary had really had a lucky windfall, it would be just as well for the Zenana working-party to get a little of it. The funds were terribly low, the workers were almost at a standstill for lack of material. Yes, she would make a suggestion to the secretary that very afternoon; and if, after all, nothing came of it, no harm would be done.

Meantime Nellie went wandering round the garden in anything but a pleasant frame of mind. She had contrived to get her ball rolling, not a doubt, but, now that it was done, she wasn't exactly sure that it was the sort of thing she liked doing. Of course there would be a lot of fun to be got out of it, and the best of the fun was yet to come; but still, as Philippa had said, fun wasn't the whole of life, perhaps might be got at too high a price. It wasn't altogether nice to be sitting whippersnoot in this way about a high-minded lady who, whatever her faults might be ("Goodness knows they're legion!" she murmured), had never failed in her duties in life. Well, there, it was done, and couldn't be undone. She was fairly in for it now, and must carry it through to the end. Step number two must be taken as soon as possible. She would go and see Lady Sowerby that afternoon, or to-morrow, perhaps, and set the whippersnoot in another quarter.

It was scorchingly hot. The grass on the tennis-lawn looked green and tempting; a racquet and some balls were lying beside the net. She picked up the racquet and began batting the balls about. The exercise seemed to let off a little of her bad temper. There could be no doubt about it,

he was in a very bad temper—with herself or embarking on a little game her conscience wouldn't let her keep up with spirit; with other people for saying, as they did, such persistently unkind things about her. She a flirt indeed! Why beyond Captain Archer and Paul she scarcely knew a man to speak to. As for Paul, her conscience was quite clear; she looked upon him as a brother, just as though Philippa were married to him already. It was utterly ridiculous of Philippa to be so jealous and cross. And as for Captain Archer—well, of course, if he said soft, pretty things to her, she was bound to bend her head and listen. And really he was so handsome, that it was a downright pleasure occasionally to look up at him; and then, of course, if he caught her looking and looked back again, she was bound to drop her eyes to study the pattern of the Turkey carpet, for no one could stand the gaze of those dark, handsome eyes of his.

Here the sun seemed to dazzle her, and her ball went a little astray. But what a delightful racquet, so light, and such a lovely yet withal rough handle! Whose could it be? Someone must have left it behind after the tennis-party yesterday. She looked at the handle. Why, how strange; there was "Arthur Archer" written on it in big black letters!

"I wonder if he left it behind on purpose," thought the girl, "so as to have an excuse for coming in to-day."

The crunch of footsteps on the gravel cut her wonders short. The orchard which bounded the garden owned to a gate opening direct on the high-road. Intimate friends of Aunt Mary had the privilege of entry through this gate to the house. It cut off a dusty bend in the road, which entrance by the front door entailed.

Nellie's heart beat a little quickly. The intruding steps might be those of Captain Archer in search of his racquet. It was something of a disappointment to see Paul coming along in company with another man, whom Nellie at once concluded to be his cousin. He looked a good fifteen years older than Paul, and was tall and distinguished-looking. His face had many lines in it, and his mouth owned to a decidedly satirical curve.

"Where is Philippa?" asked Paul, as he shook hands; "I promised to take her to her working-party." Then he introduced to Nellie his cousin, Sir Francis

"Philippa has been gone at least half an hour, and I should say is in about the middle of her fifteenth seam by this time," answered Nellie stiffly, for she was not at all inclined to forgive Paul his iniquities.

The name on the handle of Nellie's racquet caught Paul's eye.

"Give that racquet to me, Nellie; I shall see Archer this afternoon, and will return it to him," he said a little sharply.

"Thank you; I'll take care of it till Captain Archer calls for it," answered Nellie defiantly, all Paul's disagreeable speeches coming at a rush into her mind.

"What do you mean? How can that thing want taking care of? Don't be ridiculous!" said Paul hotly.

Nellie looked him full in the face.

"Take the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland from sea to sea, and you won't find a bigger flirt in it than Nellie Fenwick," she said slowly, and then walked away down the garden-path, racquet in hand.

Paul flushed scarlet. Sir Francis laughed.

"Take my word for it, she hasn't her sister's sweet temper," he said, as together they made their way into the house; "of all things in the world, give me a soft-speaking, amiable woman. It's lucky for you your choice didn't fall upon this one."

Paul did not answer.

Nellie subsided into a better frame of mind now that she had paid off one of her debts.

"He'll take care what he says of me another time," she said with a little laugh, as she seated herself in a creeper-covered summer-house which overlooked the tennis-ground, intending to wait there until Paul and his cousin, having ascertained Philippa's intended movements for the day, had taken their departure.

The arbour was a pleasant little haven of refuge from the sultriness of the garden. A thunder-storm seemed threatening. The air was heavy with the scent of carnation and honeysuckle. A pair of Nellie's white doves, with a flutter and a coo, flew past, and in another moment twinkled like two silver butterflies against a bank of black clouds slowly piling overhead. A big leisurely bee went droning past. It was all delicious laziness and drowsy enjoyment. Nellie began to feel sleepy.

"I should like London immensely for three months in the year," she said to herself, "but even there I don't think I could live without a garden." And then her eyelids began to droop.

But once more the sound of footsteps and voices broke in on her reveries. They seemed coming from the house this time. A peep-hole between the boughs of her arbour showed her Captain Archer and Cousin Geoffrey making for the tennis-lawn. They were no doubt in search of the captain's racquet.

"I thought I threw it down here somewhere last evening. It doesn't in the least matter," he was saying as he came along. But if he thought he had left it on the lawn it was very strange that he should be looking up and down the garden-paths, and even over the fence across the orchard. Something else beside his racquet surely he must have been in search of.

So at least Nellie thought, and she laughed softly to herself, saying, "I won't stir, and he sha'n't have his racquet, and next time we meet I'll tell him I watched him from the summer-house all the time he was with Cousin Geoffrey, and I shall see his face change, and know exactly how much he is disappointed."

"I'll look in again for it; don't trouble any more," Archer went on, evidently not seeing what he wanted. "Good-bye; I'll go out through your orchard-gate if you'll allow me."

Cousin Geoffrey went back into the house. Captain Archer made his way towards the orchard, and, passing in front of the summer-house, spied Nellie in her hiding-place.

"I have a particular wish not to be disturbed in my reveries this morning," she said demurely, without stirring, as he lifted his hat in recognition.

"And I have a particular wish to respect your wishes this morning," he said, in reply, as he seated himself beside her on the rustic seat.

Captain Archer's personal appearance was exactly of the sort to captivate the fancy of a young girl. His face and figure were those of the typical soldier who has "seen service". An erect carriage, bronzed features, bold black eyes, and knowledge how to use them, may have much to answer for in the matter of maidens' broken hearts, more especially when they are found in company with a mellifluous voice, and a facility in the art of putting deep meaning into trivial words and phrases. Captain Archer was an adept in this. He would ask after your health in a tone of voice which implied that his own would suffer if you had so much as a little-finger ache. He would petition for five

minutes' chat with you with as earnest a look in his eyes, as most men would have put into them in asking for a parson for life.

So now, when he sat down by Nellie's side, and said four simple words, "Are you quite well?" they did not sound in the least like the same words on Philip's lips or Cousin Geoffrey's. Nellie, as she answered his question, said to herself, "And there are actually people in the world who can't tell what a man wants when he makes love to you—heart or money! If this man doesn't want heart I don't know who does."

What a sweet, dreamy ten minutes they had out there in the creeper-covered arbour!

The luncheon-bell clanging brought Nellie from dreamland to solid earth again; she jumped to her feet and held out her hand.

"From the sublime to the prosaic," said Captain Archer, holding her hand a prisoner for a moment for the sake of saying his good-bye to her eyes. "Why doesn't Miss Fenwick ever ask me to stay luncheon with you? I shall depart forlornly to eat a chop at the St. George's."

The words "St. George's" sent Nellie's brain back to her little plot again. Her eyes sparkled with fun.

"Aunt Mary has grown too grand to ask anybody to luncheon lately. I suppose she intends cultivating no one lower than a Duke or Marquis now," she answered.

"What do you mean?" ejaculated Captain Archer, surprised.

"Oh, haven't you heard of Aunt Mary's legacy?"

"I knew that you had had a legacy, and I was heartily glad."

This, no doubt, was true enough.

"Ah, you see, I talked of my legacy, but Aunt Mary kept hers to herself. Don't speak of it at the St. George's on my account. Aunt Mary has a mortal terror of men running after her for her money. Good-bye—I must go in."

"But you don't mean to say that Aunt Mary's legacy was a bigger one than yours?"

"I don't mean to say anything," replied Nellie. But her manner said a good deal.

Captain Archer laid down his racquet, which he had taken up while he was talking.

"I won't take it to-day, and then, perhaps, I may be allowed to come to-morrow and look for it," he said, as he

shook hands, impressively as before, and turned his steps towards the orchard-gate.

Nellie went back to the house with a bright, pretty flush on her cheeks.

"There will be only Lady Sowerby to tell now, and the thing's done," she said to herself. On the door-step she turned her head for one more glimpse of the Captain's vanishing figure. "Ah," she murmured softly again, "if he doesn't want heart I don't know what he does want!"

CHAPTER II. COUNTERPLOT.

AUNT MARY was laughing—heartily. Aunt Rosie was laughing—softly. Cousin Geoffrey stood by with never a smile on his thin face—with not so much as a twinkle in his eye. Those who understood Cousin Geoffrey knew this meant that he thought the joke a very good one indeed.

Aunt Mary had been in the very midst of "labelling creation"—in other words, ticketing her geological specimens, Aunt Rosie was knee-deep in her housekeeping books, when Cousin Geoffrey had come in, and, in treacherous fashion, had laid bare Nellie's plot to get rid of her guardian by marrying her out of hand.

Aunt Mary had looked up from a dear little bone she was scrutinising through her glasses—someone had told her it was a jaw-bone of an extinct ape.

"Ah," she had ejaculated, bone in hand, "Thomas Carlyle did say 'England contained upwards of thirty millions of people, most of them fools.' I endorse his statement."

"Did he say so? A better heart would have taught him better manners," Cousin Geoffrey had replied. Then he had detailed in full his own little scheme of a counterplot. "It is clear to me," he had said, "that Nellie's thousand pounds' legacy has been exaggerated among her friends, possibly to ten times its amount. There's Archer, up to his eyes in debt. He, no doubt, thinks that her portion will be at least ten thousand. Very well then, let's fall in with the girl's whim, transfer the thousands from niece to aunt, and see if a transfer of the affections won't be the immediate result."

Upon which Aunt Mary had replied: "Exactly the same idea occurred to me while you were speaking." Then she had added, after a moment's pause: "Those who play with fire must thank themselves for their burns."

That had been a fortnight ago. Plot

and counterplot had since had time to work.

Now, as the two ladies on their "At Home" day, sat waiting in their drawing-room to receive their friends, they had such a ludicrous succession of incidents to relate to each other, that it was no wonder they should enjoy a hearty laugh, or that Cousin Geoffrey should stand by looking preternaturally serious.

Aunt Mary was a tall, stately person, with a very high bridge to her nose, and a very high top-knot of hair exactly in the middle of her head. One saw the nose and the top-knot before anything else. After that the spectacles—big, solid-looking things—claimed one's attention; then the voice, dogmatic, abrupt. She had a terse method of "putting a thing into a nutshell", as she called it, was fond of telling people to "take a common-sense view of things", or that "a grain of fact was worth a ton of theory". Phrases especially irritating to Cousin Geoffrey, who was in the habit of declaring that common-sense was another name for prejudice, and that he "detested facts, they were so misleading".

Aunt Rosie was simply the softest, sweetest, most loveable of old maids conceivable; adored everywhere by servants, children, horses, cats, and dogs. She had been engaged for ten years to one man, and he had died. Since then her kindness had been a thing to wonder at.

"That little goose, Nellie," Aunt Mary said, when she found her voice again, "how she must be puzzling her brains at the present moment! I have had applications from charities all through the week, and have nearly ruined myself by the extravagant sums I have given everywhere to keep up the joke. Five pounds here, ten pounds there! How disappointed the poor souls will be when I subside into my modest-one-guinea subscriptions again!"

"I saw Nellie's eyes open when you signed that big cheque this morning," put in Aunt Rosie.

"Oh, that was for the local Archery and Tennis Club! They've asked permission to put me down as patroness to it, and to the afternoon dances. Of course, it means opening one's purse a little. But it'll be money well spent, if it serves to open a girl's eyes to the smallness of her powers of attraction compared with those of the god Mammon. As a matter of fact——"

"Oh, if facts are coming in, I shall go," interjected Cousin Geoffrey.

But he was met at the drawing-room

door by a stream of callers, and was compelled to turn back.

Meantime Philippa and Nellie, in their music-room upstairs, were neither laughing softly nor heartily. Nellie was in the bad temper now; Philippa was looking a little downcast and ashamed of herself.

"Everyone is behaving disgracefully," Nellie was asserting vigorously. "I think the sooner the world comes to an end the better. If anyone had told me a week ago that I should ever spend an evening such as I spent yesterday in Mrs. St. John's drawing-room, I should have simply said it was impossible."

"But, Nellie, I saw nothing out of the way," said Philippa deprecatingly.

"My dear, you saw nothing in the way nor out of the way. In fact, you simply saw nothing at all; you were so busily occupied in flirting with Sir Francis Everard."

"You were so cross, and Paul was so cross, I was only too glad to get away from you both; and Sir Francis was very polite and attentive to me."

"Sir Francis has led a wickedly fast life, and has run through three fortunes," said Nellie mockingly.

Philippa flushed scarlet and said nothing.

"Paul, as a clergyman, ought to be more careful whom he takes up with," Nellie went on.

Philippa began to cry.

"You're cross with me, Nellie, just because you had a miserable evening yourself, and no one showed you any attention. Paul said——"

"I don't care the least in the world what Paul said. You may tell him from me that next time he takes the census of the United Kingdom to find out the flirts, he'll please to put Aunt Mary, not me, in the first rank. Anything more ridiculous than her behaviour last night I never saw. Four men round her all at once, and she talking to them all at once and laying down the law—and I had to turn over my music for myself!"

"Paul wanted to turn over for you and you wouldn't let him."

"Paul! I would as soon have the east wind turn over for me as Paul. He does it with such a flutter."

"Captain Archer was showing some sea-eggs embedded in flint to Aunt Mary. He had gone ever so far to find them."

"I know exactly what Captain Archer was doing. I have eyes in my head for

what goes on about me. I don't spend my time flirting with a wicked——"

But the word "baronet" was cut off by the door opening and the appearance of Cousin Geoffrey's melancholy face.

"Your aunt's drawing-room is filled to overflowing with visitors this afternoon. They want you two girls down to help entertain," he said.

This was a mild way of putting what had really happened. Aunt Mary, talking with deaf Lady Scudamore in the window-recess, had spied Captain Archer coming up the front of the house.

"That man is coming for his racket again," she had whispered to Cousin Geoffrey. "It's the fourteenth time within the last fortnight, and he always departs without it! Go and fetch Nellie down. There's going to be some fun."

Nellie entered the room to find about fifteen ladies present and three men. The men surrounded Aunt Mary.

Two spinster ladies fastened upon her. "Come and tell us all about it, Nellie," one said. "The will was found in an old cabinet, written entirely in your poor uncle's handwriting, and witnessed only by his butler and valet—was it not so? We were calling at Lady Sowerby's yesterday, and heard all about it."

"And they said the cabinet had been sold with the rest of the furniture," continued the other lady, "bought by a furniture-dealer, and exhibited in his shop-window. And the butler, happening to pass—no, it was the head-gardener, I think they said—saw it, and thought he would like to have some memento of his old master, bought it, and chancing to pull it open——"

"No," the first lady interposed; "it was one of the children who pulled open the drawer and found out the secret spring. Of course your aunt will buy the cabinet. I should amazingly like to see it."

Nellie felt her brain going round. A voice sounding over the buzz of talk in the room made it steady in a moment. It was Captain Archer's mellifluous baritone. He was exhibiting one by one a succession of "specimens" to Aunt Mary.

"I don't know whether they're of the least value," he was saying, "but if they supply any gaps in your cabinet, I shall feel myself more than repaid for my long walks in search of them."

Possibly a scientific friend of Captain Archer's, who was just then "wedding" his collection, might have given another

reason of the manner in which the specimens had come into the Captain's possession.

Aunt Mary eyed them only a moment. "Ammonites—every one," she said with decision; "of no use to me, for I have them all, but of infinite use to you if you will set to work and find out all there is to be known about them."

Captain Archer sighed.

"I am thinking of taking up some serious study. A man wasn't sent into the world for the sole purpose of spending his afternoons in tennis, and his evenings in billiards."

"One wonders what they were sent into the world for—some of them," murmured Cousin Geoffrey, for Nellie's benefit.

"Now, if someone would be good enough to put me in the way of the thing—give me a few hints how to set about beginning, I should certainly take up with geology," Archer went on with a look in his eyes, which Nellie had hitherto imagined only her own pretty brown eyes could bring to the Captain's black ones.

Aunt Mary was affability itself.

"I study science while my frivolous young nieces play tennis," she answered graciously. "Come in any afternoon you like, and you may take your choice between the lawn and my geological library."

"The game will undoubtedly have to make its bow to the science," was Captain Archer's reply, as he rose to take his leave.

"Isn't it fun—glorious fun?" whispered Cousin Geoffrey, right into Nellie's ear. "Never mind how it ends, the middle's the fun of the thing, and we're right in the very middle of it now."

CHAPTER III. IN WINDSOR PARK.

NELLIE was putting on her hat with slow, unwilling fingers in front of her glass.

"I wish," she was saying to herself, "all the nightingales had been drowned in the flood! To think of an old maid like Aunt Mary—nearly fifty, if she is a day—jaunting out in the twilight to hear the wretched little creatures sing. I dare say she will attire herself in a Rubens hat and let down her hair to her waist. Well, it seems to me the best thing the girls can do will be to put on poke-bonnets and act the chaperon to the old maids. Now I think of it, this hat is far too juvenile for anyone under forty-five; I'll hunt up one of Philippa's old pokes instead."

So the pretty straw hat was tossed on

one side, and one of Philippa's discarded bonnets substituted.

The grey of a June evening was beginning to fall. Out in the pleasant roads and bye-ways the yellow light from a sunset sky still lingered, but in the deep green glades of Windsor Park the reign of shadows had begun. There was the "melancholy music" of the nightingales cleaving its way through the thick leafage of oak and elm, straight up to the dark or starry skies, and there were the lasses and lads, all in tune with the lovmaking birds, assembling in the lonely glades to catch all they could of the "melting, mystic lay".

Lasses and lads, however, had by no means secured a monopoly of the lonely glades. Captain Archer had said to Aunt Mary, with vastly sentimental emphasis: "This is nightingale time! Dreamy twilight, sad melody, a congenial companion—could one have a better idea of Paradise?" And, lo! the lady had at once ordered a *recherché* little dinner for a few friends, and arranged for a twilight ramble in the park afterwards.

"I can't keep up the joke much longer," Aunt Mary had confessed. "In the first place my purse won't stand it. I've been so munificent all round that I doubt if I shall be able to pay my baker's bill at the end of the year. In the second place, the muscles of my mouth are positively aching for a good laugh at the expense of the ridiculous fortune-hunter. In the last place, our purpose is fairly accomplished. Nellie, I imagine, will never again to the end of her life, 'dote upon the military'. Possibly, to make the cure permanent, and as a final act in the little comedy, it may be advisable to give one more hard knock to her pride. It can be given just as well under the trees in Windsor Park as here in our drawing-room."

So, sitting in conclave, the two aunts and Cousin Geoffrey made out the programme of the day that was to deal the final blow to Nellie's pride and thoroughly rout the Captain.

"We'll have a little dinner first so as to collect together our party—four men and four ladies," said Aunt Mary, going minutely into all the details of her final act; "and Captain Archer shall take Nellie in to dinner."

Cousin Geoffrey and Aunt Rosie exclaimed in chorus at this.

"And," Aunt Mary went on, "he'll sit

between her and me at table. You will see in which direction his head will turn."

"For refinement in torture give me a woman," murmured Cousin Geoffrey.

Aunt Mary ignored him, and went on :

"Sir Francis Everard will take me in to dinner, and will sit on the other side of the table, between me and Philippa. You will see in which direction *his* head will turn."

"Why—why," began Aunt Rosie. "You don't mean to say——"

"I mean to say that Philippa has managed her love-affairs every whit as badly as Nellie, and unless someone takes them in hand for her will pair with the wrong man. I shall do my best to set things straight. Paul will take her in to dinner, and—mark my words—will do nothing but stare across the table at Nellie."

"But surely Philippa would make an ideal clergyman's wife! What more in a woman could Paul expect or want?" interposed Aunt Rosie.

"Ah, the ideal clergyman's wife of story-books! In real life it generally happens that curates marry the fastest girls in their congregation, not the good, meek little saints. To conclude, Cousin Geoffrey will take you in to dinner, and being a sensible middle-aged man with no love-affairs to trouble him, will, no doubt, keep his eye——"

"Upon the company generally. There will be occupation for a discerning eye," interrupted Cousin Geoffrey.

"Upon his plate, I was going to say," finished Aunt Mary dryly; "there will be occupation for a discerning palate. My cook is excellent."

So the dinner was arranged and eaten. Aunt Mary's prophecy was fulfilled to its last syllable. Captain Archer, seated between Nellie and Aunt Mary, showed to the former a patronising, fatherly kindness which took the salt out of her soup, the sugar out of her sweets; to the latter a deferential attention, which could only be construed as the outcome of an admiration he was proud to acknowledge. Sir Francis Everard throughout the repast had eyes and ears only for his younger neighbour. As for Paul and Nellie, their tempers seemed about on a par. Moody and abstracted, they somehow got through the meal, sending away half the dishes untasted, and limiting their conversation to monosyllables.

"Are you qualifying for a nun, Nellie," asked Philippa, staring with amazed eyes

at her own discarded bonnet on her sister's head as they set off, a goodly company of eight, for their twilight ramble.

Philippa's personal appearance had undergone something of a transformation, since she first shook hands with Sir Francis Everard under the mulberry-tree. There is the dowdy demureness of the girl who gives neither time nor thought to the matter of dress, and there is the effective demureness of the expert in fashion's art. Philippa's style of dress had passed almost imperceptibly from the one phase to the other.

Paul also had a remark to make about Nellie's bonnet.

"Why do you ever wear hats, Nellie! You can have no idea how well a bonnet suits you," he said, trying to speak in his old brother-like fashion, and utterly oblivious of the fact that the said bonnet on Philippa's head had called forth anything but a compliment.

Nellie's reply did not seem altogether to the point.

"I wish," she said, bringing out the words with a rush, "that all the bonnets, and all the hats, and all the nightingales were where a great many people ought to be to-night—at the bottom of the sea." Then she hastened on ahead at such a tremendous pace, that Cousin Geoffrey's powers were taxed to overtake her.

Naturally enough within the park-gate they fell into parties of twos.

"The grove of acacias is the place to make for; the birds come back to the grove every year," said Aunt Mary. Then she had contrived to whisper a word to Cousin Geoffrey: "Don't forget! under the big oak—the one struck by lightning, which has a seat all round it—in three-quarters of an hour from now."

"Aunt Rosie is all alone," said Philippa very sweetly to Paul; "do you mind taking charge of her? I am too hot to hurry on so fast."

"Where is Cousin Geoffrey," queried Paul sharply, straining his eyes in the dimness, to get a glimpse of two vanishing figures at the end of a long, shadowy avenue, and thinking what an admirable arrangement it would be if he and Cousin Geoffrey could change partners for the evening.

He received no answer to his question. Philippa, in company with Sir Francis Everard, had already strayed away across the greensward, a little out of the beaten track. If he did not wish to be drawn

for sole companionship to his own thoughts he must seek that of Aunt Rosie. No alternative remained.

The soft evening breeze rustled among the leaves, bringing with it the scent of cut hay from outside fields, and lifting and shifting the rapidly deepening shadows. A company of startled deer fled swiftly across the path, jostling each other and trampling down in all directions the tall bracken.

"The sensible brutes!" said Cousin Geoffrey; "they saw we were—well, not in the best of tempers to-night. Now, if we only had a bow and arrow, Nellie."

"Speak for yourself," answered Nellie sharply; "I never in my life felt in a more amiable frame of mind;" and again she went on at a tremendous pace.

Cousin Geoffrey looked over his shoulder. "We're well ahead of them now, Nellie," he said with evident satisfaction; "shall we take breath?"

"Well ahead of whom?" asked Nellie, still irritable and sore.

"Of Captain Archer and Aunt Mary. I thought you were trying to run away from them, so I put the pace on."

"Run away from them! Why should I?" cried Nellie furiously. "As if it mattered an atom to me where they were, or what they were doing! I had even forgotten they had come out with us to-night!"

Soft and low at this moment fell a sweet "jug, jug," from a bird, perched high on a big acacia almost at their elbow.

Cousin Geoffrey laid his hand on Nellie's arm.

"They are tuning up. Shall we stay here and listen?" he asked.

Nellie's answer was to cover both her ears with her hands.

"I won't be made to listen to nightingales if I don't choose. I hate and detest them!" she said. "I'm going to walk, walk, walk to-night, and then go home and get to sleep as fast as possible."

But the nightingales had no mind to be treated with indifference. They would be listened to, whether one chose or not. From out the deep branchy darkness came swimming their sweet, full-throated music, now tender, now loud; now passionate, now pathetic. The faint humming of a few sleepless insects, the croak of a distant frog, the cry of the night-hawk, the rustle of the breeze, died beneath it; and those stragglers under the trees, feeling all in a moment how much of love, joy, pain,

their hearts could hold, folded their hands, and stood still.

"Hush!" said Aunt Mary authoritatively to Captain Archer; "don't talk; I want to listen." Yet, was she listening? Was she not rather turning back a few pages of memory? Now she was standing beside her dying father's bed, and he was saying: "Mary, take care of your mother and sister—never leave them." Anon, she was speaking a hard, emphatic "No" to a man who stood beside her—ah, how unlike the one standing at her side now!—and he was saying, in reply: "Life ends for me to-day."

Possibly Captain Archer, while he allowed Aunt Mary the privilege of her thoughts, filled in the gap with a picture of his own—of hot sands, an African sky, a girl with a Cleopatra's eyes and big gold bracelets on her arm. One of these she was unclasping, as she said, "Take it—we shall never meet again."

Sir Francis Everard, as he stood beside Philippa, forgot all about the pathos of life, and remembered only its passion; and, as he bent low over Philippa's upturned face, with its shining eyes, he whispered words that might never have come to his lips if the nightingales that night had somehow lost the trick of song.

Aunt Rosie once more saw the lover's face she had last kissed in a coffin, and her cheeks went from pink to white. Paul saw a living face, whose lips he thought death might, perhaps, let him kiss, but life never. And poor, petulant, self-confident Nellie, grateful for the darkness which hid the hot rush of tears in her eyes, felt all her wounds throbbing, her mistakes swelling to the magnitude of unpardonable sins, her follies claiming for themselves an endless celebrity.

"Cousin Geoffrey," she faltered, "I am tired, I want to go home, but I don't want to turn back and meet the others. How can we get out of the park?"

So Cousin Geoffrey led the way out of the grove through the bracken, past some sleepy black cattle with big horns, straight to the grand old oak whose topmost boughs had flung defiance to the heavens, and so had had a thunder-bolt for their pains.

"Let us sit down here a minute, Nellie," he said, kindly though jesuitically; "we'll get behind the tree on this seat, and if the others pass this way they won't see us."

Two and two, the rest of the party came along out of the grove into the open,

feeling the fresh breeze something of a relief after the music-weighted air of the grove with its under-note of pathos.

Aunt Mary and Captain Archer, however, were the only two whose footsteps turned in the direction of Nellie's hiding-place.

She shivered into the shadows, and held in her breath.

"She'll see us," she whispered to Cousin Geoffrey, as she peeped round the big trunk at the pair; "no, she won't—yes, she will. Oh, goodness! they're going to sit down."

And sit down they did.

"You take away my breath—fairly take away my breath," Aunt Mary was saying, as she took her seat and drew her long cloak around her; "of course, you have paid me a very high compliment—the highest a man can pay a woman. I offer you my best thanks in return, but, really, you must give me time to consider."

Nellie's heart seemed to be killing itself with its own beating at that moment, it throbbed at such a pace.

Captain Archer's reply came in his usual slow, impressive tones. "Time would be another word for torture," he said; "surely in one moment the voice of the heart can be heard. Let it speak now, I pray."

"Well, at my time of life the heart is not in the habit of saying rash ecstatic things, and perhaps might be safely listened to. It says to me at the present moment, 'Be a little careful; marriage is for life, not for a week or a month. Men are proverbially fickle—a young, pretty face will sometimes wreck a man's constancy.'"

"Nay, by Heaven!" cried Captain Archer with energy; "young, pretty faces, I assure you, have never had the smallest attraction for me, and as I get on in life are not likely to have more. Give me intellect—intellect, that's what I say. It's worth a hundred young, pretty faces any day."

"Ah, you say so now, but you may alter your mind."

"Alter my mind!" broke in the Captain vehemently; "it's the young, pretty faces that make a man alter his mind, not the intellectual ones. Now between ourselves let me say the modern pretty young lady seems to me the type of everything that is silly and frivolous."

"A little while ago you seemed to me to have rather a liking for silly, frivolous young people. A tennis-lawn saw a good deal of you."

Captain Archer had a sudden prolonged fit of coughing. When he recovered his

voice he said: "Let me explain. You are alluding to a—a certain little—well, shall I say flirtation, which took place between me and your niece, Miss Nellie."

Nellie gave a great start. Cousin Geoffrey put his hand on her shoulder. "Hush, don't betray yourself! Aunt Mary will be furious if she finds out we're here," he whispered.

"It's contemptible—horribly contemptible, sitting here listening to their talk," whispered Nellie.

"What was that?" asked Archer, turning his head in the direction of the sound.

"It was the deer," said Aunt Mary calmly; "pray go on with your explanation;" this added a little stiffly.

"It's—a—a rather difficult task, unless one is brutally plain-spoken."

"I prefer the truth, even if it be brutal."

"Well, then, it's just this. Miss Nellie is a charming girl—a very charming girl; but, as possibly you have found out, intellect she has none."

"I've had that fact specially brought under my notice during the past few months."

"Exactly. During the past few months. And no doubt you have also noted another fault she has—a very serious one."

"Name it."

"I scarcely dare. But if you insist, it's just this: she is rather too fond of laying herself out to attract attention. The soldiers, you know, are quite accustomed to have to face that sort of thing among girls and call it—it's not a nice expression—a 'girl throwing herself at a man's head.'"

Here Nellie absolutely jumped off her seat; but Cousin Geoffrey was firm and made her sit down again.

"If this doesn't cure her I don't know what will," he muttered to himself.

"What was that?" again asked Archer, looking over his shoulder.

"It was the black cattle; they are behind the tree. I saw them as we came along. Go on," said Aunt Mary tranquilly.

"Well, as perhaps you know, men are always ready enough to flirt with such girls to any extent, but marry them never. I confess the thought of marrying Miss Nellie never for one moment entered my head. Her attractions are not at all to my taste."

"You have greatly relieved my mind. I confess I had serious apprehensions on the matter."

"Ah, she's jealous! Capital sign!" thought Archer.

"Now since you've been so perfectly amiable with me, I will return the compliment and tell you honestly that my faults run in exactly an opposite direction to Vellie's. Instead of having a liking as he has for men's society, I rather shun it—in fact, there are certain men whose society I can barely tolerate."

"Capital sign! She has more than tolerated my society," thought the Captain. Aloud he said: "I know the sort you mean, he rackety, noisy sort——"

"Whose whole life," Aunt Mary went on, "is a round of gambling, billiard-playing, horse-racing, and other follies; and who, when debts begin to get pressing, try to sneak out of their difficulties by marrying an heiress."

Captain Archer fidgeted on his seat. He coughed a little nervously. "Exactly," he said. And, because he could find nothing else to say, again said "Exactly."

"As you say, exactly. Well now, be quite honest with me. Knowing my opinion of such men, and how utterly impossible it is for me to tolerate their society, do you still press your offer of marriage on me, or do you wish to withdraw it?"

"Withdraw it!" here Captain Archer in his energy jumped off his seat and stood facing Aunt Mary. "My dear madam, can you suppose such a thing? I would rather press it a hundred times over. You have described most accurately a great many men—a of my acquaintance—of my regiment even; but such men, I assure you, I should never attempt to bring into your society should you do me the honour to marry me."

"You think you could settle down to a quiet life in our little house here."

"I should adore such a life—easy distance from town—the house is everything that's admirable."

"But I've a great objection to London life. London will never see me. And it has just occurred to me that you'll have to put down your hunter. There's only room in my stables for my two ponies."

"Consider the hunter sold," cried the Captain ecstatically, resuming his seat a little closer to the lady, and thinking how easy it would be to buy the hunter back again a little later on.

"And now I come to think of it, it would be just as well, perhaps, that I should put down my ponies. By-the-way"—this said slowly and thoughtfully—"to be quite honest with you, I've been living a little beyond my income of late."

"Beyond your income?" and Captain Archer shifted on his seat and began to look a little uncomfortable.

"I'm afraid so. You see, my income is not very big to start with. I indulge in no extravagances, it is true, but I adore my geological cabinet, and, as perhaps you know, a hundred pounds does not go very far in buying specimens. In fact, the hundred pounds which my poor brother left me the other day, went a very little way in supplying some ugly gaps in my shelves devoted to the triassic period."

"Your hundred pounds!" Pen could not express the blank astonishment and dismay which couched behind these words.

Aunt Mary took no notice of them.

"The dew is beginning to fall. We must think of getting back to the house," she said. "Well, now, Captain Archer, that we have been so perfectly honest and straightforward with each other, I don't see why our chances of happiness in the married life should not be as good as those of any other prudent middle-aged persons free from vices and extravagances. Come, let us be going."

She rose as she finished speaking. Captain Archer did not stir. There came a long uncomfortable pause. "I feel, after your extreme candour to me just now," he said at length, halting and stumbling over his words, "that it is due to you to make a confession—a—a—most painful one, but I shall not spare myself."

"There is no necessity for such a thing. I am not one of those who think a man is bound to confess all his youthful follies to the woman he wishes to marry."

"But these are not youthful follies, and a—a—the truth is—a—that the older I get the closer they stick to me."

"Ah, I'm sure you'll shake them off easily enough beside a quiet fireside."

"No, confound it!" cried Archer, jumping to his feet; "nothing of the sort. A quiet fireside would make them stick harder than ever. The fact is," he went on excitedly, "I wouldn't—no—I couldn't do such a mean thing as marry a woman under pretence of shaking off my bad habits and settling down for life tied to her apron-strings. Some men could do it, but not I."

Aunt Mary surveyed him with a quiet smile. "My dear friend," she said blandly, "your sense of honour is so fine as to be all but wire-drawn. Some women might take advantage of it, but not I——"

"Three hunters and a hack are a

necessity of existence to me," broke in the Captain with a violent jerk.

"To a man who can exhibit such a fine generosity as you have shown to-night even three hunters and a hack might be forgiven."

"And as for billiards and a—a—brandy-and-soda——"

"My dear friend, even brandy and billiards could be condoned in a man of your magnanimity of temper; out of fiction I could not have believed such a character possible."

"Good Heavens, madam!" cried the Captain, fairly carried away by excitement now, "what is it you can't condone or forgive—will you tell me that? I tell you I abhor all the sciences—geology in particular; I have a terror of an intellectual woman, especially if she is on the wrong side of forty. I detest virtue; I adore the vices—every one of them. I've led a worse life than Jack Sheppard himself—than Jack Sheppard himself, do you understand?—than Jack Sheppard and Tom Jones rolled into one. I've cheated at cards, I've borrowed money all round without having the smallest intention of ever paying it back; in fact I——"

"Stand confessed as about the biggest scoundrel that ever wore shoe-leather," finished Cousin Geoffrey, coming round from behind the tree at that moment. "Well, sir, will you allow me to make the suggestion that you should offer this lady the humblest of apologies for the offer you were good enough to make her a little while ago of your disreputable name and your damaged fortune."

"And will you allow me," said Nellie, coming round the tree on the other side and making him a little mock curtsy, "to thank you for the high compliment you paid me a minute ago when you confessed that my attractions were not to your taste." It was too dark to see her face, but the cheery, mocking tone in her voice told Aunt Mary that the girl's skin-deep wounds were healed already.

"It's a planned thing—a planned thing from first to last to insult me!" cried Archer, trying to shake himself into a tume of virtuous indignation.

There came the rustling of dresses, the trampling of feet through the bracken at this moment. The rest of the party was at hand.

And, presently, to Nellie it seemed as though the dusky, silent glade had all at once become alive with light and sound,

as though a whole multitude of stars had suddenly flashed forth in the dark heavens, a mighty wind had come rushing down the shadowy acacia-grove towards them with the music of all the nightingales on its wings.

For Paul had come close to her side and had whispered in her ear while his hand sought hers in the darkness:

"Nellie, such news! Philippa has thrown me over for Francis, and my heart isn't broken a bit. So I can offer it whole to you, dear—yours for life."

A BYGONE STORY.

BY W. W. FENN.

CHAPTER I.

WHAT WAS IN THE OLD MAN'S DESK.

A ROOM in a farmhouse, with all the signs in furniture and fittings expected in the abode of a well-to-do yeoman. The yeoman himself, a very old but hale and hearty man, sitting at the table, and by the aid of a quite modern paraffin-lamp, examining the contents of a battered, time-worn desk open before him. He has just laid aside a much-thumbed, dog-eared account-book, from which he has taken one or two letters and a thickish packet of manuscript, all showing, by the faded ink and yellowed paper, that they may be as old as he is. Such of the writing as we are concerned with shall speak for itself.

First, the account-book, which bears the superscription, Jane Burt. Inside, under date June 2nd, 1810, there stand the names, "Mr. and Mrs. Roderick Craven Letting best rooms from this date for four weeks, to June 30th, at 25s., £5 0s. 0d."

Then a preliminary letter from this Mr. Craven, dated from Oxford, negotiating for the hire of the rooms in a certain Bower Well Cottage, Crendon Wells, Worcestershire, and addressed to Mrs. Burt, the landlady. "He has been informed of them by a friend, and wishes to know if he can bring his wife there, who has been out of health." It is written on the large-sized post-paper common in those days, and in the same handwriting as the manuscript—that of Mr. Roderick Craven, evidently an author. The manuscript itself now lies under the spectacled eyes of the veteran yeoman, and we will follow them as he reads it. On its front page, as a note, are these words, in faded pencil:

"This adventure will serve as a basis of a sketch for one of the annuals. Heath has often pestered me to write him one for his 'Book of Beauty.' Here is the idea. Then it begins thus :

"Ideal country quarters at last. Hard to reach, but when reached, promising well. Though why the landlady gazed at me as she did, so enquiringly and so strangely, puzzles me much. That the unlooked-for and startling interruption to our peace should have happened was very unfortunate, there is no doubt, but we must be thankful that it proved no worse.

"The snug sitting and bed rooms in Bower Well Cottage are one above the other, and have each a bow-window looking out across a patch of garden upon a lovely prospect and up a narrow avenue of trees. The house is oddly situated, jammed, as it were, into a nook in the hills, a third of the way up to their top. It is long and narrow, the kitchen and landlady's apartments being at the back, while one side rests against the slope. On the other is the entrance—opposite the well or spring, which, gushing forth from a rocky fern-clad dell, pours itself into a rough stone basin, thence finding its way at its own sweet will to the valley far below. A primitive wooden shed shelters it, and makes, with a bench, a snug corner and resting-place for visitors coming to drink the waters. There is a rough, steep carriage-road to this point about a quarter of a mile long, from where it leaves the main-road between Worcester and Hereford, which runs along the valley at the foot of the hills, and just where the straggling village of Creedon Wells has its solitary hostelry. Thus the Bower Well and the cottage stand in a wildish, lonely spot quite by themselves; and as the road leading to them ends there, it is little used except by pilgrims; but from there the hill-paths proper begin—at the very garden-gate almost of the cottage, and with the narrow avenue referred to. The whole region is very beautiful, though but little wooded save just hereabouts, and the trees, even, which form the avenue gradually die away a few yards higher on the hillside. No wonder it is a popular health-resort, for apart from the benefit the waters may confer, the splendid air and magnificent prospect commanded on all sides must do body and mind alike infinite good.

"The evening was beautiful when we arrived from Worcester which city we

reached the night before, after two days' posting from Oxford. Night fell, however, so rapidly that we had not much time to enjoy the view, to which, nevertheless, the rising full moon lent a wondrous charm of its own. My wife was much fatigued, and retired soon after our comfortable supper, leaving me alone in the long, low, bow-windowed parlour to finish some work I had in hand. After some long writing, the air becoming a little chilly, I rose to shut the window. It was a splendid night, and the moon, now high in the heavens, created the most beautiful, and at the same time fantastic, effect among the trees. The scent of the roses, clustering close to the window, and here and there thrusting a blossom straight within it, filled the atmosphere. I stood looking out for many minutes, enjoying the perfect serenity and beauty. The silence was almost awful in its solemnity, for only the faintest breath now and again passed among the leaves and flowers, scarcely stirring them. Loth to retreat, but remembering what was still to be completed on the desk, I at length closed the casement, and partially drew the curtains. Soon deeply absorbed by my occupation, I lost consciousness of everything save the intense stillness and the loneliness of the situation; therefore it is not surprising that I was startled by fancying I heard a gentle tap at the window. Involuntarily I looked up, and then at my watch—it was on the stroke of midnight. Listening for a second or two without hearing the faintest sound, I concluded that my ears had deceived me, but within a minute after I had resumed the pen, the tap on the glass was repeated—this time without any doubt—and then was again repeated. Was it a rose-bush, stirred by the wind, touching the pane? There was not a breath. While I was wondering all speculation was cleared away. Once more the noise came, and now distinctly—it was the firm but gentle tapping of fingers! I do not think I am less courageous than most men; but this was at least enough to have given the strongest nerves a twinge—the hour, the solitude, all considered. Surely it was but natural that I hesitated, ere walking to the window and pushing the curtain back. But I did so boldly, resolutely, in another minute, for still again came the tapping, and more prolonged; another moment, and I had opened the window, to encounter at it, and within a yard from it, a sight which certainly struck me with a passing terror.

"I have never actually disbelieved in ghosts, but after what I now saw—well!—Full in the moonlight stood the tall form of a woman, her face as white as her garments. The rays fell clear and direct upon it, and as I appeared at the open window it drew back, beckoning with uplifted hand. If this was not a ghost, I should never see one! It looked too ethereal, too unsubstantial, for aught else—besides, it appeared to glide rather than to walk. Slowly it continued to retreat—through the garden-gate, back into the avenue—seemingly unflinched by the shadows from the overhanging trees which fell, of course, in fretted pattern upon all substantial objects. This mysterious form gave out a light of its own, increased, perhaps, by that of the moon, but still independent of it. Presently it began to vanish up the avenue, though for ever looking round and beckoning; then it was gone—suddenly.

"Not to dwell on my sensations, I merely say I had a slight difficulty in collecting my thoughts. Was the whole thing an optical illusion, due to the strain that writing late puts upon the brain and eyes? I rubbed them, and resented the idea. Ears as well could not have deceived me. It was ridiculous! No similar experience would warrant it, for I am young, strong, and sound of nerve, mind, and limb. No more work for me, however. I could not settle to it, excited as I was. I waited a while watching and listening at the window. I waited there for the best part of an hour, until the moon was getting well behind the hill. No further sign of the figure appearing, I fastened the window securely, put out the light, and crept up to our bedroom, situated above the parlour, and like it in shape, size, and aspect. Happily my wife was sleeping soundly, but it was long ere I could do the same; yet, had I aroused her, be sure no word of what had happened would have passed my lips that night, nor did I let it the next morning. The disturbing effect on a delicate woman's nerves of such a story must have been prejudicial, and, whatever I thought about it myself, I determined to keep it to myself, at any rate for the present. I might have been deceived in some way after all; most people would consider I had, so I said nothing even to our good landlady, in spite of her continued looks of enquiry at me the next morning, and, indeed, whenever we met. To forget it, however, was impossible. Throughout the succeeding day it haunted me, despite the diversion of wandering with my dear

mate up and about the slopes in the neighbourhood of our cottage, and the enjoyment of the fine air and sunshine, and the beauty of Nature so lavishly spread out on all hands.

"Supper-time again! and all going on with that strange and confusing repetition which, in peaceful lives, seems to substitute the affairs of yesterday so completely for those of to-day, that the mind momentarily loses count of the twenty-four hours elapsed. It might have been last night exactly, and we might have only just arrived, for aught of difference in our surroundings and doings. Only my wife is not so tired—the change of air is already telling beneficially, and she does not retire quite so soon. I am glad of this, for I have no relish for being again disturbed after the manner of last night; and when she goes upstairs I mean to do the same, and say so.

"'Why, Roderick,' cries she in surprise, 'I never knew you in such a hurry to go to bed before!'

"'The air is very strong,' I reply evasively; 'it makes one sleepy, I suppose.'

"'Well, you don't look sleepy.'

"'Ah, looks are deceptive, my dear; they have often deceived you with regard to your husband. For instance, you have always thought him a good-looking fellow, and there is no greater deception than that possible.'

"'You would not like me to say so,' says she; 'however, come along! It's quite time, past eleven—not country hours at all! I shall be glad of your company; this is a lonely spot, and quite eerie at night. I did not quite like coming upstairs alone last night, I promise you. The old landlady and her maid have been an hour and more! How monotonously quiet everything is! I don't think I should quite like it when there is no moon, but it is very beautiful now.'

"Thus gossiping, we reach our room. Her last words are dictated by the flood of light streaming in at the bow-window, to which she has walked, and where she stands looking out upon the brilliant orb of night. The scent of the roses steals in with the silver rays, and for a moment she seems to be absolutely revelling in the sweetness and beauty.

"I have a restless desire to prevent her standing there. If, by any chance, that wandering form should come again! Why, it would scare the life out of her, were she to see it, as I did.

"'Very beautiful,' I say indifferently;

'but you had better not stay up now, and we must draw the curtains, or the light will be too strong for you.'

"Yes," she cries; 'it is not good to sleep in the rays of the moon, I have been told. What is the story? "The Vampire's Victim." I have read it somewhere. Ah, I remember, it was one of yours. I read it in one of the annuals, before I knew you! Oh, a horrible story! I wish I had not thought of it. Ah, what is that?'

"This sudden exclamation, in great alarm, startles and tells me the fatal truth. That haunting figure has caught her eye for a certainty! I am by her side on the instant. Clinging to me, and pointing towards the avenue, she says:

"Surely there is someone in the garden! I am confident of it. I saw a white figure move towards the avenue."

"Nonsense! there is no one there," I say reassuringly. 'Who should be? These hills are nearly deserted by day—and quite so by night.'

"Oh, I am confident, Roderick," she goes on, trembling from head to foot; "it passed like a flash across the path, but I saw it distinctly. Oh! Who or what can it be?'

"All efforts at first to pacify her are in vain. Only very slowly can I persuade her to come away from the window, and induce her to believe she has been deceived. She does not—she will not believe it. I try and make the best of it, look forth boldly, and only speak the truth when I again and again declare there is no one to be seen. That my mind misgives me, however, and that I have little doubt she may have seen what I saw the previous night, can be guessed. If this really be the case, there at once is an end to our peace and comfort. If this sort of thing is to go on—if there really be some apparition haunting this nook in the hills, we shall have to leave our snug quarters forthwith. To-morrow I determine there shall be no further concealment on my part. I will question Mrs. Burt; but for to-night my wife's rest is the first consideration, and I bend all efforts to bring that about.

"Long is it, however, ere there is any approach to success; but, finally, she is somewhat soothed, and preparing for sleep. The curtains of the window are closely drawn; not a sound is to be heard outside. I am nearly ready for bed myself, when, all in a moment, the panic is renewed by the distinct splash of gravel thrown up against the window

"'There!' cries my wife; 'there is some one outside. I told you so!'

"Impossible now to deny it. As I am about to draw the curtain back she continues:

"Heavens, Roderick, what are you doing? Pray don't go to the window.' But, ere I can reply, more gravel tinkles against the glass.

"Indeed I must," I say; 'I must see who is there,' for I feel assured now this can be no ghostly manifestation, and perhaps the conviction lends me courage, and I am angry at the disturbance. Deaf to further remonstrance, back go the curtains, and open flies the casement.

"Who's there?' I cry. The words have hardly passed my lips ere there is a flash below—a loud report. The glass is riddled by shot; one rakes my hair, another cuts my ear! Almost before I can realise this fact and step back into the room, a second report rings through the air, taking up the dying echo of the first. More window-panes are broken, the wood-work is torn away, but I am untouched.

"No attempt of mine can describe my wife's consternation, nor, for the matter of that, my own. She need not cling to me so closely, though. I have no intention again to expose myself to such outrage. Rousing the house is unnecessary, for the noise has done that, as may be judged in a minute or two by the arrival, in wild bewilderment, of Mrs. Burt.

"Oh, sir, sir—what has happened? Why, you are bleeding!' This is true; the cut on my ear makes a great show, but I know there is no further hurt.

"Rapid and incoherent explanations, mingled with sobs from my wife, follow for a moment, but I say:

"It is for you to explain, Mrs. Burt—for you to account for this alarming, unaccountable outrage. What thieves and ruffians are there hanging about these hills who could do this thing? There is a woman in it, too, or may be she is single-handed. I saw her last night flying about the place like a ghost; indeed, till now, I thought she had been one.'

"Ah," exclaims Mrs. Burt, astonished; 'she has seen you, then, has she? I reckoned if she did she would mark the resemblance, and she has been drawn on by it; it is most marvellous. But she, poor thing! would not have fired at you. Can it be that Evan, in one of his fits of vio——' Mrs. Burt breaks off. 'Stay' she adds 'let me see. Here

Mary, Mary, bring me a cloak! I will go down; and the woman retreats to the maid-servant, standing with frightened ace in the passage.

"To prolong here any details of the bewildering and confusion incidental to this strange scene is quite out of the question. The well-founded fear that some personal attack upon myself had been made, and intended for me alone, is the conclusion which rushes through my brain at the landlady's disjointed and mysterious references, though why, or wherefore, or what I have done to incur such animosity is beyond comprehension. But worse—may not the attack be renewed, when my escape might be less fortunate? This idea increased by my wife's strenuous efforts to prevent my moving from the spot, and her eagerness to lock the door.

"'Wait, wait,' she says; 'do not move. Wait till the woman returns.'

"I remain as passive as I can. We can hear hurrying footsteps outside, and the voices of more than one man in hurried colloquy with the landlady. Presently they go away, and no sound, for a long while, comes through the open casement. We are both nearly dressed now, though either dares—wisely, I think—to approach the window. Presently Mrs. Burt is returning. We hear her coming in and upstairs. When admitted to our room she cannot say much. Two post-boys, from the village inn, up late with their horses, had run up the hill to see what the matter was on hearing the report, and Mrs. Burt had told them, and then they had all gone away to Hay's house, and though they could not find him or his sister, they felt sure he had done this.

"Who Hay was, why he should try to fool me, and all the rest of the enigmas which the case presented here in the dead of night, were not likely to be answered or made clear. All this must stand over, we agreed, till the morrow, and all that could then be done was to try and wait for that morrow with what composure we could summon.

"The above has been noted down while fresh in my memory, knowing, as I do, the value of vivid impressions."

CHAPTER II.

WHAT WAS IN THE OLD MAN'S MIND.

WHEN the aged yeoman finished reading the manuscript he leisurely referred to the state of the letting of the rooms to Mr.

Craven in the account-book. Then, after taking off his spectacles, quietly wiping them and laying them down, he wheeled round his chair to the fire, stirred it, took a long clay pipe from a recess in the chimney-corner, filled, and lighted it.

"Strange," he said aloud, with the garrulity of years, as he began to puff, "how it takes me back to the old days. Fifty years at least since I looked at these papers, and nearly eighty since they were written; yet it all comes back to me as fresh as if it had happened but a month ago. Why do I keep them? All the actors have passed away, and I must soon follow, for I shall be ninety-five come Michaelmas—wonderful that I have been spared so long and to be so well—with all my faculties about me except in the matter of walking. No; I will keep them no longer; they shall be burnt to-night with the rest of the useless rubbish." Then he lapsed into a silent reverie, and as we followed his old eyes over the faded writing, so will we now follow his mind over the events it vividly recalled.

The farmhouse he occupied had been his birthplace, and that of his father before him. It was situated in the valley, not far from the junction of the roads up to Bower Well, and the highway between Worcester and Hereford. He saw himself in his narrow, homely life learning his father's trade of farming, and falling in love when he was about seventeen, like many another lad in the village, with the beautiful and strangely attractive Gwynneth Hay, then some three years older than himself, and as lovely a rustic maiden a might be seen in a day's march. Delicate as far as features, hands, feet, and complexion were concerned, but tall, upright, strong, and healthy withal, she was a true specimen of what is called a nut-brown maid, or in simpler words, somewhat gipsy-looking. In character and mind, she was even more uncommon. Had she been born in a higher station of life, she would probably have shown those refinements of thought, feeling, and taste, out of which accomplished women are made and poetic and romantic characters woven. Her footfall was as light and elastic as a bird's, and she appeared to skim over the ground rather than to walk. A dreamy creature at most times too, and she had a dreamy way of looking at you, the old man remembered as this picture of his early love came before him. Deeply religious, to the point of fanaticism, she

professed, though without ostentation, to have the gift of prophecy, being able, as she said, to foretell many things that would come to pass, because at times they all seemed to have happened before, and within her knowledge. Those who judged her only by others asserted that at times she was not quite in her right mind, but this had no deterrent effect on the love with which she inspired the rustic youth of the countryside. She lived with her brother Evan, in a house on the neighbouring Squire's estate, but situated in a deep copse on the slopes of those same Creedon Hills among which she was born, not far from the Bower Well. He was head-gamekeeper, bailiff, overseer, a sort of steward and general factotum to the Squire, and many years older than his sister. A trustworthy man in the main, but with a violent, ungovernable temper—occasionally increased by drink—which had more than once well-nigh cost him his post, and promised sooner or later to be his ruin. Gwynneth, nevertheless, was idolised by him since their mother's death, but like many men of his class, he took little heed of her movements or of the friends and acquaintances she made. Thus she fell in love and became engaged before he knew anything about it. But it was not with the farmer-lad that she fell in love, nor any of the other young Worcester-shire swains that came courting her glances. It would have been better for her if she had. No; she cast her affections upon a stranger—a certain Mr. Robert Cross, who made his appearance one summer in the character of a convalescent seeking health in the lodgings of Mrs. Burt of Bower Well, the guardian of that spring. He had been set down one afternoon by the Worcester coach at the corner of the road, and hearing that there were rooms to let near the well, wandered up there with his small valise and took them. He professed to be an Oxford student, though the landlady confided to her neighbours—the young farmer among them—that she thought he must be too old, “being nigh upon thirty by looks, which were in his favour every way, though.” Still, as he paid a fortnight's rent in advance, and apparently had plenty of money, she was quite satisfied. Mystery, nevertheless, clung to him and his acts, for how he first knew Gwynneth, eventually became engaged to her, and accepted as her honourable suitor by her brother, no one ever rightly heard. At any rate the young farmer never knew,

or, if he did, that part of his retrospective reverie came net before him. His memory now only travelled back to the agony of mind he suffered, and the bitter indignation he felt when, after a year or more of absence and silence, it became only too plain that this Mr. Robert Cross had utterly deserted Gwynneth. A vision of the forlorn, disconsolate, and now truly half-witted girl sitting hither and thither among the woodland paths and up the hill-sides, arose vividly through the clouds from the old man's pipe, and even after those long, long years brought an angry frown to his otherwise placid brow, and made the gnarled and aged hand clench angrily. His fancy, however, followed the figure with such loving thoughts that his face soon resumed the calmness happily vouchsafed to his declining hours, but once more grew a little disturbed as he remembered the morning immediately succeeding that night in Bower Well Cottage, described by the manuscript; how he went to the cottage to verify the strange reports which had found their way down to the village and his father's farm. Stripling though he was at the time, he recollected how he had gone into good Mrs. Burt's comfortable kitchen or house-place, to find several neighbours eagerly discussing the events with her. Some suggested that the assailants must have been footpads or highwaymen, who had tracked the lady and gentleman to their rural lodgings, although why they should have been fired at was past understanding. The village blacksmith stuck to his opinion, however—he was sure it was robbers. They swarmed along the roads at that season when the quality were travelling to and from the Wells to drink the waters. Quite lately several carriages had been stopped between Oxford and Cheltenham, and he made no doubt the gentlemen of the road had found their way among these hills by now. Mrs. Burt shook her head; her ideas were quite different, she insisted, and when the constabulary came to hear of it, they would have to look nearer home, she expected. Still the blacksmith was obstinate and refused to give up his point.

“But have you seen my lodger?” she asked.

The man had not. He had been too busy to leave his forge. He should have enough to do if he watched all the visitors and people that came to the Wells at this season.

“Then you can't know nowt about it,”

answered the landlady. "Did you ever see that Mr. Robert Cross, as he called himself, as was here in my rooms a year and more ago?"

Yes; the worthy farrier remembered him well, he'd seen him many a time, walkin' with Gwynneth Hay, and he always said no good 'ud come o' that job; and for his part he'd like to catch sight of him now—that was all, and he'd give him a bit of his, the farrier's, mind, if not a taste 'summut else.

At this moment there was a tap at the door of the kitchen communicating with the front of the house, and on its being opened there entered a gentleman, who struck all present but Mrs. Burt with amazement. As he stood for a minute in the shadow, a half-indignant murmur passed round the room.

The old yeoman set down his pipe and rubbed his eyes, as memory took him through that scene again.

"The likeness was startling," he muttered; "no wonder we were all deceived for the moment. We were sitting and standing round about the table between the wide open chimney and a low window opposite. Beside this window was the door giving upon the way down to the shed sheltering the well. Ah, I remember the weather of the preceding day had broken; heavy clouds made it very dark, and a thick, misty rain was clinging close to the hills. The door was half open, for it was hot cold. Before anybody spoke again, a shadow passed the window, further obscuring the murky light it admitted. When the door was pushed open, and Gwynneth herself came in next moment, he was looking very beautiful as usual, though pale unto death, and her poor eyes were more dazed and far-off looking than ever. She had only a white kerchief tied loosely over her head, beneath which streamed her nut-brown hair—alas! now little streaked with silver. I see her plainly in a grey stuff gown, all soiled and torn. Yes, and when she saw the gentleman, she walked straight up to him, exclaiming:

"Oh, Robert, at last we meet! Why have you been away so long, and never have written! Speak to me, and tell me she is not your wife—she that I saw you with on the hills, and standing in the moonlight at the window? Tell me this, at least, if you have no more to say."

"I can hear her very voice as I think

of it," continued the veteran dame. "Yes; she held out her hand as if expecting him to take it. He turned, then, bewildered, towards Mrs. Burt, who, advancing, took poor Gwynneth's stretched hand, and endeavoured to turn her aside.

"My dear," she said, 'come to me. I don't know this gentleman; he has never seen you before; you are quite mistaken. Come, let me take you home.'

"No, no," said the girl; "I am not mistaken. I will not go home without him; now he has come back, he must come home with me—it is his home too. If he does not, brother will be right; he said Robert had deserted me, but I knew better. Come, come!"

"But this gentleman is not Robert—your Robert," insisted Mrs. Burt, 'although so like him.'

"Oh, don't tell me that—he won't tell me that!" cried Gwynneth. "He will not say anyone but himself gave me this as a token of his love, and bid me wear it for his sake."

"She hastily undid the neck of her dress, and removed a thin silver chain necklace with a little coral hand hanging from it as a pendant. Directly the gentleman saw it as she held it towards him, he took it eagerly, crying in amazement:

"What! Who! How came you by this?" and then quickly to Mrs. Burt: "What does it mean? Who is this poor mad girl?"

"Gwynneth answered:

"You, Robert! You gave it me—I know you did!"

"Great Heaven!!" he exclaimed suddenly. "I see it all! My wretched brother—and she has mistaken me for him; and so at first, I suppose, did you, Mrs. Burt, and that is why you looked at me so wonderingly. For we are—we were—greatly alike, and have often been mistaken. But when was he here, and what name did he pass by?"

All was hurry, confusion, astonishment. But the old man in his reverie recalled even the details vividly—so vividly as to be greatly moved as he remembered the effect of the discovery on Gwynneth, when they were able gradually to make her poor, bewildered mind understand something of the truth.

And that truth, simply put, was that the twin-brothers, Roderick and Robert Craven, though so marvellously alike in person, were absolutely opposite in

character. The first, an upright, honourable, accomplished gentleman; the second, a scampish, lying, untrustworthy, ne'er-do-well from his boyhood, but his mother's favourite, of course. The necklet had been hers, given to him on her death-bed. His family had heard nothing of him for three years—heard nothing of him ever again, so far as the old man knew.

Gwynneth had caught a glimpse of Roderick Craven through the window, as he sat writing, on the first night he arrived at Bower Well Cottage, and had tapped at the casement, but when he opened it, was afraid to speak so near the house, and therefore beckoned him to go forth. The next day she saw him walking with his wife, and was heartstricken—saw him again in the evening standing with the same woman at the window of the bedroom, in the moonlight. In her wild jealousy she had rushed home and told her brother. He, not quite sober, became furious, seized his double-barrelled gun, and, despite her entreaties, rushed through the garden of Bower Well Cottage, flung up the gravel, and—it was not difficult to fit it all together. Still, as the neighbourhood said, he might have been hanged for it—would have been, but for the clemency of Mr. Craven, for in those times hanging was common for far less offences.

The last vision of the past which the old yeoman saw through the smoke of one more pipe was the little mossy mound, with a stone cross at its head, nestling under the trees in the rural churchyard. As this died away into smoke with the rest, he gathered the contents of the old deak together—they had come into his possession nearly fifty years before, in his capacity of executor and administrator of good Mrs. Burt's little estate. He never knew how Roderick Craven, the author, happened to leave his manuscript behind him, but there it was among the rest of her effects. Now he glanced once more through some of its pages, and then consigning them to the flames, slowly watched the writing as it turned to ashes and fell in blackened, shapeless masses upon the hearthstone before which he sat.

WAITING FOR ORDERS.

BY FREDERICK TALBOT.

IN Pengelly Creek lies the Princess Iris, a smart and beautiful craft, finished and

adorned with a care that shows how she is valued by her captain and owners. Her taper masts, her fine spars, and the cobweb tracery of her rigging, catching at this moment a strong gleam of sunshine, stand out against dark masses of foliage; rugged, many-coloured crags; and the rude stone walls upon Pengelly Hill. Land-locked, calm, and placid are the waters of the creek, like those of some inland lake; but just round the point where fringing woods dip their branches into the tide, lies the broad expanse of Learmouth Harbour, where all the navies of Europe might ride at anchor.

But trim and handsome as is the ship, there is an aspect of solitude and desertion about her. No sailors are lounging about her decks or hanging from her rigging. Her crew, indeed, were paid off a month ago, and nobody knows when she will ship another, for times are bad, and freights are scarce, and thus the good ship lies in ballast waiting for orders. But the captain still lives on board; and, indeed, one could not desire better quarters than the handsomely-furnished house on deck which forms the captain's cabin; and the mate is there, too, in his cabin down below. But each lives apart, and has little to say to the other, and the man who cooks for them serves their meals separately at different hours of the day.

Just now, as the ship swings gently round in answer to the first movement of the tide, and as a soft breeze ripples the water, the captain comes out from his white house on deck, and gives a hail down the opening to the cabin:

"Hi, Penailon! I'm going ashore."

Captain Carnew is a handsome young Cornishman, not a giant by any means, but well built and proportioned, with a bronzed and ruddy visage, and a good-humoured and yet determined expression. As the mate thrusts his head into the daylight, and looks about him, yawning, he presents a strong contrast to the sanguine captain. He is yellow and dark-eyed, with crisp, black curling hair, and his eyes gleam savagely as they rest upon his captain's spruce array.

"I shall go ashore, too, if you go," said the mate defiantly.

"When I come back you can go ashore," said the captain, in a voice that did not invite further discussion. And then he lowered himself, deftly, into a little dingey that lay alongside, and was soon out of sight round the bend of the creek.

There the hill rose still more

cipitously, and its summit was crowned by an old ruined tower, known as Pengelly Castle, while just below, in a little clearing among the woods, stood the tiny church of St. Keo, with a pathway up to it from the creek, and a little landing-place with steps almost hidden by moss and weeds.

Here Harry Carnew moored his skiff, and then he sprang with vigorous footsteps up the hill, to where a little spring by the churchyard-wall filled a mossy basin, and trickled down the hillside, its course almost hidden by a luxuriant growth of ferns and bright-leaved ivy. This was the wishing-well of St. Keo, and by its margin stood a tall and slender young woman, gazing into the pellucid water, and so much occupied with her incantation that she did not hear the approaching footsteps. And thus Master Harry stole quietly upon her, and, putting his head over the girl's shoulder, saw reflected in the little basin the dark and glowing face of Iris Grade in close proximity to his own manly features. The girl, of course, saw the same reflection, and gave a start and a little scream; but next moment her wrist was firmly clasped, and a round dozen of kisses put all illusion to flight.

"Oh, Harry, you clumsy fellow!" cried Iris, untwining herself deftly from the young man's embrace. "Why, you've spoilt the charm! I really did believe in St. Keo just for a minute."

"St. Keo's all right," said the captain. "You were looking to see your future husband's face, dear, and you saw him. Though, after all," his face clouding over, "what reason had you to be in doubt about the matter?"

"Oh, there is terrible doubt," said Iris, "and that is why I asked you to meet me here. But, first of all, where is Pensilon?"

"Why, on board, of course," replied Carnew, chafing at the question; "what matters about him?"

"Why, you know," began Iris coaxingly, "how fond he has always been of me. Now, don't get in a rage, Harry; you know I don't care for him; but still I feel a little sorry for him because, don't you see, Harry, before I knew you I think I used—what you might call to flirt with him."

"I make no doubt of it, my girl," said Harry dryly. "Well, and now?"

"Well, now, you know, dear Harry, that papa is somewhat in a fix—"

"Well, that's not my fault, anyhow," said Harry gloomily. "I've always done

him justice with my Princess—she is a charming Princess, isn't she?" he said, snatching a kiss from the radiant face that was so near his just then.

"She is a beautiful ship, Harry," rejoined Iris, ignoring the personal application of his words. "But think of the old Princess, the deserted, miserable old thing lying there in Bool River. Come, Harry; I'll race you up to the tower to have a look at her."

And Iris, forgetting all troubles for the time, darting away, ran lightly up the tangled pathway with Captain Harry close behind her; and they reached the summit of the hill, and the foot of the old tower that crowned the height, almost at the same moment. From this point a charming view was spread out before them. On one side Pengelly Creek, with the one tall ship lying there at anchor, and on the other the Bool River winding placidly among the wooded heights. In front lay the broad expanse of Learmouth Harbour sparkling in the sunshine, and dotted with the sails of innumerable craft, while beyond was seen the dark headland and the low sandpit, with its black, grim-looking front, and farther still the sea-horizon, almost lost in a soft summer haze. But the object that most interested the lovers was an old black hulk that lay just beneath them in a little bay formed by the river—a hulk that had lain there many years. The story went that she had belonged to an old sea-captain, who had sailed her on his own account till both ship and captain were out and growing old. They had anchored the last time in Bool River. Without money to refit his ship, and having no lived all friends who could help him, the old captain was found one morning hanging in his cabin, dead and cold; and from that time everybody had avoided the old hulk, which had been called the Princess in her sea-going days. And now she belonged to Stephen Grade, of Pengelly Castle, the father of Iris, and was used as a sort of floating lumber-room and receptacle of old stores.

But what now attracted the attention of the young people, was the unexpected sight of a large man-o'-war's boat manned, if the expression is allowable, by a crew of boys from the training ship in the harbour, while in the stern were several naval officers, who appeared to be scrutinising the old Princess with more attention than she was in the habit of receiving.

"But surely," and Iris, as, standing in

eyes with her hands, she looked down into the boat, "surely, Harry, that is Pensilon who is steering. I wonder if he can see us." And Iris shrank back into the shadow of the tower.

"Yes, it is Pensilon!" cried Harry angrily. "And against my orders. I'll let him know who's the master!"

"Now you stop here, Harry," said Iris coaxingly. "You often say there is no discipline in harbour. No doubt Captain Fluke picked him up to pilot his boat up the river, for you must own, Harry, that nobody knows the ins and outs of our river like Frank."

It was soon evident that the boat was making for the landing-place by Pengelly Castle—not the old ruin, it must be noted, but the grey manor-house that lay sheltered in the woods by the river, and that bore the name of its more ancient predecessor on the heights. That there had been a family of Grades at Pengelly from the days of the Crusades might be read in old county histories, but the name had been unknown there for a couple of centuries at least, when Stephen Grade, who had made a fortune by trade in South America, came and bought the place. There was little dignity attached to the ownership of Pengelly Castle, for the domains were only a few dozen acres of rocks and woodland, and Stephen Grade had no ambition in the way of social distinction. His fortune was chiefly invested in shipping, and he had done something to add to the prosperity of Learmouth Harbour and town. His ships, which were mostly sailing-craft and in the South American trade, called at Learmouth for orders, and most of his captains were of the west-country race. One of his favourite commanders was Henry Carnew, of an old seafaring line, whose forefathers may have fought and plundered under Drake and Erobisher—one of the youngest of sea-captains afloat, but who perhaps owed some part of his rapid advancement to having means of his own and being part-owner of the vessel he commanded, which was altogether a smarter craft and fitted up with more luxurious appointments than the general run of trading-ships.

At the request of Stephen Grade, Captain Carnew had taken on board as mate, Frank Pensilon, whose uncle was a rich Liverpool merchant, to whom Grade was under obligations. Captain and mate had got on well together while at sea, but the month they had passed in idleness in

Pengelly Creek had strained their relations terribly. They were rivals for the affections of Iris Grade, and the captain's success in that matter had filled the heart of his subordinate with the gall of jealousy and bitter hatred. Captain Carnew, as the winner in the race, could afford to be more magnanimous, but his temper was continually tried by the provocations thrown in his way by Pensilon, who burned to find some pretext for revenging himself on the man who had supplanted him, as he considered, in the affections of Iris Grade.

When Iris told her lover the real state of affairs, how her father, whose ships had been a loss to him of late, could not carry on his adventures without the help of the elder Pensilon, who had already advanced him money, and that this help was only to be forthcoming if Iris consented to marry young Frank, Captain Carnew was almost beside himself with anger. To meet young Pensilon, and decide the matter by wager of battle was his first impulse; but Iris contrived to detain him at their trysting-place till the man-o'-war's boat had once more put into the river with Pensilon on board, and all danger of an immediate meeting was at an end. And then Iris was quite willing that Harry should go and have it out with her father. And they made their way to the house together.

Stephen Grade was sitting in his library writing when Harry Carnew burst in upon him like a whirlwind.

At the sight of Stephen Grade, Captain Carnew involuntarily moderated his bearing. Here was a man he had always looked up to, almost venerated, and whom he had always found a true friend. Why should he doubt him now?

Mr. Grade gave Harry a hand without speaking a word, being gravely immersed, it seemed, in some intricate calculation. And Harry stood silently by his side till Mr. Grade's face relaxed from its strained pre-occupation, and turned to him with a smile of welcome.

"Harry, my boy, I've been thinking of you, writing of you, but not to much purpose. I've no orders yet for you."

"I wasn't thinking so much of that, Squire," said Harry. "Of course in a general way I should be glad to get a cargo and sailing-orders, but now I'm thinking most about Iris and our engagement."

"And the obstacles in the way of it—well, I've been thinking of them too. By the way, Frank Pensilon was here just now, with a lot of naval fellows, and what do

you think? The Admiralty want to buy the old Princess—just to blow her to bits, I fancy; but I don't like to part with the old girl, somehow. They are away up the Bool River now, to lay down their stations for torpedoes and so on, and as Frank knows so much about the river, I offered to lend him to them for a few days, subject to his captain's approbation, of course."

"As far as that goes," said Carnew doggedly, "I should be glad to be rid of the fellow altogether."

"Between ourselves, so should I," replied Mr. Grade, sinking his voice. "But what are we to do? There's his uncle—uncle, indeed! I believe he's really Frank's father—but, anyhow, he wants Frank to settle down, and join him in the business. Frank vows he won't settle down without my girl. I must have six thousand at once to carry on with, or else sell all my ships and settle down in the workhouse. Old Pensilon is the only fellow who will lend me the money, and he won't lend it unless I help him with Frank. Now there's the whole kettle of fish boiled down into the compass of a sauce-ladle."

Mr. Grade had made the matter clear, anyhow. And Captain Carnew felt that if the Squire's enterprise came to a bad end, it would be a terrible misfortune for the whole countryside. How many sailors would be thrown out of employment, with little chance of finding anything else to do; for what is the use of a good seaman on board a steamer? And the same might be said of the sea-captains. Grade's doctrine had always been that sails would pay better than steam in the long run—just as canals pay better than railways—for carrying heavy merchandise, and he had kept together perhaps the last relics of good English seamanship—a sort of Old Guard, as it were—and if these were lost, all was lost. And with this in his mind, it was impossible for the captain to say, in a light-hearted way:

"Give me your daughter, and let the whole concern go to smash."

"I would lend you the money myself, Squire—" began the captain.

"If you had it," interrupted Mr. Grade. "I know you would, Harry; but I know, too, that as long as your mother lives you can't touch your money. And I wouldn't advise you to either. It's a risky business, and if the business doesn't mend, my whole fleet won't be worth an old brass kettle. Why, I tell you, Harry, that your Princess is the only ship that has brought me in a

penny these two years. Ah, if I had only a few more such ships, and a few more such captains! Why, that run you made from Valparaiso, when you licked the mail-steamer by twenty-four hours—why, the country rings with it!"

"Ah, that wasn't a bad run," said the captain modestly; "but then what a wind I had all the way!"

At this moment a bell rang softly in an adjoining room, and shortly after a yacht brought in a telegram, which had just been read off from Mr. Grade's private wire. Mr. Grade put on a pair of gold-rimmed spectacles, and read over the message to himself with much deliberation.

"This concerns you more than me, Harry," he said, as he handed the paper over to the captain.

The message was from a well-known firm of ship-brokers in London.

"Client will give six thousand for Princess Iris, delivered at Antwerp within seven days. Money lodged with us. Reply immediately."

"What, sell the Princess—part with my ship?" cried Captain Carnew. "Oh, Squire, you would never have me do that!"

"No, I wouldn't, Harry," replied Mr. Grade warmly. "Stick to your ship, but she's the best wife a seaman can have."

"But to give up Iris! Oh no, Squire; I couldn't keep the ship at that price. And six thousand pounds! It's the very money we want."

"It's only three thousand apiece, sir all," said Mr. Grade. "Just half what we want."

"Oh, take it all, Squire. Do you think I'd stand on a few thousands with some who has been the friend that you have? Take the money, Squire, and give me Iris. And we'll build another ship."

The Squire would not hear of this at first, but he came round after a while. There was the castle, after all, and the land belonging to it, that he had settled upon his daughter some years before; and that would be some compensation for her future husband, if he should lose his money. But even then, Mr. Grade could not quite see his way. He had in a manner pledged himself to old Pensilon, and it would never do to offend a man who had so much of the South American trade in his hands.

"Tell you what, Harry," said the Squire, after pondering deeply. "You might be wicked enough to run away with the girl, even to get a licence, and so meet quality."

at St. Keo's Church; get spliced, slip on board, and away to Antwerp before anybody finds you out. I shall be in a deuce of a rage, Harry, if you do."

There was long and earnest consultation after this, but in the end all was settled, and a message returned to the brokers:

"Terms accepted. Carnew sees you to-morrow."

Harry Carnew had a full week's work out for him when he left Pengelly Castle, having first with some difficulty obtained Iris's consent to this hasty and half-secret marriage. First he had to run up to London to arrange for the transfer of the ship. And finding his way to the City into one of the busy arcades of shipping-offices about Fenchurch Street, he had a long interview with the head of the firm who were conducting the purchase. And here, for the first time, he was made aware that the transaction must be conducted with some prudence and secrecy. A revolution or civil war was going on in a small South American Republic, and one of the contending parties was anxious to secure a fast-sailing ship as a cruiser. The qualities of the Princess Iris were well known over there, and hence the liberal offer for her purchase.

Now, there was nothing illegal in this transaction; but, at the same time, it was quite possible that, if the authorities came to hear of it, they might, in dread of another Alabama business, lay an embargo on the ship, and thus put an end to the bargain. And so Captain Carnew, disregarding all possible amusements in London, went back to Learmouth by the next train; now with his heart thoroughly engaged to bring this matter to a successful conclusion, the spice of risk about the affair having warmed him to the work. As soon as the Princess was sold, he would give orders for a new ship on the same lines to be laid down in the old building-yard of Learmouth. Once more the carpenters' hammers and the adzes of the shipbuilders should be heard in the old port, and many a now bare household would be replenished, and work and wages would go merrily together all through the winter that was coming.

But when the captain got back to Learmouth he found the whole town agog with excitement. The Fleet was coming—the whole Channel Fleet. There was to be something like a night attack on the harbour; mines were to be exploded, and the hulk was to be attacked by torpedo-boats and sent to the bottom. But this hulk

was not to be the old Princess, after all. No; Squire Grade would not part with her, said the loafers by the quay, with some pride. Where should he put his old boots, Stephen had asked, if they took away his store-ship?

"I'm looking out for you, cap'en," said a grizzled old salt, as Carnew made his way to the quay, past a long row of idlers, who were watching the movements of the shipping, and most of whom had a word or two to say to him. "Got the Gem alongside, to take you across to the Castle. The Squire wants to see you most particular."

Now, the Gem was a little steamer belonging to Mr. Grade, and was something between a yacht and a tug, and doing duty in both capacities. Soon she was threading her way among the craft lying at anchor, among which were now a number of Government vessels flying the white ensign of St. George, while a German despatch-boat and a French corvette, which had, no doubt, come to see the fun, hung out their national emblems, and boats manned by bluejackets, with a sprinkling of gold-laced officers among them, were darting about in all directions. But soon the harbour was crossed, and the steamer ascended the winding channel of the Boal River, and the grey and weathered façade of the old Squire's house came in sight, backed by a luxuriant screen of foliage, against which blue columns of smoke rose from the twisted chimney-shafts of the hospitable manor. As the Gem passed the old Princess, Hiram, the old salt just alluded to, who was in charge of the wheel, called the captain's attention to the altered appearance of the hulk.

"Governor's given the old gal a coat of paint, you see, cap'en."

True enough, the old lady looked quite smart with a streak of white paint all round her, which gave her a resemblance to the younger Princess that still lay in the creek on the other side of the hill.

By the strip of silver-sand that formed the landing-place to the house lay a man-of-war's boat, her crew arranged in easy attitudes upon the thwarts, some reading, some smoking, and others sleeping, as tranquilly as the tricks of their more wakeful companions would allow.

"The Squire's got company," explained Hiram laconically, and, indeed, on reaching the lawn, the captain found it occupied by a group of tennis-players, conspicuous among whom was Iris, in a charming costume,

and as gay as if she had nothing but festivity on her mind. The captain squeezed her disengaged hand in passing, and received a bright comprehending glance. Pensilon, who was among the players, watched the pair with jealous eyes.

"Have we got our orders yet, captain?" he asked with something like a sneer.

But the Squire was sitting apart in his favourite seat under his favourite cedar, and beckoned the captain to him, and they were soon in deep conference together.

"All we've got to do," said the Squire in conclusion, "is to keep our tongues between our teeth. Above all, we must not let Pensilon suspect anything unusual, or he'll clap a stopper on our tackle. He's watching us now out of the corners of his eyes."

The captain, however, had too much to do to stay and gossip with the Squire. He had to run up to the cathedral town to get a licence for the marriage. He must see the parson of St. Keo, who was a cousin of his, and who might be trusted; and then he had to get together a scratch crew for the voyage to Antwerp.

There was not much difficulty in this last part of the business, for plenty of seamen were hanging about, and glad of a spell of employment. But the mischief of it was that it somehow got abroad that there was more than met the eye in this short trip to Antwerp, and that resolute, adventurous seamen, who did not mind a risky job, might expect to be taken on for a further cruise with high wages, and possible prize-money. Who had set this abroad the captain could not imagine, unless some secret agent of the proposed purchasers were at work. But it was in vain that the captain disclaimed any knowledge of such possible adventures; his disclaimers were received with respectful winks of perfect understanding, and the captain, to his dismay, found the shipping-office where he was engaging his crew, besieged by a number of seamen who might be good at their work, but who were evidently of dissolute lives and of dangerous character. However, for such a short voyage the character of his crew did not matter very much, and if it really happened that they should take service under a foreign flag, the loss to their own country would not be serious.

With all this business on his hands Captain Carnew had been unable to visit his Iris for four-and-twenty hours, and when the morning came which had been

fixed for the secret marriage, Harry repaired to the trysting-place, which was the old Pengelly Tower, with many feelings of misgiving. All was ready in the little church below; the clerk was there, and the clerk's wife, and old Hiram, who was to give the bride away, and the parson was walking about in his garden, ready to assume his surplice as soon as the wedding procession appeared in sight. But when she came, without whose presence all preparation would be thrown away! Harry waited on the top of the hill, fuming and fretting, and quite unconscious of the beautiful scene around him, for eleven o'clock had long struck, even by the asthmatic old clock of St. Keo, which was always half an hour behindhand.

At last, however, Harry saw the flutter of a garment through a break in the trees, and there was Iris sure enough, but with a terribly sad and tear-stained face. She had been upset altogether, she answered Harry's tender, despairing attempt to comfort her. First of all, to have her steal away like this! and then she had had a terrible scene that morning with Frank Pensilon! He had come over early, in a very excited state, had waylaid her in the garden, and overwhelmed her with reproaches. She had ruined his life, and now he was desperate and did not know what he did. But on this he was determined: if he could not have her, nobody else should; and if she dared to marry the captain, her bridegroom should never see the morrow of his wedding-day.

The captain pronounced this all very empty talk, but let Iris come with him, and in half an hour she would have one gentleman to protect her, who would soon dispose of half-a-dozen such bragging fellows. And Iris, looking up at his determined and tender face, seemed to think he was right, and they hurried on to the church. The ceremony was soon over. Almost before they knew it had fairly begun, it was over. And they walked up the hill together, man and wife, dazed and half-intoxicated by the feelings of their new relationship. But at the tower they were to part till midnight, when Harry, with a boat's crew, would be ready to receive his princess at the landing-place, and to take her on board his ship, which would sail as soon as they got on board. Even now his boat was waiting for him by the steps, and he must get on board at once, for the Princess was to drop quietly down with the tide to an anchorage just within the

harbour-bar. There she would take in the rest of her crew, and then, just before the first hour of the morning, the Gem, with her steam up, would range alongside and tow the Princess out into the open sea. And then, if the wind held, and it seemed steadily fixed in the west, they would be off the coast of France before the morning was far advanced; and in thirty-six hours, if Harry knew how to handle his ship, they would be off the Scheldt, where a steamer would meet them, and then a telegram to the brokers would put the sum of six thousand pounds at the disposal of Squire Grade.

Yes, it all seemed very straightforward, Iris acknowledged with sighs and involuntary tears, but still she could not shake off the feeling that something was going to happen, and that Pensilon would do some harm to Harry.

The Princess dropped down to her new berth by the harbour-mouth without exciting any attention, for everybody was watching the movements of the war-vessels; and when the captain had got his crew on board, and set them to work to make things taut and comfortable for the voyage, he would have no more communication with the shore.

The night came on dark and gloomy, with driving showers, just as two or three ironclad cruisers came up and anchored in the roadstead. It was not the halycon kind of a night that a lover might have chosen for his bridal, but it was a favourable night for slipping quietly away. At about nine o'clock, when it was growing pitchy dark, the Gem ran alongside, and old Hiram came on board, and was presently closeted with the captain.

"They've got warning to stop the ship, cap'n," said Hiram slowly, but with a twinkle of enjoyment in his eye; "telegram came an hour ago: 'Watch the Princess Iris; not to leave the port, but avoid a seizure.' I had it word for word from a true friend."

Hiram winked and screwed his face up into a knot with suppressed glee.

"There's nothing to grin about, man," said the captain testily, for he was a good deal worried by the news. "Why, they are watching us now, I expect. We shall never get away."

"That's the beautifullest part of the business," cried Hiram. "They hadn't noticed you had changed your berth, cap'n, and they've sent a boat's crew to watch Pengelly Creek. I heard 'em coming up in the gloaming. 'Oh, it's all right,' says

one, 'there's her anchor-light, and there she swings.'"

"But there would be no light there," cried the captain.

"That's the beauty of it again, sir," replied the sailor in full enjoyment of his story. Soon as you'd vacated your berth, says the Squire to me, 'Tow the old Princess round to the young 'un's moorings.' As was done, sir, and there she lies at this blessed moment, and a armed boat's crew a watching her as a cat watches a mouse, all in the dripping wet—a kind of ambush, you may call it."

Captain Harry was obliged to join in the old salt's roar of laughter. But the matter was still serious enough. It was out of the question now to take a boat to the creek to bring Iris to the ship. But the Bool River was open, and the best plan would be to take the Gem round to the house and bring Iris away, even from the midst of her guests, and then up anchor and away.

The Gem flew rapidly across the channel, and presently the bright lights from the house were seen reflected in the river, while the music of an inspiriting waltz floated across the water. A cluster of boats and launches were lying off the landing-place, for most of the Squire's guests had come by water. The rain had ceased, and in this sheltered bay the wind was little felt, and now coloured lamps were being lighted all over the grounds, giving the little nook the appearance of a place in fairyland.

Hiram undertook to find out Miss Grade, and deliver the captain's message that she must come aboard without a moment's delay: But time went on, and the messenger did not return; so Harry himself strode up towards the house to claim his bride. But half-way up the path he met Iris hurrying to meet him, wrapped up in a thick cloak, but otherwise in her evening costume.

"Oh, Harry," she cried, throwing her arms about him, "I could not get away. Frank would not leave me—he is following me now."

And, indeed, at this moment Pensilon came up to them.

"You scoundrel!" he cried, seeing the captain holding Iris in his arms. "You would entice the girl from her father's house. Come back, Iris—leave this villain!"

"Oh, hush, Frank!" cried Iris, turning upon him. "I am his wife."

Frank Pensilon fell back a pace or two, his face convulsed with passion.

"His wife!" he cried. "He shall have little to boast of!"

And with this he threw himself upon the captain, a knife gleaming in his hand.

Iris shrieked, and one or two seamen, who were waiting by the shore, sprang forward, but would have been too late to avert the tragedy. Hiram, however, was just behind, having kept Miss Grade in sight all the time, and seizing Frank's arm before he had time to strike, he disarmed him in a moment, and stretched him on his back upon the sward. And then Harry Carnew hurried his bride on board the Gem, and Hiram, having given his adversary a good shaking to incapacitate him for the moment, followed them on board, and seizing the cord of the steam-whistle, let forth a rousing whistle expressive of triumph and satisfaction.

It seemed as if this manifestation from the Gem had aroused all the slumbering forces of the deep. A gun bellowed loudly over the waters, its echoes thundering back from every hill and crag; then another and another, while rocket after rocket could be seen soaring into the sky. In a moment everything was bustle and activity in the little cove. Seamen came hurrying down from the house where they had been punishing the Squire's home-brewed, and flirting with the pretty maids. Then a swarm of young officers came laughing and scampering down the path, taking hurried farewells, and exchanging flying jeats with their suddenly-bereaved partners. Then there was nothing to be heard but the rattle of oars and the sharp words of command, as boat after boat took its load and shot rapidly into the stream.

Iris had clung to her husband's arm, convinced, in the agitation of the moment, that this was nothing but the hue-and-cry after Harry and herself. But Captain Carnew laughed heartily at the notion as the Gem scudded rapidly down the stream, and as he held his Iris safe in his arms:

"'Tis a night surprise, my girl," he said with a kiss. "And now, you see, Master Frank has done his worst, and where are we!"

"Not out of port yet," murmured Iris in reply.

After the first note of alarm all was quiet for a time, and the Gem sped on her way, and brought up under the lee of the Princess Iris without having been challenged on the way. And now there was not a

moment to be lost, for it was evident lights glittering here and there, and exchanged by flashes from the ships, a cordon of boats was being established across the harbour-mouth. And just as the Princess Iris was bathed in light, rope and spar standing out distinctly against the dark night as the beams of a powerful electric-lamp searched the water to and fro.

"Ship ahoy!" cried an authoritative voice from a venomous-looking tug-boat that came up alongside; "you'd better get out of this."

"Aye, aye, sir," replied Captain Carnew, "that's just what I'm trying to do."

"Outward bound, are you?" cried the officer in reply. "Then heave to and board and we'll run you out."

This was too good an offer to be refused as the tide was still running in, and the Gem was barely powerful enough to cope with a big ship in tow. But the powerful Government boat made nothing of the business, and threading her way among the monsters at anchor in the roadstead, cast off the Princess when she was clear of the British Fleet, while her sails, like a cloud, were soon filled with spanking breeze, before which she sped merrily up the Channel.

The captain and his wife spent their honeymoon happily enough seeing the sights of Antwerp, and cruising about in odd places on the Scheldt. It was long before Iris had a letter from her father, in reply to her first hurriedly signed "Iris Carnew".

"Tell Harry that the money was all right, and everything satisfactory. I'll give you, my children, and wish you all happiness. This is at the intercession of old Pensilon, who is staying with me, and firmly believes that Iris ran away from her indignant papa. Master Frank has put his foot into it nicely, for old Pen, it was he who was the real purchaser of the Princess, which, I fancy, he has made a good thing of. And when he found out that Iris had peached about her, and tried to stop her, you may fancy how he was with it. Anyhow, Frank is to be shipped to Valparaiso, to keep a dry-goods store on Old P. and I have just been laying down the keel of the new ship, to the tune of a dozen of champagne. She must be christened Queen Iris, to avoid confusion, and I promise to find a cargo for her on her voyage. So, once she is finished, she will not have long to wait for orders."

THE LAST WHALER.

By SUSAN K. PHILLIPS.

An' so they can't spare space for her to rot,
I'd had a thout they would ha' let her be
For sake of the old days they've all forgot,
An' we might pass together, her an' me—
Me, to my sleep up 'mid them crowding graves,
An' her, to better rest, aneath the waves.

But there—the river's nigh choked up wi' all
Them ugly steamboats as ha' made sike deed,
Wi' their red sides, like a great iron wall,
An' their black funnels, promising o' speed;
There's many a chap as put his hard-earned brass
I' them, an' hungared for his pains, alas!

An' times are hard; an' they will do to sell
The timbers that ha' braved the Arctic seas,
When she went dancing o'er the ocean swell,
Wi' all her canvas given to the breeze;
There's none so many left frev' those old days,
To tell her story while she feeds the blaze.

I wer' a proud chap, when as speeksioneer,
I trod her deck, the gallant Northern Star,
As she went gliding past the crowded pier,
An' clove the breakers surging on the bar;
I mind how Nancy looked, so fresh an' fair,
Wi' my blue ribbon in her golden hair,

Waving her little hand, while tears ran over,
Yet couldn't wash the dimpling smile away;
You see she didn't care to send her lover,
Without a cheer upon the parting day;
An' we had pledged our words as we'd be wed,
The Sabbath after she should make the Head,

When we came home—our banns were out, you see,
But her auld mother wouldn't ha' her left
Neither a wife nor widow like—an' she,
Knowing t' auld dame wer' half o' sense bereft
Sin' her poor man wer' drowned—made her give
Consent—"She'd none so much time left to live."

"None so much time!" we thout so! I won home
Both proud an' happy. Many a full-fed fish
Had fallen to my harpoon, an' I'd the sum
O' gain an' glory given to my wish.
Who met us on the pier as we cam back?
Why, her auld mother, clad i' rusty black!

My Nancy loved the bonnie primrose flowers.
My mate had sought the roots, an' set 'em thick
About her grave, hard by the Abbey Towers:
An' when I could—I lay a gey bit sick—
I climbed the steps, an' knelt them blooms beside,
An' when the soft leaves touched me, why, I cried;

Cried like a bairn; they say it saved my wits,
It may ha' been so—like a bitter dream,
Of wrong, an' loss, an' hope that came by fits,
As 'gainst a thunder crash the lightning gleam,
Sin' first I looked into her mother's face,
All that dark time has left a strange, blurred trace.

She'd caught some fever, doing angels' work,
Among the childer, down i' Hagalythe;
I like sometimes—set musing i' the mirk—
To think my winsome lassie gave her life
Helping the helpless. Well, the time flies past,
The Northern Star has gone—I'll follow fast.

The best life left to me wer' spent wi' her,
'Mid the strange splendours i' them regions see;
The great ice plains wi' neither sound nor stir,
The mighty bergs, all blue, an' white, an' green,
The plunging sea—the blowing of the whale—
The fitting compassants on shroud an' sail.

I've fancied when in banners broad unfurled,
The crimson lights were glowing over head,
As I could a'most see the other world,
Where Nance wer' waiting for me, parson said.
Aye, many a year she's borne us fast an' far,
An' now she's sold for firewood—poor auld Star!

If I'd the brass, I'd buy the brave old boat.
An' tak' her out, right out o' sight o' land,
An' scuttle her as she lay there afloat,
I've strength enow left i' this shaking hand;
An' so we'd sink together, her an' me,
To slumber to the hushing o' the sea.

But that's another idle dream—I've got
Enow to bury me by Nancy's side,
Up on the shelf there, i' the chiny pot,
She bade her mother gie me, ere she died.
I'll try to beg a bit on't Star, to make
My coffin—for the last old whaler's sake.

THE GUEST ON MY HEARTH.

By PAUL CHALLINOR.

THE big trunk was locked, the last strap
drawn, and the rugs rolled up. Down
below we could hear our landlord disturb-
ing the morning quiet of the street with
shrill whistles and calls of, "Hi, four-
wheeler!" and yet Hilda, in her new
travelling-wrap, still stood at her easel, her
smart hat tipped off her forehead, and a
brush in her mouth, working with eager,
rapid touch, and masterly certainty of effect,
now and then drawing back with half-shut
eyes to contemplate the result.

"Hilda, do you want to miss the
train?"

"I don't know. Yes; I believe I do,"
dreamily, with her head on one side.

"You'll have to go by the next then,
that's all."

"Shall I? Yes; I suppose I must. So
it's no use trying. There! That must do,
then." She woke herself up, threw down
her brushes, and jerked her hat back into
position. "You will take care of it for me,
won't you? Cover it up and let nobody
stare at it just yet. I want to look at it
again with fresh eyes by-and-by, and see
what it really means. I think I've got at!
the ghostliness back again into it. Nora, I
can't bear going; I feel as if something
must happen to it, or to you, without me,
How I wish you were going with me, or
instead of me, or in disguise as me!
Wouldn't that do?"

"Certainly not," I pronounced, hooking
vigorously at her tenth glove-button;
"lords and ladies are not in my line."

"Still less in mine. Well, it's all in the
way of business, and I'll let you know how
I get on in the gilded halls of the aristo-
cracy. Good-bye, Nora, my darling!" and
with something very like a tear in her
beautiful black eyes, she made a dash at
her umbrella and rushed off in the wake of
her luggage.

I followed her as far as the landing, and

watched her tripping down the long, uncarpeted flight of stone stairs to the hall beneath. I was guiltily conscious of the relief it was to see her go, and yet cut to the heart with remorse at the thought that it should be so.

She looked up at the turn of the stairs, caught sight of my face, and, moved by some sudden impulse, rushed up again.

"Nera, I can't tell what ails me; but I'm afraid to leave you. Take care of yourself. Don't mope, don't overwork, and don't get into mischief."

She caught me in her strong arms, and pressed one of her rare, warm, almost passionate kisses on my lips, and was off and away again before I could reply.

I turned slowly back to the vast empty studio, which always felt so much bigger and emptier without Hilda Gale in it.

In the long three years of our partnership we had hardly been separated for more than a day hitherto. Never a day by choice since the love-at-first-sight—commoner amongst women than men can admit without a sneer—had mutually seized us and drawn us, two lonely art-students in the wild desert of London, into close companionship. It was curious to stand there and remember the misgivings with which we had taken this studio between us, and begun our penniless, happy-go-lucky life there together, faring sumptuously, now and then, when Hilda's wealthy New York friends happened to remember her and sent her a present or an order; living on crumbs, and counting our halfpence, when pupils were scarce and sales were few.

What a joyous, full, contented life it had been at the hardest, with its cheap pleasures, rare holidays, exciting strokes of luck, and disasters, which always had, at worst, a comic side!

If we had missed some of the leisure and soft living of life, at least we had escaped much of its weariness. We had had work we loved; friends, if few, of our own choosing. It had been a life of sunshine. I broke off with a start. Had been! I was beginning to use the words already. Already I was gazing back on our happy days from a distant standpoint, yearning wistfully for their brightness even in these days of our better fortunes.

Our better fortunes? Well, Hilda had two pictures in the Academy, both well noticed, and one well sold. I had my hands full of work, teaching and illustrating. One of Hilda's pupils, a brilliant,

artistic, enthusiastic little lady, had been pleased to take a violent fancy to her, and had wiled her away on a fortnight's visit. I let her go readily. I did not envy her little Lady Pamela's devotion, nor the valuable introductions she had promised her, and the lucrative employment—work after Hilda's own heart—in the regulating of the neglected art-treasures in Castle Cromer. I longed to be alone with my secret—my golden secret—hugged close to my heart, free to gaze on it and gloat over it untroubled by the keen inquisition of Hilda's loving eyes.

And now I was free, alone, unrestrained by so much as a loving look, just as I had willed it, and my secret lay on my heart like lead, and the glory of our days seemed a faded thing of the past, and it was with something like a sob that I sank down beside the fireless hearth, while, from the walls above, Hilda's great frescoed angels, with the golden sunlight on their wide-spread wings and lifted palms, looked sadly down on me—a world of pitying understanding in their clear, shining eyes. On the easel near the window in full light stood Hilda's picture with the last wet touches on the canvas.

"The Closed Door" was the name she had chosen for it. The two panels, on the second of which she had been working, were to be enclosed in one frame. One was an interior. A rough little cabin lighted only by a dying fire, over which in lonely grief a man sat brooding. One flickering brand cast a light on his rugged face full of a passionate, hopeless yearning. His eyes were fixed on the empty chair in the chimney-corner, and his great rough hands held tenderly a little silken scrap of woman's gear—ribbon, or scarf, or veil. The heavy door behind him was bolted and barred against friendly intrusion; he would be alone with his grief and his memories; but the dog, who had trailed himself to his feet and laid a shaggy head against him in unnoticed sympathy, turned his eyes restlessly towards the threshold.

In the second, outside under a wild, stormy sky, a woman stood, weather-beaten, travel-stained, beating with upraised hand on the shut cabin-door. The face was unnoticeable, except for its look of frantic, hopeless eagerness. One hand clutched at the broken latch as if she would tear the door open, the other was raised to strike. A world of love, and longing, and despair, shone in those great, hollow eyes. It was no false wife or straying daughter returning

repentant and crushed to sue for admittance. It was for her own place as of right that she was clamouring, it was back to her own fireside that she would force her way—and the door was closed. This was not the original motive of the picture. The woman's figure, as Hilda had at first designed it, had been sorrow-crushed, humiliated, exquisitely human. I had been touched by it, and Hilda exasperated.

"Clap-trap!" she had grumbled. "Of course she'll get in if she waits long enough, and makes noise enough. I want that door to remain closed for ever."

She put it impatiently aside for the time. Soon after I chanced to be telling her stories of our old Welsh home and my foster-mother's cabin, where the sod of turf was left alight and the "soul-cake" placed in readiness for the wandering spirits on All Souls' Night. How the door was set carefully ajar, and the watch kept lest by chance the spirit of one who died within the year should be waiting outside for one last chance of communion with the living. She seized on the notion. There was a visionary, imaginative side to her shrewd, practical nature.

"That was what I wanted to paint, though I did not know it. See, Nora, he has himself, in ignorance or forgetfulness, closed the door on her. His heart is full of her. He is holding her little scarf in his hand, clinging to any poor little scrap that shall recall her presence, while she—she herself—stands without, beating with soundless blows on his door, and crying voicelessly on him to hear her. He will not. The hour will strike, and the chance be gone for all eternity."

"An eerie, dreary thing you have made of it. Who do you suppose will buy it now?" I asked, when she had finished.

"Never mind. I am painting it for Her," Hilda said in her odd, enigmatic way.

To-day I shivered as I looked at it, and was glad to put it out of sight. I cleaned brushes and palette, and put away her colours conscientiously, reducing the studio to a forlorn state of dreary tidiness. My solitary meal was ready spread, but I could not look at it, and strolled away restlessly to my bedroom. There were roses lying on my table there—roses that I had not dared to let Hilda see, and near them lay a tiny note. No need to open and read it. I knew its contents by heart, but for the sheer pleasure of looking on the strange handwriting, which in these last few hours

had become so curiously familiar, I pored over it anew.

"My darling, my beautiful proud Nora—mine at last! When you taunted me with the worth of my love, did you guess what even then it was prepared to do and dare for you? You drove me from you with scornful words, my cruel darling. Was it because I had nothing then but my love to offer you? All I have in the world is yours this day—name, wealth, title. I have brought you your price to the uttermost farthing, my queen; deny me now if you dare. I must not come to you—not yet, but I must see you, and at once.—Yours ever, from henceforth.

"LAURENCE."

I put it down, and looked absently at my own reflection in my glass. A worn, anxious-faced girl in a shabby gown, with work-soiled hands and wearied eyes, blushing, trembling; and then, as it were, in a flash of sudden sunshine, glorified and made resplendent in my own eyes by the knowledge of his love. He loved me! In spite of my poverty, my insignificance, my want of knowledge of the world's ways, he loved me! I laughed triumphantly at my shamefaced reflection, and lifted the roses to my lips.

I knew where he would be waiting for me that afternoon. There was a certain small, little-visited picture-gallery to which, in right of an accepted picture of mine, I had entrance free. It would not be our first meeting there, by many. Ours had been a chance acquaintanceship, an accidental meeting followed, by others as accidental—or I had believed so—a friendship founded on alight passing courtesies, of brief conversations that lengthened insensibly before our favourite pictures, now in one gallery, now in another. It was the freemasonry of mutual art-love that had drawn us together, I had decided; till one day some chance word or look had startled me into self-consciousness. I was on my guard from henceforth, against myself as well as him. I would have avoided him, and taken shelter with Hilda, but it was too late. He told me frankly, violently, that he loved me, and when I drew back, upbraided me fiercely with vain coquetry and heartless trifling. He spoke passionately, almost savagely, and I was terrified, and yet secretly exultant. I held my ground. If I had forced him to reveal his secret, I could keep my own—or what were a woman's wits worth?

So I sent him from me with stinging words to be repented with bitter tears in secret after. He never came again, only now and then came a flower, a book, a drawing, once or twice a costly jewel which I had hidden angrily away; and ever and always I felt that an unseen watch was kept on me, that my steps were followed; while over and over again came brief, passionate messages imploring me "to wait—only wait!"

For what, I wondered? Now I should know.

I trifled restlessly through the hours till the time I had decided on, undisturbed except by my good old landlady toiling up to see me in my solitude, and to mourn over my untasted meal, and make comforting suggestions about early tea. I got rid of her, pleading engagements, and watched her safely away before, with hands that trembled guiltily, do what I would, I dressed to go out.

I put on my everyday walking-dress, pinning the roses in my little rough black coat as its one touch of prettiness. I looked at my reflection, only half satisfied when all was done—yet why need I care? He loved me—he loved me! and some day I would make myself fair and fine for his sake.

I had to drive—how Hilda would have scolded—but I could not meet him splashed with street-mud. Good old Hilda! She had insisted on leaving me with pockets well-lined, and what a traitor I felt when I thought of her!

The shabby old custodian of the gallery looked, I fancied, askance at me when I entered. The rooms looked empty, and silent, and stuffy as usual. Only a couple from the country were working their conscientious way round, beginning at Number One with a catalogue between them, and speaking to one another in whispers. I passed on to an inner room. Someone sprang up from the seat in the centre. He was beside me in a stride, his arm round me, and my two hands crushed in the clasp of his hand.

"At last, at last! My darling!"

I freed myself decisively, leaving one hand in his and looked up into his face. How worn it was—how changed since I had last seen him! A strong, beautiful face, with dark, burning eyes, and lips that trembled.

"Why do you put me away? Have you wearied of waiting?" he asked, with fierce impatience, under his breath. "Is that what you have come to tell me—eh?"

His breath caught, and a shudder ran through him from head to foot, while his face grew ghastly white. "Speak!" he said hoarsely. "Why do you meet me?"

I had set my lips sternly, and after one look had turned away my eyes lest he should read too much in them—lest he should guess the mighty joy that had seized me at the touch of his hand, the sound of his voice in my ears once more. Then I ventured to look at him again, and gently lifting my hand touched the roses at my breast.

"Nora, Nora! My love—my queen—my wife!" he cried with a sort of sob, and dropped his burning lips on the fingers he held. "You dare not have come to me thus—with a smile on your lips, and my flowers at your breast, if you had played me false!" Then he caught me in his arms, and held me with sudden stress to his heart for a moment.

When he had frightened me before by his vehemence I could take refuge in my coldness and cutting words. I was past that now; I was weakened by the sudden delight of meeting, by the long-endured pain of separation, by secret, unshared inward conflict. I rested my head against his arm in a dumb, blissful ecstasy.

"Not a word, Nora! Are you too angry with me to speak?" he asked, but his voice was full of content. "Tell me you have chafed at my long absence—that you hated me for my silence. Ah, my darling, that it was that maddened me—the thought of what you might be suffering too."

I lifted my eyes to his face and tried to smile, but I met his dark glance full of such fire that I dropped and shivered beneath it.

We were alone. The country couple had departed; I had heard the turnstile at the entrance clash behind them. Laurence drew me to a seat beside him, and held me close to him while he whispered in my ear words I had dreamed of. I longed to hear him speak, and yet some strange, new shyness kept me from all response.

"Let me have time to think," I forced myself to say at last. "I cannot realise what you want yet. Nor do you, perhaps. You are a rich man, are you not? And I—"

"Rich? Too poor to buy a smile from you, Nora, once upon a time!" impatiently.

"And you said 'your title'. I did not know——" I faltered.

"No. By Heaven, I believe you, Nora!" he cried with sudden conviction. "You

were not bargaining for that, at least. It would have been little use," he muttered in a savage undertone. "Such as it is, it is yours. 'Lady Inglefield'"—he stopped to raise my hands to his lips, and his eyes glowed with dark fire again—"your days of toil are ended, my beautiful love. All that the heart of woman can wish for shall be yours. Ask me for something, Nora. Give me some wild, impossible fantasy to gratify. What do you women most long for? Where is the ring I sent you? Were the diamonds not big enough? You shall choose for yourself. Or do you not care for trinkets such as any woman might wear. You want power, position—to be a leader of the great world, perhaps. One worshipper of your beauty would not content you."

"Oh, hush, Laurence!" I besought. "What are you dreaming of? What do I know of the great world? I am an ignorant, inexperienced girl. How should I have any extravagant fancies to gratify, unless it is one that you should love me for ever, as you say you do now? No more diamonds. There is not one in the world big enough and bright enough to tempt me to wear it now. Give me what you will when I am your wife."

"Kiss me, Nora!" he demanded, almost roughly, "and say when that shall be."

"Not a kiss, not a diamond till then, and it shall be when you will."

The turnstile clattered round again, admitting a party of four or five, who scattered themselves all over the place. We started apart.

"Good-bye, Laurence," I whispered, rising.

He held my dress to detain me.

"I must not follow you now, Nora. I am wanted elsewhere. They must have missed me already, and wondered," he stopped to laugh mockingly; "and to-morrow—I cannot see you to-morrow, I think, but the next day I will come."

I would have protested, but his words were imperative.

"Yes, I will come to you. I will come for my wife. Put on your wedding-dress, Nora, and call your friends together if you will, for before that day is over you shall be mine. Nothing in earth or heaven stands between us now."

He laughed a hard, defiant laugh. His face, as if turned to confront some unseen adversary, grew hard, defiant, his eyes alight with a sort of cruel triumph. His hands clutched mine, crushing it painfully.

Then, with a sudden softening, his eyes met mine, and so we parted.

I sat with pen in hand and paper before me for many an hour that night trying to tell Hilda what had befallen. I could not. The same constraint seemed laid upon me which had sealed my lips before, whenever my secret would have passed them.

Once I had sketched his face from memory and laid it before her as if it had been a study for one of my illustrations.

"A handsome face," she had said musingly. "A fierce, remorseless face. Is he your villain? He looks a bold one," and so she had silenced me.

Now I tried once more. It was a hard task. First of all to tell how little I knew—how I had only known his name within the last few months; and of his home and his friends I yet knew nothing. Had there been time I would have begged her to come back to me. I wondered now how I could ever have let her go. A great craving for the support of her strong, loving presence swept over me, and a great dread of my own weakness and lonesomeness. Laurence would come to take me away, and how should I refuse to go with him? I could not, even if I had so willed. What more could I wish than to be his wife? And yet I trembled in my loneliness at the thought of the terrible new world opening before me.

No! I could not write to Hilda yet.

The next day dawned full of autumn storm. A basket of costly flowers lay on my breakfast-table, but no message. I thought it strange at first, until it struck me that it meant that I should see him that day after all, most likely.

My courage had come back with the daylight. I was glad to look forward to meeting him. As to our marriage, why should I fear his forcing that on with undue haste? He would wait for Hilda. He could not refuse me that. Now and then a thought of his fierce passionate eyes and hot vehemence made me thrill with a faint misgiving, but I sang about the great bare studio as I made it look its prettiest in his honour. I displayed our few treasures of Oriental stuffs and quaint-hued art-tinted embroideries to their best advantage, re-arranged our few precious morsels of bric-à-brac, kindled a mighty blaze in the old tiled fireplace with the high carved mantel-shelf. Then I made the place festive with my flowers, and took out my gayest dress—Hilda's choice, not mine—and clasped her gift, a silver bracelet, on my wrist.

I opened the cases and looked at the jewels he had sent me, but left them untouched. The great flashing diamonds might suit his wife, but not a working-woman like me, I decided. Then I brought out Hilda's picture and set it on her easel. It struck me with new force, and I stood looking at it till I turned away shivering. A little calendar was pinned on the wall near me, and when I noticed the date I shivered again, and impatiently covered the painting up and put it away.

The short day closed in, and I lighted my shaded lamp, and still worked on and on. Now and then I sprang up, and took a rapid turn up and down the room to rest hands and eyes. The demon of unquiet possessed me. I flung the heavy shutter back, and looked out into the night. The autumn rain fell heavily, sprayed to right and left against the window-panes by each fierce gust that swept down the empty street. From parapet and cornice the water poured in showers, and by the misty gleam of the street-lamp I could see the channel beside the pavement running like a river. I suddenly realised the lateness of the hour. All the lights were out in the house opposite—ours was a quiet street—except the fanlight over the doctor's door, and a dim gleam in the windows of the chapel. What was the service to be at this time of night, and who would go to it? I idly wondered. The only human being abroad seemed to be the policeman. I dimly made out his shiny figure tramping heavily past in his mackintosh cape.

I heard the studio-door open gently, and remained concealed in my dusky corner. Only my landlady, good, motherly soul, coming in to ask if there was anything she could do for me.

I saw her shake her head as she looked at my untouched supper—the little cake she had made for me, and the glass of milk, standing as she had left them two hours ago on the low table by the hearth. She made a few doubtful steps in the direction of my bedroom, but evidently thought better of it before she reached the door, and turned back again. Then she carefully drew the scattered embers of my fire together into a last blaze, and withdrew with a shade of disappointment on her kindly, wrinkled old face.

I was vexed and ashamed. I had been a coward, and had kept out of sight, dreading her questions, when, perhaps, after all, it might have been only some of her own daily worries she had come to

talk over with me. Perhaps her husband was ailing again, and she wanted my help. I hurried after her remorsefully. She had disappeared when I reached the landing, most probably into her daughter's room, for I could hear voices on the floor above me.

The long white stone staircase, lighted only by one dim swinging-lamp, looked terribly dreary and ghostly, and a cold blast sweeping up now and again suggested untimely coming and going in the lower regions. I returned shivering, but left my door ajar. Even so much of human companionship felt comforting after my long, lonely day. I could not think of sleep for hours to come. I should only lie awake counting the minutes as they passed, each one bringing me nearer to the fatal to-morrow. I turned my lamp high, and sat down before my drawing-board again.

I succeeded in getting absorbed in some delicate line-work, and in forgetting for a space to count the ticking of the clock. But my eyes would stand no more. The sketch grew indistinct, and the lines blurred, and I stopped to press my hands hard over my forehead to relieve the dull ache there.

Sitting thus with my eyes covered, I grew conscious, I know not how, of a second presence in the room. There was no sound there other than the rustling of the dying embers on the hearth and the angry swirl of wind and rain against the window. Then in the brief stillness I could hear in far-off, muffled tones the tolling of a bell. That was all.

A chill breath of air struck on me, and I shivered from head to foot. I dropped my hands from before my face and peered into the gloom. Surely my tired sight was playing me some fantastic trick, or what was it—that shadow that passed between me and the far dimly-lighted wall? From out the dusky corner, where a tall screen masked the entrance to the room, it stole—softly gliding—with no sound of foot-fall or sweep of rustling garments—a dark, formless Shape advancing towards me.

I pushed my chair back noisily and sprang to my feet. I would not be afraid. Why should I? Who or what would come to harm me? There was help at hand. I had but to cry out. Then a cold dew burst forth on my forehead, and my lips refused to open and give sound to my call, and with trembling hands I clutched my table to steady myself as a deathlike faintness seized me, while nearer and nearer

drew the dark, mysterious thing. It had gained the Venetian mirror now, and crept across its field like a black mist. It passed me close, and again the cold blast of air, charged with an odour of decay as from a fresh-opened vault, blew on me. Then it stood motionless and spectral, a black shadow on my hearthstone.

I made a violent effort to regain the mastery over myself. I drew myself sharply erect and challenged the intruder, advancing to it as I did so. As I approached it it seemed to grow slowly distinct, and to take solid form. A white face, lighted by great, shining eyes, peered out at me from under the hood of a long black mantle. A alim white hand was stretched forth from its folds and raised as if to prohibit a nearer approach. She—for it was a woman's face—bowed her head courteously to me, but kept silence. Then without invitation the hand was extended, and she broke from off the edge of the cake on the table a small fragment which she ate, still keeping her eyes fixed on me. Then she raised the glass to her lips.

"Who are you?" I repeated the demand.

"A friend," she answered. Her voice was sweet, but hollow-sounding, and faint as if heard from afar. "You do not trust me, and you give me no welcome. Yet I have come on no bad errand. You need not fear me. I come from those who love you best."

I drew near her, reassured. Outside the storm rose anew, and beat with frantic sobs and shrieks at the window. There was no raindrop on her mantle, though; no wet footmark on the floor. How had she come through such a night? I had heard no sound of wheels nor of horses' feet without. Only in the next pause of the gale came snatches of organ-music and chanting voices from the chapel across to me.

She let the dark cloak drop from her head and shoulders, and I made out that she was not, as I at first had fancied, an old woman, but a woman aged and worn by pain and sorrow. She was slightly deformed, and walked lame; her wax-white forehead was wrinkled, and her mouth drawn. Her great mournful eyes sought mine pleadingly, till my heart ached for pity.

"It is late," I faltered.

"It is my only hour," she answered, "and the time is short for the work there is to be done. Why do you look at me so? What do you see in my face?"

It was the face of a woman from whose life all joy had died, all spirit been crushed by long, sore suffering, but who yet had lived to know some bitterest pang of all—to whom some cruellest wrong had dealt the death-stroke.

"Can you paint my picture? It is for a farewell gift."

"Not at such a time as this," I expostulated. "I want daylight. I am not prepared."

She pointed to my sketch-block and pencil.

"The merest outline will do; only make haste."

I hesitated, but felt I must needs obey, unreasonable as it seemed. I took a fresh sheet of paper, arranged the light, and posed my sitter. She drew her dusky mantle round her with one white hand, and from its heavy folds the noble outline of brow and cheek stood out clear and well-defined. Her eyes fixed on me seemed to hold me in thrall. My fingers worked mechanically with marvellous speed and skill, guided by some power external to me. I felt as one possessed. The gift of a divine insight had for that brief space descended on me for certain. The sickly, grief-furrowed features before me showed as the mere earthly mask through which it was given unto me to see the veritable countenance—the deeper beauty that lay concealed under the marring touches of carking care and pain—to see the very soul looking from her eyes, speaking through her lips.

She stopped me at last and rose.

"Is this all you want of me?" I asked.

"No. Keep that till he who has the best right to it shall come."

I looked at her questioningly, though I felt I knew the name that was on her lips.

"Give it to him—to Laurence, your lover. To Laurence, Lord Inglefield."

Then fell silence—the silence of death between us. Then, like a blow, there struck the first stroke of midnight.

"Tell him it comes from me—from Joan, his wife."

I stood shaking like a leaf. The bell tolled again.

"Tell him I came to save you, if you would be saved by me. I grudge you not my place, poor child, only my evil fortune."

The clock tolled on.

"Had you but loved him," she cried with a sudden passion of regret—"loved him with a love strong and noble enough to have worked out his salvation as well

as your own, I would have been content to pass into the silence and forgetfulness of the grave without a sign. But you do not. What is your love to mine? A little flame of vanity and romance to end in ashes."

I made no protest. She spoke truth. It seemed already dying in my breast, leaving my heart cold.

"Turn from him, then! Be deaf to his words, blind to his lures! And pray, child!—pray, as you never prayed before, that your good angel may stand beside you in your hour of meeting."

Still, in the silence, the bell tolled on.

"I leave you this for token," and her hand was extended to mine, "that you have seen and spoken with me. Ask him, if he denies it, to dare to look again on my poor face. Ask him how I lived—ask him how I died."

The last stroke of midnight. Her voice grew suddenly faint, like a far-off echo. I fell on my knees, my hands clasped over my face. From without there floated in to me the solemn music of a requiem mass, and to my lips there rose the prayer for the dead—for the wandering souls abroad in the blast on that All Souls' Night.

They passed before me, dimly seen through falling tears—the faces of those long dead ones I loved so well. Mother, my scarce-remembered father, my fair young sister with the face of one of Hilda's angels.

I watched through the night till the grey morning broke, then throwing my gay dress aside, I clothed myself in a mourning garb—deepest black, for it was for a living love now dead and cold that I mourned—dead and cold as the grey ashes that strewed my hearth. Laurence's flowers hung faded in their vases in a streak of bright cold sunshine, that poured in as if to mock my desolation. The old mirror showed me myself cold and lifeless as the grey ashes, drooping as the neglected roses, sitting with idle hands waiting for my lover with the ring on my finger that his wife had placed there.

I heard his step on the stair, his step full of eager, happy haste; the door was burst open, and he stood before me, bold, handsome, masterful, his arms extended.

"Nora! my love—my wife!"

"Never, Laurence! Never your wife. Take this answer and leave me."

His eyes flamed.

"Why, is this some pretty trick of coyness? Or do you still mistrust me? What stands between us yet?"

Then I stretched forth my hand and plucked down the black curtain that hung before my picture. I can see his face now. It blanched to a ghastly whiteness, then grew hot with fierce resolve.

"My wife! How did you come by it?" There was hatred in his tone and a touch of wonder. "Are you jealous of a dead woman, Nora? She can keep us apart no longer;" and I heard a muttered curse on his lips. "When did you see her?"

"She was with me last night, standing where you stand. Can you guess her errand? See, here is her token that I have seen and spoken with her."

I drew the ring from my finger and held it to him. He took it curiously, and then dropped it, as if it had scorched him.

"That ring!" and his voice for the first time trembled.

"And she bade me ask you, Laurence, to look on her there, and to tell me how did she live and how did she die."

Then he cowered under my fixed look, his face blanching in mortal terror.

"She told you that—last night? Why, I saw her buried yesterday. And that ring—that ring! I placed it on her finger in her coffin;" the words drifting from his lips as if frozen with horror.

"Farewell!" sighed a voice that seemed not mine, though it spoke through my lips. His eyes only replied, full of overmastering dread, baulked passion, and blank despair. No word, nor touch, nor caress, was possible between us, now or for evermore; for between us stands the Shadow of the Dead.

And yet I live. Live to find, if I may, my place in this great, empty world, to be Hilda's true and faithful comrade till I give her into the loving hands that are even now outstretched to claim her from me—live to fast and pray for the Living and Dead.

A MIND OF HER OWN.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE WATER OF REVELATION," ETC.

CHAPTER I.

"NORA, you don't mean it—you can't possibly mean it!" exclaimed Mrs. Pe feather.

"But I do," replied her cousin, Ned Clyne, with the utmost calm.

"It is absurd! You, who have thousands a year, and who came to me at least I thought so—with the intention

making a good marriage, want to go into a draper's shop to be a common shop-girl!"

"Well, why not? The only requirements for such a position, besides honesty and a knowledge of compound addition, are, I believe, a fairly good figure, and no objection to wearing black gowns. I think my figure will pass," said Miss Clyne, surveying her graceful form critically in a long mirror, "and black is becoming to me. I ought to get a situation, in spite of my want of experience."

"It isn't that!" cried the matron. "You know very well what I mean. You oughtn't to want a situation, and the way you are talking is simply mad. You are just twenty-one, and you are an heiress. Thanks to your guardian's idiotic prejudices, you have never been in London before. You are undeniably good-looking; yet, instead of caring, as a sensible girl should, about balls and theatres, and securing a good establishment, your first wish is to shut yourself up in a stuffy, horrid shop, where you'll have to stand for hours, till your feet ache and your brain reels, and yet be expected to be active and smiling. You are unquestionably insane!"

"I hope not, Lou; I think not," replied Nora with a smile of rather conscious superiority. "You have enumerated the very reasons why I want to make this experiment. I have read in the newspapers articles telling how shop-girls are over-worked and ill-treated, and I think my two thousand a year, and, perhaps, the good looks you say I possess, should help me in a crusade I mean to preach against their wrongs. But I don't want to have men say to me, as they usually do to every woman who is in earnest about any question, 'You don't know anything about the matter!' I want to know my subject—to live data in my own experience."

"And"—Mrs. Penfeather spoke with anxious solemnity—"do you mean to pass all your life in one of these places?"

Miss Clyne's smile became a little mischievous.

"Oh no," she said. "After six months' experience of millinery, I shall probably become a barmaid, and then, perhaps, a ballet-girl."

Mrs. Penfeather fairly screamed.

"I won't do it, Nora—I will not do it. cannot let you degrade yourself in those horrid ways. What would Sir George think of me?"

"I cannot guess, though I know what he thinks of you already."

"What is it? Do tell me!" cried the matron, expecting something complimentary.

"He says that you are 'a confounded matchmaker'—that's his very phrase—'who has a score of needy fortune-hunters round her, ready to pounce on an ignorant girl with a little money'—that's me."

"Your guardian is a— a brute!" exclaimed Mrs. Lou, with tears of anger in her eyes.

"He is a donkey, at least," returned Nora calmly. "He would be furious if he knew my plans. His wish was that I should remain in his house, till I consented to marry 'a gentleman of suitable rank and wealth,' he said—in short, someone of his choosing. It was my announcing my determination, as soon as I attained my majority, to pay that visit to you to which he had always refused his consent, that made him characterise you in the terms I repeated. You see, he is jealous of the influence you have over me."

Mrs. Penfeather had not a shadow of influence over her cousin, who, indeed, prided herself on her independent ways; but the suggestion flattered Lou, and in the reaction from her recent indignation she began to judge Nora's scheme more leniently.

"But, my dear," she said, returning to the original subject of conversation, "you don't really want to be a ballet-girl, do you?"

"No; I was only jesting when I threatened that. I want to make this one experiment of a month in a draper's shop. Nobody but you and Mr. Penfeather knows that I am in London, and he won't mention the fact to anyone—I don't interest him sufficiently. So, if you'll only be a good, kind, obliging cousin, you will get me a situation with that Blacklock to whom you are such a good customer; and a month hence you can announce, to the half-dozen future husbands you have selected for me, the arrival of your charming cousin from Yorkshire. If you won't do what I want, I will return to Swarfedale to-morrow; but, if you will, I promise to remain with you six months, if you don't tire of me before, and to marry the whole six if nothing less will satisfy you."

Mrs. Penfeather protested a little longer, but more feebly. When one is thirty-five, and is growing stout, and has a husband who hates going out and doesn't like parties at home, invitations become less plentiful than they were ten years before:

and it is a marvellous fillip to a matron's popularity, and an addition to her prestige, to have a young and handsome heiress to take about with her. Mrs. Penfeather's temporal happiness being measured almost wholly by the number of evenings she could spend in other people's drawing-rooms, she really longed for that increased number of requests for the pleasure of her society which Nora Clyne's residence with her would produce. Therefore she gave her adhesion to the girl's scheme for disposing of the first month of her stay in London, on the express stipulation that for a year thereafter Nora should make the Penfeather establishment her home.

Nora promised, and Mrs. Penfeather went to ask Mr. Blacklock to take into his establishment one Miss Adams, whom she stated to be a humble protégée of hers, and a very intelligent and respectable girl.

"I have perjured myself terribly on your account," she said to her cousin on her return from the interview. "I said you were intelligent and respectable."

Nora smiled.

"And don't you think I am?" she asked.

"Oh, of course; but you know when one describes a woman in those terms, one always means that she isn't quite a lady."

"That's rather hard on the ladies, is it not?" said Miss Clyne demurely.

But her cousin failed to perceive the sarcasm.

"Blacklock will take you on trial for a month," Lou went on, "and he means to put you 'in small wares,' he says; but if you are smart and obliging you are to be promoted to lace. I hope you like the prospect. If I hadn't promised faithfully to see you through this experiment without protest, I should have fled from the place at the first mention of small wares. Small wares indeed!"

"I wonder what they are," said Nora thoughtfully. Then she waxed eloquent. "I, too, shall share in the dignity of labour!" she exclaimed. "And afterwards, when I want to right any wrong of the working-woman's, I shall say—not 'I am told'—but 'I know, I have seen, I have endured!'"

"I hope to goodness you won't!" cried Lou. "I wouldn't have your mad freak known for worlds. You pride yourself, I believe, on having a mind of your own, but you would be much better without it. A woman should have no mind but her husband's."

"But if she hasn't a husband what is she to do?"

"Get one," said Mrs. Penfeather attentively.

Two days afterwards Nora Clyne entered the service of Mr. Blacklock. He was one of those tradesmen of distinctly modern growth who believe very devoutly in the division of labour, and not at all in the division of profit, and, therefore, he had extended his original drapery business to include coals, coffins, and groceries. He had one hero, one ideal—the Universal Provider of Westbourne Grove. He had stretched a point in taking Nora to oblige Mrs. Penfeather, who was such a good customer that her husband sometimes averred (when filling up a cheque in payment of a quarter's bills) that he believed she received back a large percentage on her purchases. It was with some regret that this autocrat of drapery had resigned his complaisance, till Miss Clyne appeared, clothed in a severely plain black gown. Then a glance of critical admiration met his eye.

"A fine figure," he murmured. "What she has a little experience I'll put her into the mantles."

It was by way of experiencing in her own person the glorious privilege of earning her own bread, that Nora had entered Mr. Blacklock's shop, but before she had twelve hours of self-dependence had elapsed, her idea of the nobility of labour had dwindled greatly. There was nothing noble in the sale of needles and buttons, nothing to elevate the soul in tape and sewing-cotton. Then, though she considered herself a fair arithmetician, it tested her capacity severely to find out how much the half of sevenpence three-farthings was—almost as much, indeed, as it confined her honesty to learn that it was fivepence.

That she should not get through the first day of her experiment without blunders was to be expected; the marvel was that none of them were serious. Once, indeed, she brought down on herself a rebuke from one of the shop-walkers. In the prosecution of her quest for the grievances of the shop-girl, Nora began to question one of her companions about the circumstances of her life. There was no purchaser demanding her attention at the moment, and she did not know that she was guilty of an infringement of any rule till the voice of one of the shop-walkers fell on her ears.

"Not so much talking, young ladies; it won't do."

Nora turned round abruptly, and flashed at the giver of the reproof a glance of indignant scorn, which he met with a look of once firm and deferential. Fortunately Miss Clyne remembered her assumed position in time to restrain the sharp word that rose to her lips.

"I am sorry to have transgressed any rule," she said coldly but politely, as she turned away.

Her companion in the fault put in a word.

"Don't be too hard on us, Mr. Wilson," he said, with smirking deprecation; "we weren't saying any ill of you, you may be sure."

Mr. Wilson turned his back on her with scarcely-concealed irritation, and looked at Nora with bewildered interest, as he returned to his usual post a few yards off.

"She isn't like the rest," he reflected; "she's not very tall, and she's not very stout; but somehow there seems to be more of her. And she doesn't speak like the others; her tone is different, and she doesn't scramble over her words. I suppose she doesn't belong to London."

He kept his eye on her all day, not to watch lest she should repeat her fault, but to observe as something phenomenal the quiet grace of her movements, the self-respecting courtesy she showed to customers, the perfect dignity she seemed to put into the meanest action. He was not accustomed to see those qualities in Mr. Blacklock's establishment. There were plenty of pretty girls there—prettier than Nora, perhaps—but she was different from them.

"If I were setting up for myself, I should want to have someone like her to manage the dressmaking department," he thought. "Wouldn't she fetch ladies! She looks like one of themselves."

"That's Mr. Wilson," Nora's fellow-offender, Miss Jones, managed to whisper to her; "he's not a bad young gentleman. He may find fault with us, but he won't report us to him." (Mr. Blacklock was always represented in the vocabulary of his employes by this simple pronoun.) "We should be fined if he did."

"We are forbidden to talk," Nora replied coldly, and was not to be persuaded into further conversation.

Nevertheless she could not help observing Wilson. He was rather undersized, she thought, comparing him with the other

men she had met—fox-hunting, amateur-farming squires, and their soldier sons and younger brothers, who had sometimes appeared at Sir George Radford's—men as unlike this London shopman as they well could be.

This was all she noticed the first day she was at Mr. Blacklock's. On the next, she perceived that, though Mr. Wilson's head was rather too big for his body, his eyes were "nice", large, and brown, and bright. Afterwards she observed that his behaviour to the lady-customers who at certain hours thronged the shop, was marked by more real deference combined with less obsequiousness than that of the other shop-walkers, and that he was always and impartially ready to help any of the girls to take out a heavy drawer or lift a box. In her mental notes of life in a draper's establishment she set down that, while the female attendants were mostly "horrid", some of the men were "rather nice".

She clung to her determination to remain in her present position for a month, though it seemed to her that she had investigated all its possibilities in three days.

"I am sure I know all about it," she said to herself, "and it is rather a waste of time to remain for three more weeks; but, if I left now, Lou would think I had given in and would laugh at me." For though Miss Clyne professed to have a mind of her own, it was not strong enough to bear ridicule with equanimity.

She went to see Mrs. Penfeather on the first Sunday of her servitude, going in a hasty and surreptitious manner, as if she feared that someone would detect her double position.

"It is rather monotonous work," she said to her cousin, when that lady questioned her about her situation; "not very interesting and not very elevating; but by no means bad. The girls ought to have seats, certainly, that they may rest when they are not actually serving; and I shall agitate for that after I leave; but, otherwise, I don't think they have much to complain of."

"But you don't like it?" asked Lou.

"N—no; but then it is more dull for me than for the others. They seem to have a lot of subjects to giggle over in common, and then in the evening they walk out with the young men. I don't, you see; so I feel lonely.

Lou burst into sudden laughter.

"Oh, Nora," she exclaimed, "what a joke it would be if some of the 'young men' took

to paying you attention! It would serve you right for trying to leave your proper station, and you would find out then what a much prouder woman you are than you think."

"I hope I should be able to keep them at a proper distance," replied Miss Clyne with a severity that would have done credit to the principal of a lady's seminary; but, as she spoke, she blushed, remembering that on the previous day Wilson had offered her a spray of narcissus-blossoms, and that she had accepted it, and thanked him graciously for it.

"I mustn't do that again," she thought.

Yet on Monday, when he came up and silently laid some lily-of-the-valley against her hand which was lying on the counter, she did not refuse them.

"It would look so unkind," she said to herself; "and after all, what does it matter? Three weeks hence I shall disappear from this place, and vanish from his life for ever. Poor fellow! He really looks too much of a gentleman for this sort of thing."

CHAPTER II.

AFTER her cousin had gone, Mrs. Penfeather fell a-thinking. This mental exercise was with her so rare as to be phenomenal, and, as is frequently the case with phenomena, its results were more often surprising than beneficial.

"Poor Nora!" she said to herself now. "It must really be much worse than she will admit, and she has three more weeks of it. She won't give in, I know, but I really think I ought to do something to make it easier for her. If I told Blacklock who she really is, and that her going into his service was only a caprice, no doubt he would make things as pleasant for her as possible."

In thus imagining, Mrs. Penfeather, as the result proved, showed an entire lack of comprehension of the nature of the British tradesman. This is two-sided; on the one (that which customers see), obsequious to servility; on the other (known only to employes), autocratic to despotism. Mr. Blacklock was the bond-slave of ladies while they kept on their own side of the counter; when they intruded on the other he was their tyrant. This rule admitted of no exception, unless, indeed, such exceptional displeasure as filled his breast on learning from Mrs. Penfeather the true name and station of "Miss Adams", and the exceptional severity with which he felt she

deserved to be treated. She was a spy, a traitor in the camp, and merited a traitor's doom. Unfortunately, the law does not confer on the employer of labour the right to hang, draw, and quarter offending subjects, and it took Mr. Blacklock two days, to evolve a suitable means of punishing Miss Clyne's impertinence in entering his domain under false pretences.

Then, like the hackneyed "wolf on the fold", he bore down on the small war counter.

"What are you doing there?" he said in the most discordant tones of a not naturally harmonious voice. "You're idling your time, as usual, Miss Adams. Do you think I haven't had my eye on you and seen how lazy you are? Take that flower out of your gown. Ladies don't like to see falderals of that sort on the young women in the shops they patronise."

Mr. Blacklock expected Nora to shrink indignantly to be styled a young lady. Any other of his female vassals would have done so, but Miss Adams was not so sensitive on the subject as they; and, indeed, being rather bewildered at this sudden and undeserved outburst of severity, did not know that any insult to her was meant. She meekly—in appearance, at least, for her spirit was roused by the injustice of Blacklock's anger—removed from her neck the flower which Wilson now daily brought her, and laid it on the counter, but her eyes flashed a little when her master threw it on the ground and trampled it underfoot.

"Don't stand staring at me in that idiotic fashion," the irate master of the shop went on. "I know that drawer of tape is useful; take it out and sort the contents."

Putting considerable restraint upon his temper, which was naturally high, Nora turned to obey. The drawer in question was a rather heavy one, and stood on a shelf somewhat above her head. Perhaps she was somewhat shaken by the effort to control her anger, and was less careful than usual; at any rate, the drawer slipped from her hands and fell, its contents scattered on the floor.

"More of your infernal clumsiness or malice!" cried Blacklock. "I believe you did it on purpose!"

Wilson, who had been watching the scene with anxious discomposure, was hastening forward, to help Nora to pick up the scattered tapes, when his master stopped him.

"Let her do it herself," he said; "she'd like well enough to have a young man

helping her and making himself agreeable. They're all up to those tricks, laying traps for flirtation."

This speech was the last straw to Nora's already overburdened temper.

"Anyone can pick up the things who chooses!" she exclaimed; "I won't—and I won't stay in this place an hour longer!"

She was about to walk away, when Mr. Blacklock put his hand on her shoulder.

"No, you don't go yet," he said; "I haven't dismissed you."

She shook off his touch.

"Then I dismiss myself," she returned.

"Then I shall sue you for breach of contract," replied Blacklock.

"I don't care; I won't serve you a minute more."

"Well, you know what'll come of it."

Heno longer opposed her passage, and she walked through the shop under the curious eyes of all the saleswomen, till she reached that part of the establishment where Mr. Blacklock lodged his assistants. Arrived at her bedroom she locked the door and sat down to have a good cry, as a preliminary to packing up the few possessions she had brought with her to the draper's.

"What shall I do?" she moaned in as real distress as if the loss of her situation had been a serious pecuniary matter to her. "I can't go back to Lou and confess what a failure I've been; and besides, I must see what that man means to do. I mustn't disgrace my poor cousin by being carried to prison from her house."

Finally she remembered having noticed a quiet-looking hotel in one of the side-streets near the Blacklock establishment, and there she took a room. She sent a messenger to Mr. Blacklock with her address, for her spirit refused to let her seem to have fled from the consequences of her action. Unfortunately her ex-employer took the message as an act of defiance—a challenge to him to carry out his threat.

"I'll do it," he said to himself. "I'll teach her what she and her like may expect when they come prying into things that don't concern them."

The result of this decision was that next day Nora received a summons addressed to her as Leonora Adams, and on the following appeared in the district court to answer to the charge of breach of contract with her employer.

The bench, after having heard a statement of the case, in which Nora, indeed, appeared as a miracle of insubordination,

gave a verdict for Blacklock, and fixed the damages at ten shillings.

"I won't pay it," said Miss Clyne; "not a penny!"

"Do you ask for exemption on the ground of poverty?" asked the magistrate.

"No; I could pay it easily enough if I chose, but I don't choose."

"Then I must commit you to prison for contempt of court."

"You can do what you like," replied Nora, tearful, but obstinate; "but nothing shall induce me to give that wretch money for behaving like a brute to me."

For this speech she was warned that such expressions were libellous, and that any repetition of them would involve her in yet deeper trouble. And so, indignant and unhappy, she was led away to prison.

A version, vague and inaccurate, of these proceedings reached Mr. Blacklock's establishment; but the general impression was that Miss Adams had had no money to pay the fine imposed, and ran some risk of being imprisoned for life if she could not raise the sum demanded, and sympathy, not loud, but deep, was expressed for her.

"Not but what she brought it on herself," said Miss Jones. "She was a fool to fight against him; but she was very independent and stand-offish in her ways."

Most distressed of all was Wilson. He could not wholly defend Nora's behaviour in the matter. Blacklock had been trying, but then masters so often were so that it was not worth getting angry about. But, as may already have been surmised, he was in love with her, and the thought of her being in prison was terrible to him.

"I can't bear it. I must pay that money for her, and—and—oh, if she would only marry me!"

Next day, as Nora, who had scarcely slept on her hard and narrow prison-bed, was speculating whether it would not, after all, be wiser to give in, pay the damages, and be restored to freedom, the door of her cell opened, and Wilson entered, looking apologetic and uncomfortable.

"Sir," said Nora with as much dignity as her red eyes permitted, "if you come from Mr. Blacklock—"

"I don't," he hastened to assure her. "It's this, Miss Adams. Of course you may think I was taking a liberty, but I couldn't bear to think of you being shut up here for goodness knows how long, so I—I ventured to pay that ten shillings."

A great wave of relief rushed over

Nora's soul. She was free once more, yet had not been obliged to undergo the humiliation of "giving in". What could a woman want more? But she dissembled.

"I have no doubt you meant kindly, Mr. Wilson; but really I have no claim on you, and of course you know that I refused to pay the money on principle, so——"

She paused, not really having a logical deduction to make from these facts.

"Of course that makes a difference," replied Wilson, looking more nervous than before; "I imagined that, perhaps, just at the time you didn't find it quite convenient to pay it."

Nora was sincerely touched at this hesitating speech.

"That was kind," she said with an accent of unmistakable truthfulness, "to spend your hardly-earned money for the benefit of a girl, of whom you knew nothing but that she was foolish and insubordinate. I thank you with all my heart, and I gratefully accept your generosity."

"Don't thank me; it was a pleasure to do it; and as to not knowing anything about you—well, of course I haven't known you very long, but it has been long enough to—make me love you, in fact. You can't go back to Blacklock's, you know, and you may not find it quite easy to get another situation at present; I know I'm not worthy of you, but I'm really awfully fond of you, and would give you your own way in everything; so if you would be my wife, I really think we should get on very well."

At the conclusion of this incoherent proposal Nora rose hastily from her seat to express the indignation she ought to have felt at it, but sat down again in surprised disgust at her own pusillanimity. The indignation wasn't there.

She felt this to be alarming. To be proposed to by a draper's assistant, and not to feel insulted, showed a moral perversion, a deadness to the most sacred instincts of caste feeling, which at the moment shocked her. She understood now why Lou thought her almost if not quite mad. From a society point of view her feelings and actions were unconventional to the point of insanity.

She took refuge from contemplating the alarming problem of her own mind by taking up the humorous side of the situation.

"Really," she said with a smile, "isn't romantic to absurdity! To get an offer of marriage in a prison."

Wilson took the remark seriously.

"I have no doubt it is absurd," he replied, "and I certainly had no intention of telling you that I loved you so soon—indeed I didn't think I should ever have courage to tell you at all, but when you were in trouble it seemed as if I couldn't help it coming out; I wanted so to have the right to aid and comfort you."

"You are far too good for me," murmured the girl with tears in her eyes, and she meant what she said.

There was a simple generosity and tenderness about Wilson which seemed to her exceedingly noble. She felt that she was not likely to have many lovers who would seek her hand simply because she was in trouble, and they wanted to have the right to comfort her. And his weakness was not dictated by mercenary motives. To Nora, who had been brought up to regard herself as the almost professional prey of the "needy fortune-hunter", a man who would offer himself to a woman who he believed had not ten shillings in the world was a phenomenon as desirable as rare.

But then he was not a gentleman; at least he had not the position nor the education of one. Her friends, each and all, would be scandalised at her marrying—good gracious! She caught herself up with a start. Could it be that she was thinking without horror of even the possibility of marrying a shop-walker in a draper's establishment!

While she was debating with herself Wilson spoke again:

"I am afraid I have startled, perhaps annoyed you, Miss Adams. I had no right to be so abrupt. Don't give me an answer now; take time to think over the matter, and perhaps your reply may be favourable. I hope it will; but, if it isn't, don't let me—I mean the little incident of this morning, exercise any pressure on you. It is a thing I would have done for any lady of my acquaintance. I will leave you now; but if I can be of any service to you, pray command me. You will always find me at Blacklock's, you know, and I should be proud to be of any use to you."

He was moving towards the door, when Nora gasped out:

"Don't go!"

"He has the heart of a gentleman, at least," she said to herself; "and I'll never

gain have such a disinterested suitor. I won't be such a goose as to let a chance of happiness slip for the sake of conventional ideas and the opinions of people for whose hearts, brains, and consciences I have not the slightest respect."

She rose from her seat and held out both her hands to Wilson.

"Don't go," she repeated, "till I have told you how much I appreciate the compliment you have paid me. I don't want time to come to a decision; I always make up my mind at once. You are too good for me—a hundred times too good. I am only a very silly and self-willed girl; but since you love me—if you want to marry me—I will try to make you a good wife, and I shall be very proud to have you for my husband."

CHAPTER III.

HAVING, so to speak, crossed the Rubicon, Nora, woman-like, began to tremble at what she had done. She withdrew her hands, and sat down again.

"He'll kiss me now," she said to herself, "and then I shall hate him."

Fortunately, no thought of taking advantage of the privileges of his position entered Wilson's mind. He did not even approach her.

"Thank you, Miss Adams," he said gravely. "You are very good, and if I can help it you shall never regret what you have said to-day." After a pause, he said: "Don't you think we had better go? You must have had enough of this place. I will wait outside till you are ready."

He moved towards the door of the cell. As he reached it, she stood before him.

"You have never kissed me yet!" she said in tones of deepest reproach. This ceremony concluded, she let him go, and tried to arrange her somewhat dishevelled hair. "I must look a terrible fright," she reflected. "He must care for me very much not to have repented on seeing me."

"Let us get to one of the parks, or some other quiet place," she said when they were outside. "I have a great deal to say to you."

But when they were seated in Kensington Gardens, Nora was still silent and embarrassed. She had meant to play the part of Queen Cophetua, to announce to Wilson what a happy stroke he had made that day, and thereby re-assume the dignity she felt she had lost. But when the time to speak came, she was conscious only that she had been acting a lie for the last ten

days, and masquerading in a fashion for which a sensible man might reasonably despise her. Nora Clyne, who had never before in her life feared mortal man or woman, stood in awe of this shopman, who had no other qualification to her respect than his simple honesty and his regard for her.

It was Wilson who began the conversation on the most matter-of-fact basis.

"I have been thinking, for some time, of leaving Blacklock's and setting up for myself," he said, "and I fancy this would be a good opportunity to do it. I have a little money—about two hundred pounds—that my uncle left me; so I can afford to do it without much risk. Still, if you think it unwise——"

"Certainly not," replied Nora; "you couldn't possibly keep on good terms both with that creature and with me. But," she spoke meekly, and he did not perceive the mischievous light in her eye, "will you want me to serve in the shop?"

"No—no. I will work for you. Perhaps you wouldn't mind helping me in the buying of goods, however? You have better taste than I."

"I will do whatever you like; and I want to tell you that I—I have a little money, too."

"Why, I—I thought——"

"Yes; I know. You thought I couldn't pay half-a-sovereign; but you are wrong. I—I'm quite rich. I have two thousand a year; and I only went into Blacklock's shop as a caprice, to see what the life was like. And my name isn't Adams at all; it is Nora Clyne, and I feel I have deceived you abominably."

"Deceived me! No; but I never suspected this. If I had—— oh, Miss Adams—I mean, Miss Clyne—— I don't know what to call you."

"I think you had better call me Nora," suggested Miss Clyne sweetly.

"If I had known this I should never have ventured to tell you I cared for you," said he.

"And I should have lost my best chance of happiness," said she.

"Now that you have told me," he went on, "I feel that I must withdraw."

"Withdraw?" cried Nora.

"Yes."

"If you do I shall call you a mercenary wretch."

"Mercenary! Not that, Miss Clyne, surely."

"Yes, mercenary; for if you give me up

because I happen to be rich, it will be evident that you care more for my money than for me, that it and your own pride are of more importance in your eyes than my happiness. You can do as you like, of course; you can give me up—you can jilt me," she said vindictively, "because I happen to be something different from what you thought; but if you do I shall despise you. And—and I respected you so much, and thought you above nasty mean considerations of this sort."

"Oh, this is terrible!" cried poor Wilson in genuine despair.

To give up the girl you love out of respect to propriety, and to be assured by her that she will scorn you for your sacrifice, is undeniably a severe trial.

"But think what your friends will say," she protested still.

"I know what they will say, and I don't care a straw for any of them. I haven't the slightest respect for them or their prejudices," insisted Nora.

And just as she uttered the last words she should draw near but Mrs. Penfeather.

She was meditating on a very serious subject (the fashion of a new dinner-gown), but she came out of her reverie at the sound of voices, and lifting up her eyes she saw her cousin.

"Why, Nora, can that be you?" she exclaimed; "I did not expect to see you here at this hour. And this gentleman?"

Lou gazed enquiringly at Wilson, vaguely familiar with his face, but unable to localise it.

"This gentleman, Lou," said Nora boldly, "is Mr. Wilson, whom you may have noticed in Mr. Blacklock's shop, and whom you must now know as my future husband."

("There!" she added in a low tone to her lover, "you can't, for shame's sake, brow me over now.")

"Your future—what?" cried Mrs. Penfeather in the one moment of agonised doubt that preceded her being swallowed up by a vast wave of despair. Then, as the latter engulfed her, she added: "I might have known this would be the end of it. Oh, this is terrible! What am I to do? What shall I say to Sir George?"

"There is no need for you to say anything to Sir George Radford," replied Nora; "I will announce my engagement to him."

A change, an expression of surprise and earnestness, had come over Wilson's face as Nora mentioned her ex-guardian's name. He stepped between the two ladies.

"Are you speaking of Sir George Radford, of Swarfedale Hall?" he asked.

"Yes," answered Nora, surprised in turn.

"May I ask what relation he bears to you?"

"He was my guardian till last January, when I came of age. Do you know him?"

"Only by name; but I knew his sister when I was a boy."

"His sister!" exclaimed Nora. "She who—"

Lou interrupted:

"You must come home with me, Nora. I won't have a scene here. As for that—that person—I will say nothing to him. I will telegraph for Sir George to come up, and he will arrange with him. I suppose money will do it?"

"No, madam," said Wilson firmly; "money will not do it. I have no claim on Miss Clyne, but what she chooses to permit. If she dismisses me, I shall go without protest; but no one else in the world shall induce me to give her up. And perhaps Sir George Radford may be less opposed to me than you think."

Mrs. Penfeather protested only by a contemptuous sniff.

Nora whispered:

"Arthur, you are splendid!"

"How do you know my name?" he asked in surprise.

"One finds out those things," she answered vaguely, not caring to confess that her ex-companion, Miss Jones, was her informant.

"Sir George Radford will probably be here the day after to-morrow," said Mrs. Penfeather. "You will hear from him. Till then, I forbid you to have any communication with Miss Clyne."

"I do not acknowledge your authority to make such a condition," replied Wilson; "but I will comply with it."

And Mrs. Penfeather bore her cousin away.

"It is better not to see her again at present," he reflected when he was alone. "If it was only caprice and self-will that made her accept me, she will change her mind when she finds her friends against it. If she is firm I suppose I must bend my pride to make it easier for her. It's a strange chance! I wonder how the old gentleman will take it!"

Two days later Wilson received a note, dated from Mrs. Penfeather's house at Kensington, in which Sir George Radford presented his compliments to Mr. Blank

Wilson, and begged to enclose a cheque for fifty pounds, in consideration for which, Sir George hoped Mr. Wilson would release Miss Clyne from a hasty and ill-considered promise into which he had entrapped her—an act which, Sir George felt bound to state, could only be accounted for by Mr. Wilson's being ignorant of the manners and obligations of a gentleman. If fifty pounds were not sufficient, Mr. Wilson was requested to state at what price he rated his claim on Miss Clyne. Any reasonable demand would be complied with. This courteous note Mr. Wilson answered in person.

Sir George Radford, a stubborn and self-willed lord of the soil, had thought it would be an easy task to crush this "counter-jumper", and had already intimated to Mrs. Penfeather, that only her weakness and stupidity were responsible for the said counter-jumper's presumption not having been nipped in the bud forty-eight hours before.

"I will settle the matter in half an hour, I promise you," said he.

Sir George had arranged the scene in his own mind. It was to be a mere auction. Wilson would bluster, of course, but as the baronet offered more and more for the redemption of Nora's promise, he would calm down and accept the largest sum he could obtain. Sir George was prepared to pay pretty dearly for the girl's freedom. He had fixed on five hundred pounds as his ultimatum, and did not expect to ransom her for less. But that sum was reached and Wilson stood firm.

"You're an avaricious scoundrel!" said the baronet, who had determined in advance to overcome the shopman by displaying the superior breeding of a gentleman. "How much do you want?"

"Nothing but Miss Clyne's assurance that she wishes to be free from her promise to me," was the reply.

"Well, I give you that assurance."

"Excuse me; you have no authority to speak for Miss Clyne. I must have the assurance from her own lips or in her own writing."

As Sir George knew very well that he could not obtain this, he fell a-swearing once more, and in the course of his remarks was very severe on the impertinence of such a one as Wilson aspiring to the hand of a lady of family and fortune.

"I admit the superiority of fortune," interrupted Wilson; "but, as to family—may I ask if you consider Miss Clyne's birth superior to your own?"

Sir George gasped at the mere suggestion of such a thing. Nobody's birth was, or could be, better than his. On principle, he believed in himself, and all thereunto belonging.

"Certainly not," he snorted. "The superiority is, indeed, on the other side, though the difference is not great."

"Not great enough to make a marriage between the two families out of the question?"

"No, assuredly. If either of my boys had lived, I would have had him married to Nora long before this, and saved a world of trouble."

"And yet, Sir George," the young man went on, "you think the wife who would not be more than good enough for your son far too good for your nephew."

"My nephew! I have no nephew."

"Yes, you have. You had a sister who married the organist of a village church."

"Who disgraced herself irretrievably by running away with a piano-tuner," translated Sir George.

"Well, if you choose to put it that way," said Wilson calmly. "The fact remains that Clara Radford, your sister, married Arthur Wilson, and became my mother. I brought the necessary certificates with me, thinking I might have to mention the relationship between us. I am not proud of it; I have never spoken of it to anyone; and if I did not care very much for Miss Clyne I would not own it now."

"You—you're not proud of it!" stammered Sir George, in utter amazement. He had glanced over the papers Wilson laid before him, and was disgusted to find they were evidently genuine.

"No," replied his nephew; "I am much more proud of my other uncle—my father's brother—who took me to his own home when my parents died. It was he who supported your sister during the last months of her life; brought me up, educated me, as well as he had means to do, and did what he thought best to set me up in life. I am proud of my kinship with him, Sir George; I am not proud to be of the same blood as you."

"This alters everything," said Sir George, ignoring Wilson's last words. "You are not merely my nephew; my own children being dead, you are my heir—the future owner of Swarfedale Hall."

"I never knew that," said Wilson, surprised in turn.

"But it's the fact," returned the baronet in a tone of grumbling content. "Of course

this makes all the difference in the world. My nephew is a good-enough match for anybody, and you may take Nora with all my heart—that is, if she'll have you, when she learns that you are of decent birth, but I don't think she will. Her fancy for you is mereromance and obstinacy; it will vanish when she finds out that I have no objection to the match."

"I venture to hope you are wrong," said Wilson gravely. "I think better of Miss Clyne's judgment than to believe what you say."

"That's your vanity, because she was ready to jump into your arms. But I'll make her marry you."

"You are very kind; but even if I did not think your intervention would be useless, I should prefer not to profit by it. Nora must take me of her own free will or not at all."

"Well, she won't, I tell you."

But she did. Nora Clyne's self-will was not the mere obstinacy of a fool, and she was glad to find circumstances to justify her choice. She was determined to marry Arthur Wilson, but she was woman enough to like him better as her guardian's heir than as Mr. Blacklock's assistant. But she has never regretted her experience of life in a draper's shop; nor has Wilson found cause to wish he had not married a wife with a mind of her own.

"ROYAL"

By B. DEMPSTER.

CHAPTER I.

It certainly was not half so pleasant as she had expected. She was even beginning to wonder if her father had not been right, after all, when he had so strongly objected to bring her West with him. Then a sudden recollection of previous holidays spent with that prim' aunt—of long days divided between endless seams of sewing and dreary walks in a dismal town, made her shudder. No. Decidedly this was preferable. But it was certainly dull, when her father went away for a long day's surveying, and left her alone—as it happened to-day, for instance—with only an Indian guard.

She was standing at the door of a kind of shanty, hastily knocked up for her shelter about a fortnight before. She was looking out with—it must be confessed—

decidedly bored eyes upon the grand view before her.

Endless depths of dark pine-wood, tumbled masses of granite crags, gleams of foaming water, splashing and falling from giddy heights of cliff. To the right by the entrance to the cañon—a fearful fissure, nearly three hundred feet deep—its walls, here, almost perpendicular cliffs of granite, there, broken and covered with woods of red-boled pine; and, between them, rushing, and eddying, and tumbling in foaming rapids over the rocks of its bed, flowed the dark river. This cañon, with its gloom, and its mystery, and brooding silence, possessed a powerful fascination for the girl.

She had never ventured far into it, for her father, fearing her adventurous spirit, had forbidden her to wander from her Indian guard. Hitherto she had obeyed. She turned and looked towards it, and slowly into her bored eyes came a great longing. Suddenly, with a quick, swift gesture of her hands; which seemed all in keeping with a bright, alert look, habitual to her eyes, and the breezy, graceful life of her slender figure; she turned away and ran quickly round to the back of the shanty. The Indian woman was there, washing some things they had used for their morning meal, and, as she bent over the platters, she did not hear the girl's light footfall.

Miss Patience Garfield stood for a few seconds gazing at her, a curious look, half disdain, half dismay, on her own young face. The woman was so ugly, and old, and wrinkled.

Then a swift look of penitence flashed into the expressive eyes, and Miss Patience snatched off a string of beads from her neck, and the next second the astonished squaw found them clasped round her own skinny throat.

"You can keep them!" said the girl, nodding violently at her, as she stepped back to see the effect. The effect was not good, though the woman, who had been coveting them for days, was wild with delight at the gift, and grinned, and gesticulated, and thanked her in an eager torrent of broken English.

"They make her look uglier than ever!" thought Patience. "But I mustn't call her names, though it is dreadful to be ugly—I'm glad I'm not. When papa is a little richer I shall make him take me to Europe; and then—oh——!"

Such a vista of courts, and balls, and

noble lovers opened out before her that it quite took her breath away. For Miss Patience Garfield was intensely ambitious, and fully meant to end her days, a duchess at the least. But the recollection of the cañon came back, and she forgot the brilliant social triumphs of the future. She explained to the woman that she was going for a walk, but she would be back by the time her father came home, and, in the meantime, neither the women nor the men were to come and look for her. Having made this arrangement to prevent being worried, as she called it, she ran off into the shanty, and came out a few minutes later, with a little packet in her hand. It was her lunch for the day.

Half an hour later she was well into the gorge. The wavering lines of hazy heat which floated over all the valley beyond, did not reach there. It was cool with deep silences of shade, and white foam of rushing waters.

How the next few hours went by the girl never knew. It was a vision of perfect delight and wonder—infinately more awe-inspiring than her highest flights of imagination could form. She could do nothing but wander on, bewildered, entranced, humble.

She did not even sit down for her luncheon, but ate it as she went. She had left the side of the river, for its banks, all broken and rough with boulders, made walking impossible. She had found a way to mount up through the trees which here grew right down to the water's-edge. It had been difficult climbing, but the sides of the gorge at this part were not steep, and the higher she climbed the more the scenery changed. On every side of her lay now only endless vistas of trees. She debated a little whether she would go on. Then the wonders of the wood proved too much for her. She and her father were returning to-morrow, to town-life again. She would never have such another opportunity. She might go just a little way, and then come back.

Two or three gigantic trunks of trees, struck down by a storm, marked the place by which she had ascended from the ravine below. She could easily find it again by using these as a landmark, and once back in the gorge, she had only to keep the water on her right hand to return in safety to the entrance. She plunged deeper into the woods. She must have gone a long way, for by-and-by she was

forced to confess that she could not take another step. She sank down on the ground, leaning back against a tree.

The silence, the air fragrant with the aromatic breath of pines, the exhaustion following upon intense delight and physical fatigue, overcame her. The upright boles of larch and pine seemed to sway and bend in mystic dance before her, and her tired eyes closed. The slanting rays of light advanced gradually between the red boles, and flickered across the needle-strewn earth, gliding softly athwart her sleeping face, as if leaving upon it a farewell caress, before they followed their king in his journey to the West. One by one they died out from the silent forest, and shadows which had been in waiting all day in the green depths to take the place of those golden rays, stole up, too, from their lurking-places, and touched the face of the girl.

But neither the sunshine nor the shadow awoke her.

When she did awake, at last, it was to wild, ungovernable terror. She opened her eyes to a wood dim with dusky twilight. She sprang to her feet with a cry. Where was she? Miles away from any human being; alone in that dreadful forest, and the night coming on! The paroxysm of terror was perhaps the reaction from the intense excitement in which she had been living through all day. But at least the discovery she made was enough to frighten even the bravest girl.

But the sharp terror subsided with the knowledge that she must not delay a moment. She must hurry back to the place where she could descend into the cañon.

She was stiff in every limb. She was faint for want of food, for her luncheon had been a slight one. She ought to have been home long ago. Her father would be back, anxious and worried about her. This last thought gave her fresh strength. She began running, too eager at first even to feel frightened.

But after a little it seemed as if she would never come to those trees she had taken for a landmark. And all the time every step she had taken had carried her farther from them. The terrible thought came to her at last that this was so. She stopped, and listening, strained her eyes into the gloom which was closing rapidly round her. Far off she could hear the dim sound of roaring waters, but she could not tell on which hand they lay. She dared not stop,

and ran on again, her breath coming in short, panting sobs, her eyes growing wilder with the fears torturing her brain. She had to sit down at last to rest for a moment. She tried to think. If she could but find her way down to the river! but her terrified thoughts refused to guide her. She was not even conscious now that she was on level ground, and that to reach the waters at all she ought to be descending. She rose and hurried on again. The night had come. The moon had not yet risen; but she dared not wait for it. She stumbled and slipped at every step, striking and bruising herself against the trunks of the trees. But the sharp agony of physical pain was nothing, for all the forest seemed full of horrible shadowy arms clutching at her. The place was alive with things she could not see. Every twisted root across her path was a deadly serpent, awakened by her blind, stumbling feet, to pursue her through the black night. Every rustle of the leaves was the stealthy footfall of a wild beast creeping up to tear her to pieces. And above all and through all rang the jeering voices of the waters, growing louder and louder every minute, horrible in their wicked triumph. How long she ran and walked, and ran on again, she did not know. She was delirious with pain and fear. The voices of the waters were so loud now that they deafened her. They were all round her. Ah, here they were, at her very feet. The moon had risen, and a pale radiance gleamed on the rushing flood and dark rock, and as it fell on her it silenced her delirium into peace. No; the waters were not mocking, hideous voices goading her to despair; they were faithful friends calling and guiding her.

They would lead her back. She stood out for a few seconds a slight figure, amid the towering crags and endless pines, the light of the moon touching her, and bringing her into relief against the dark shadows of the boulders. Then sight and strength and will failed her, and with a cry she flung out her hands to the roaring waters leaping up at her feet, and fell heavily forward.

CHAPTER II.

IF he had another name no one ever knew it. When he had first made his appearance in the West, a miner had nicknamed him Royal, in acknowledgment of an aristocratic refinement of bearing, which distinguished him from the rest of the company.

This subtle difference was the only thing that distinguished him from the rest of his surroundings. In all other things he was the same as his acquaintance. He worked like a navvy when he came upon a hopeful claim. He had days of luck and months of ill-luck. But the fact of being on the verge of starvation for weeks made no difference in his mode of proceeding when the luck turned. For a month or so he would live royally, and then, when funds fell, starve again as miserably. He gambled greatly, and swore more than occasionally, and was quite ready with his Derringer. He had followed Fortune up and down the country till he was a familiar figure at most of the camps and miners' town-resorts. There was one of their amusements that he certainly did not indulge in. He was never seen anything else but sober. His mate said that it was because he had an unusually strong head. That may have been, but, at any rate, he was never found incapable of managing his own affairs. Not that the managing did him always credit. He had bungled them considerably at the present, for instance. He had been mixed up in a peculiarly unpleasant, not to say dubious affray, and the result was that he had been put outside the town of Jeanville, this 13th day of July, with the agreeable warning that if he set foot in it again, he would have a bullet in his body as surely as that a hundred boys were eager to put it there.

He had been summarily tried by a committee elected from them, and the verdict would not fail to be carried out. He knew that, and calmly concurred in the judgment, for the good reason that he had nothing to say against it. If he had been one of the committee, and another man in his place, he would have voted the same sentence, and cheerfully carried it out, too, if the necessity had arisen. If a man is discovered trifling with a fellow-creature's accounts and appropriating results, he deserves to be put out of the way to prevent such mistakes in the future.

He had not exactly played that delicate game himself, but he had espoused the quarrel of a friend who had. They would have both shared the same fate, only, by some freak of fortune, his friend was lucky enough to escape. There were other charges brought against Royal. Probably these added to the severity of his sentence, for one of the committeemen was personally interested in one of the other matters.

ndeed, but for his brother judges actively seasoning with him by holding him down n his seat, he would have made short work, here and then, of the prisoner.

Royal had put nearly a day's journey between himself and Jeanville. It ought o have been two, only he was waiting or something. The man whose quarrel e had espoused might join him at this oint. It was an old waiting-place of theirs. Now, why he had taken up arms in defence f a man guilty of a weakness of which he, personally, strongly disapproved, no one ut Royal could have told. Probably, he ould not have told himself. Cheating vas not the worst of that other man's ailings. He was a hopeless member of ociety generally. He was scarcely ever ober. Yet he looked little more than a oy. He had fair hair, and eyes blue as a girl's, and a manner almost as winning when he was capable of having any manners at all, and, as so often happens, this sweetness of disposition accompanied a hopeless weakness of character. Royal knew this Dolly to be a blackguard, and, what was more to the point, a backboneless one. But, in spite of his cynical judgment of the boy's capabilities, Royal was conscious of a feeling of disappointment that he should have bolted and left his champion in the lurch. But he might still make his way to this shelter; and as he would probably be unable to proceed farther without assistance, Royal stayed to take him on with him. He was not worth waiting for, but Royal waited. Half-way down a deep cleft in the cañon was a small cave. It was reached with great difficulty from above, and had afforded shelter to Royal and Dolly on more than one occasion.

From it, winding, intricate passages—some so low that they could only be entered on hands and knees—reached far into the cliff, with another outlet, of which no one apparently yet knew but themselves. The entrance of the cave, which was little more than a slit in the face of the rock, was so covered with shrubs and overhanging trees that they themselves had only found it by accident. The only light that fell in it entered by another larger opening, some distance higher up, and itself inaccessible. So the place was a safe enough shelter, for a few hours at least. But when Royal reached it, Dolly was not there.

After a short sleep, Royal came out of the cave which opened on to a ledge of rock, and made his way down to a lower and

broadier terrace, which, completely hidden from above by the dense pine-woods, commanded a narrow glimpse of the river rushing through the gorge below. It was about eleven o'clock. The moon, high above the cañon, touched the sombre green of the pines with silver, and kissed the dark waters into light. The man's alert, far-seeing eyes, accustomed always to watch, fell on a boulder lying half in the water. Its upper surface, resting on the bank, was splashed with the foam of the hurrying waters, and it glistened in the moonlight. There were no shadows now.

Stay. He had made a mistake. There were shadows. One at least. A huddled-up shape, with a ghastly resemblance to a human figure lying by the side of the boulder.

"Dolly, and drunk as usual!" exclaimed the man with bitter contempt. But even as he said it he was plunging down over the rough ground to his friend's rescue.

It took him nearly a quarter of an hour to reach the boulder. It did not take him a minute to leap from it down to the figure lying by its side, and lift it in his arms.

"A woman! A child! Good Heavens!" he murmured, looking down with something like shocked eyes at the death-like face resting on his breast. The slender figure was still and lifeless, the hands cold as death itself, and the dress all damp and heavy with dew and the spray of the water. Another step or two forward and she would have fallen into the torrent.

There was something almost ludicrous in the perplexed amazement with which the man regarded her. He felt almost afraid to touch her hands as he tried to chafe them into warmth. He inveighed against his folly and want of forethought in not bringing his flask of brandy down with him. No chafing would bring back the warmth to them, and at first he thought she was dead. But a faint beating of her pulses told him she was still alive. He dared not leave her to go back for the brandy. A sudden thought of the committeeman's threats, for the first time in his life made him anxious. He might have tracked him, and was perhaps already lurking near. For George was not always particular about fighting on the square. He could not leave the girl alone. He lifted her again in his arms, and began to ascend the ravine. When Royal reached the cave, he laid her down on his blanket, and, taking off his coat, wrapped her in it. He found his flask, and kneeling by her side forced some brandy down her

throat, and rubbed her hands and temples with it.

Just as he was beginning to despair, her lips moved.

"Father—father!" they moaned.

Royal hastily applied some more brandy. The girl's eyes opened at last. She looked up and saw the man's face bending over her. A terrified cry broke from her, and she struggled up, her eyes filled with delirious terror.

"Father! Those horrible faces! They are like death. Drive them away! Oh, they make me afraid!"

Now as Royal was a remarkably handsome man, the address was confusing. He drew hastily back, and a sudden chill went to his own heart. Was it a presentiment? But it vanished so quickly that it scarcely seemed to have been, and he went to the side of the girl again.

"You are quite safe," he said, rather jerkily, for the circumstances were unusual to his life. "I'll fetch your father directly. Take a little more of this."

The girl was lying with closed eyes again, faintly sobbing and moaning. He knelt down beside her, and, gently putting his arm under her head, raised her. She was shivering with cold, and her eyes were dazed and wandering. Probably his generous use of the flask saved her life, for she was sinking from exhaustion, and chilled to the bone from exposure to the night air and the spray of the water. When she opened her eyes again, they were beginning to understand. She sat up, though the movement forced a cry from her. In her fall she had twisted her foot, and the sharpness of the pain made her nearly faint again. But the remembrance of all that had happened rushed over her like a flood, and she forgot everything else.

"Oh, what have I done?" she sobbed. "Papa will be just wild with fright. Oh, how wicked I have been!" every beat of stronger returning life sharpening her remorse and misery. "Oh, do find him! He will be mad looking for me!"

She caught at the tall dark figure standing by her, too remorseful even to be surprised, or to wonder at her surroundings.

And in a breathless voice, broken by sobs, she told Royal what she had done, entreating him again and again to go and find her father, or to help her to him. The request was awkward; Royal felt it to be so. The girl was powerless to walk herself, and he could not go away and leave her there alone. The distance she had

wandered amazed him. Her father would probably be looking for her miles away. After some time, he persuaded her to wait till daybreak at least, and try and rest a little. He cut off the tiny shoe, for the foot was too swelled to allow of its being removed another way, and before she even knew what he was going to do, had dully twisted the dislocated ankle into its position again, though the sharp cry the sudden wrench forced from her, made him turn as white as a girl. But he said nothing, for Royal was not much given to words. He started off and returned almost immediately with a strip of his blanket saturated with water. He bound up the foot as well as he could, and made her eat a little food, and then, persuading her to lie down, he covered her with what covering he had, and left her. Outside, he made his way again down to the terrace below, where, hidden by overhanging bushes, he could see the entrance to the cave, without being seen himself by possibly watching eyes. And there till daybreak he kept guard.

CHAPTER III.

THE sun was high in the heavens when Miss Patience Garfield awoke from a deep sleep which had mercifully come to her after her dreary experiences. As she stared about her, it seemed at first like a dream. The cave, with its jagged, fissured sides and uneven floor, strewn with broken boulders, was warm and light with sunshine. She stared about her, unable at first to understand what she was doing in so romantic a sleeping-chamber. Her first attempt at moving proved to her that it was no dream, at any rate. She was stiff and aching in every limb, and her foot was intolerably painful. But the thought of her father's trouble made her forget all personal suffering. There were no signs of her friend of the night before, and a great terror fell on her that she had been left alone again.

She struggled to her feet, and though each step almost forced a cry from her, she made her way to the entrance. She pulled aside the branches and looked out. To her relief she saw him cooking on the terrace below. He caught sight of her almost as soon as she appeared, and, raising his hat gravely, came up towards her. Curiously enough, even in the midst of her own pain and mental trouble, she noticed the same subtle difference in his bearing that the rougher miners had already discovered. This man was not of her father's order.

le belonged to one, with which, not even the school where she had been sent to learn the refinements of "elegant" society had made her familiar. Then another thought struck her as she glanced down to where the river flashed between the trees in the unlight below.

"Did you really do that?" she asked with a gasp, as he stepped up beside her.

"Do what?"

"Why, fetch me along from down here?"

He followed her gesture with his eyes.

"Well, I never!" said the girl as he did not answer. "It was real good of you," and she flushed faintly.

The next second she was enquiring eagerly after her father. She sighed impatiently when she heard that nothing had been seen of him. But Royal cut short any further enquiries by telling her to go back into the cave, and he would bring her something to eat. There was a touch of cool command in his manner which she resented hotly, not being accustomed to it.

Then she remembered what she owed him, and submitted. She found some water in a hollow of a rock inside the cave. She bathed her face in it, and tried to smooth her dishevelled hair, wondering with a very tearful amusement whether Nature provided it for such emergencies. She did not know that it had been placed there in the early morning for her use. Royal would not wake her. He had intended the night before to push on at daybreak. But her presence changed the matter; as he could not leave the place now, there was no occasion to wake her. Sleep was the best thing she could have. Any difficulties about his own position were dismissed without a second thought—that is, if there had been a first thought at all.

She was sitting, very nearly exhausted again with the pain of moving, on a low bank of rock against the side of the cave, when he entered. Her white face seemed to disturb him, for he looked as if he were going to say something, and then, changing his mind apparently, set to work in silence to place food before her.

The meal was rough enough. There was only a long clasp-knife and a fork with one prong to eat it with. But she was hungry, and her spirits even rose a little at the adventure. He went out and reconnoitred again, carefully extinguishing every trace of the fire. He was some little time gone. When he returned the girl had ceased eating.

"I thought you had gone right away!" she exclaimed quickly, a look of relief flashing into her eyes.

"Gone away!" he echoed.

"Please forgive me!" she exclaimed in quick penitence and remorse, confused by the look her words had brought into his face. "I don't know what's the matter with me. I'm not a coward generally. I guess I feel nervous after yesterday—and there's papa."

She looked away so that he should not see her eyes. Then, to make amends for her ungrateful doubt, she began to eat again. In consideration of her fears, apparently, he stayed in the cave this time, sitting down a little way from her. She stopped suddenly in her eating and looked at him.

"It must be very dull for you sitting there. Why don't you smoke?"

Royal flushed a deep red.

"I don't know," he said slowly.

"I——"

A sudden recollection of days when such things as women's drawing-rooms had been a part of his daily life came back to him, and he checked himself, his eyes full of a far-off vision.

"Now, I should just like to know what you are thinking of," she said abruptly, holding her knife and fork upright in her hand, in a meditative, if inelegant position. The attitude seemed so incongruous with the purely patrician beauty of her face, that he laughed slightly.

"Now, that's what I call rude," she said.

But she laughed good-humouredly and showed the loveliest teeth in the world.

"You are laughing at me. I know it," with a peremptory little flourish of the knife. "No; you needn't feel scared and apologise. I don't mind. I laugh at most people. I laughed at old Marie yesterday because she was ugly, and I do believe yesterday was a punishment."

She looked so solemn that he nearly laughed again, but changed his mind.

"Do you think we are always punished immediately for our spitefulness, and wickedness, and things?" she asked in a slightly awed tone, after a few seconds' silence.

"It depends, I suppose," he said. "But it comes sooner or later;" and his thoughts returned to the far-off vision.

But the problem was too difficult for the girl, or, perhaps, something in his face recalled her first question.

"Now, do tell me what you were thinking of! I've had a lovely meal, and want

to talk. I shall cry if I don't. How much longer are we to wait here?" and her eyes grew misty again. "I'm dreadfully ashamed, but I can't help it. If you had behaved as badly as I have, you would feel silly too."

"What was it you wanted to know?" he asked hastily, to divert her thoughts, as she sat there struggling hard not to give way.

"Heaps of things!" she said, but her curiosity was decidedly dispirited. "What made you look so, and why you don't smoke when you have nothing else to do? Papa always does, and so do all the men I know."

"Don't you mind?" he asked.

"Mind!" her violet eyes opened wide.

"Of course I don't; who does?"

"Some ladies do."

The quick-bright eyes watching him read something in his face again.

"Gracious! I guess I never met ladies who minded—not even Miss Baxter, and she's just fearfully elegant. That's where I go to school. But I'm finished now. Would you say I was finished?"

A slight smile parted his lips again. He put up his hand to hide it, but her terribly quick eyes caught it.

"There, you're just thinking again of those other ladies. I'd give something to have a sight of them. They must be fearfully particular."

She laughed with a little mockery. But there was with it a sense of being at a disadvantage, which irritated her, for something told her that these "ladies" he mentioned, had the same subtle touch of difference to her and hers as he had.

"Are you a real miner?" she asked abruptly.

"Yes," and he laughed softly; "mostly."

"And when you're not?"

He seemed to have a difficulty again in answering her question, and his eyes looked away for a second from the frank, curious eyes gazing at him.

She laughed again.

"You are close," she said. "I wouldn't go into any business I was ashamed of speaking of, anyway. What is your name? You never asked mine. Mine is Patience Garfield. What's yours?"

"Royal," he answered laconically.

"Why, what a funny name!" Then she suddenly stopped. "I know why they called you that," she said. "There's something about you which makes you different to most men I know. I guess those ladies

you talk of, are like it too. I haven't got it, have I?"

Neither had heard a stealthy footfall creeping along the ledge outside the cave. The feet stopped, and a cautious hand drew the leaf-screen aside to let a face peer through.

Miss Patience's bright, imperious eyes were fixed on Royal's face, commanding an answer, while he in his turn sat looking at her with an amount of embarrassment in his, which precluded any other thought.

Before he could see a way out of his difficulty, a voice slightly thick and hoarse broke in on his perplexity:

"Well, I'm blessed, if you ain't the most sneaking old cuss I've met, Royal! This is what you do to amuse yourself when you retire from Jeanville. She is a little beauty! You needn't have kept her so close if——"

Miss Patience Garfield had a glimpse of a pale, dissipated face with blue eyes and rough fair hair staring at her. The next second it wavered violently to and fro in the grasp of an iron hand closing round its neck, as with a smothered exclamation, her friend hurled himself upon it. Then the fair head, and white furious face bent over it, disappeared, with their respective bodies, through the screen of branches and leaves. The branches swept back into their places again, and there was a thud as if the two bodies had suddenly and heavily arrived together on firm ground some considerable distance below the level of the cave. It had all passed in a moment.

Miss Patience Garfield stood where she had sprung to her feet, staring after the vision which had vanished as suddenly as it had appeared. Then she shuddered from head to foot, and sank down again, trembling violently, on her seat.

CHAPTER IV.

OUTSIDE there was a profound silence for a minute as Royal, stumbling to his feet on the lower terrace, stood waiting for Dolly to rise. This was rather a long process, and when he did get up he made a savage lunge at Royal, which necessitated another gentle reminder from the latter's fist, and Dolly measured his length on the ground again.

"Get up," said Royal, his face still very pale, "and tell me if you want another."

Apparently Dolly did not, for he staggered to his feet and smiled quite cheerfully.

"You're a brute, Royal!" he said placidly.

Royal, with a contemptuous gesture, turned from him, and stood staring for a few seconds down at the river. Then he turned to him again.

"Why didn't you come sooner?"

"I've been coming since the night before last," said Dolly calmly, as he sat stanching a considerable cut on his face. "It took some time. Now don't jaw——"

"It isn't any good," said Royal, his eyes full of bitterness as he saw the unsteady hands. "I've been wanting you." He paced the terrace for a few seconds, then stopped, and in a short, curt fashion gave an account of how he had met the girl, and his own difficulties with regard to her. "George is out," he added, "and I couldn't go myself."

"Ah, I see; if luck were against you, it would have been awkward," said Dolly, entering into the case as if no scene disturbing to his own peace had arisen from it. "He won't hesitate at getting the first shot."

"Yes," said Royal; "and if it had succeeded she would have been left here alone."

"Certainly," said Dolly in a depressed tone; then, quite cheerfully: "I should have found her."

The other looked at him.

"Much good you would have been," he said, again with contempt; "you would have probably been drunk!"

"Very probably. But I'll keep sober now if it's any good," said Dolly.

"It wouldn't have done for me to take her with me, for I still might have come across George, and everything would have depended on my luck then."

"Rather!" The tone was significant, and Royal seemed to grow paler.

"There's only one thing to be done—you must go. George doesn't trouble about you, so long as you keep out of Jeanville."

Dolly's face betrayed opposition. He was tired and footsore, and had been looking forward to a peaceful rest in the security of the cave. Royal saw the hesitation.

He laid his hand suddenly on the other's shoulder, twisting him round, so that he could see straight into his eyes.

"Look here, Carleton," he said slowly, "you haven't been so long from the old place that you have forgotten everything. That girl in there, is a woman such as you and I used to know. You insulted her

shamefully a few minutes ago. If I had shot you down, it wouldn't have been sufficient punishment to wash out the insult. There's only one thing you can do. Get out of her sight, and find her people."

Dolly listened without a word, though slowly up into his face welled a dull red flush. But he wrenched himself, half sullenly, out of Royal's grasp. Royal let him go. He had conquered. The next few seconds were spent in hasty directions, and then Dolly started.

It was some minutes before Royal could enter the cave again. When he did so, he found Miss Patience Garfield still sitting on the bank of rocks, her face turned to him. It was very white, except two crimson spots burning on either cheek, and her eyes were brilliantly bright. As Royal entered, the colour swept swift and scarlet over her face, staining brow and throat, but her eyes never failed. As he advanced she rose to her feet.

"Is Jeanville anywhere near here?" she asked, her voice still and cold as ice.

"Only a few hours' journey."

"Then I shall be much obliged if you would go there for me. We were going there on our way home. My father has a friend there, and we were to stay a few days with his wife. If you would let them know, they could come and fetch me. I am sorry to give any more trouble. But if you will do this, I shall be much obliged."

Her voice was steady and clear; her language quite dignified.

"Very well," he said.

"I will write Mrs. Maple a line," she said, "and if you would take it at once," her voice was not quite so steady, and the colour began to well up slowly into her face again, but her eyes still met his. "I have left my pocket-book behind; if you would give me a piece of paper"—her voice was growing very unsteady indeed, and the stiff dignity of the erect figure began to tremble a little—"or anything to write on," her voice choked in a very undignified sob—"I would thank you. Oh, how could you—how could you keep me here! It was wicked of you when—— Oh, I want to go right away!"

A wild passion of sobbing words swept away the last traces of dignified primness, and the next second Miss Patience Garfield sank down, a poor little crushed heap of sobbing girlhood, on the rocky bank.

The look on that man's debased face, the sneer of his words, his hateful laugh,

seemed to shut her in, and scorch her like an atmosphere of fire.

Royal stood looking at her. His face grew paler and paler, till it seemed that there was no blood left ever to flush it into crimson life again. Perhaps one life did pass from him then; or at least, it was so weakened, that it made the giving up of the other comparatively easy.

After a little he pulled out a dirty, well-worn note-book. He tore out a sheet of blank paper and laid it down by the girl with a pencil. Then he left the cave. Outside he did several things: he fetched water from the spring which fell down the sides of the ravine, some little distance from the cave, in case she should not have enough till they came for her. He looked to see what food remained. There would be plenty for the rest of the day, and, before the next, help would be there. Then, when he could do nothing else for her, he proceeded to his own private affairs. He opened his note-book again and looked through it, tearing out and carefully destroying most of the notes. A few he left, and on a blank sheet of paper he wrote half-a-dozen lines for Dolly.

Dolly might as well have the benefit of the little belonging to him. When the present affair had blown over, he could claim the property.

When Royal had finished everything to his satisfaction he returned to the cave. Miss Patience Garfield had ended her note, and was sitting waiting for him:

Then the pale gravity of his face lightened, and he addressed her in his usual voice:

"I want you to promise me this before I go: that you will not stir from this place till they come for you—not even to pass outside of the bushes."

She nodded, her voice was not yet to be trusted.

"I would hide you farther in the cliff," he said, with a gesture towards the broken background of rock, "but I am afraid you might lose yourself. You will be safe enough here, I think, if you will keep quiet and wait till I send."

"You will come back too?" she exclaimed hastily, suddenly remembering all that he had done for her.

A curious smile flickered across his face.

"I don't think so," he said; "but you will be all right. You can trust me!" with a touch of anxiety.

"Trust you!" she flushed piteously.

"Oh, I don't wonder at your asking that I was so ungrateful, so—and you had been so good!"

He drew back hastily.

"No, you needn't be scared," and she tried to laugh, but the effort was not very successful; "I'm not going to cry again. You'll have to come back to see papa; he will be mortal grateful, and—and I'll never forget as long as I live. And if you don't come and see us, I'll go on expecting you till—well, I guess, till I die."

She laughed again; but the sound was so hysterical that it upset herself, and wildly waving her hand for him to go, she turned away.

So he went, and as he went he thought that they had not once shaken hands. He would have liked to have done so; but he could not ask, and, besides, there was no time to waste.

CHAPTER V.

It was about eleven when Royal started. It was just upon seven when he reached the outskirts of Jeanville. In a lonely half-made road, skirted by a belt of pines, which shut off as yet the sight of the town, he stopped, hesitating whether he should wait for nightfall to enter. But the remembrance that every hour here meant another hour of torturing loneliness and possible danger to the girl waiting in the cave, induced him to push on. If luck were with him, and with proper precaution, he might enter. Besides, it would be dark before he reached it. The town lay still a mile away. He was footsore and faint; but after another look at his Derringer, he went on down the road, and as he walked his quick, keen eyes kept up their patient watch which nothing could escape. Suddenly he stood still. His ear, trained and delicate as an Indian's, caught a slight rustle in the bushes to his left. There a figure sprang down from the bank a few yards in front of him, standing out clear in the crimson light.

His hand, with the gleam of the weapon, dropped to his side, and he stood silently looking at the figure. It was a woman, and the crimson light stained her face and made even his look flushed.

It lighted up her tawdry finery, and flashed on the gold in her ears and on her hands. She was handsome, with a certain bold, coarse beauty, and her great dark eyes stared steadily at him as he looked at her. "Royal!" She spoke first, in rough

though not unpleasant voice. It had even a touch of softness. "What brings you here? The boys are all on the look-out. George has been gone since yesterday after you. He was wild because they wouldn't let him do for you at once."

Royal smiled in mockery.

"I've passed him on the road, then."

The woman laughed.

"Guess he won't expect to see you here, anyway."

Then her face grew grave.

"But, Royal——"

"Good-night, Nan!" he said laconically.

He turned on his heel; then a thought struck him, and he turned back. He pulled out a piece of the paper he had brought, and scribbled something on it. The woman stood by, looking at him with a curious expression in her face. When he had finished, he looked up.

"Nan," he said, laying his hand on her arm, "I believe you are to be trusted. I want you to do me a favour."

The woman nodded, but she still looked at him curiously, and the dark flush that mounted to his pale face seemed to find an odd reflecting shadow in her eyes. She took the paper without a word.

"There's an address on it," he said; "I want it taken to that place—that is, if anything happens to me, you know. I'm going there now; but, if I don't get so far, I want you to go for me; only, whatever you do, don't let George know."

"You bet!"

"Good-bye, Nan!" he said again; and this time he held out his hand.

"Good-bye, Royal," she said, with a self-conscious laugh. "You're a fool to carry that handsome head so close to the boys. Go back where you came from."

He only laughed and turned away.

She stood staring after him as he went. Then she sat down by the roadside and began to cry.

But Royal did not look back. Perhaps, if he had, he might have felt differently. As it was, he was only filled with a bitter, cynical wonder that, for the sake of a brief amusement with a woman such as that, he had played a game of which the stakes were his life.

In a moment of folly, or dulness, or ill-luck—whichever it might be Royal could not have said—he had made himself agreeable to "Beautiful Nan". And George Pelham, who looked upon her as his property, resented his attentions. He had sworn not to rest till he had put a bullet

in his rival. And the woman between them sat crying by the wayside, for Royal's eyes said more, perhaps, than they really meant, and his handsome face would awake chords in women's hearts when he himself was perfectly indifferent to the music he drew. But the women had their revenge now, if they wished for it.

Down the lonely road came sounds of feet and voices. Half-a-dozen miners were making their way out of the town. A bend of the road hid them from view, and Royal, springing into the thick undergrowth, crouched down in hiding. They passed him after a few minutes. They were all men of his acquaintance.

He waited till they were some distance away, but he did not wait long enough. Perhaps he had grown reckless. After hours of ceaseless watching and expectation, men do sometimes. He stepped down into the road, and made for the curve. Once beyond it, he would be out of sight. Just as he reached it, one of the men looked back. As he caught sight of the well-known figure standing out clear for an instant in the red light, an exclamation broke from him. The other men turned and saw, and with a shout they gave chase. Royal heard the shout, and ran. It was not a case for fighting. Down the rough road he flashed, his head up, his feet light and active, as if there had been no heaviness of exhaustion a minute before. He must get into the town, or at least near enough to find another messenger in case Nan failed him.

His splendid training and natural swiftness more than kept up the advantage of his start. The men saw it as they turned the curve, and one, with an oath, fired. The bullet whistled past Royal. The next—for the man's example was followed—grazed his cheek. But still he never stopped, though now the bullets seemed flying all round, and he was struck more than once. But for the moment he was scarcely conscious of them. Something else stronger than physical endurance was carrying him on.

"It is lucky for me. They're all drunk!" he said, with heavy, sobbing breath. "I'll do it yet."

But he had reckoned without his host—otherwise George. There was an old half-ruined shanty standing a little back from the road. A man was lying in it asleep. It was George Pelham. Torn opposite ways between the lust of revenge and the rage of jealousy, the latter had proved the

stronger, and George had returned from tracking his rival to see what Nan herself was about. He was sleeping off the fatigues of his search in the shanty. The sound of firing and the thud of feet awoke him. A row was like the breathing of new life to George. He sprang to his feet and rushed out, to see his rival ten yards past the shanty, running for his life. A deep curse broke from George's lips, while into his eyes leaped the horrible fury of triumphant revenge and hatred.

He lifted his hand, with its weapon covering the figure which was stumbling a little now, as if the way before it was no longer quite clear. George waited for a second till it steadied itself again, then touched the trigger.

There was a quick, sharp report; Royal gave a little bound in the air, ran a few steps, then staggered a step or two forward, then flung up his arms, and fell face downwards in the red earth of the road.

CHAPTER VI.

A BEAUTIFUL English garden in July, Sweeps of velvet turf, scarlet patches of blossoms, shade of grand trees, and the old grey house in the midst full of guests, for Lady Samphire's country seat was as popular as her town-house, and to be invited to spend a few days with her, was an honour much esteemed.

This hot July morning all the tennis-courts were vacant with the exception of one, and in this stood a man and a woman talking very earnestly. Now, given a beautiful woman with a fabulous fortune, and every fascination of manner, natural as well as acquired, it is easy enough to guess what the subject of an earnest discussion is, when her companion is a man, unmarried, young enough to be ambitious, and appreciative enough not to lose sight of her beauty in her millions.

The result of the conversation naturally depends on the woman, as it did on Miss Patience Garfield this morning. A few minutes later, the young man walked dejectedly away to hide himself in the trees, and Miss Patience Garfield flitted in her pink tennis-gown back to the grey house. She did not look penitent at all. Indeed, there was a bright light in her eyes, and her cheeks were flushed.

"It is very tiresome that you can't play a set of tennis with a man without his thinking he may propose," she said to herself snappishly.

Now, as these proposals were of such constant occurrence that they had grown part of Miss Garfield's existence, it was a wonder she felt so cross over it. But this morning she felt something as she did in the days when the proposals first began. She felt inclined to cry.

She was passing the morning-room. A glance showed that it was empty. She slipped hastily through the French-window and darted into the coolest and shadiest corner, seizing a book. She had barely settled down, when the butler opened the door and announced a visitor:

"The Earl of Oldacre."

"Bother!" was Miss Garfield's mental exclamation at the announcement of a strange name. "Lady Samphire is not here," she said hastily, aloud to the butler: "she has just gone down to the farm." Then she caught sight of the man entering. She staggered to her feet and stood staring. The butler drew back and closed the door. The Earl of Oldacre advanced into the room, then stopped and stood staring too. Then Miss Garfield, her face as white as the roses she wore, sank down into her chair trembling in every limb. "Are you a ghost?" she said. "Are you dead or alive? Oh, you were dead! They said so!" and she began to laugh a little wildly.

Lord Oldacre, who seemed to have recovered some of his self-possession, came quickly forward, smiling a little, though his face was as pale as her own.

"I have frightened you," he said. "I wanted to see Lady Samphire first to get her to tell you. I am staying near her, and heard you—"

"But you are Royal, are not you?" she rose to her feet, and looked at him, her eyes still frightened. He was dressed in the faultless dress of an Englishman, yet he wore it with scarcely more grace than the shabby, rough clothes she had first seen him in. "Oh yes, you are Royal!" she said, and she sank down again, apparently forgetting to shake hands. She looked so white and trembling that the man's eyes were full of distress.

"What an unlucky brute I am!" he said hastily.

"No; it doesn't matter at all." She forced herself to sit up and laugh. "Only a foolish woman like me would have fancied she saw a ghost on a hot July morning. No; I was dreadfully foolish. But they said you were dead when we arrived at Jeanville. Sit down there and tell me all about it."

She made an imperious gesture to a chair near.

"There isn't much to tell," he said. But he sat down. As he did so, Miss Garfield's eyes fell on the great ugly scar on his cheek, and she shuddered from head to foot.

"It was horrible!" she said. "You would have told me. How was I to know that I was sending you straight to death!"

"But it wasn't, for I am alive," with a faint smile.

"Don't—don't make me hate myself more than I have done all these years—eight years! And you were alive all the time, and never came back, though I said you should wait. And such lots of things have happened. Papa made a fortune, and we have come to Europe to spend it. Eight years; and I have grown quite old! Do you know, in three more years I shall be thirty? I have no grey hairs yet, nor any wrinkles, but I am growing old for all that, and I was so young when you first met me!" with a touch of pathetic passion. "It was wrong of you. If you were alive, you should have come back. I told you I should expect you."

"I thought you might have forgotten me."

"Forgotten! But I know you always thought badly of me. Oh, I have learned many things since then. I know now what sort of women you meant. I have met them. See, do you think I have succeeded?" She sprang up, and paced up and down the dainty room with a stately grace, holding a palm-leaf in her hand. The man sat watching her. Then she tossed the palm-leaf away, and ran back to her seat with a laugh. "I have tried so hard," she said; "and I don't say 'around' any more, nor 'elegant', and I don't eat with my knife. Didn't I eat with my knife when you saw me?"

Lord Oldacre laughed, but his eyes were a little bewildered.

"No; you did not do that."

She breathed a sigh of relief.

"I did so many things, I thought I might have done that too. How you must have laughed at me!"

"I did not."

"No; you died for me."

"Not even that," he said with a smile, which faded as suddenly as it came.

She looked so beautiful as she sat there in the perfection of her womanhood, with the soft colour coming and going in her face, and her lips tremulous between laughter and something nearer tears.

"You have not told me yet," she said. "Life has been so monotonous for eight years. I want to hear something exciting."

"There is nothing exciting. I don't know very much myself. I believe they took me into the shanty when I was knocked over. I was left there for dead."

"How did the note reach my friends?" Lord Oldacre flushed darkly.

"I had given it to a messenger," he said.

"Oh!"

Then she was silent, and looked away.

"Some friends found me a little later and took me away," he went on with a hurried note in his quiet voice. "They gave out I was dead, thinking it safer for me till I was able to get about again and look after myself. That was what you heard, I suppose?"

"Yes," she said; and she sat upright with a stiffening of all the beautiful line of her figure.

There was a hardening of her eyes, too.

"My friends found me, and almost a week soon my father came. He went down into Jeanville next day, for I was too ill to be moved; then we heard all the story and that you were dead."

"Who was it who found you?" she asked after a second's pause, during which they had not looked at each other.

"Dolly—Tom Carleton was his real name—and a woman called 'Nan'."

Miss Garfield rose and went over to the bank of ferns, pulling at their fronds with her slender fingers.

"They were very good to me—these friends," he said. "I was ill for a week after that, unconscious and helpless, and they nursed me through it all, though Dolly was a drunkard, and Nan—well, she was not a woman such as you know."

There was a dead silence.

When she turned her face to him again it was very pale, but the eyes looked out softly from a mist of tears.

"They were very good, those friends of yours," she said. "What became of them?"

"Dolly was killed in a drunken fray and Nan—well, she is living still."

Lord Oldacre had risen. He went over to the window and looked out for a few seconds. When he turned again there was a shadow on his face which hushed the last rebellion in her heart.

"Dolly used to be my fag at Eton," he said simply. "I wanted to bring him back with me, but he died. His mother brok

her heart over him. Miss Garfield, will you listen to my story?"

She sat down silently.

"You ought to know it, for if there is anything saved from the wreck it is your doing. That day I met you made a difference. Somehow you brought back all the life I had lost. You made me remember the women I had known. When I got better I cut the old ways and tried to live differently. Then three years ago I came into the title. My two elder brothers had died. But perhaps you have already heard my history—it was common property!" with a little bitter sarcasm.

"I have done a great deal," she said, with a laugh which was not very successful, "but I have not yet mastered the private histories of the English peerage."

He laughed faintly.

"Mine is not a very edifying one, at any rate. When I was a youngster I was in the Blues. I was a younger son, and I gambled, and betted, and disgraced myself generally. I was kicked out of the service, and had to disappear. When I came into the title I was ashamed to come back. But I was persuaded to come and live the past down."

"And you have."

It was more an affirmation than an enquiry.

"I don't know; I am the Earl of Old-acre, and people are civil to me," with intense bitterness.

He went over to the window again, and stood there looking out.

Miss Garfield sat watching him.

"Do you know what to-day is?" she asked abruptly; "it is the 13th of July. Eight years to-day since you saved my life. How worthless you must have thought it when you would not even come back to let me have the satisfaction of thanking you for it."

"Worthless!" He turned sharply

round, and the next minute he was on her side. "It was because it was so beautiful to me that I dared not."

He stopped abruptly, turning and trembling suddenly from head to foot. "Royal—Royal!" she cried, rising to her feet; and then she burst into a cry.

"What is it! Have I hurt you?" "Don't, for Heaven's sake, Miss Garfield."

He stepped back, speaking hoarsely. "It's no good!" She lifted her hand.

"You are so blind!" with a laugh in a sob. "You mended my feet, saved my life; and then—and then—"

"What?" He drew quite close. "I love you—I love you! Oh, tell me what were you going to say? You said nothing of me. I might be——"

"No; I know nothing of you, but that you went to die for me, and that is dreadfully silly, I know, but I thank you for you ever since, though I thought I was waiting for a ghost."

Miss Patience had only a very faint sense of where she ended her story. Only it seemed as if suddenly all had fallen upon her, and that she lay down and quiet in a perfect resting-place.

She was very silent for a few minutes, then she lifted her head again.

"I want to say something more to you, and yet I am afraid. That you saved your life, and I——"

"Patience!" There was a sharp cry of pain in his voice. "Has not my suffering been great enough? It was for the life she represented, which had been torn apart from you all these years. I will not come and find you."

"Poor Nan!" and the voice was pitiful, and the eyes so sorry and wondrously beautiful, with that gleam of light of love, that Royal—remembering the past—with a sound like a sob in his throat caught her to him again.

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CONTENTS.

I. ON A VERSE OF VIRGIL	1	VIII. THE GRAVE OF HONOUR	42
II. HIS LORDSHIP'S TOWN HOUSE	8	IX. THE BROKEN RING	50
III. A LONG MORNING IN THE CITY	16	X. THE ADVERTISEMENT	52
IV. WHO HAS DONE THIS?	24	XI. STILL ONE CHANCE LEFT	56
V. A STEADY YOUNG MAN'S EVENING	31	XII. UNCLE JOSEPH AS AN INSTRUMENT	60
VI. THE TEMPTATION	36	XIII. A LAST APPEAL	65
VII. DOWN WITH THE LANDLORDS	39	CHAPTER THE LAST	68

"SELF OR BEARER."

CHAPTER I. ON A VERSE OF VIRGIL.

WHEN Virgil represented the souls of infants as lying all together in a cold and comfortless place outside the gates of Tartarus—why not outside the gates of the Elysian Fields, where the air is finer and the temperature more moderate?—he certainly had in his mind the Roman Hospital for Children, the ruins of which may still be seen on Mount Aventine, close to the ancient Porta Navalis, where the population was thickest, the houses tallest, the streets narrowest, the street-cries loudest, the rumbling of the carts noisiest, the smell of onions, oil, and vinegar the most profound, the retail of tunny-fish on the largest scale, and where the population consisted of porters, sailors, riverside men, gladiators, and loafers. It was a very good Hospital. The wards were spacious and lofty; there was a garden, where vegetables, and flowers, and fruit were grown, and there was always plenty of fresh air. The provisions were abundant; the Sisters who nursed the children were mostly young, and generally, therefore, pretty. They dressed in white, simply but gracefully, in respectful, distant imitation of the Vestal Virgins. It was their custom to speak with admiration of the celibate life, though the young doctors and clinical clerks always fell in love with them, and they sometimes went away, and left their Hospital children to be married. Then.

in due course, they were able to set up a little Children's Hospital of their own at home. The Senior Physicians were grave and reverend persons, who knew to the tenth part of a drachm how much powder of kittiwake's brains would cure infantine colic, and how snail-broth should be infused with a certain herb, found only on the Campagna, in order to subdue a quartan fever or ague. The younger doctors were zealous and active—too fond, perhaps, of trying experiments, but devoted to science, and always on the look-out for new specifics. It was a great school of medicine, and the students were notorious in the Quarter for their singing, drinking, dancing, gambling, fighting, lovemaking, tavern-haunting, street-brawling, ruffling, roystering, fanfaronade, and galliardise.

Yet, with all these advantages, the Romans did not understand quite so well as we of later and, in other respects, degenerate age, how to keep the little fluttering spark of life in existence; nor were they so skilful in reading the signs of disease, nor had they so many appliances at hand for relieving the little sufferers. Therefore, there was, in the old Roman Hospital, a continual wailing of the children.

Now, had Virgil visited the Children's Hospital at Shadwell, which was founded, unfortunately, after his time, he would have re-written those lines. He would have represented the souls of those innocents lying all in rows, side by side, in comfortable cots, enjoying a mild air with

no draughts, and Sisters always present with thermometers to regulate the temperature, and an endless supply of bottles and milk. The infant souls would be perfectly happy, just as they are at Shadwell; there would be no wailing at all. Sometimes they would sleep for four-and-twenty hours on end; sometimes they would be sucking their thumbs; sometimes they would be sucking the bottle; at other times they would be kicking fat and lusty legs, or they would be propped up by pillows, looking straight before them with the indifference absolute to outside things, and the perfect self-absorption possible only to infants, mathematicians, and fakeers, their eyes full of the calm, philosophic wisdom which belongs to Babies. One considers this wisdom with mingled pity and envy. Is it a memory or an anticipation? Does it belong to the past or to the future? Is the child remembering the mysterious and unknown past before the soul entered the body, or does it think of what is to come when the earthly pilgrimage is finished? Another theory is that one is born wise, but, owing to some defect in our nursing, one forgets all the wisdom in the first year, and only recovers a few fragments afterwards. Now, whether they are sleeping or waking, the souls of the infants are, one is perfectly convinced, always happy, and always watched over by certain pale-faced, beautiful creatures dressed in long white aprons and white caps, with grave and thoughtful faces, who have no independent existence of their own, nor any thoughts, hopes, desires, or ambitions, but are contented to minister for ever to Baby, mystic and wonderful.

One is sorry that Virgil never had a chance of seeing the Shadwell Hospital, not only because he would have written certain lines differently, but because the place would certainly have inspired him with a line at least of illustration or comparison. There are Babies in it by the score, and every Baby is given to understand on entering the establishment that he is not to cry; that he will not, in fact, want to cry, because all his necessities will be anticipated, and all his pains removed. At home he has been told the same thing, but has never believed it, which is the reason why he has so often sent his father off to work with a headache worse than the Sunday morning skull-splitter—reminiscence of a thirsty night—and why he has every morning rendered his mother to the similitude of a thread-

paper, and kept the whole court awake, and become a terror to the High Street outside the court. Here he cries no longer, and gives no one a headache, but is contented, and good-tempered, and contented.

The Babies are ranged along the sides of the room in cots, but some are laid in cradles before the open fireplace, and some are placed on top of the stove, like a French dish laid to stew in a Bain-Marie, and some have spray playing upon their faces and down their throats; some are sleeping, some are sucking the bottle, and some are lying broad awake, their grave eyes staring straight before them, as if nothing that goes on outside the crib has the least interest for a Baby. Here and there sits a mother, her child in her lap; but there are not many mothers present, and about the ward all day and all night perpetually hovers the Sister. When one first visits this room, there happens a curious dimness to the eyes with a choking at the throat for thinking of the innocents suffering for the sins of their fathers and the ignorance of their mothers. Presently this feeling passes away, because one perceives that they do not suffer, and one remembers how good it must be for them to be in such a room with pure air, neither too hot nor too cold, with the Sister's careful hands to nurse them, and, for the first time in their young lives, a holy calm around them. To the elder children in the Ward above, the quiet, the gentle ways, the tender hands, and the kindly words, are full of lessons which they will never forget. Why not for the infants, too?

The Sister in this Ward wore a grey woollen dress with a white apron, which covered the whole front of her dress, a "bib apron," a white collar, and a white cap and no cuffs, because cuffs interfere with turning up the sleeves. She was young, but grave of face, with sweet, solemn eyes, and yet a quickly-moved mouth which looked as if it could laugh on small provocation, were it not that her occupation made laughing almost impossible, because Babies have no sense of humour. Her name, in the world, was Calista Cronan, and she was the daughter of Dr. Hyacinth Cronan, of Camden Town. As for her age, she was twenty-two, and as for her figure, her stature, her beauty, and her grace, that, dear reader, matters nothing to you, because she is the next thing to a nun, and we all know that a nun's charms must never be talked about.

It was a Sunday morning—a morning in

early June—when outside there was a divine silence, and even the noisy highway of the Thames was almost quiet. The Sister was loitering round the cribs in her ward, all the Babies having been looked after, washed, put into clean things, and made comfortable for the morning. Two or three mothers—but not many, because there are household duties for the Sunday morning—were sitting with their own Babies in their laps, a thing which did not interfere with Sister Calista's catholic and universal maternity. Everything in the ward was as it should be: the temperature exactly right, the ventilation perfect, the cases satisfactory. Presently the door opened and a young man came in. As he carried no hat and began to walk about the cribs and cradles as if they belonged to him, and as the Sister went to meet him and talked earnestly with him over each baby, and as he had an air of business and duty, it is fair to suppose that this young gentleman was connected with the Medical Staff. He was, in fact, the Resident Medical Officer, and his name was Hugh Aquila.

Mr. Hugh Aquila had passed through his Hospital Course and taken his Medical Degrees with as much credit as is possible for any young man of his age. Merely to belong to the Profession should have been happiness enough for him, who had dreamed all his life of medical science as the one thing, of all things, worthy of a man's intellect and ambition. There are, in fact, other things equally worthy, but as Hugh was going to be Medicinæ Doctor, it was good for him to believe, while he was young, that there was nothing else. So the young limner believes that there is nothing to worship and follow but his kind of art; and the physicist considers himself as the Professor of the One Thing Noble and Necessary—all in capitals. But the fates are unequal, and one man's cup brims over while another's is empty. To this fortunate young man Love had been given as well as the Profession which he desired, and a measure of success and reputation—Love, which so often is kept by Fortune for Consolation Cup, and bestowed upon those who have lost the race and been overthrown and trampled on in the arena, and have got neither laurels nor praise, nor any wreath of victory, nor any golden apples. Yet this young fellow had actually and already obtained the gift of love—though he was as yet no more than five-and-twenty—in addition to his other gifts,

graces, and prizes. Perhaps it does not seem a very great thing to be Resident Medical Officer in a Children's Hospital. But if you happen to be a young man wholly devoted to your Profession, and if you are already in good repute with your seniors, and if you have faith in yourself, and a firm belief in your own powers, and if, further, you see great possibilities in the position for study and increase of knowledge, then you will understand that to be Resident Medical Officer in the Children's Hospital at Shadwell may be a very great thing indeed.

When this Resident Medical had completed his round and finished the work which has every day to be begun again, he stood for a moment at a window looking out into the silent street below. It had been raining and the pavements were wet, but the sun was bright again, and there were light clouds chasing across the sky. Within and without everything was very quiet.

In the week there were noises all round them: the noise of steamers on the river, the noise of work in the London Docks, the murmurs of the multitudes in High Street, Brook Street, Cable Street, and St. George's-in-the-East. But to-day was Sunday morning, and everything was peaceful. The eyes of the young man, as he stood at the window, had a far-off look.

"You look tired, Hugh," said the Sister.

These two were not brother and sister. They were not even, so far as they knew, cousins. Nor had they known each other from infancy. Yet they addressed each other by their Christian-names. To be sure Calista was, professionally, the Universal Sister. But Hugh was certainly not the Universal Brother. This singularity might have given rise to surmise and gossip in the Ward, but for the fact that the Babies took no more notice of it than if it had never occurred at all—it is a way with Babies. The Sister was plain Sister to all the world, and therefore to Hugh Aquila she was Sister as well; but with a difference, for to him she was sister with a small initial, because he had entered into a solemn undertaking and promise, with the Sacrament of Vows and Kisses, to marry her sister after the manner of the world—Norah Cronan, at that time Private Secretary to Mr. Murrige, of Finsbury Circus. All mankind were Calista's Brothers, and yet she called one or two of them by their Christian-names. One of them was Hugh, her sister's fiancé, the other was a young gentleman who, at

that moment, was actually entering the great doors of the Hospital and making for the direction of the Resident Medical's private room.

Hugh Aquila, M.D., F.R.C.S., and L.R.C.P., was a strong, well-built young man, with big limbs, and a large and capable head—a head which had been endowed with an ample cheek, a reasonable forehead, a firm mouth and chin, steady eyes, set under clear-cut eyebrows, and a nose both broad, straight, and long. This is rather an unusual nose. The nose which is broad and short is the humorous nose, but it generally argues a want of dignity; that which is narrow and long may belong to a most dignified person, but he is too often unsympathetic; that which is both short and narrow shows a lack of everything desirable in man. Since Hugh Aquila's nose was both broad and long, he could laugh and cry over other people's accidents and misfortunes—that is to say, he had sympathy, which is almost as valuable a quality for a young Doctor as for a novelist. Such a young man, one is sure at the very outset, will certainly make a good fight, and win a place somewhere well to the front, if not in the very front and foremost rank; it is not granted to every man to become Commander-in-Chief; there are a great many men, very good men indeed, who miss that supremacy, yet leave behind them a good record for courage, perseverance, and tenacity. Happy is the woman who is loved by such a man!

To add one more detail, Hugh had big, strong hands, but his fingers were delicate as well as strong. This was, perhaps, because he was skilled in anatomy, and already a sure hand in operations.

"Oh, Hugh," said the Sister—it had been Mr. Aquila until a day or two before this—"oh, Hugh, I have had no opportunity before of telling you how glad and happy I am for Norah's sake."

"Thank you, Calista," he replied simply, taking her hand; "everybody is very kind to me, and it is so much the better that we spoke and settled matters before this wonderful Succession."

"Yes, I think it is. Though the Succession ought not to make any difference. Tell me, Hugh, is it long since you began to think of it?"

"I have been here for nearly twelve months; I had been here a week when first I saw Norah in this Ward. I began to think of it, as you say—that is, to think

of her, then and there—my beautiful Norah. She is like you, Calista, and yet unlike. She is as good as you are, but in another way. She belongs to the world, and you—"

"To my Babies," said Calista, smiling.

"I should have put it differently. Strange and wonderful it is, Calista, that such a girl as Norah should be able to love such a man as—"

"No, Hugh; that must not be even thought. Norah is a happy girl to win your love. I suppose it is good that you should think your mistress an angel, because it makes her better. Remember what she thinks of you, her strong, and brave, and clever lover, and do not be too humble. Did you see her yesterday?"

"Yes; in the evening I found time for Camden Town, and had supper with her Ladyship."

Strange to say they both smiled, and then their faces broadened, and they laughed. Did you ever see a Sister in a Hospital laugh? She smiles often. She smiles when the patients thank her and kiss her hand; when they get light-headed and talk nonsense; when they grumble and groan; when they go good, and promise to remain patient and steadfast, clothed in the armour of righteousness; or when they go away cured and strong again, and effusive in thanks; or when they come back again for the tenth time, for there are some known in Hospital Wards who spend as much of their lives as they possibly can in these comfortable places. But no one ever saw a Sister laugh except Hugh; and the effect on the Ward was incongruous, as if a Cardinal should dance a hornpipe, or a Bishop perform a breakdown. Some of the Babies felt it like a note out of harmony, and began the preliminary cough which, as every *père de famille* remembers, heralds the midnight bawl and the promenade about the bedroom. Calista, perhaps, received the cough as a warning; the laugh did not occur again, and, besides, to so sweet a Sister everything must be allowed. Therefore, the cough preliminary was not repeated, and none of the Babies really began to cry.

"His Lordship was present," Hugh repeated. "We had a pipe together. He sat in his robes and his coronet, of course, which become him extremely—especially when he has the pipe in his mouth. Yet I doubt if he is happier. His face expressed some anxiety, as if he was uncertain

about his feet in those dizzy heights, and would like to come down again and be a commoner once more. Perhaps he thinks that when beheading begins again, Viscounts will have an early turn."

"Poor dear father!"

"The brass-plate remains on the door unchanged—the plain H. Cronan, M.D.—and there is the red lamp with the night-bell just as usual. The boy, I believe, runs about with the basket and the bottles as before; the medicines are still made up by his Lordship's illustrious fingers; and he remains what the people unfeelingly call a Common Walker. Not even a carriage with a coronet upon it."

"Oh, it seems too absurd if that is all that is to come of it!"

"Her Ladyship wore her court dress—the black silk one—you know it."

"I know it. But, Hugh, don't laugh. It is a very trying thing for her."

"I am not laughing at her, Calista. She informed me after supper that differences of rank must be respected, and that all matrimonial engagements made before the Succession would have to be reconsidered."

"Oh, Hugh!"

"Uncle Joseph chimed in here. I suppose it was he who started the theory—dear old man! He said that of course his Lordship's daughters were now entitled to look forward to the most desirable alliances possible; they would marry naturally in their own rank, which has so long been kept concealed from them. Right-minded young men, he went on, would not require to be reminded of a thing so obvious. He is, indeed, a delightful old man."

"What did Norah say?"

"She looked at her father, who laughed. As for me, I made a little speech. I said that Norah and I were above all things desirous of pleasing our parents—which is quite true, isn't it? so long as our parents are reasonable and try to please us. But marriage is a thing, I added, which is so curiously personal in its nature, that the most filial sons and daughters are bound to consider themselves first. Therefore, I said, that Norah and I intended to continue our engagement, and to complete it as soon as we possibly could, even if we had to trample on all the distinctions of rank."

Calista sighed. "I wish this dreadful title had never come."

"So do I. A white elephant would have been much more useful. One might

at least kill him, and dissect him, and put his bones together in the back garden. I should like to have a white elephant. But what can be done with a Peerage when the income remains the same, and you have got to go on dispensing your own medicines?"

"But is there nothing at all? It must be an extraordinary Peerage."

"There is nothing, your father tells me."

"Then I am sure the best thing to do will be to make no difference at all, and to go on as if nothing had happened. What does Daffodil say?"

"He takes it pleasantly, after his manner, and laughs at it. In fact, no one would take it seriously if it were not for Uncle Joseph, who has got a fixed idea, which he has communicated to your mother, that every title is accompanied by a princely fortune. It appears that at the Hospital there is some excitement over the event. They haven't had an Honourable at the Hospital for a long time, and they naturally desire to make much of the title. So they have raised his rank, and he is now Baron Daffodil, Viscount Daffodil, and even Earl Daffodil, and while we were taking our cold mutton and pickles a post-card came for him addressed to the Right Honourable and Right Reverend His Grace the Duke Daffodil."

"And what does your mother say, Hugh?"

"She says everything that is kind, and something that is surprising."

And then the young man began talking about himself, and of the time, not far distant, when he would buy a practice and set up for himself, and start that partnership with Norah, and combine the serious work of a physician with love-making, which should be as blackberry-jam to dry bread, or Soyer's sauce to cold mutton, and should turn the gloomy Doctor's house—presumably in Old Burlington Street or Savile Row—into a Palace of Enchantment.

Calista was a good listener, and she heard it all with answering smile and sympathetic eyes, and the young man, in his selfish happiness, accepted her sympathy and interest in his fortunes as if they were things due to him. Everybody used Calista in this fashion.

But the Babies watching their long talk grew suspicious. They were neglected. This young gentleman, whom they knew because twice every day he bent over their

cribs, was not a Baby. Why did the Sister waste her time upon him? So great and so widespread was the uneasiness, that they first began with the cough preliminary already alluded to, and then with one accord burst into that wailing which was familiar to Virgil from his acquaintance with the Hospital near the Porta Navalis.

It was just what you would expect of a man that, at such a juncture, he should meanly run away, and leave the Babies to be wrestled with by the Sister. This is what Hugh did.

He went to his private room, a snuggerly whither the Babies could not follow him, and where he proposed to spend the short remainder of the morning in an easy-chair, with a book in his hand to assist meditation on the virtues and graces of a certain young lady. He did not immediately carry out this intention, because there was a visitor occupying the one easy-chair in the room.

"Why, Dick?" said Hugh. "I did not expect to see you here to-day."

The visitor was a young man about his own age. When Hugh opened the door, he was sitting, with his head bent and his face set in deep gloom. But he hastened to put on a smile—rather a weak and a watery smile.

"I had nothing to do this morning, and so I took the omnibus to the Bank and walked over."

"Are you come to congratulate me, Dick?"

"No, I'm not. Daff told me about the engagement. I suppose you know you've cut me out? Did she tell you how she'd refused me?"

"No. I have not talked about previous aspirants."

"Yes; I asked her to marry me. Half-a-dozen times I asked, and she refused—that's all. Well, I'll congratulate you if you like. But I ought to have been told by some of them that you were in the field. I don't like being kept in the dark."

"There has been no keeping in the dark, because I only came into the field, as you call it, four days ago."

"Well—when are you going to get married?"

Dick looked as if a doubt might be raised as to this assertion.

"I don't know. Perhaps we may have to wait some time. I must find out, first, what my mother will be able to do for me. I haven't seen her yet since our engage-

ment, and I don't know how she will like Norah. What is the matter, Dick? You look pretty bad this morning. If you weren't such a steady fife, I should say you had been drinking and keeping late hours."

Dick Murrige was at most times a young man of gloomy and sombre aspect. At this moment, he looked as if sunshine would have no place in his countenance at all; his face was pale, and his hair black and straight; his eyes were black and set back in his head; he had a short moustache; his mouth was set and hard; he never laughed, except in the primitive and primæval manner of laughing, namely, when anybody suffered some grievous misfortune, or when he was able to say a very disagreeable thing; his chin was square and hard. He was dressed quietly, even for his age, with almost ostentatious quietness, in a frock-coat buttoned closely, dark trousers, and tall hat, something like the good young man who on Sunday morning may be met, with a book in his hand, wrapped in a white handkerchief, on his way to early Sunday School. He did not carry a book, but there was about him something which proclaimed contempt of mashers. Barmaids and ballet-girls would feel quite safe and therefore happy with a young man who dressed in this fashion.

"You are such a staid and serious character," continued the Resident, "that it can't be drink and late hours. Got no pain anywhere, have you? Is it some worry?"

"What should I be worried about, I should like to know?" he replied almost savagely.

"Can't say, Dick. Shortness of temper, perhaps. It is like shortness of breath, difficult to cure, but it can be alleviated. Are you going to stay and have some early dinner with me?"

"No; I must go home. My father expects me at half-past one. Sunday dinner at home is as cheerful as a meal in a sepulchre among the bones. But I must go. How does Norah like the Grand Succession and the Family Honours?"

"Oh, it will not make the least difference to us."

"There isn't any money with the title, I hear; but it ought to help a man in your Profession, for his wife to have a handle to her name, even if it's only an Honourable. I'd make it help me I know; if I was a Physician, I'd get money out of it somehow. It's the only thing in the world

worth getting or having. Title! What's a title without an income? But if I had the title I'd soon get the income."

"I believe you would, Dick," Hugh replied quietly.

These two young men had been at school together. Of the old school-days there remained the use of the Christian-name. When they were quite young they may have had the same thoughts and the like ambitions. But their paths from the beginning diverged, and now they were so wide apart that they looked in opposite directions: one to the sunny south, and one to the bleak north. One looked downwards, and the other upwards. One saw a bright and sunny picture, with wonderful and unvarying effects of light and colour, and the other saw only a grey and fog-laden landscape, with a bit of lurid sky; one saw men and women, noble, erect, and godlike; the other saw men and women, creeping, sneaking, backbiting, filching, and treacherous. One longed to give, and the other only lived that he might grab.

Hugh thought he had never seen his former friend more morose and grumpy. This dark and gloomy creature, to want his bright and clever Norah! His cheek flamed at the very thought.

They stood in silence for a while, each expectant that the other would say something. Then Dick asked if Calista was in her Ward, and learning that he would find her there, he went away.

"There is something," said the young Doctor, "not quite right with Dick. He can't have taken to drink. Yet there was a look as of drink—unsteadiness in his hands and eyes, no purpose in his movements, want of will in his manner. There is something very queer about Dick Murridge."

The young Doctor drew two letters from his pocket, and fell to reading them. That is to say, he read them eagerly and yet slowly, as if he wanted to read every word. Nobody shall know what was in the first letter, except that it was signed "Norah", with some very sweet words preceding the signature. He sat with this letter in his hands for a while, meditating on the charms and graces of the writer. Then he put it back into his pocket-book, and read the other letter, which was from his mother.

"MY DEAREST SON," she said, "I am quite ready to believe that your mistress is everything that you believe her to be, as good, and as sweet, and as beautiful. I pray that you may have as good a wife as

you deserve, and that is saying a great deal. Will you please give Norah my love, and tell her I am looking forward with the greatest eagerness to seeing her and getting to know her? As regards your plan and manner of living, I quite approve of your ambition to become a successful Physician. It is fortunate that you are the son of a successful singer, my dear boy. You will have no difficulty in making the attempt. As for my money, it was made for you, and is all your own, if you want it all. There is, however, a great surprise for me in your letter, apart from the news of your engagement, which ought not to be a surprise to a mother. It is the surname and the Christian-name of your fiancée. Is she one of the Clonsilla Cronans? In that case, her Christian-name is easily accounted for. There should be also a Calista in the family, and her father's Christian-name should be Hyacinth. They should also be poor, which I suppose is the case with them, because you tell me her father is a General Practitioner in Camden Town. Tell me, when you write next, about their family, which concerns you in a very strange manner. But of this I will tell you when we meet. I hope to see you—and Norah—next month. But do not forget to answer this question—Is her father's Christian-name Hyacinth?—Your affectionate MOTHER."

"Well, his name is certainly Hyacinth; and there is a Calista in the family. And they are the Clonsilla Cronans. I wonder what the Mater means? After all, she will tell me in her own time."

He laid his head back and closed his eyes. He had been up half the night with a bad case, and he fell asleep instantaneously, and slept till they brought him his early dinner.

There certainly was something very queer with the other young man, and he was going to Calista in order to tell her so. He had been accustomed for a great many years to make Calista that kind of half-confidant who shares all the woes, hears nothing of their cause, and is forgotten when things run smoothly. Persons like Calista always have plenty of friends, who make use of their sympathies when trouble has to be faced.

"Calista," he said, dropping into a chair, "I wish I was dead!"

"Do you, Dick? You said the same thing about two months ago, when I saw you last, yet I heard afterwards that you were cheerful."

"I wish I was dead now, then."

"What has happened? What is the matter?"

"I didn't say anything had happened, I said, 'I wish I was dead.'"

"Is that all you have come to tell me?"

"Not quite. I've come to tell you— Oh, Calista, I'm the most miserable, unlucky beggar in the world!"

"What is it, Dick? Have you done anything foolish?"

"I've—I've— He stopped, because he caught Calista's clear eyes gazing steadily in his, and it seemed as if he changed his purpose. "I didn't know," he said, in confusion, "that it would really happen until this morning. Now I find it must."

"What will happen?"

"You will remember my words when it comes off—will you? I came to warn you."

"Well, Dick, if anything is to happen, and I am not to know what it is, I see no use in warning me."

"I warn you because I want you to understand that it is all her own fault."

"Whose own fault?"

"Whose should it be but Norah's? I'm talking about her, ain't I? Very well, then. Let her understand that it is her own fault."

"What has Norah done?"

"She's deceived me. That's what she's done. I've offered myself a dozen times, and she has refused me. Told me there was nobody else that she cared for; said she didn't want to get married; said that last week; and then I hear she's engaged."

"Very well. You are not going to take revenge upon her, are you, Dick? That would be mean indeed."

"Not revenge. It isn't revenge. And yet it's all her own fault, whatever happens."

"You are very mysterious this morning, Dick, and very gloomy. Well, if you have nothing more to say, had you not better be getting back home? It is twelve o'clock already."

"You can tell her if anything happens," he repeated, "that you knew all along it was coming, and that it is all her own fault."

"Go, Dick. You are worse than gloomy this morning. You are wicked. I will listen to you no longer."

He turned and flung himself from the room. I use the word which would have pleased him most, because he desired to

fling himself. The people who fling themselves from a room are the same who curl their lips as well as their locks, and knit a brow as easily as a stocking, and flash flames from their eyes as well as from a lucifer match. But good flinging requires a narrow stage, or, at least, close proximity to the door. At the Adelphi, before the villain flings, it may be observed that he carefully edges up close to the door. Now, the Ward was a long room, and Dick's fling became, before he reached the door-handle, an ignoble stride, which was rendered only partially efficient by his banging the door after him, so that all the Babies jumped.

"Something," said Calista, in the same words as those of the Resident Medical—"something is certainly wrong with Dick. And he is trying to set himself right by laying the blame on Norah. What can it be? And what can he mean by his vague threats?"

She tried to dismiss the subject from her mind. A man does not try to injure a girl because she has refused him. Yet she was uneasy; and in the afternoon, when Norah came to the Hospital, and Hugh made love to her before Calista's eyes, Dick's gloomy words kept repeating themselves in her brain:

"It is all her fault, whatever happens."

CHAPTER II. HIS LORDSHIP'S TOWN HOUSE.

THE residence of Hyacinth Cronan, M.D., L.R.C.P., General Practitioner, was in Camden Street, Camden Town. His Surgery, his consulting-room, and his red lamp were also attached to the same house where patients not only received advice, but saw their medicines mixed before their eyes, and might also, if they wished, have their teeth drawn. The part of Camden Street where he lived is that which lies about the Parish Church, and therefore nearly opposite the cemetery, which is now slowly becoming a kitchen-garden. The house is on the right-hand side, going north, and just beyond that very remarkable survival of rural antiquity, where the old cottages still stand behind long strips of garden running down to the road. Some of the gardens are receptacles for old vehicles and wheelbarrows; some are strewn with the débris of a workshop; some are gardens still, with cabbages and sunflowers. This situation, being in the very heart of Camden Town, is a most desirable one for every medical man who

desires such a practice as Dr. Cronan enjoyed—viz, a wide connection and a large popularity, the confidence of many thousands, and an income of very few hundreds. Probably—it is not safe to make the statement with greater confidence—no practitioner in Camden Town had a larger practice; very few of his brethren, except among the youngest men—those just starting—made a smaller income. No man in the parish, except the postman, walked a greater number of miles every day; nor did anybody, except the tramcar conductor—and even he gets every other Sunday off, which the Doctor does not—worked for longer hours.

There were, in Dr. Cronan's case, the usual compensations; though the income was small, the family was large; there were plenty of wants to exhaust the scanty means; though the loaves were few, the mouths were many. This is, as has often been remarked, one of Dame Nature's playful ways. She substitutes for the things which are missing, those which are superfluous or least prayed for; she adds to the things which are already possessed others which may deprive them of their value. Thus, on him who has the greatest good-fortune, luck, and worldly happiness, she bestows an asthma which deprives him of the power of enjoying anything at all, and when a poor man has succeeded with infinite trouble and self-denial in saving a little money, she sends him an illness or a misfortune which gobbles up his little all; to the rich man she denies an heir, and to the poor man, who has nothing to leave, she showers heirs and heiresses. However, Dame Nature means well, and we are but poor blind mortals, and, doubtless, know not what is best for us. On this principle of playfulness, Nature had enriched Dr. Hyacinth Cronan with ten children, of whom Calista, the eldest, now in her twenty-second year, was, as we have seen, a Sister at the Children's Hospital. The second, named Hyacinth, after his father, was at University College Hospital, on the point of completing his student-time. After Hyacinth came Norah, private secretary to a genealogist, recently engaged to Hugh Aquila. Then followed Patrick, who followed the sea, and was a midshipman, or fourth officer, as, I think, it is now called, on board a P.O. boat in Indian waters. After Pat followed those who were still at school—Alberic, Terence, Geraldine, Larry, Honor, and Kathleen.

It will be understood from these names

that Dr. Cronan was of Irish extraction. He was born, in fact, in Dublin—he still pronounced it Doblun—and he graduated at Trinity College, and such relations as he had were understood by his wife, who never saw any of them, to be still resident in the distressful country, where Irish people are fond of talking about their families. Dr. Cronan, however, hardly ever mentioned his people. Yet he gave all his children Christian-names more common in Ireland than on this side of the Channel. When a man is taciturn on the subject of his origin there is generally a presumption that it is not such as makes men stick out their chins. On the mother's side, however, to make up—Nature's way again—the children could boast of the most honourable connections. Their grandfather had been an Alderman. More important still, he had made money at his trade of chronometer-maker. He was one of those amiable persons who not only take a pride in their calling and turn out none but the very best instruments, but who consider that, next to good work, there is nothing worth thinking of but the saving of money. There are always, everywhere, plenty of these good persons; they save, scrape, stint, skin, and spare through the whole of their lives, happy in leaving behind them a good large fortune to be divided. But in a generation or so, one of them saves so much and has so few heirs that a new family may be founded; generally the money is divided among so many that it just serves to make some of the women of the next generation lead easier lives, and some of the men lazier. It is something to achieve, even to improve the lives of a few unborn women; they certainly will never want to do any work, and perhaps they will not get the chance of marriage, and if they do will be all the better for the money they bring to the family pot. As for the young men, for the most part they run through their money and take a lower place, cheerfully or sulkily, according to taste. It is strange, however, that in a country second only to one in its Love of the Almighty Dollar, justice has never been done to the benefactor who spends his life in saving up for his grandchildren. No poems have been written upon him; no statues have been erected to his honour—no one is expected to go and do the like; he is even held up to ridicule and execration as a money-grubber, a grinder of noses on the grindstone, a hard master—one who will have his pound of flesh. What matter for the

hardness when one thinks of the result! How few among us are there who, in the days of their youth, remember their unborn grandchildren, and resolve to work for them, live for them, and save for them! Think of the resolution that young man must possess who can say: "I mean to scrape and screw all the days of my life for those I shall never live to see. I will deny myself the pleasures and indulgences of my age. I will forego delights, and live laborious days, and all for those who will never know me, and who will forget even to thank me, and very likely will be ashamed of the shop." A noble young man, indeed! Would that, in the last generation but one, there had been a great many more like this young man, Mrs. Cronan's father. Yet he, for one, was not without reward, because he rose to be an Alderman, and was Warden of his Company, and, in both capacities, devoured, in his time, quantities of turtle-soup every year. It was entirely through his virtuous self-denial that Mrs. Cronan, his granddaughter, whom he did not live to see, was possessed of a substantial income, no less than two hundred pounds a year. What the ten children would have done without that two hundred a year one cannot even think. What became of all the rest of the Alderman's money I know not. Some of the grandchildren had, no doubt, run through their portions, and were gone abroad; some were clerks; some had shops; some were professional men; not one, I am sure, was imitating the great example of his grandfather, and saving money for those of the twentieth century to spend.

One evening in June, about half-past nine o'clock, while it is still almost light enough to read without a lamp, Dr. Cronan sat by the empty fireplace in the family dining-room, surrounded by his family. It was not every evening that he could thus sit at his ease, in slippers, with a pipe between his lips, and the "materials" on the table. The room was called the dining-room, but it was used as the family sitting-room, work-room, study, and anything else. They lived in it, they received their visitors in it, and they took their meals in it. The window was open, for it was actually a warm evening, though only at the beginning of June; the gas was lit, and if the room was rather crowded it had a happy look, as if the family were, on the whole, good-tempered. Among those family possessions which the visitor at once involuntarily

recognises, even before he has had time to look at the china and the pictures, good-temper is the first, if it is found in the home at all.

The Cronans took their good temper chiefly from their father—it was just one more of Nature's compensations to make up for the small income. No one ever saw the Doctor cross or irritable, not even when, after a long day's work, he was called out again at bedtime. He was a tall man of spare figure; his once dark hair and whiskers well streaked with grey. His features were clear and handsome, and his blue eyes had a trick of lighting up suddenly, and his mouth of dropping into a smile on small provocation. Certainly not a weeping philosopher, nor one inclined to rail at the times, even if they were ten times as disjointed.

The picture of family life at its easiest and happiest presented in this Camden Town household is reproduced every night in miles of streets and thousands of houses. It is complete when the mother sits—as Mrs. Cronan sat this evening—with a basket of work before her, placidly stitching. She had been married for twenty-four years, and had stitched without stopping for twenty-three years, so that she now desired no other occupation but leisurely stitching. When the children were younger there was greater pressure—the stitching was hurried. Beside her sat her second daughter, Norah. She had a book in her hand, but I think she was not reading much, for she did not turn over the pages, and her eyes were looking through the open window into the back-garden, where two lilacs and a laburnum were in full blossom. When a girl is engaged to the most delightful fellow in the world, and the cleverest, there are not many books which she cares to read. If it be asked why she was not assisting her mother in darning the family stockings, it is enough to reply that a girl who is Private Secretary to a genealogist, who draws a salary and pays for her own board, and who is engaged all day in the most scientific researches, cannot be expected to darn stockings in the evening. Geraldine, the third daughter, was learning a lesson for next day's school, and the three boys, Terence, Alberic, and Larry, were having a Row Royal, in which nobody interfered—in so large a family there is always a row going on between some of the members—over a backgammon-board. That is to say, two of them were quarrelling, and the

third, who ardently desired to swing a shillelagh in the fray, had been hustled and bundled out of the squabble at an early stage, and now sat quiet, waiting for his chance.

Such a picture as this is truly national; it represents the English *bonheur de famille*. Less civilised nations go to theatres, *cafés chantants*, open-air concerts, operas, dances, circuses, public gardens—all kinds of things. All "in family" our people stay at home, each household in its own nest. The elder boys, however, have got a trick of spending the evening out. In his hand the Doctor had an evening paper, and he was reading it slowly, as is the habit with men who have no time for much reading, and sometimes forget the newspaper for many days together. From time to time he jerked a piece of news at his wife, who never read a paper at all, and knew nothing of any politics outside the walls of her own house.

Then the door opened, and an old gentleman came in. He was a very clean, good-looking old gentleman, grave, and even severe, but not benevolent of aspect. Quite the contrary, indeed, though his looks were so silvery white and so abundant, and his beard so beautiful and so creamy. He would have looked benevolent, perhaps, but for his under-lip, which projected and gave a grumpy look to an otherwise open and kindly countenance. This was Uncle Joseph himself. He was dressed in evening costume—not the old-fashioned swallow-tail which old men used to wear by day, but the correct evening dress of the day, with a shirt-front decorated with one stud and a white tie. He wore this dress—a most unusual dress in Camden Town—as if he was accustomed to it, not as if it was a kind of disguise. At sight of their great-uncle, the boys shut up the backgammon-board, and all then retired together promptly, and were heard to finish their game and their quarrel in some upstairs apartment. Norah, for her part, applied herself vigorously to her novel, and her father buried himself in the paper. So great was the popularity of Uncle Joseph.

Uncle Joseph shook his head solemnly, took a chair as if he were assisting at a funeral, and sat down beside his niece—Mrs. Cronan—with a sigh that was almost like a groan. He sighed a great deal in the evening, which, for certain reasons, was a trying time with him.

"Two years ago," he addressed the

Doctor, but received no response from the newspaper, and therefore he turned to his niece. "Two years ago, Maria, I should now, at this moment, half-past nine, be sitting on the right hand, or perhaps the left, of the Chairman. The Banquet would be nearly over, and the eloquence of the evening, in which I always took part in a few well-chosen sentences, would be about to begin. If you sit down at half-past seven or a quarter to eight, the speeches generally begin at half-past nine."

"Yes, indeed, Uncle Joseph," Mrs. Cronan replied with a sigh sympathetic; "it must be a beautiful thing to remember."

"Beautiful indeed, Maria!" He sighed again. "I will take a glass of gin-and-water. But it is over—it is over. I shall hear those speeches no more. I shall drink that champagne no more. Piper sec and Heidsieck are strangers to me henceforth."

"In heaven, uncle," Mrs. Cronan suggested piously, "there is finer champagne."

The old man shook his head doubtfully, as if he thought that could not be.

"And nearly every night, uncle, wasn't it?"

"Nearly every night, Maria. Always in evening dress, and wearing the magnificent jewels of the order. Always the mysterious ceremonies of the Lodge, and the Banquet after the work was done. The Banquet—ah!" again he groaned, "with the champagne. Nearly every day of my life, for more than thirty years—except Sunday—the Banquet and the champagne. In summer, the country Lodges; in winter, London. What a Life, Maria! What a Career! And now it is over."

Uncle Joseph, in fact, had been for something like thirty years the Secretary of a very Exalted Institution in Masonry, much grander than Grand Lodge. In this capacity—for which he was fitted by a very extraordinary memory and as great a genius for ceremonial as if he had been Grand Chamberlain—he was constantly occupied in visiting Lodges, and conducting the mysterious functions of the "higher" degrees, those of which the humble wearer of the blue apron have no knowledge, and the outer world no appreciation. He spent, as he proudly told his niece, nearly every night of his life in this work, and as the Function in every right-minded Lodge is always followed by a Banquet, there was certainly no other man in the whole world, outside Royal circles, who had consumed such an enormous

quantity of champagne, and was possessed of a finer palate. But to all things there cometh an end. The Secretary grew old. He began to find travelling wearisome; his memory began to fail him—it was whispered that he had once imparted the secrets of a Higher instead of a Lower Degree by mistake, a truly dreadful thing to do, and believed to have caused the Earthquake in Java; things began to be said about slipshod conduct of the work; and, finally, the Council resolved that the time was come when he must resign. They gave him, however, a pension of one hundred pounds a year, which he brought to the Cronan household, where he came to lodge and to grumble.

His champagne was cut off; it was gone for good. He would never again—alas!—taste of that divine drink. No wonder that the old man went heavily, and was always discontented. For he craved continually after champagne. He found some consolation in putting on his dress-clothes every night, and in talking over the once splendid past he had a sympathetic listener in his niece, and he found gin-and-water a substitute for champagne, inadequate it is true, but better than nothing.

"It has been a brilliant career, Maria," he said. "Few men—it has often been said in my own presence—have sat at more or at nobler Banquets. I doubt if any man, except a Prince, and he must be a Prince of seventy at least, has drunk more champagne than your poor uncle. Yet such a life has its drawbacks; you can't save money by eating and drinking; the more brilliant it is, the more champagne you drink, the less chance you've got of saving. You can't save champagne, and now, you see, nothing but the memory remains."

"Indeed, Uncle Joseph, we are all proud of you."

"And now I'm come down to a pension of a hundred a year and to gin-and-water. Give me another glass, Maria. Gin-and-water!"

"You must think of the Banquets, uncle, and the great company you kept, uncle."

"The highest in the land," he replied solemnly. "I have initiated and raised to the most sublime Degrees Royal Princes and the noblest of the Nobility, young and old. As for Dukes, Marquises, Earls, and Barons, they have been under my hands, meek and obedient, by the hundred. I've lost count of Baronets, and Knights I value not at all. Yes, Maria. It gives a man some satisfaction in his old age to feel he's

done so much good, and been so greatly honoured. No doubt such a life bestows an Air of Distinction. I put it on with my evening-dress. The jewels are upstairs. It would not be proper to adorn my breast with those splendid regalia outside a Lodge. I can leave my jewels to your children, Maria, but not the Air of Distinction. That can't be left to anybody."

"It cannot, Uncle Joseph, no more than a Smile."

"I've often thought, Maria," the old man continued, "that I should have liked one of your boys to take up the same line. But of course it is too much to expect of them. It is a gift. Such a man as myself can't be made. He is born, as they say of a poet. Either a young man has the genius or he has not. Lord! Most Masters, whether in the Chair or past it, have got no more real knowledge of the Ritual, whatever the Degree, than they have of the Roman Mass."

"Of course I don't know what it is," said Mrs. Cronan; "but I've always understood——"

"You can't understand, Maria. No women can. It's beyond their intellects to understand such sublimity and such intricacy. More than a dozen different Rituals—think of that! Every one complete and different, and all to be worked exact and word for word. All those Rituals at my fingers' ends, without flaw or hitch, and me the man deputed to work them, for instruction, for raising and advancing, and a separate dress for each, with its own Jewels! The aprons and the scarves are upstairs, with the Jewels. But the Rituals—they mustn't be written, and there's no one, anywhere, who knows them like me. They've got a young man in my place. I trained him. But, as for comparing him with me—— Well, I pity the young man. They will make comparisons, and they will despise him."

He shook his head mournfully.

"Your boys are all handsome, Maria. Any of them would look well in the Apron and the Jewels of the Order. But what is one to expect of them when their father has always refused to join the Craft, and scoffs at it openly? It is wrong of him, Maria, and I have known Doctors made by joining a Lodge, and making themselves popular in it. I would have taught your boys, and advanced them, and introduced them. But are they taught reverence for the Ritual? I would have taken them to a school for manners. How are manners

to be learned in Camden Town? I could have shown them a way to associate with the Great. How are they to hope for intimacy with Royalty and the Nobility unless they become Brethren? Why, for my own part, I have conversed with the noblest in the country as their equal—actually their equal. And I have exchanged opinions with the Prince himself without a stammer, Maria."

"Oh, good Lord!"

This unseemly interruption was due to the Doctor, who suddenly jumped up with this profane cry. He dropped back, however, and sat down again, gazing about him with a look of the blindest amazement. The start and the cry might have been forced from him by suddenly sitting on a pin, or by exasperation beyond endurance with Uncle Joseph's tedious prattle, or by some sharp internal pain, or by the recollection of some frightful omission or blunder. But that look of amazement—what did that mean?

"Gracious!" cried Mrs. Cronan; "what has come to you, my dear?"

"Nothing," said the Doctor.

He picked up the paper which he had dropped, folded it very carefully, and placed it in his pocket—a thing which he had never been known to do in all his life before.

"There must be something the matter," his wife persisted. "Is it toothache?"

"It is nothing," he repeated; "nothing of the least importance to us, or to anybody."

"Then it is something," said Norah, "and something that concerns you, at least, papa; and it is something that you read in the paper. Let me read the paper, too."

He made no reply, except to look about him with a bewildered look, as one who wonders what he is going to do next.

"If I am allowed to talk without being interrupted," said Uncle Joseph irritably, "I was going to say, Maria——"

"Papa, let me see the paper," said Norah again.

"No, my dear, not to-night. I dare say you will hear soon enough."

"I was going to say, Maria——"

"Yes, Uncle Joseph. Your father will show me the paper to-night, Norah," said Mrs. Cronan in a tone which implied that, as a wife, she meant to know the secret, whatever it was. "If there is anything in it which concerns you, of course I can tell it to you in the morning. Go on, Uncle Joseph."

"I was going to say, Maria, when these interruptions began, that there is something in noble blood which one remarks on the very first introduction. It is something——"

Here the door opened, and Uncle Joseph was a third time interrupted. He sat back in his chair, and began to drum the table with his fingers, but only for a few moments, because the thing which followed was of such a surprising and startling character that for once he forgot his own reminiscences.

This late visitor was an elderly man with iron-grey hair, short of stature, and of thick build, but not fat; a man of hard face—hardness in his grey eyes, hardness in his firm-set mouth, hardness in his chin. As he stood in the doorway, Norah, who had her mind full of her novel, thought he looked like a landlord come to sell up everybody without pity. Nobody knew him better than herself, and her knowledge of him did not make that resemblance impossible. For Mr. Murrige was her employer; she was his Private Secretary.

"I don't know, Doctor," said the visitor, "whether I ought to offer you my condolences over the death of your illustrious cousin, or my congratulations on your accession to his honours."

"I don't know, either—hang me if I do!" said the Doctor.

"You have, I suppose, seen the evening papers? The paragraph is in all of them. I wonder how these Editors get hold of news so quickly. The news of his Lordship's death arrived this morning only."

"But my two cousins?"

"One of them died three years ago, and the other three months ago."

"Good Heavens!" cried the Doctor, sinking into his chair.

"Papa," said Norah, "something has happened. I think you had better let me see the paper."

The Doctor sighed, but he drew the thing out of his pocket and handed it to his daughter.

While she ran her eye down the columns nobody spoke. Mrs. Cronan held a needle in suspense at the very moment of action; Uncle Joseph ceased drumming; Mr. Murrige smiled superior as one who knows what is coming; and the Doctor looked more miserable and foolish than at any previous situation in his whole life.

"I have found it!" cried Norah. "Listen, mother. Where is Daffodil? Where is Calista? The children ought to be taken out

of bed and brought down. Oh, here is news! Listen, everybody. Papa, is it possible? You knew it all before, and you told none of us—not even me. Mother, didn't you know?"

"Your mother's grandfather, the Alderman——" Uncle Joseph began; but Norah interrupted, reading breathlessly:

"We have to announce the death of Hugh Hyacinth, Viscount Clonsilla, of the Irish Peerage, which took place in the island of Madeira, a fortnight ago. Lord Clonsilla was born in Dublin in the year 1810, and was therefore in his seventy-fifth year. He married, in 1836, Ursula, daughter of Sir Patrick M'Crath, Baronet, and had issue one son, who died unmarried in the year 1866. The late Lord never took any active part in politics. The heir to the Title is Hugh Hyacinth Cronan, Esquire, M.D., the great-grandson of the first Viscount, and son of the late Hugh Hyacinth Cronan, formerly of the Irish Civil Service. Dr. Cronan has been for many years practising as a Physician in London. THERE!"

"What does she mean?" asked Mrs. Cronan helplessly.

"We are all Viscounts and Honourables. Oh," said Norah, "what will Hugh say? What will Calista say? Good gracious! It's like a dream!"

"Hyacinth, tell me this instant," cried Mrs. Cronan again, "what it means?"

"It means, my Lady," said Mr. Murrige, bowing low, though he was an old friend of the family, and had never bowed low before; "it means nothing less than that your noble husband is the Right Honourable the Viscount Clonsilla, of the Irish Peerage. Nothing less, I assure you."

"A Lord Viscount!" said Uncle Joseph. "There was a Viscount once—he was a Templar. Maria, there ought to be, on this occasion, a bottle of Champagne."

"Nothing less," repeated Mr. Murrige. "And nothing more," said his Lordship. But no one heard him.

"A Viscount! My grandfather was an Alderman—and yet—— Hyacinth, can't you speak? Why have I not been told?"

"It's Duke, Marquis, Earl, Viscount and Baron, Baronet and Knight, unless you reckon the Ranks of Grand Lodge and the Thirty-Third," said Uncle Joseph. "Really, Maria, on such an occasion——"

"There was no use in telling you of a chance which seemed so impossible," said the Doctor.

"And I've been married to a nobleman's

cousin for five-and-twenty years, and never knew it."

"Only his second cousin once removed," said the Doctor. "My dear, I told you the truth. My father was in the Civil Service, as I told you. His grandfather was the first Viscount Clonsilla and the second Lord Clonsilla. When last I heard anything about it, Lord Clonsilla had a son, and a married brother, and a first cousin; all these stood between me and the Title. Was it worth talking about? I had no money; I had never spoken to the Viscount, or set eyes on him. Nor had my father before me. What was the good of my great relations?"

"Great relations are always good," said his wife. "If it hadn't been for the Alderman, my grandfather, and my Uncle Joseph, where would have been the Family Pride?"

"At all events, my Lady," said Mr. Murrige, "there is no doubt possible on the subject. The late Lord's only son died twenty years ago unmarried. His brother, it is true, was married, but he had no children. And the first cousin, who was the Heir Presumptive, died three months ago, also without offspring—S.P. as we say in genealogies. Consequently, the next heir to the Coronet and Title is—your husband."

"Oh," cried Norah, throwing her arms about her father's neck, "I am so glad! You poor dear! You sha'n't go any longer slaving like a postman up and down the streets all day; you sha'n't be waked up by a bell, and made to go out in the middle of the night as if you were a railway-porter; you sha'n't any more make up your own medicines; you shall hand over all your patients to anybody who likes—give them to Hugh if you like. What will Hugh say when he finds out that I am the Honourable Norah—or are we the Ladies Calista and Norah?"

"The Lord knows!" said the Viscount still looking helpless and bewildered.

"Well, I suppose Hugh won't mind much. Oh, and I suppose we shall go away from Camden Town and live at the West End—Notting Hill, even"—Norah's knowledge of the West was limited—"and drive about in our own carriage, and go to Theatres every night. Daffodil will give up the Hospitals and go into the House——"

"Perhaps we shall all go into the House, Norah, my dear," said her father grimly.

"Oh, you will go into the Upper House! Of course, there's acres and acres of land in Ireland—dirty acres, the novels call them"—Mr. Murrige coughed and the Doctor changed colour—"and a Country House. What is the name of our Country House? Oh! I know it is a beautiful, grand old place, with a lake and swans, and a lovely garden, and the most wonderful glass houses, and a Scotch gardener. I haven't read Miss Braddon for nothing."

"There was a Country House once. It was called Castle Clonsilla. But I believe it tumbled down years ago. The late Lord never saw the place since they shot at his father and hit the priest."

"Well, then, there must be a grand old—old—venerable—ancient—romantic history of the House. You will tell us the Family History, won't you, as soon as we settle down? All the men were knights without fear, and all the ladies were beautiful and without reproach."

"I will tell it you at once: About two hundred years ago there was an attorney in Dublin, named Hyacinth Cronan. Creeping Joe, they called him, so greatly was he admired. He made his son a barrister, and the barrister became a Judge, and the Judge was made, for certain political services, Lord Clonsilla. Crawling Joe, his friends called him, to distinguish him from his father. His son, for other eminent political services, was raised a step in the Irish Peerage at the time of the Union. That is all the family history, Norah; and I am hanged if I see much to be proud of when it is told."

"Not one of them," said Uncle Joseph, "so much as a Provincial Grand Master."

"Oh! And no Banshee? no Ghost? no White Lady? Are you quite sure?" asked Norah.

"Not even so much as a Family Bogey, my dear."

"Well, then there is a Town House somewhere, I am sure. I hope it is in Ireland. I feel real Irish already. To-morrow I shall try The Wearing of the Green. Where is our beautiful Town House—Lady Clonsilla's Town House—where she will live in the season with her daughters, the Ladies Calista, Norah, Honor, and Kathleen?"

"There used to be one over in Dublin, but I suppose it's been sold long ago."

"Well, there's the money and the dirty acres," Norah persisted.

"I wish you good-night, Lady Clonsilla," said Mr. Murrige. "Once more, I congratulate you. Good-night, my Lord."

He bowed very low, much lower than is expected by Viscounts as a rule, and retired.

"I was about to remark, Maria," said Uncle Joseph, "when we were interrupted by Mr. Murrige, that I had always observed something of the Air of Rank in your husband. It was certain, to me, that he was of noble parentage, though he concealed the fact from friends who would have appreciated its importance."

"Yes; you never told me. Oh, Hyacinth!" said his wife reproachfully. "It would have made us all so happy to think that you had such noble blood in your veins."

"My dear," he repeated, "I didn't know there was the least chance of the Peerage. It's the most extraordinary thing that ever happened. And, Maria," he added, rubbing his chin, "I believe I've made the greatest Fool of myself ever known. I'll go and see Murrige about it to-morrow. But I am sure of it, beforehand. There never was a Greater Fool in all the world than your husband, Maria."

"Oh," cried Norah again, "you will look so beautiful in your coronet!"

"Shall I, my dear? I wonder where it is. What is more to the point is, whether the late Lord left any money, and if so, whether he left any to me. There certainly never could have been a Greater Fool than your father, child. Esau's case is about the only one which can compare with it."

"Maria," said Uncle Joseph, "we will all move upwards, immediately, into the highest Society, and we will have a Banquet, with Champagne, every night. On all points of etiquette rely on me. There will be, of course, waiters in evening-dress. It will be exactly like a Banquet of a High Degree, only that ladies will be present and I shall not wear my Jewels. Of course, I shall sit on the right hand of the Chairman and respond for the Craft."

"Oh, Uncle Joseph!" murmured Lady Clonsilla, carried away by the splendour of his imagination.

"As for his Lordship, I will take him in hand at once——"

"I have been the most Almighty Fool," said his Lordship.

"And initiate him to the Loftiest Degrees. I'll do it with my own hand, and then he will be a credit and an honour to the illustrious Peerage of his native country. I can't initiate you, Maria, nor the girls, because you are females. But the boys I can, and I will, and when they are Knights

Templars, Mark Masters, Royal Arches, and Thirty-Seconds, they will not be ashamed to talk with anyone, and will be fit to share in the very highest Society like their Great Uncle." He drank half his glass at a gulp, and went on rather thickly, pointing to the Doctor: "Look at him, Maria! He is a Nobleman all over. Blood in his veins and Aristocracy upon his upper-lip. Didn't I always say there was a something in your husband above his Pills?"

"It can't be helped, Maria," said the Viscount. "But I wish your husband had not been so great a Fool."

"Why, on the present occasion," Uncle Joseph went on—"an occasion which may never happen again in the History of the Lodge—why, Maria—why is there no champagne? Thank you! I will take—yes—I will take another glass of gin-and-water."

CHAPTER III. A LONG MORNING IN THE CITY.

MR. MURRIDGE was, by profession, a Genealogist. This is a trade in which are few competitors. There are, to be sure, the Heralds, who are a dignified body, and have a College of their own, and on occasions of ceremony wear the most beautiful coats in the world, and, consequently, are tempted to wish that there was a Coronation every week. They also enjoy much finer titles than the Members of the Upper House, being called King-at-Arms, Herald or Poursuivant, Rouge Dragon, Rouge Croix, Bluemantle, and Portecullis. Mr. Murrige possessed no other title than that of plain Mister, which we are not expected to enjoy. It was reported of him, by those who regarded him as an interloper and an unqualified practitioner, that he had originally been apprenticed to a Die-Sinker, and was afterwards employed in engraving coats-of-arms for one who kept a heraldic shop, ornamented outside by the gilded effigies of a Loathly Worm, like unto the Dragon of Spindleston Heugh. This enterprising tradesman not only engraved shields and furnished family seals, but also found their coats-of-arms for people who had lost them so long that all memory and trace of them had vanished. Nothing proves a family to be old so much as to have lost the memory of their arms. There are many such; they have withered in obscurity and neglect for generations; then one of them makes money, and such gentlemen as this heraldic shopkeeper recover

the long-lost connections and land them proudly among the Barons in the Wars of the Roses. In this way, therefore, old Murrige found himself impelled in the direction of genealogical studies, and in this way he gradually neglected the practice of his art, and transformed himself into a searcher and grubber into family history.

Although there are not many in the trade, it is sometimes profitable. For there are always the New Rich, who continually desire to prove that they have always, though their friends little suspected it, really belonged to the class which rules by Right Divine, and by the same right possesses hereditary brains; and there are, besides these, the Rich *d'outremer*, who bear names of English origin and would fain prove their connection with great English Houses, and are willing to pay handsomely for such a connection. Therefore, old Murrige generally found his hands fully occupied in tracing pedigrees, finding out missing links, proving marriages, establishing American connections, following up lines of descent, converting plain country gentlemen into descendants of Royalty—this is a very lucrative branch of the profession—and in this way bringing vainglory, delight, honour, distinction, and solace to all who could afford to pay for it. So great, indeed, was his skill that he never failed to prove his client a cadet, at least, of some ancient House, and, when there was no Estate involved and the family was supposed to be extinct, he not infrequently made his client the Head of that House. Nothing could be conceived more pleasing to ladies and gentlemen who had been brought up to believe that for them there was no Family History—no more than at the beginning of the world—previous to the Family Shop where the money was made—whether a Shop with a counter, and a till, and an apron; or a Shop with an office and a clerk; or a Shop with a box of pills; or a Shop with a wig and gown; or a Shop with a sword and a red coat; or a Shop with a steel pen and a few pages of blank paper; or a Shop with a bundle of scrip and shares. So that Mr. Murrige was really a Philanthropist of the first water—an eighteen carat Philanthropist. If, from time to time, in his grubbing among genealogies, old wills, and family histories, he came upon curious discoveries which he was able to turn to his own advantage, he is not to be blamed. Notably, there was the succession to the Clonsilla Title, in which, as you will

presently see, he did a very good stroke of business.

He lived modestly in College Street, Camden Town, at the town end, of course, where the trees are and where the gentility of the street do mostly congregate. He was a man of regular habits. Every morning, at the same time, he took the same omnibus to the City; every evening, at the same time, he took the same omnibus back. He took his dinner every day at the same dining-rooms, and always spent the same amount upon it—namely, half-a-crown. When he got home he stayed there. He never read anything at all out of the way of his business, except the newspaper; he always read the same paper—namely, the *Standard*, because it gives most news. Whether his plain and regular life was deliberately chosen on account of parsimony, or whether it had become a habit, in the course of long years, or whether it was caused by smallness of income, nobody knows, because Mr. Murrige neither invited nor offered confidance with anyone.

His office was in Finsbury Circus, where he had two rooms on a second floor; the front room large and light, looking out on the open Place; the back room small and dingy, looking upon the Limbo of chimneys—workshops, back buildings, outhouses, and grimy yards which one finds in that part of London. On the door-posts below, his name was painted: "*Second Floor, JOHN MURRIDGE.*" His own room was furnished with one very large table—genealogists, like civil engineers, require great tables—and another very small one; he had a great bookcase, full of books of reference, such as Dugdale, Douglas, Tonge, Beltram, Wotton, Collins, and Lysons, a really valuable collection; as for the country histories, one needs the resources of a Rothschild to possess them. There was also a large-sized safe in a corner, and there were tin boxes piled one above the other, as in a solicitor's office, and there were three or four chairs. The room at the back was not, properly speaking, furnished at all. That is to say, there was a table at the window with a blotting-pad, and an inkstand, and a chair before it. There was another table beside the fireplace, with a heavy copying-press upon it, the kind with a handle and a screw. This was for the boy-clerk, who posted the letters, copied them, and ran errands. The other table was for Mr. Murrige, Junior—Mr. Richard Murrige. His son and the clerk,

together with the Private Secretary, completed Mr. Murrige's Staff, and formed his Establishment.

As regards Master Dick, it might be said of him, as of a great many others, that he would, doubtless, have been different had his training been other than what it was. Yet his education was not neglected. At school he learned only the things most useful in a commercial life, as a good hand, accounts and book-keeping, shorthand, French, and the art of writing a business-letter. He also had the advantage, being a day-boy, of his father's experience and practical wisdom, which was on tap, so to speak, every evening.

"I have taught my son, sir," Mr. Murrige explained, "to despise the common cant about Honour, Friendship, Justice, Charity, and the rest of it. The world is full of creatures who live by eating each other. There is no other way to live. We come into the City every day to eat each other, and to defend ourselves against those who would eat us. The way is to make as much money as we possibly can. As for Honour, it means that you must play fair where it is your interest, and Friendship means putting other people on to a good thing when you can't get it for yourself, and in exchange for another good thing. Benevolence means keeping the people you are eating up in good temper. Dick quite understands the world. There is no nonsense about Dick. Justice means having all you can get—all that the law allows—to the last penny, and never forgiving anybody. I have made the boy thoroughly understand these principles. He begins life with a clear head, and no sentimental humbug."

It is not often that a boy's views are thus based upon the first elements of life and society, and Dick certainly began life with great advantages.

Unluckily for Dick, he was not allowed to put these principles into practice in an independent way. Mr. Murrige regarded his business as a thing to be kept together, and handed down as a property to his son. He, therefore, without any question as to Dick's aptitude for genealogical research and the art of clothing a man with a pedigree, removed him from school at an early age and placed him in his own back office, where he gave him copying work. You cannot possibly carry out any of these beautiful precepts and maxims on mere copying work.

Unfortunately, too, Mr. Murrige could

never bring himself to trust his son. He was a jealous master, who would let no one into his secrets but himself, and worked, like the mole, underground. So that, though Dick was now three-and-twenty, he knew no more about his father's business than he did at sixteen, when he first took his seat in the back-office. Except that his father would talk over the successful conduct of a case when it was completed, especially if there had been any difficulties or sharp practice in it. He did not dare to complain, but his position made him continually grumpy. It is not a good sign for a young man's future when he nourishes a secret grudge against his father, and when the father, absorbed in his own business, never stops to consider what his son is doing, and how he regards his own position and work.

Dick was now drawing the very handsome salary of seventy-five pounds a year, with breakfast, lodging, washing, supper, if he wanted it, and his Sunday dinner. He was, therefore, rich as clerks at three-and-twenty go. We may allow him eighteenpence a day for his dinner, or ten shillings a week, which comes to twenty-six pounds a year; fifteen pounds a year for his dress, which is not extravagant; ten pounds for a fortnight's holiday in the summer; and five pounds a year for his daily omnibus. There remained the handsome sum of nineteen pounds a year, or rather more than a shilling a day, to cover his amusements and his petty expenses. How many young fellows can afford a shilling a day for pleasure?

Dick had so few pleasures, that he must have been saving money. He was a very quiet young man—sons of masterful fathers generally are; he had taught himself to play the piano a little, and to draw a little, but languidly. When he was at home he spent most of the time at the old piano, which had been his mother's. When he was at the office he spent most of the time in drawing. He had no taste for reading; he seemed to care nothing for the things which form the pleasure of so many young men; he never went to the theatres or music-halls; he had no bicycle, belonged to no athletic club; and, except one or two old school-fellows, he had no friends. Yet of late he had got into the habit of spending every evening out. Where he went, or what he did, his father did not enquire.

A quiet young man, who seemed to be getting through his youth at a regular, even pace, turning neither to the right hand

nor to the left, picking no fruits or flowers, and running after no butterflies, caught by none of the Jack-o'-lanterns which lead astray so many of the London youth—his father should have been satisfied with such a son.

But he was not. Mr. Murrige was disappointed that his son had no passion for anything. Dick was no fool, but he did his work like a machine; he took no interest in his work; he was spiritless.

Now a young man who is not a fool cannot be, though he may appear to be, a machine. Parents who have such sons as Dick should remember this proverb, which is one of the very few omitted from Solomon's Unique Collection—how good it is for the world that this King collected Proverbs instead of old Phœnician Ware and Prehistoric Pots! You will presently discover that Dick was no exception to this proverb.

Mr. Murrige's confidence was enjoyed, to a certain extent, by the young lady named Norah Cronan, who called herself his Private Secretary. He called her his clerk, but it made no difference in the salary, which remained at the same figure as that enjoyed by Dick; namely, seventy-five pounds a year. But he did next to nothing for the money, and she did the work of three men, being as sharp, clever, industrious, and zealous a girl as ever man had the good fortune to engage in his service. She came every morning at eleven, and generally spent an hour or two with her employer before she went off to the Museum, to the Record Office to consult parish registers, to read wills, to make extracts, and do all kinds of genealogical work, which kept her all day long and very often all the evening as well. She was nineteen years of age, and she knew—by heart, I think—nearly every genealogical work that exists in the vernacular. Of course, Mr. Murrige did not wholly trust her; perhaps he was afraid she might make discoveries and keep them to herself and make her own market out of them—he had done so himself in the old days; perhaps there were certain risky connections in his pedigrees which he did not wish to expose to the girl's sharp eyes; perhaps he was constitutionally unable to trust anybody wholly. He might very well have trusted her, because she had never yet suspected that she might become a money-winner instead of a salary-earner—most men never do learn this lesson; still fewer women ever learn it, and so are

contented to go on all their lives upon a wage, and nobly rejoice when the smallness of their own salaries has brought wealth to their employers. Therefore she was honest and carried to Mr. Murrige everything she found, and never dreamed of withholding the least scrap of information. This is praiseworthy in every walk of life, but especially laudable in a genealogist, because this least scrap is always the thing which is of the greatest importance. Such a simple thing, for instance, as a single one-lined entry in a parish register concerning a marriage a hundred years ago has been known to prove a very gold-mine to the discoverer. No man in the City had a more valuable clerk than Mr. Murrige or a cheaper clerk.

Some there are who object to girl-clerks on the ground that although they are always honest, and may be underpaid and overworked to any extent, and though they never grumble and always carry out orders literally and exactly, one cannot swear at them. There is force in the objection, though it is not, I believe, felt by some of the gentlemen who employ girls to sell gloves, and bonnets, and beer, and soda-and-brandy, nor was it felt by Mr. Murrige, who, when Norah first came to him, swore at her every day. She did not like being sworn at. It made her limbs tremble and her face turn red and pale, but she thought it wisest to say nothing about it at home, for the usual reason that there was not much money going and her small salary was useful; and, besides, her brother being a student at University College Hospital, there was, just then, less than usual. Whenever Mr. Murrige's orders were imperfectly obeyed or neglected, he swore at her. Why not? When he was a Prentice he had been sworn at every day, cuffed, caned, and kicked, until he became a smart Prentice and a good engraver. Why should he not swear at his own clerk? He did, and with sad, wearisome iteration of one word, that Norah grew to loathe that word, and to take any amount of pains and trouble in order not to hear it. It is quite a short word and has been mistaken by some for good Saxon. This is wrong. The word was brought into this country by Julius Cæsar himself, who uttered it when he fell upon his nose on landing in Pevensy Bay. By this act he conferred it upon the land, so to speak, by solemn gift and deed, as a possession for ever. Vortigern subsequently taught it to Hengist and his Saxons. St. Edmund of East Anglia

taught it to the Danes just before they cut short his saintly career. Canute and Edmund Ironsides frequently exchanged it, standing a good way apart; Harold, in his last rally, so deeply impressed it upon Duke William that he strictly enjoined his sons never to suffer the word to be lost. It was the only paternal injunction which the Princes agreed in obeying. But the word is not Saxon.

Norah had now, however, been so long with Mr. Murrige, and had worked for him so well—pedigree-hunting is matter of instinct with some, like finding old books, or picking up old coins—that he had almost ceased to use "language" even in her presence. He knew her value, and in his softer moments he had thoughts, even, of raising her salary.

At half-past ten in the morning all City offices are in their first fresh vigour and early morning enthusiasm of work. The glow of the dawn, so to speak, is upon them. The glow lingers till about half-past eleven, when fatigue and languor begin among the younger brethren; at twelve, many have visibly relaxed and have begun to glance at the clock, and to wriggle on their seats. It is not, however, until five in the afternoon that the curse of labour is really felt to weigh heavily upon the shoulders of the young clerk. In Mr. Murrige's outer office there was no languor or fatigue possible, because there was no labour either for Mr. Richard or for the boy. It was a season of forgetfulness. No work had been given to Dick for three weeks, and, except in the evening, when there were letters to be put through the press, no work was ever given to the office-boy. During this enforced idleness, Dick Murrige sat the whole day at his table by the window which commanded a view of back-yards, chimneys, and outhouses. He amused himself by drawing girls' heads upon his blotting-pad in pencil. When one page was covered, he turned it over and drew on the next, so that the pad was become a perfect gallery of loveliness. By dint of long practice he could draw a girl's face very well, whether full, or in profile, or a three-quarter face. He looked at his watch a good deal, and he grumbled a good deal, and if the office-boy made any noise he used bad language, but not loud enough for his father to hear, because Mr. Murrige was one of those parents who reserve certain vices for their own use and forbid them to their sons.

The office-boy sat at another table on

which was a copying-press. He had nothing to do, as a rule, except to copy letters by means of the press, and to go on errands.

But this boy never found the day too long or the Golden Hours dull. This was because his table had a drawer. Even to an industrious clerk a drawer is a standing temptation. To the lazy clerk it is an ever-present snare; to the clerk who has nothing to do, the drawer is a never-failing solace and resource. This boy, a City-born boy, with sharp eyes, pasty face, and commonplace features, was able, by means of his drawer, to live all day long in another world. He kept it half-open, so that at the least movement or sound from the inner office, or change of position in Mr. Murrige, who sat with his back to him, he could, by a quick, forward movement of his chest, shut the drawer suddenly and noiselessly, and be discovered, so to speak, in the attitude of the expectant, ready, and zealous clerk, eager to do something which would lessen the drain of his three half-crowns a week. Inside the drawer there was always a story—one of those spirit-stirring, exciting, and romantic stories of adventure, which can be bought for a penny, and which never pall upon the reader. So that this boy's days were passed in a delicious and delirious dream of adventure, love, and peril, tempered only by the fear of being suddenly found out and horribly cuffed or even dismissed, when he would catch it worse at home under the family cane. If the boy is not before long enabled to live up to that dream and to become a rover, pirate, smuggler, or highwayman, I fear that his whole future will be wrecked. Because there inevitably comes a time of hope too long deferred, when the realisation of a dream, though possible, no longer seems delightful. This boy, at eighteen, may cease to desire the lawless life; or, if he pursues it, he may become a mere common burglar, forger, long-firm man, confidential-dodge man or welsber—joyless, moody, apprehensive, suspicious, and prone to sneak round a corner at sight of a man in blue-coat and helmet.

In the front room—Mr. Murrige's room—the Chief sat at a great table, covered with papers. He was not consulting any; he had before him half-a-dozen cheques, and he was looking at them with perturbed eyes. Sometimes he compared one with another; sometimes he looked at each separately; and as he looked, his hard face grew harder, and his keen eyes

sharper. Six cheques. They were all drawn for the same sum—twelve pounds; and they were all signed by himself. One would not think that the contemplation of half-a-dozen cheques, payable to self or bearer, signed by one's own name, could take a busy man from his work. But they did.

About eleven o'clock the silence of the office was broken by a light step on the stair. The boy shut up his drawer with a swift and silent jerk of his chest, so that he might be discovered with his elbows on the table, and his hands clasping the handles of the copying-press, a model attitude for the Zealous Unemployed, when the door opened, and a young lady appeared, carrying a black bag. This was the Private Secretary. She nodded pleasantly to Dick, and passed through the room into the inner office. But Dick responded with a grunt.

Mr. Murrige looked up, and greeted her with an ill-tempered snort.

"You're late again," he said.

"I'm not," she replied. "Eleven is striking; and I never am late; and you know it. Be just, even though you are out of temper."

"Your head is turned by your father's Title. I suppose you think you can say what you like. Is the Honourable Norah Cronan going to continue in her present employment?"

"I don't know. Very likely. Meantime there is this Case to finish. I have brought you some papers you will be pleased to see."

"I don't know that anything can please me this morning. Give them to me. Humph! Mighty little, considering the time you've taken!"

"Hadn't you better read before you grumble? That's always the way with you when you get your fur rubbed the wrong way. Look at this, now."

"Yes; will you read it to me?"

She always "stood up" to him, and generally reduced him to good temper by sheer force of courage. To-day, however, he attempted no rejoinder, but meekly gave in without reply. It astonished her. Perhaps he was ill.

"Go on, please."

Norah, therefore, sat down, and began to explain the nature and the bearing of her papers. Genealogical research is really most interesting work. You are always hunting for someone, and finding someone else. Then you go off on a dozen

hunts; and you discover the most abominable falsehoods in printed pedigrees, with gaping flaws, and disconnections, and impossibilities, where everything looked fair and smooth. The girl enjoyed these things more than Mr. Murridge, for the simple reason that he could never for one moment forget how much money there might be in it. Now, no one ever enjoyed any kind of work, whether it is painting a picture with a brush, or painting a succession of pictures with a little steel pen and a sheet of blue paper, who keeps thinking all the while of the money. But while Norah told her story a strange thing happened—a very strange thing. For the first time in his life Mr. Murridge was inattentive, and that over an important piece of work. He had often before been irritable, but never inattentive.

Outside, Dick Murridge had returned to his blotting-pad, and was gloomily drawing girls' heads upon it. The office-boy opened his drawer again very gently, and resumed the reading of his romance, which had been interrupted at the critical moment when Spring-heel Jack was commencing his earliest love-adventure. The lady was not described with any detail, but the boy concluded that in figure and face she must have greatly resembled Miss Cronan, whom he himself secretly loved, though he was aware that he had a rival. What would Spring-heel Jack have done to a rival? His mistress, since she was like Miss Cronan, was slender in figure, wore a neatly-fitting jacket, and a hat with a red feather in it. She had roses in her cheeks, dark brown hair, and full, steady eyes. The boy did not yet know the adjective, but he knew the quality of steadiness. She also had, like Miss Cronan, a sweet and pleasant smile. The lady in his story, however, did not resemble Miss Cronan in one particular. She was not a young lady "in the City", but was a Countess in her own right, though disguised as a milkmaid.

Half an hour afterwards the girl came back to the outer office, with her black bag in her hand, on her way to resume her work upon the Case. It was, however, with a sense that her work had not been appreciated. Mr. Murridge was strangely inattentive. She shut the door after her, and turned to Dick, who slightly raised his right shoulder, a gesture familiar to the Grumpy, and considered effective. He then made the same gesture with the left shoulder. This indicates unrelenting Grumpiness.

"Well, Dick?" she said, waiting.

He made no reply whatever. The office-boy felt that he really ought to get up and wring the neck of his master's son for incivility. But he was not yet man enough.

Then Norah crossed the room, and laid her hand on Dick's shoulder.

"Come, Dick," she said, "don't be vindictive. Let us be friends."

"Friends!" he replied. "Oh yes; I know! You told me there was nothing between you and anybody, and next day I am told all about Hugh. Call that truthfulness, I suppose?"

"It was the truth, Dick. It really was."

"I don't believe it. Sapphira!"

"Well, Dick, if you take it like that, I've got nothing to say."

"I don't care what happens now. If anything happens it's your fault—you and all of you."

"What will happen, Dick?"

"Anything may happen, I suppose. How am I to know what will happen?"

"Well, Dick," the girl replied, "I can't stay to guess riddles. Will you shake hands?"

"No. Sapphira!"

Norah retired without another word.

The office-boy thought of Spring-heel Jack, and what he would do under such provocation. But it was useless. He was not man enough by several inches.

Half an hour afterwards there was another step on the stairs. Dick hastened to assume the air of a Junior Partner, and the office-boy once more closed the drawer and grasped the handle of the copying-press.

This time it was Dr. Hyacinth Cronan. He was still in the overwhelming wave of the first day's enjoyment of his new honours. Yet one might have thought that there was something wanting, as if the full flavour of his title had not been quite brought out—it requires time for the complete enjoyment of everything, even a title. His brow was knitted, as they used to say in the old metaphorical times when people would knit a brow as well as a stocking and curl an upper-lip as easily as a ringlet, and hurl scornful words as readily and as effectively as big stones. They could also unhand each other. He looked, to put the thing plainly, disturbed.

"Is your father in his office?" he asked, cutting short Dick Murridge's proposed congratulations. "I will step in."

"I expected you this morning," said Mr. Murrige. "I expected you would look in. You came to talk over the new position. Well, I am not much accustomed"—he laughed a dry laugh—"to advise noble Lords."

"You need not trouble about the title. I came especially to ask you about a certain document which I signed here two or three years ago."

"Quite so. It is in my safe here. For the consideration of two hundred pounds—money down—you resigned the whole of your reversionary interests, whatever they might be."

"I remember the transaction perfectly. You offered me two hundred pounds for my reversionary rights. I wanted the money pretty badly. I always do. The reversionary rights. You explained to me at the time that there were two lives between me and the succession. I thought I had no more chance of the title than I had of the Crown of England. Tell me exactly what it was I sold. There are other rights besides reversionary rights, I suppose?"

"What you sold was your chance of succeeding to the property of which the late Lord Clonsilla was only a life-tenant."

"What made you offer me the money?"

"Because I knew that yours was a substantial chance."

"But there were two lives, men no older than myself, between Lord Clonsilla and myself."

"One of them, when you signed that paper, I knew to be suffering from a hopeless disorder. He died, in fact, a few weeks afterwards. The other had been married for fifteen years without children. I hoped that he would have none. Well, my hopes were well founded; not only are there no children, but the man himself is dead. And you are the new Viscount, and what estate there is has come to me. It isn't much, after all."

"You knew this and you did not tell me?"

"I did. You thought you knew all about it, and you did not even take the trouble to enquire before you signed. Don't talk about honour, Doctor, because in the City there is no such thing. Clever people invented the word in order to keep other people foolish. It was sharp practice—nothing more. I was astonished at the time that a man of your capacity shouldn't have made some enquiries before you sold your rights. Why didn't you?"

"I suppose because I trusted you."

"Did you suppose, then, that I was benevolently giving you two hundred pounds?"

"No; I supposed we were making a fair bet. My chance of the small estate—what is it?—a thousand a year?—was worth, I thought, what you offered."

"Never think in business—never trust—never believe any man."

"If there is no honour there is, I suppose, some kind of fair play between men who deal? Do you call your play fair?"

"Yes, I do. You might have got the same information as I got. But never mind fair play. The estate is mine, and I shall send word to the tenants that they are to pay their rent to me. Do you dispute my claim?"

"I would if I could; but I fear I cannot."

"Think of it. Take legal advice about it. As for the land, it is only a few hundred acres, and none of the tenants have paid the rent for years. They'll have to pay or go now, if there's law left in Ireland. You haven't lost anything. You couldn't have made them pay."

"You ought to have told me——"

"Nonsense, Doctor," Mr. Murrige interrupted him sharply. "That is not the way in which I manage my business. I get hold of a secret, and I use it for my own advantage. I never suspected you were cousin to Lord Clonsilla till you gave me a receipted bill for medical attendance with your full name—Hugh Hyacinth Cronan. Never dreamed of it till then. But when I saw that Christian-name—you are all Hyacinths, you Cronans—I began to suspect, and with a question or two put to you, and a little examination into the pedigree, and a little information about the heir presumptive, I easily arrived at the whole truth, and I used that truth to the best advantage. Why didn't you take the same trouble to protect your rights as I did to acquire them?"

The Doctor made no reply.

"Honour! He talks of honour," Mr. Murrige went on. "Why, what is there in the world but self-interest? Nothing but self-interest, which is the same thing as self-preservation. That is the instinct which makes men gather together, and pass laws, and make pretence of charity, and affection, and honour, and such rubbish. I've got myself to look after; I must make money to keep myself; I shall get old and

past work, and I must make money to support my old age. I make money as I can. No man can say that I have robbed him."

The Doctor at this point started, as if there might be one exception to this general statement. Mr. Murrige paused for a moment, but as nothing was said, he went on:

"I've had to take every advantage, and I have taken every advantage. Very well, then, what have you got to say to that?"

"Nothing at all," said the Doctor, laughing ruefully. "Nothing in the world, except that there's one kind of men who believe and one kind who suspect. Well, I shall go back to my patients." He rose and took his hat. "I wonder if there's ever before been a real Viscount making up his own pills for his own patients in Camden Street, Camden Town. But I don't think I need change the door-plate."

"Wait a moment, Doctor; wait, my Lord," said Mr. Murrige; "you must not go just yet. Dear me! Pills? Patients? For the Viscount Clonsilla? You distress me; your Lordship makes me feel as if I had not done a noble action in—in—in clearing the way for your accession. Why, if it had not been for me, you would still be plain Dr. Cronan!"

"That is true, Mr. Murrige!"

"Why, Doctor—I mean my Lord—there are a thousand ways in which a title may be used. Such a title as yours is a fortune in itself and a certain income—a large income if properly used. Even a Knight can do something, a Baronet can do more; but a Viscount—oh, a Viscount is a tower of strength, especially in London, where all the money is——"

"Am I to let the title out at so much an hour as if it was a donkey on Hampstead Heath?"

"Sit down for five minutes. Of all men, medical men are the least practical. Now, then, put the case plainly. You are Viscount Clonsilla, and you have no money except your professional income and your wife's two hundred a year. You have also your children. Why, to keep up the title decently, you must have two thousand at least. It can't be done at all with less than two thousand. Shall I show you how to make that two thousand?"

"It seems worth hearing, at any rate."

The Doctor sat down again.

"The world, my Lord, is divided into

two classes—those who can use their chances and those who can't."

"Very good."

"I am one of those who know how to use their chances. Now and then I get such a haul as a man who will sell his reversionary interest. But I am not ungrateful. You sold me a certainty for a song, and in return I will show you how to make money out of nothing."

"Go on."

"To begin with, there are always companies, good and bad, going to be started. The great difficulty with them all is to inspire confidence at the outset. For this purpose the names of noblemen—not men of business in the City—are greatly in demand. Now do you begin to see?"

"I do. The name of Lord Clonsilla would look well on a list of Directors."

"More than that; you yourself would look well in the chair. There is nothing against you. An Irish peer with a small property who has been a physician in practice. Come, I will run you. I know of more than one company already that would rejoice in appointing you as Director; as for the qualification——"

"I think," said the Doctor, "that the red lamp will have to stand."

"Then there is philanthropy. Hundreds of societies for every kind of object, and all of them wanting a Lord. An income might be made out of the May meetings alone."

Lord Clonsilla rose and put on his hat.

"Thank you," he said. "There was an old proverb, Noblesse oblige, which, I suppose, is now translated, 'Sell everything you can and take the highest bid.' The red lamp will have to stay where it is, with the brass plate, and the less we say about the title the better. Good-morning, Murrige."

"The man is a fool," said Mr. Murrige when the Doctor was gone; "he was a fool to sign away his interest for a song, and now he is going to fool away his title. Well——"

Then his thoughts returned to the cheques, and his face darkened as he turned back the papers which covered them, and saw them again all spread out before him.

At five minutes to one exactly there ran up the stairs another visitor—for the third time that morning the office-boy jammed his drawer close, and embraced the copying-press. It was hard, because the heroine was at that very moment taking her famous leap from London Bridge, followed by

Spring-heel Jack. He caught her, it will be remembered, in mid-air, and gracefully swam ashore, holding her inanimate form out of the water with his strong left hand. Dick Murrige did not this time pretend to be absorbed in business, because he knew the step.

"Come out and have some dinner, Dick."

It was a young fellow of one or two and twenty, and he had the unmistakable look of a student, not a clerk. The office-boy thought his real name must be Spring-heel Jack, because he bore himself bravely and joyously, and was so comely a young man; and because, as all young highwaymen are, he walked as if he would rather be dancing, and talked as if he would rather be singing, and he was, no doubt, extraordinarily impudent to all persons in authority.

Mr. Richard, on the other hand, would not make at all a good highwayman, because he was generally grumpy. Nobody ever heard of a grumpy highwayman. And as for a pirate, he may carry high spirits to the length of firing pistols under the table, but he may not be grumpy.

"Come along, Dick. I had to do some business in the City for my mother. I say, what a lark it is about the Title! You've heard about it, haven't you?"

"Yes, I've heard. How much money is there in it?"

"I don't know. I got home late last night, and expected a row. Instead of that, if you please, the Mater burst into tears, and cried out: 'Oh, my dear son, your father turns out to be a Viscount in disguise, and you are the Honourable Hyacinth!' Upon my word, Dick, I thought they were all gone mad together, especially as my father stood like a stuck pig—as if he was ashamed of himself—and Norah laughed and said: 'You are the Honourable Daffodil, and I'm the Honourable Norah. Larry is the Honourable Larry, and Calista is the Honourable Calista.' And then Uncle Joe wanted to say something too, but he was up to the back teeth by that time in gin-and-water, and he could only wag his head like Solomon."

"There must be some money in it," said Dick. "People can't sit in the House of Lords without any money."

"We sha'n't be allowed to sit in the House of Lords, it seems, at all, because we're Irish—only Irish, you know. My mother talks already of petitioning the

Queen to remove the disability, which, she says, is a disgrace to the Constitution."

"My father told me this morning. It isn't often he tells me anything. I say, Daff——" Dick grew very red—"I've forgotten something, and must go back to the office and set it right. We'll meet at the usual place in five minutes. Look here. Just cash this cheque for me as you pass the Bank, will you? Thanks. It will save me five minutes. Take it in gold."

He thrust an envelope into his friend's hand, and ran off without waiting for an answer.

"I say," said the Honourable Daffodil, "why should I go to the Bank and do Dick's messages for him? I'm not his clerk, nor his father's clerk, though Norah is. Well, never mind."

The Bank lay in his way to the Crosby Hall, where they proposed to take their dinner. He went in, presented the cheque without looking at it, received the money without counting it, dropped it in his pocket, and went his way to the dining-place, where he met Dick and gave him the money. They had their dinner, and after dinner Daffodil went back to the Hospital in Gower Street, where he received with cheerfulness the congratulations of his friends on his accession to the family honours. These congratulations took the form common among medical students, who have, it must be owned, small respect for hereditary rank. Yet, out of kindness, they promoted their comrade, and gave him several steps in the Peerage, calling him the Right Honourable His Royal Highness Prince Daffodil.

CHAPTER IV. WHO HAS DONE THIS!

THERE were six cheques lying before Mr. Murrige. All of them were drawn for the same amount; all of them, in words and figures, were written exactly alike, save for the date. Mr. Murrige himself wrote a small and well-marked hand, very neat and clear—each letter perfectly formed—such a hand as might be expected of one who has been brought up as an engraver. Yet, for that very reason, perhaps, easier to imitate than a more common and slovenly character. The signatures of these cheques were so perfectly imitated that even Mr. Murrige himself could only tell by the dates which were his own and which were forgeries.

"Six cheques," he said, once more comparing the dates of the cheques with his

own diary, "and four of them—these four—are forgeries. These four."

Again he examined them closely.

They were all drawn for the same amount—namely, twelve pounds. It was an established rule with this methodical man, a rule from which he never departed, always to draw the cheques he wanted for private and domestic use for the same amount—namely, twelve pounds. This enabled him to know by a glance at the bank-book how much he spent on his household, and on salaries, wages, personal expenses, and office. Generally he drew this twelve pounds once a week. Sometimes, however, he would have to draw oftener than once a week. But a cheque for twelve pounds, with his signature, payable to bearer, would be certainly cashed without suspicion or doubt, when presented across the counter.

The forger must have known that practice of his.

Who did know it?

He had before him, besides the cheques themselves, his bank-book and his cheque-book.

"Six cheques," he said, summing up the case, "have been abstracted from the book; not taken altogether, which would have made a sensible gap in the book—I should have noticed that at once—but one taken here and one taken there, so as to escape observation. That was crafty. When could I have left the cheque-book lying about? and who would be in the office when I went out leaving it lying on the table? Six cheques. Four have been presented and paid. There remain two more."

Mr. Murrige's business was not one which required the continual paying into the Bank of money, and the drawing of many cheques. He had his bank-book made up once a month. His son generally called for it. On this occasion he had, himself, while passing the Bank that very morning, three days before the usual time, looked in and asked for it. Therefore, it was probable that the other two cheques would be both presented before the customary day of sending for the bank-book. Evidently the writer of the cheques knew perfectly well the routine of his office as well as his signature.

"It could not be the girl," said Mr. Murrige; "she could never imitate my handwriting to begin with;" he looked at one of her papers. It was written in a large hand, rather clumsy, for Norah belonged to the generation which has not been taught to

write neatly as well as legibly, and the day of the fine Italian hand has quite gone by. Nobody who wrote such a sprawling hand as hers could imitate even distantly Mr. Murrige's neat and clearly-formed characters. "She may have stolen the cheques for someone, though. She may have a lover. Girls will do anything for their lovers. Yet I have always thought her an honest girl. The man who trusts anyone is a Fool."

Then he thought of the office-boy. He, too, was incapable of such an imitation. Yet he might have been put up to the job by someone outside. Very likely it was the boy. Most likely it was the boy. There was also a third person who knew the routine of the office, and his own customs, and daily rules. Mr. Murrige started when he thought of this third person, and his face hardened for a moment, but only for a moment, because the very possibility of such a thing cannot be allowed to be considered.

He placed all the cheques with the bank-book in his pocket, put on his hat, and went slowly out of the office. He was so much troubled in his mind that he actually left the safe unlocked, and all his papers lying on the table, cheque-book and all. This was a thing which he had never done before in his life. The office-boy observed this extraordinary neglect, and thought what a splendid chance would have been presented to Spring-heel Jack had his tyrant master left the safe open.

Mr. Murrige was not the kind of person to begin by crying out that he was robbed. Not at all. He would first be able to lay his hand upon the man who did it. He therefore went to the Bank Manager and requested an interview with the clerk of the pay-counter, merely stating that one of his cheques appeared to have fallen into the wrong hands.

"Can you tell me," he asked, "who presented these cheques?"

The clerk was paying cheques over the counter all day long, and it seemed rather a wild question to ask. But there was one thing in favour of his remembering. The only person who was ever sent to the Bank with Mr. Murrige's private cheques was his son.

"I cannot remember each one. But I remember something about them, because your son usually comes with these twelve-pound cheques."

"Well—what do you remember?"

"Two or three of these cheques—I

think three—were presented by an elderly man with white hair, a white moustache, and a foreign accent, which I noticed. Oh, and he had lost the forefinger of his right hand. He took the money each time in gold, and was a long while counting it."

"An elderly man, with white moustache, and one finger gone. You ought to be able to recognise him."

"I think I should know him. Another of the cheques was presented by a young lady. I should certainly know her," said the clerk with more assurance. "She was well dressed, and very pretty. Oh, I am sure I should know her."

"Oh! Is there anything else you can tell me?"

"Why, there was another cheque presented half an hour ago."

"That makes the fifth," said Mr. Murrige. "Who presented that?"

"A young man—I think I should know him—with light hair and a light moustache. He wore a pot-hat and a red necktie, and had a flower in his button-hole. He walked into the Bank as if the place belonged to him. First he said he would take it anyhow, and then he said he would take it in gold."

"And the other two—these two?"

"They were presented by your son as usual. Your cheques being always for the same amount, and always being presented by your son, made me notice a difference."

"Thank you. Observe that I have made a little alteration. This will, in future, be my signature; you see the difference? Now, if a cheque is presented without the variation, you will please detain the man who presents it, and give him in custody, and send for me. That's all."

He went back to his office. Something was learned. A man with a foreign accent, and one forefinger gone, had presented three of the cheques. A girl, good-looking and well dressed, presented another, and a young gentleman in a pot-hat and a red tie presented another. Not a great deal to help a detective, but something.

His son had not yet returned from his dinner, and the office-boy was still alone.

"Where is the callers' book?" he asked.

The boy produced the book. Mr. Murrige ran his finger slowly down the list, looking for someone to suspect. There was no one. But the last name of all struck him. It was the name of Mr. Hyacinth Cronan, junior. The only visitors that morning had been those members of

the Cronan family. He suddenly remembered that Hyacinth, junior, had a way of walking about as if everything belonged to him, and that he wore a pot-hat, and generally had a flower in his button-hole. Why, in a general way, the descriptions agreed, but then it was impossible.

"What did young Mr. Cronan come here for?" he asked.

"I don't know, sir. He came for Mr. Richard. They went out together at one o'clock."

Mr. Murrige gazed thoughtfully at the boy. Young Cronan might have called at the Bank on his way.

"Go to your dinner," he said to the boy abruptly.

The boy took his hat and disappeared in trepidation, because the history of Spring-heel Jack was in the drawer. Suppose his master was to open that drawer and discover it! This was exactly what Mr. Murrige proceeded to do. He opened the boy's drawer, and examined it very carefully. There was nothing in it at all, except a boy's penny novel, which he turned over contemptuously, taking no heed of the way in which the boy was spending the office-time. What did it matter to him what the boy did so long as he got through his work? It is not until middle-age that we learn a truth which is not one of the most important laws, yet is not without its uses; namely, that nobody cares how we do spend our time, every man being fully occupied with the spending of his own time.

When Mr. Murrige was quite satisfied in his own mind that there was nothing in the boy's drawer, he turned to his son's table. He did not in the least suspect his son, or connect him with the lost cheques, but it was his nature to search everywhere—even in the least likely places. His profession was to search for missing links. He knew that anywhere he might find a clue. He, therefore, opened the drawers. He turned over the papers, and even examined the blotting-pad, but observed nothing except that the paper was full of girls' heads, drawn in pencil—very prettily, if he had been able to examine them from an artistic point of view.

"The boy does think of something, then," said Mr. Murrige; "if it is only of girls. Perhaps he will wake up now." Dick was, in fact, wide-awake, and had been awake for a long time. "Girls' heads! Well, he is young, and believes in women. Young men very often do."

On the shelves round the room were piles of old letters, documents of no more use to anyone, account-books, and all the litter of thirty years' accumulation. But to search through this mass of papers, black with dust, would take too long. He stood beside his son's table, uncertain, troubled in his mind, not knowing where to look or whom to suspect. Here his son found him, when he returned from dinner at two o'clock, studying the pictures on the blotting-pad.

"Dick," he said, "come into my room. Shut the door. Look here. Do you know these cheques?" He looked at the cheques, and not at his son as he spoke, therefore he did not observe the change of colour which passed swiftly over the young man's face, followed by a quick hardening of the mouth. "Do you know these cheques?"

Dick took them up one by one, and looked at them carefully, taking his time over each.

Then he replied slowly, and in a husky voice:

"Why, they are only the cheques which I have cashed for you, are they not?"

"How many cheques have you cashed for me in the last three weeks? Think!"

"Two; unless— No; two."

"Look at the dates. They have all been presented during the last three weeks. There is no doubt as to that fact, at least. Five out of the seven, Dick, are forgeries. I have been robbed."

"Impossible!" said Dick.

"So I should have said yesterday. To-day I can only repeat, I have been robbed."

Dick showed a face full of astonishment. "Who can have robbed you?" he asked.

"That, you see, is what we have to find out; and that, by George, I will find out—I will find out, Dick!" He rattled his keys in his pocket. It is supposed that only persons of great resolution rattle their keys when they resolve. But I doubt this. "If I do nothing for the next twelve months I will find out. I have been robbed of sixty pounds—sixty pounds! That won't break me. It isn't the money so much as the villainy which troubles me; villainy about the office; villainy at my very elbow. I'll find out who did it, Dick; and then we will see what the Law can do! Some men when they are robbed—oh, I know it goes on every day!—sit down and hear excuses, and forgive the villain. They let the wife or the daughter come to them and cry, and

then let the fellow go. That is not my sort, Dick. I will catch this fellow wherever he is—I will track him down! He had better have robbed a Bank—which is bound never to forgive—than have robbed me!"

"How—how," asked Dick, clearing his throat again—"how do you propose to find him?"

"As for the amount, it isn't much—sixty pounds. The interest of sixty pounds at five-and-a-half per cent, which I can get if anybody can, is three pounds six shillings a year. An estate in perpetuity, worth three pounds six shillings yearly, has been stolen from me—from you, too, Dick, because I suppose—" Here he stopped to heave a sigh. The Common Lot is hard, but hardest of all to a man who is making money. "I suppose I shall some day have to leave things behind me like everybody else. Three pounds six shillings a year! Think how long it takes to save that. A little perpetual spring, so to speak. Who has done it, you say? That is just exactly what we have to find out; and, by George, Dick, I'll never rest—never—and I'll never let you rest, either—until I have found out the man!"

Two men there are who particularly resent being robbed. The one is the man born to great possessions. He is always obliged to trust people, and he is the natural prey of the crafty, and he feels personally insulted by a breach of trust because it seems to accuse him of being credulous, soft, ignorant of the world, and easily taken in. The other is the man who spends his life in amassing small gains, and knows the value of money, what it represents, how much labour, self-restraint, and the foregoing of this world's pleasures for the sake of getting it, and very often how many tricks, and what crookedness in his pilgrimage. Mr. Murrige was the second of these men. His son watched him curiously and furtively, as he continued wrathfully threatening vengeance and relentless pursuit.

"Well, sir," Dick asked, when the storm subsided, "as yet you have not told me any particulars?"

"I'm coming to them. I don't know very much. But I am sure it will prove enough for a beginning. Many a great robbery has been discovered with fewer facts than these. Now listen, and get them into your head. A clever detective would very soon get a clue out of what I have learned."

He proceeded to relate briefly what we already know.

"Have you got them all?" he asked. "Sit down first and make a note of the dates. They may be important. Remember, an elderly man with a foreign accent, and the forefinger of the right hand gone. A girl. A young fellow with light hair, a pot-hat, a red necktie, and a swaggering air."

"It is not much to remember," said Dick. "But why do you want me to remember them so particularly?"

"Because I want you to find the thief, Dick."

The son started, and lifted his head.

"What?" he cried.

"I want you to find the villain, Dick," Mr. Murrige repeated.

"Me to find him?"

"You shall show me the stuff you are made of. You'll never make a genealogist worth your salt. It's poor work spending every evening over a piano or out in the streets, and all day drawing girls' heads on a blotting-pad. I don't believe you are without brains, Dick. And here's a chance for you to show what you can do."

"Yes," said Dick thoughtfully.

"Besides, I don't want to make a fuss about the matter. Let us work quietly without the police, and the Bank and all. I don't want to arouse suspicion anywhere."

"I see," said Dick. "You want the man who did it not to know that you have found it out already."

"Yes. It shall be your work. It will be an occupation for you. Get to the bottom of this case. Take a week over it. Do nothing else. Think of nothing else. Lord! I should make a beautiful Detective. I've often thought that I should have liked the work. But there's no Money in it."

Dick received these commands with profound amazement.

"Go to the police, if you like. But I would rather you kept it entirely in your own hands. Anyhow, I don't care how you find it out. Here, take the cheques; you may want them, and the cheque-book. That may be useful. Don't let the book lie about, though it would be of no use to anybody, because I've taken the precaution to stop the numbers. And as for the sixth of the stolen cheques—the one which is not yet presented—I'm in great hopes, my boy—particularly if we keep quiet and nothing is said—that the fellow will have the impudence to hand it across the

counter-to-day or to-morrow, when that joker will be pleased to find himself asked to step into the manager's room, while the police are called in to escort him before the Lord Mayor. And as for my signature, I've altered it. And it will be a good long time before anybody gets the chance of getting my cheque-book again."

"I—I will do my best," said his son. "At present, I confess—"

"Mind, Dick, when you've got anything that looks like a Clue, follow it up—follow it up. Never mind who it is." He was thinking, I am ashamed to say, of his Private Secretary. "Follow up any clue which offers, wherever it may lead you. If you find reason to suspect—even slight reason to suspect anybody—anybody, I say—find out where that person has lately spent his time, and what money he paid away, and to what people, and how he has paid it. Find out his associates. Then find out them. If necessary, make yourself chummy with them; make them believe that you want to cultivate their acquaintance; go to their places of amusement. And mind, not a word to any living creature."

"Not a word," his son repeated shortly. He held in his hand the cheque and the cheque-book, and he had a strange look of astonishment and hesitation.

"Why," Mr. Murrige continued, "what a poor, miserable, sneaking thief he must be! He had six cheques, and he could forge my name so well that even I myself cannot tell the difference. Among those seven cheques I only know my own cheques by the numbers in the book. Yet he fills them up for no more than twelve pounds each. He will be arrested, committed, tried, and sent to penal servitude for sixty pounds. Why, he might have made it a couple of hundred. But he did not know my balance, I suppose. Well, find him for me, Dick. Don't let me have the trouble of hunting him down."

"I will do my best, sir," said Dick; but he looked as if he thought doubtfully of the job.

"Now, there's something else, only this cursed forgery interfered. It is this Clonsilla succession. It was I, you know, who gave the Doctor his title."

"You!"

"No other. He knew, of course, that he was a distant cousin, but he never dreamed of the title falling to him; and three years ago, Dick—three years ago, when I talked the thing over with him.

and showed him that two lives stood between him and the title, he sold his reversionary rights to me—for a song. And now the reversion is mine."

"I thought there was no money in it."

"There's a small Irish estate, which at present is worth nothing, because the tenants won't pay. We shall see about that. But there's a snug little English property, Dick, about which the Doctor knows nothing. It isn't a great thing, but there is a house upon it, with a few acres of land, and it stands in a good position. I think it is let for three hundred a year, and perhaps we shall be able to run up the value a bit. Three hundred pounds a year, my boy, with a good tenant, and I bought it for two hundred pounds down. I'm a landed proprietor, Dick, and you are my heir. You shall be a landed proprietor, too, by Gad, when your turn comes!"

He rubbed his hands cheerfully. His son's face, which ought to have responded with some kind of smile, only darkened more and more. That was, perhaps, his way of expressing joy.

The thought of that snug little English estate made Mr. Murridge so cheerful that he forgot his wrath concerning the forgery.

"It will be a cheering thing," he said, recurring to the subject, "when the Case is completed, for you to think of the man you have conducted to the Lord Mayor, and afterwards to the Central Criminal Court. For sixty pounds—the paltry sum of sixty pounds—he will have purchased the exclusive use of a whitewashed apartment, rent-free, for seven, or perhaps ten years. There will be other advantages—the privilege of a whole year spent alone, with an hour's exercise every day; then a good many years of healthy employment, without any beer, or wine, or tobacco, and no amusements and no idle talk. And when, at last, he comes out, it will be to a world which will turn its back upon him for the rest of his natural life. The hand of Justice is heavy in this country on the man who invades the rights of Property; but the hand of Society is ten times as hard—ten times as hard. So it ought to be—so it ought to be. For, if Property is not held sacred, who would try to make money?"

Dick went back to his own desk, bearing with him the cheques and the cheque-book. He sat down and began to think. He had a week in which he would be left quite undisturbed to find out the forger. A good deal may be done in a week. If

he failed, his father would take up the case for himself—his father, whose scent was as keen as a bloodhound's, and whose pursuit would be as unrelenting. He had a week! For the moment he could not think what was to be done; he had no clue, perhaps; or, perhaps he was not satisfied as to the best way of following up a clue. Perhaps the problem presented itself to him as it would to an outsider. Given a robbery and a forgery. The robbery must have been committed when Mr. Murridge was out—that was certain; the forgery must have been committed by someone well-acquainted with the custom of drawing twelve-pound cheques as well as able to imitate a signature. The only persons who had access to the inner office in Mr. Murridge's absence was himself, Norah Cronan, the office-boy, and the housekeeper; but the latter only when the offices were closed and on Sundays. Suspicion might fall upon any of these four, but especially upon himself and upon Norah. He put this quite clearly to himself. As for the office-boy, no one would suspect him, he was too great a fool even to think of such a crime; and the housekeeper, too, was out of the question. There remained, as the most likely persons to be suspected, himself and Norah.

Having got so far he remained here unable to get any farther; in fact, he came back to it again and again.

"Myself and Norah," he thought. "It must lie between us two—it must lie between us!"

The office-boy watched him curiously. From his position at the other side of the fireplace he looked, so to speak, over Dick's shoulder, and could watch him unseen and unsuspected. There were certain special reasons—in fact, they were concealed in the pocket of his jacket—why the office-boy thought that something was going to happen. There were other reasons, such as a great increase in Mr. Richard's sulkiness, a jumpy manner which had lately come over him, and his rudeness to Miss Cronan, which made this intelligent boy believe that something was going to happen very soon. Then Mr. Murridge had been shut up with his son for three-quarters of an hour. That meant things unusual. And now Mr. Richard, instead of drawing girls' heads, was sitting in moody thought.

You know how strangely, when the mind is greatly exercised and strained, one remembers some little trifle, or forgets some little habitual thing, such as brushing the

hair or putting on a collar. Dick's eyes fell upon his pocket-book, which lay upon his desk. It was a diary, one of the diaries which give a certain small space for every day in the year and a pocket for letters. It belonged, like his purse, and his bunch of keys, essentially to his pocket. Yet he could not remember when he had last carried it in his pocket. Consider, if you are accustomed to a bunch of keys in your pocket, you do not feel their presence, but yet you miss them when they are no longer there. Dick became suddenly conscious that for some time—perhaps an hour—perhaps a whole day—perhaps more—he had not felt the presence of the pocket-book. But his mind had been so much occupied by certain pressing anxieties which beset him about this time, that he had noticed the absence of the book half consciously. Now that he saw it lying on his table he snatched it up, and began turning over the pages, at first confidently and then hurriedly, as one looks for something lost. There was something lost. He shook out the leaves; he looked through them again; he searched the empty pocket. Then he searched his own pockets.

The boy behind him watched with a broad grin of satisfaction, as if he understood the cause of this distress.

Then Dick sprang from his chair and looked under the table, on the floor, in the blotting-pad, in the letter-rack, and in the drawers. Then he began all over again. No Greek mime ever expressed more vividly the anxiety, dismay, and terror of one who has lost a thing of vital importance. The boy felt as if he should like to roll on the floor and scream.

"Have you picked up anything, you boy?" Dick turned upon him fiercely, so that he was fain to repress the smile upon his lips and the light of joy in his eye. "Come here, you little devil!"

The boy obeyed with composed face, and, in fact, with considerable trepidation, because there was something in his jacket-pocket which he ardently desired to conceal from Mr. Richard.

"Have you picked up anything at all?" he asked again.

"What is it?" the boy asked by way of reply. "Is it money dropped?"

"You measly little devil! Why don't you answer? Have you picked up anything? It is something of no importance to anybody—a bit of pink paper."

"I haven't picked up nothing," replied the boy sullenly.

"I've a great mind to search you," said Dick, catching him by the coat-collar. "You're as full of tricks as you can stick."

"Search me, then. Oh yes! Search me. I'll go and call the Guv'nor, and ask him to search me, if you like. You just lemme go, or I'll scream, and bring out the Guv'nor and ask him to search me."

Dick dropped his coat-collar instantly.

"Look here," he said. "Do you know this pocket-book?"

"Never saw it before in my life."

This, I regret to say, was a falsehood. The boy had seen it many times before. Every day Mr. Richard drew that book from his pocket and wrote in it, and then put it back.

"You came here before me this morning. Was it on my desk when you came?"

"Don't know. Never saw it there. Never saw it before in my life."

Dick began to think that he was wrong. The book must have been in his pocket; he must have taken it out without thinking. But where was the—

"You boy," he said, "if you are lying, I'll break every bone in your body."

Modern Boy is so constituted that this threat does not terrify him in the least. Nobody's bones are broken nowadays. It is true that every father has the right to whack and wollop his own son, and sometimes does it, but with discretion, otherwise the School Board Officer will find him out.

"I don't care. Call the Guv'nor, and tell him what you want. I dun know what you've lost. What is it, then?"

"I've lost a—a paper. It was in this book."

"What sort of a paper?"

Dick made no reply. Perhaps the lost paper would be in his own room. Stung by the thought that it might be lying about somewhere, he put on his hat and turned hurriedly away.

"What sort of a paper was it?" asked the boy. "If you give over threatening, I'll help look for it. What sort of a paper?"

"Hold your tongue. You can't help. I've looked everywhere."

"Perhaps," said the boy persuasively—"perhaps it was the housekeeper."

Very few people think of the housekeeper. Yet there is always one in every house let out for offices. She is always elderly—nobody ever heard of a housekeeper in the City dying—and she is generally a grand-

mother with a daughter, also a widow, and three or four little children—they are always little. Grandmothers and children always, in the City, remain at the same age. All the week long the children are hidden away somewhere in the basement; on Saturday afternoons and Sundays they come up and have a high old time, because the front-door is closed, and the place is deserted, and the whole house is their own. Then the office-doors are thrown open and the children run races in the most sacred apartments, and open all the drawers, and ransack their contents, and make themselves acquainted with the clerk's secrets and the Chief's hidden decanter of sherry, and read all the private journals, and pick up the odd lead-pencils, and provide themselves with steel-pens, penholders, blotting-paper, note-paper, letter-paper, foolscap, india-rubber, envelopes, and, in ill-regulated offices, with postage-stamps as well.

Dick rang the bell for the housekeeper. She declared, which was quite true, that she had found nothing, and carried away no papers. She had children in the house, but, unlike children in some offices she could name, her children were never allowed in her offices on Saturday and Sunday.

So she withdrew again, and the lost paper was no nearer recovery.

Perhaps Dick had left it in his own room at home. Pierced by the thought, as with an arrow, he seized his hat and left the office.

Then the office-boy sat down in Mr. Richard's chair, and put his hands into his trousers-pockets, and spread his legs out, and grinned from ear to ear.

"It's coming fast," he said. "Lor! I wish he had searched me. What would the Guv'nor have said when this little envelope was found in one jacket-pocket, and this envelope was found in the other jacket-pocket? And what would Mr. Richard have said? I'm a measly little devil, am I? And Miss Cronan, she's a Sapphier, which rhymes with Liar, and goes with Ananias. I've often heard a boy called Ananias, but never a girl called Sapphier. Sophy I know, but not Sapphier."

He could not resist the temptation of drawing out the two envelopes and looking at the contents.

"Shall I," he said, "knock at the Guv'nor's door and give him these two envelopes at once, or shall I wait? I think I'll wait. Ha! The time will come. Then I shall jump upon him. Then I shall make him wriggle. Then I shall see him curl."

This boy had not read the History of Spring-heel Jack in vain.

But neither at home nor anywhere could Dick Murrige find that lost piece of paper, and the loss of it filled him with anxiety.

CHAPTER V. A STEADY YOUNG MAN'S EVENING.

THAT secluded corner of London which lies hidden behind the three great stations and is separated from the rest of the world by the Hampstead Road on the west, and the St. Pancras Road on the east, contains many houses and harbours many families, whose histories, were they known, are as romantic and wonderful, and as deeply laden with pathos and interest, as any Moated Grange or Shield of Sixteen Quarterings.

One of these houses—for reasons which will be immediately obvious it is not necessary or advisable to name the road in which it stands—is devoted, so to speak, to the nightly conjuring of the Emotions among those who are privileged to enter its walls. No Melodrama ever placed upon the boards of a Theatre arouses more fiercely and more certainly the passions of Terror, Anxiety, Rage, Despair, and Frantic Joy than the simple passes of the great Magician who practises nightly in this house. It is nothing more than a tavern—a simple Corner House, with a signboard and a Bar of many entrances. Yet it has pretensions somewhat above the common, for at the side is another door, and this is inscribed with the legend, "Hotel Entrance." It is a quiet and orderly house, with a family trade, in a quarter where beer is truly the national beverage, and with regular takings. There are never any rows in this house; the landlord has no occasion to persuade the policeman to partial blindness, and the renewal of the licence has never been opposed.

The Spells, Magic and Mystery, are worked on the first-floor, which is let off for a club which meets here every evening, all the year round, except on Sundays. The members would meet on Sundays as well if it were permitted. It is not a club of working-men, nor can it truthfully be called a club of gentlemen, unless the widest possible licence is allowed in the use of that term. On the other hand, the members would be very much offended if they, collectively, were addressed otherwise than as gentlemen; and they all wore

black coats all day long, which is, in a way, the outward livery and badge of gentlemen. Yet very few among them possess such a thing as a dress-coat, so that, perhaps, they are only gentlemen by courtesy. It is, further, a Proprietary Club. There is no Committee of Management; there is no Ballot; there is no Election of Members; there is no book for Candidates' names; there is nothing but the Proprietor. He alone admits the Members, regulates the time of opening and closing, establishes the tariff for drinks and tobacco, and is the Autocrat, Despot, and Absolute Ruler of the Club. There is not even any entrance-fee or subscription. Yet the greatest precautions are taken in the admission of members, and a man stands without, to keep off persons who have not received the right of entry, and, perhaps, to prevent the Club being disagreeably surprised.

At seven o'clock the Club opens every evening. It is not a political club, because Politics are never touched upon; nor is it a Social Club, for the members do not converse together after the manner of ordinary mortals; nor is it a club founded for the advance of any Cause or for the promotion of any Art, or for any Scientific or Intellectual objects whatever. Yet it is a Club where conversation is always animated, and even interjectional, though sometimes monotonous. It is also absorbing, and it brings all heads bent together, it makes all eyes strained; everybody's face is anxious and eager; and it is so witty, so clever, so biting and epigrammatic, that at everything that is said some laugh and shout, and some sigh, weep, and even curse. It is, lastly, a club which contains everything which the members want to make them completely happy, though, unfortunately, the members cannot always get what they want and what they come for.

At eight o'clock in the evening the club is generally in full swing. Anyone looking in at that hour would find a group of men sitting at a table, or arrangement of tables, in the middle of the room, lit by half-a-dozen candles.

The men would be fully absorbed in their occupation, with faces as grave as if they were in church, and eyes as anxious as if they were about to have a tooth out.

There were eight or nine small tables about the room, each provided with a pair of candles, and each occupied by two men.

There was a sideboard, or buffet, with decanters and glasses, cigars, cigarettes, and the usual trimmings, behind which stood a young lady of barmaidly loveliness. For the look of the thing, there were champagne-bottles, but the customary drink was whisky or bottled stout. A dozen men were standing together about the bar, drinking or talking to the girl. They were those who had come too late for a place, and were waiting their turn. The atmosphere was thick and heavy with tobacco-smoke. There was also an open piano, but no one regarded it.

Among the tables and those who sat out there moved continually a man rather small of stature, but of good proportions, of straight and regular features, and very carefully dressed. He was now advanced in life, being perhaps sixty years of age. His hair was white, and he wore a heavy white moustache. A cigarette was always between his lips; his voice was soft, gentle, and he seemed to have something friendly to say to every one of the members; his smile was kindly; his eyes benevolent; he laughed easily and musically; and there was not a man in the room who did not believe that the Count was his own private, personal, and particular friend. They called him, to show their great respect, the Count. He did not himself claim the title, though, perhaps, he was a Count in his own country, or even a Prince, for he was by birth an Italian, and his card bore the simple name of Signor Giuseppe Piranesi. He had lost the forefinger of his right hand—in a duel, it was understood, about a lady; no doubt a Princess. Everybody believed that the Count had been, in his day, a terrible breaker of ladies' hearts.

In plain words, the place is a gambling club, run by this Italian who was so good a friend to all the members. Not, it must be understood, exactly a Crockford's, but a suburban second-class club, the members of which are chiefly tradesmen dwelling in and about the neighbourhood, and clerks, young and old, in which the stakes are in silver, not in gold; and the group in the middle of the room were playing baccarat, while the smaller tables were occupied by those who played écarté, or any other game of two at which money may be lost or won.

The rich classes have their gambling clubs; the workmen have their clubs where they gamble—a distinction without much difference—in these days of equality.

Why should not the middle classes, the great, virtuous, honourable middle classes, have their gambling clubs as well?

The game of baccarat, as, perhaps, everyone may not know, is played at an arrangement of three card-tables set side by side, the middle one being generally much smaller than the other two. Three players sit at each of the large tables, and two—the dealer and his partner, who keeps the bank—sit at the small table opposite to each other. The dealer gives two cards to the player on his right, two cards to the player on his left, and two to his partner. Before the cards are turned up every player places his stake before him. The amount is limited, and in this small and unpretending coterie the limit was, one is ashamed to say, five shillings only, most of the players hazarding only a shilling. The two players who receive the cards play each for his own table, the dealer for himself. The stakes placed, each player looks at his hand. If he has a Natural—that is, a combination of pips, making, in the aggregate, eight or nine—he shows his cards, and all the players at his table are paid by the dealer. If the dealer has a Natural he is paid at once. If the player has not a Natural, he can order one more card. The players on the right and left of the dealer go on playing so long as they beat the dealer; as soon as one of them is beaten he resigns in favour of the man next to him.

There are other rules in this game, but these are sufficient. There is no play in it; all is as the true gambler loves to have it, pure chance. The player is left to the one thing dear to his heart, the exercise of judgment, prudence, caution, audacity, and perseverance in the amount of his stake. It seems as if the chances were equal all round, but somehow the dealer is supposed to be in the least desirable position, and the players have to take turns to be dealer.

The men at the tables in this vulgar little gambling-den were mostly young, some of them mere boys, who had not long left school, young clerks in the City, who brought their shillings in the hope of turning them into pounds, and played with flushed cheeks, and quivering lips, and eager eyes. Some were middle-aged, and appeared to be, as they were, tradesmen—shopkeepers in the Euston Road or the Camden Road. Their shops were left to the care of their wives and daughters, or to shop-girls, while they came night after

night to tempt fortune at the green table. The humane person feels a profound pity when he considers the position of the small shopkeeper, because he has to fight such a desperate fight against want of capital, want of credit, competition, and the Stores, and because the Devil is always whispering in his ear, "They all cheat. You must cheat, too, if you wish to get on." Yet it must be owned that the small shopkeeper is not always the highest type of Englishman, and in many cases it would be better for him to remain in the cold but wholesome discipline of clerkly or shopmanly servitude, when, perhaps, he would never be tempted to go lusting after the fever joys of gaming. Some of the players were quite old men, whose fingers trembled as they made their game, whose hands could hardly hold the cards, who clutched at the table when the players turned them up, and laughed when they won, and groaned miserably when they lost. They were as fierce and as eager as the boys—more eager, because, of all the joys in life, this was all that was left to them. At the table they could feel once more the blood coursing through their veins, the delirious trembling of hope and fear, the bounding pulse of victory. Play made these old men young again. At the West End the old men, whose work is done, play whist every day. At this club at St. Pancras they play baccarat. The principle is much the same, save that in Pall Mall skill is joined with chance, and the game is not altogether blind.

A mean and vulgar hell. When the boys have lost their money, they will go away and get more—somehow; by borrowing, by pledging, even by stealing and embezzling. Their mistress craves perpetually for money. Those who love her must bring money in their hands. No other gifts will do; she must have gold and silver coins, and if they want to woo her, they must find those coins somehow. She never asks how they find the coins; she has no suspicions, and she has no scruples. Whether the money is honestly earned or stolen matters nothing to her.

Therefore there will come a day in the life of one or two young men now torn by the raptures and anxieties with which the goddess rewards her votaries, when there will be an emigrant-ship in the London Docks ready to be towed out, and on the deck, among the steerage passengers, a lad, one of these lads, standing with a look, half of shame, half of defiance. He has gambled

away home and friends, character and place. When the bell rings, and his father wrings his hand for the last time, he will break down with tears, in thinking of what he has done and what he has lost. Yet the next day, out in the Channel, he will be courting his mistress again, with an old pack of cards and another youth like minded.

Or there is a worse ending still for one or more of these young men—an ending in a Police Court, where a young man stands in the Shameful Dock, and is committed by the Magistrate. As for this middle-aged tradesman here, who comes here every night to play away his profits and his capital, his credit, character, substance, and stock, presently his shop will be shut, and, with wife and children, this gentleman will go away and vanish into the unknown depths known only to the district visitor, the Charity Organisation Society, and the rent-collector. They will very likely rescue the children and alleviate the lot of the wife; but the man's case is hopeless, because, at every depth, there is a den somewhere for those who have a penny to risk and to lose.

As for the old men, they will go on as long as they can drag themselves up the stairs, and I suppose the time is not far distant when, perforce, they must cease to come, and obey reluctantly the summons to go away to a place where, perhaps, there are no games of chance.

Among the players at the middle table sat Dick Murrige.

His father was right in mistrusting a boy who went about his work like a machine, and seemed to have no passion, no pursuit, no ambition—who committed no small follies, and had none of the head-long faults of ardent youth. Dick had a Pursuit. It was absorbing and entrancing: he followed it with ardour every evening of the week. It was a Pursuit which brought into play, to a very remarkable degree, the maxims which his father had taught him. It requires, for instance, no Law of Honour, except that if you conceal cards, or play false, or do not pay up, you are out-kicked. It makes no foolish pretence about Friendship, Philanthropy, Charity, or any stuff of that kind. At the baccarat table every man is for himself. No skill is wanted; no dull working and daily practice in order to acquire dexterity, which would not be of any use: the whole object of the pursuit is to win money.

Of all the eager and noisy crew who sat at that table, there was not one who was more absorbed in the game than Dick Murrige. The others shouted and swore great oaths when they won or lost. Dick made no sign. His face betrayed no emotion. The quiet Gambler is the most determined and the most hopeless.

By the side of Dick sat—alas!—young Daffodil Cronan. He was by no means a silent player. His face was flushed with excitement, his hair tossed; his lips were parted, and at every turn of the cards he gasped, whether it brought him victory or loss; only, if he won, he laughed aloud.

The Count stood watching the game. He was a most obliging Proprietor. If anyone wanted to shirk his turn at holding the Bank, which is considered less advantageous than playing against the Bank, the Count would take it for him, smiling cheerfully whether he lost or won. Or, while he stood out, if anyone wanted to play *écarté*, poker, monty, *bézique*, *euchre*, *piquet*, *sechs und sechzig*, two-handed *vingt-et-un*, or any other game whatever, the Count would play with him. He knew all games. He was equally ready to cut through the pack for shillings, or to toss for sovereigns, should any of his members desire it. A most obliging Proprietor. Sometimes he lost and sometimes he won. Whether he lost or whether he won he laughed gently, as if it mattered nothing to him. As for his fairness at play, no one entertained the least doubt. One would like to have the history of such a man. If he would write down his autobiography it would be instructive. But this he will not do unless he be allowed to tell it in his own way, as Mrs. George Anne Bellamy and Madame du Barry have related their lives. The autobiography of the Count would be, I am sure, as interesting as that of Barry Lyndon.

Other attentions he lavished upon the members. If, as sometimes happened, one of them rose hastily from the table, with haggard face and despairing eyes, the loser of everything, the benevolent Proprietor would lend him half-a-sovereign, or half-a-crown, according to the age and social position of that member, and with regard to the amount of his losings. He would also advise him to go away, and to tempt fortune no more that night against a run of bad luck; and he would prescribe for him, mix and administer, a restorative in whisky-and-water, on the strength of which the patient would go straight home, and

go to bed, and feel no pangs of remorse and terror until the morning. Or, if one of the members was not despairing, but only reckless, he would lend him money to go on with, taking a note of acknowledgment in return. He was so benevolent that his pocket-book was stuffed with these notes.

It was not known how the Count made the club pay. Perhaps the notes of acknowledgment for money lent included interest; perhaps he steadily won; if he did, it was clearly only by those games, such as *écarté*, which require some skill. But no one knew.

This evening, it might have been remarked that the Count was a good deal engaged in watching Dick's play. He observed two or three things. When Dick won he put his winnings into his pocket without a word or a sign of satisfaction. When he lost he saw the stake raked up without the least emotion. Further, he observed that Dick lost nearly every time. The luck was dead against him from the beginning. And this circumstance afforded him a certain satisfaction, but why one could hardly explain.

The evening went on; the windows were thrown wide open. But the air grew intolerably close and heavy; the players were more serious and more silent. No one, except Daffodil, laughed, and then the others turned upon him looks of reproach and wonder. Those who had left the table sat moodily without, thinking over their losses or whispering with the Count; and at the small tables there was heard the continued cries of "King—Vole—Trick—More cards—Play," in the quick, decided tones of those who play for money and play quickly.

At ten o'clock Dick rose from the table and laid his hand upon his friend's shoulder.

"Come," he whispered; "they will be expecting you at home."

The boy rose unwillingly. He was winning, and for the first time in his life his pocket was heavy with silver. But Dick dragged him from the table.

"My young friends," said the Count, as they left the table, "you leave us too early. But perhaps it is best to be home in good time. I hope you have not lost?"

He spoke very good English, but with a slightly foreign accent, and he spoke as if he really did take the deepest interest in their fortune.

"As for me," cried Daffodil eagerly,

"I've won a pot. Look here!" He pulled out a handful of shillings. "It's glorious!"

The Count laughed encouragingly.

"Good," he said; "very good! Luck is always with the boys. At your age I should have broken all the banks. Come again soon. I love to see the boys win. And you, friend Richard?"

"It doesn't matter to anyone except myself," Dick replied gloomily, "whether I win or lose."

"He is silent," said the Count. "I watch him at his play. When the others laugh or when they curse, he is silent. No one can tell from his face whether he has won or lost. A good player should be silent. Will you drink before you go?"

Daffodil went to the bar and had a drink; Dick refused.

"Do you want another advance, my friend?" asked the Count.

Dick shook his head, but with uncertainty.

"What is the good?" he asked. "My infernal luck follows me every night. I'm cleaned out again."

"Dear me! I am very sorry. Let me see your account. You have given me three cheques, each for twelve pounds. They were passed"—he glanced quickly at Dick's face—"without question."

"Why the devil should they be questioned?" Dick asked.

"Ah, my friend, yours is the face for the gambler. You can keep your countenance, whatever happens. It is a great gift. Steady eyes—look me in the face—full, steady eyes, and fingers"—he took Dick's hand in his, and squeezed the fingers critically—"fingers that are sensitive and quick. Sometimes I think that fingers are alive. Why, if a devil was to enter into one of these fingers, and persuade it to—well, to imitate another person's handwriting—"

"What do you mean?" asked Dick.

"Steady eyes—steady eyes! Why, that the finger would imitate that writing to perfection. Well, as to our account. You owe me, my young friend, twenty-four pounds. Shall I make you another advance? Well, come here to-morrow morning at eleven. Can you spare the time? Come! We shall be quite alone, and I have something to say. Steady eyes, delicate fingers, hard and cold face. These are the gifts of the true gambler."

"What then?" said Dick.

"What, indeed! I fear they are gifts

time, or if he was obliged to take it into hand. This kind of talk made his son writhe.

After dinner, Mr. Murrige, on Sundays, always had a bottle of port. His son took one glass, and he himself drank the rest of the bottle. With each glass he became more pleased with his cleverness in outwitting the Doctor, and more eager for revenge in the matter of the robbery, so that he mixed up his own astuteness with the craft of the forger—his ducats with his acres.

"Find him, Dick. Find him for me—make haste!"

"I am doing the best I can," said Dick. "Don't hurry a man."

"Have you got a Clue yet?" his father asked.

"Don't ask me anything. You gave me a week. I am not going to tell you anything before Thursday morning."

"Quite right, Dick. Nothing could be better. I hate prattling before a Case is ready. But there is no harm in a word of advice. Now, if I had the conduct of the Case, I should advertise a substantial reward for the discovery of the three persons who presented the cheques; once find them and the thing is done. To be sure, there may be a Ring of them—one to forge the cheques, one to steal the cheque-books, and one to present them, and they would stand by each other. I wonder Bank-clerks haven't made a Ring before now. They might use it merrily for a time. But I don't think there is a Ring, Dick. The cheques have been taken out of the book, and given to someone who has copied my signature, and got the cheques cashed by people he knew. Now, one of them is a foreigner, old, and grey-headed, and wanting a forefinger on the right hand—wanting a forefinger, Dick. There can't be many men in London answering to that description, can there? Very well, that's my idea. You will act on it or not, as you please. But find him, Dick; let me put him in the Dock. Let me see him going off to his seven years. It begins with a year on a plank, I believe, and solitary confinement on bread-and-water or skilly. The Law is a righteous law which condemns one who steals hard-earned money to solitary confinement and a plank bed. But he ought to be hanged, Dick. Nothing but hanging will meet the merits of the Case."

Presently Dick escaped, and wandered about the streets of Camden Town. One

thing he clearly perceived must be done at any cost—he must keep his father from taking up the Case.

To him who thinks long enough there cometh at the last a suggestion. To Dick it seemed to come from without. It was a truly villainous and disgraceful suggestion, black as Erebus, crafty as the Serpent, and cowardly as the Skunk. It had been whispered in his ear at the Hospital. Now it was whispered again.

"You must accuse someone. It is your only chance. If you acknowledge that you have failed, your father will immediately take up the Case himself. He will advertise and offer a reward. He is quite sure to find out the truth. You must accuse someone. Whom will you accuse?"

"It must be someone who has access to the office; someone who knows your father's habits in drawing cheques; someone who would get at his signature easily.

"No. Not the office-boy. There cannot be a proof or a shadow of proof against the office-boy. Who else comes to the office?" Dick waited while that question was put to him a hundred times. "Who else but Norah? There is no other. Norah Cronan."

Dick Murrige had known this girl all his life. When she was five and he eight, they played together. When she was ten and he thirteen he teased and bullied her after the manner of boys; when she was sixteen and he nineteen he began to perceive that she was beautiful; only a fortnight before he had told her that he loved her. And now he could harbour the thought of accusing her in order to save himself. Said the Voice in his ear:

"The first rule of life is self-preservation. Before that everything must give way. A man must save himself at any sacrifice. Honour, Love, Friendship, Truth—what are they? Shadows. The first thing is self-preservation."

His father had taught him this precept a hundred times. What was it he was going to do but to preserve himself?

How would his father take it? Why, that made the thing all the more easy. She was, if anyone, a favourite with him. He trusted her more than any other person in the world—more than his own son. If he interested himself or cared about anyone it was about this clever, quick, and industrious girl-clerk, who for seventy-five pounds a year did the work of two men-clerks at double the salary. If his father could only be persuaded that it was Norah

he would probably say nothing more about it. He would forgive her, and all would go on as before. Here Dick was wrong. Mr. Murrige and men who, like him, trust few, and those not unreservedly, are far more dangerous if they are betrayed than men who trust lightly and easily.

He thought over this villainy all the evening. The longer he thought of it the more easy and the more likely it appeared. He saw a way of making the charge plausible and possible. He made up his mind what he would do and how he would do it. At the same time he resolved to keep on with the Count. It might be well, in case things turned out badly, to listen to the proposals, at which he kept hinting, with promises of wealth unbounded.

It was past ten when he went home. He took his candle, and, without seeing his father, went straight to his own room.

"Of course," he said, "I would not have her tried, or sent to prison, or anything. It will be quite enough for my father to think she's done it. They can't send her to prison, or anyone else, if there are no forgeries to convict with." Then suddenly came a really brilliant idea. "They must have a forgery to go upon. Suppose a man says that a cheque was cashed which he did not draw, very well then, where is your cheque? Produce your cheque." He did produce a little heap of cheques and a cheque-book. He placed them in the fireplace; he struck a match; and he saw them quickly consume into ashes.

"There," he said, "where's your proof, now? Where is your forgery? The worst that can happen to Norah, now, when she says I gave her the cheque, is not to be believed. It's all right now. They can't prove anything."

He was so pleased, pacified, and easy after this act of decision, that he went to bed, and for the first time for many weeks slept soundly, and without any apprehensions, nightmares, or dreadful dreams.

CHAPTER VII. DOWN WITH THE LANDLORDS.

"We have now," said Uncle Joseph, regarding his first glass of gin-and-water with discontented looks—"we have now, Maria, been members of the Peerage—actually of the Peerage—the Peerage of the Realm for nearly a week. Yet I see no change."

"No one has called," said her Ladyship. "I have put on my best gown every night.

But no one has thought fit to take the least notice of us."

"Where is the Coronet? Where are the Robes? Where is the Star? Where is the Collar?"

The Doctor silently filled his pipe and went on reading his evening paper, taking no notice of these complaints. Yet it did strike him as strange that a man should succeed to a Peerage with so little fuss.

"No message from the Queen," Uncle Joseph continued; "no officer of the House of Lords with congratulations from that August Body; no communications from Provincial Grand Lodge; no deputations from a loyal tenantry; no ringing of bells. Maria, in the whole course of my experience among the titled classes I never before saw such a miserable Succession."

"Miserable, indeed," said her ladyship.

"The reason," continued Uncle Joseph, "is not difficult to find. They are waiting, Maria, for the Banquet. How can a noble Lord succeed without a Banquet? You can't do anything without it. Why, if you initiate a little City clerk, you have a Banquet over it. If you raise a man to the dazzling height of Thirty-Third, you must celebrate the occasion with a Banquet. And here we succeed to the rank of Viscount, and not even a bottle of champagne. Gin-and-water, in the house of the Right Honourable the Viscount Clonsilla!"

There was a full attendance of the House, so to speak. The Honourable Hyacinth was present; the Honourable Norah, with Mr. Hugh Aquila, had just returned from an evening walk among the leafy groves of Camden Town's one square; the Honourable Terry, Larry, and Pat were, as usual, quarrelling over a draught-board.

"Well, my dear," said the Doctor at last, "what did you expect?"

"I expected Recognition. I thought that our brother Peers would call upon us."

"What have we received, Maria?" said Uncle Joseph. "The outstretched hand of Brotherhood? Not at all. Cold neglect."

"We may belong to the Irish peerage," said the Doctor, "but, remember, if you please, that I am still, and am likely to remain to the end of the Chapter, a General Practitioner, with a large practice and a small income, of Camden Town. It will be a proud distinction, no doubt, to reflect that we are the only titled people in Camden Town. Well, we must be contented with

the pride. You may add to the Alderman's robe, my dear, your coronet, when it comes along."

"We ought," said Uncle Joseph firmly, "to assert ourselves. There ought to be a Banquet."

"At the funeral to-day," the Doctor continued, "there was not a single mourner except myself, and Daff, and Hugh who went with us. Not one. The old Lord seems to have outlived all his friends. He left no will, so that all the property, whatever it is, entailed or not, should have come to me, but for an accidental circumstance which you ought to learn at once."

"As the old Lord is buried," said Uncle Joseph, "the time has come for action; of course it would have been unseemly to rejoice before the funeral. Now, if my advice is thought to be worth anything in this family—the advice of a man who has shaken hands familiarly, yet respectfully, with Earls, and sat next to a Prince at a Banquet—is, that we should, without any delay, issue invitations to a large number of our noble and illustrious brother Peers for a Banquet in robes and coronets at the Freemasons' or the Criterion. I will myself superintend the Banquet, inspect the menu—at this time of year, what with lamb, duckling, green peas, salmon, white-bait, turtle, young potatoes, early apricots and strawberries, the Banquet will be unusually choice—choice and toothsome. As for the champagne—ah!" he gasped and drank off the whole glass of gin-and-water, "I will order it. Do not be in anxiety about the champagne. Maria. It shall be my care. When the Banquet is over, your health—you will be in the chair, Doctor—shall be taken after the loyal toasts. I will myself respond for the Craft. Then we will give up this house, which is mean for a Viscount's Town Residence, and we will move to a Mansion in the West, where Maria can take that place in Society which she was born to adorn."

He spoke so confidently, with so much enthusiasm, that her Ladyship murmured, and even Norah was carried away with the thought of the Family greatness. A large house in the West End, with nothing for her father to do, and Society—though it is not certain how she understood that word—seemed fitting accompaniments to a Title.

The Doctor listened gravely. Then he laughed.

"It is too ridiculous," he said. "I am Viscount Clonsilla. You, my dear, are

Lady Clonsilla. All you boys and girls are Honourables. And, except for your mother's money, there isn't a penny in the world for any of us. What do you say, Hugh?"

"I should let the Title fall into abeyance," said Hugh. "I don't know why, but a title, without land or money, seems contemptible. I should give it up."

"Never!" said Uncle Joseph, with decision. "Give up a Title? Give up a thing that thousands are envying and longing after? Throw away a Title? You must be mad, young man. Actually refuse to enjoy your Title? You might as well go to a Banquet and pass the champagne. But it shows your ignorance. You have never been among Lords and Honourables. You don't know, young man—you cannot know, what I mean. You are only a young Doctor. Be humble. Don't presume to advise, sir, on matters connected with Rank and Society."

"I know what science means," said Hugh; "and that's enough for me. Title! Who would not rather make a name for himself than bear a Title?"

"Let us look at the thing practically, children," said the Doctor. "I shall never make a name for myself, unless I make a name as a great Donkey. As for the Title, then. If Rank allows me to enlarge my practice and makes a better class of patients send for me, and enables me to ride in a carriage instead of trudging along the streets, and to double all the bills, and to give up making up my own medicines, and to have a balance at the bank, why then I will gladly sport the Title. But if it only makes us ridiculous, let us give it up. A Coronet on the door of a surgery, where medicines are made up by the noble Lord within, does seem ridiculous, doesn't it?"

Uncle Joseph shook his head.

"Rank," he said, "can never be ridiculous. But, if you feel it that way, follow my advice: give up the surgery, take a house at the West End, and go into Society."

The Doctor shook his head impatiently.

"Let the thing slide," said Hugh. "What do you think, Norah?"

"I shall always be glad, whatever happens, to think that my father can be a Viscount if he pleases. Of course, at first I thought there must be a great fortune with it. I always thought that Peers were very rich men, and I thought it would be delightful to see him resting a little from

his hard work, and not to be afraid any more of the night-bell."

The Doctor kissed his daughter.

"Children," he said, "I have a confession to make. Listen, now. Your father has been a terrible Donkey!"

"If I had been consulted——" said Uncle Joseph.

"No doubt," the Doctor interrupted him. "Now hear my tale. Three years ago, I happened to be very much in want of money. The practice had been very bad, as far as paying patients go. I was so troubled for money that I consulted Mr. Murrige as to the best way of getting a loan. I then learned, for the first time in my life, that my second cousinship to an Irish Lord might be turned into money. Mr. Murrige thought it was worth exactly two hundred pounds, and for the two hundred pounds, without which I could not have sent you, Daff, to University, I sold my reversion."

"There was some estate, then?" said Hugh curiously. "I understood there was nothing."

"There was this small estate of—I do not know how many acres, and I do not know what it is worth, or whether the tenants have paid any rent."

"And Mr. Murrige—Dick's father—bought your reversion?" said Hugh. "It seems a very strange thing for him to do."

"His business lies among genealogies and family histories," said the Doctor. "He found out what I ought to have learned before signing and selling—that my chances were really very good indeed—almost a certainty."

"Then," said Hugh, "Mr. Murrige thinks he is going to be the landlord, I suppose?"

"Certainly; he has bought me out."

"Father," said Norah, "you did it for the best. It was for us—for Daff—that you took the money. What does it matter? Let us all go on just as before. Hugh won't mind; will you, Hugh?"

"No, I don't mind, Norah. But I venture to make a little prophecy, Doctor. Mr. Murrige will never be owner of the Clonsilla estates, even if they consist of nothing but a four-acre field of bog. He thinks he has got them, but he may find that he has overreached himself."

"If I were consulted," said Uncle Joseph, "I should invite the tenants to a——"

Again he was interrupted. This time it was the last post of the day, which brought

a letter in a great blue envelope, addressed in a great sprawling hand, as if written with a pitchfork: "For the Honorable Lord Viscount Clonsilla, somewhere in London."

"It is the first Recognition of Rank," said her Ladyship. "Open it and read it quickly. Perhaps it is a missive from the Queen—a missive of congratulation."

"Or an invitation from the Lord Chancellor," said Uncle Joseph. "A summons, no doubt, to a Banquet on the Woolsack."

The Doctor opened it curiously. It did not look, somehow, like an Invitation. It was more like a Bill. The writing of the letter was even worse, more sprawling, than that of the address.

"MY LORD," the letter ran, "this is to warn you that the first man evicted from his holding will be the signal for your Bloody End. No rents. No eviction. Remember Lord Mountmorres. We will have Vengeance. Blood and Revenge. You shall die. Look at the picture. Think of the Whiteboys and the Invincibles. Death! Death! Death! Every man has got his gun, and we are sworn. Death! Death! Blood and Death! Down with Landlords!"

And at the bottom, rudely designed, were a coffin, a gun, a skull, effectively and feelingly delineated, and two cross-bones copied from the churchyard.

The Doctor handed this cheerful epistle to his wife with a laugh; but no one, even in the secure retreat of a fastness of Camden Town, quite likes to have a letter sent to him with a promise of murder if he dares to enforce his rights, and the picture of a coffin and a skull.

"Murrige, I suppose, has sent them all notices to pay up," he said. "This is a cheerful situation. He is to get the rents, and I am to get the credit for them—in bullets. I don't think this was in the agreement."

"At all events," said Hugh, "they don't know where to find you. 'Somewhere in London' is a little too vague even for an evicted Irish tenant."

"As their landlord," said Uncle Joseph, "you should gain their loyalty—by a Banquet."

"Well, children," the Doctor continued, disregarding this suggestion, "you have now heard the whole story. What are we to do? Shall I alter the plate on the door? Shall I attend my patients, at anything I can get a visit, in my coronet? Shall we invite the landlord shooters to Camden Town? What do you say, Daff?"

"Well," said the medical student, "as there is no money, there will be no fun with the Title."

"We will go on," said Norah, "just as before. Only, of course, with a little more pride. You are pleased, Hugh, are you not, that you are engaged to a real lady by birth, and the daughter of a Viscount, if he chooses to take the Title? It is always best to belong to a good family."

"Yes," said the Doctor; "Creeping Bob was——"

"Hush!" said Norah. "I will not hear any stories about my great-great-grandfather. There are always scandals in every old family. I prefer to believe that they have all been the soul of honour—every one of them."

"You are disappointed, my dear." The Doctor turned to his wife.

"Oh!" she cried, bursting into tears, with the revolutionary letter in her hand, "if we are to be murdered in our beds, and all for nothing, with no money, and no land, let us say no more about it. But it is a cruel thing to give up your Rank. And just as the tradespeople are beginning to find it out. Why, this morning the butcher congratulated me. He had just heard it, he said. And he put a penny a pound more upon the beef."

"Well," said the Doctor, "that is settled, then. The Title is extinct. My children, you will, however, continue to be as Honourable as you can."

Before Hugh went to bed that night he read over again a letter which he had received that morning from his mother. This was the conclusion:

"And now, my dear boy, you know the whole. If you are desirous of acting before the doctor allows me to travel, go to my solicitors, Messrs. Ongar and Greensted, of Lincoln's Inn Fields. They have the papers and know my secret. If it is not necessary, wait until my arrival. I expect to be released in a week or so, if things go well. Do not, however, move in the matter without consulting them, and I do not think it is prudent to tell anyone—even Norah—until you have consulted them. It is vexatious to conceal anything from her. Still, have patience for a week."

"I don't think," said Hugh, "that the Doctor will mind much. Murrige, I take it, will be astonished."

CHAPTER VIII. THE GRAVE OF HONOUR.

LET this chapter be printed within a deep black border. Let it be in mourning.

Let it be illustrated with all the emblems which can be gathered together of disgrace and dishonour. The Valley of Tophet, with its baleful fires, may furnish a front-piece—there may be funereal cypress, hembane, deadly nightshade, and the poisonous flowers of marsh and ditch may adorn the corners of its pages. There should be a drawing of Adam turned out of Paradise, with portraits of all the most celebrated renegades, turncoats, and traitors, and the most eminent Sneaks, in history. For a man may do many things wicked and base, and yet find forgiveness; he may drag his name in the dust, and trample on his self-respect, and give a rein to his passion, and yet be welcomed back into the world of honourable men. But the thing which Dick Murrige did was one which can never be forgiven him in this world, save by the girl to whom he did this wrong. And she, I think, has forgiven him already.

He did it on the Tuesday morning, two days before his week expired. He spent the whole of Monday in putting his Case upon paper in the form of a Report. On Tuesday he went into town before his father, and on his arrival followed him into the inner office, with a roll of paper in his hand.

"I think, sir," he said, "that I have done all I can in this matter. I have put down on paper what I have to tell you—for your private information."

"Do you mean that you have found the thief and forger?"

"I think I have."

"Think! I want you to be sure. And what do you mean by talking of my private information? If you've got the man, I'll soon show you how private I will keep the information."

"If you will read these papers——"

"Afterwards. Tell me who did it."

"Well, then. It was—none other—than—your private clerk—Norah Cronan."

Dick looked his father steadily in the face, speaking slowly and deliberately.

"I don't believe it!"

Mr. Murrige sprang to his feet and banged the table with his fist.

"Read these papers, then."

"Dick, I don't believe it! The thing is impossible! Where are your proofs?"

"Read these papers."

"Norah Cronan! It cannot be!"

Dick smiled, as one who is on a rock of certainty and can afford to smile.

"What have you always told me, sir! Never trust anybody. Every man is for

himself. Every man has his price. Everybody thinks of nothing but himself. Very well, then. Remember these maxims before you say that anything is impossible. If you will read these papers, you will find——"

"Read the paper yourself. Let me know all that you can prove. Read the paper yourself. Quick!"

He threw himself into a chair and waited with angry light in his eye.

Everything happens in the way we least expect. Dick had made up his mind that he would lay the paper upon the table with solemnity suitable to the occasion, and then retire, leaving the document to produce its natural effect. He further calculated that, after reading the paper, his father would most likely send for him, and enjoin him to say nothing more about the matter. That, at least, was what he hoped. But he had not expected to be asked to read the paper aloud, and he naturally hesitated. He had committed to writing an Enormous Lie, or, rather, a Chain and Series of Lies—all strong, massive, well-connected, forming together a tale which, for cowardice and meanness, never had an equal since the days when men first learned to tell lies, swop yarns, invent excuses, and pass on the blame. Certainly, it would never have a superior. To write such a thing, however, was one thing—to read it calmly and coldly was another.

When Dick had once made up his mind that escape was only possible by one method, he gave his whole thought, and devoted the greatest possible pains to make the narrative complete in all its parts, and impregnable at every point. He wrote and re-wrote every single sentence half-a-dozen times; he read it over and over again; he examined the document critically; he put himself in the place of a hostile and suspicious critic; he even read it aloud, which is the very best way possible of testing the strength of such a document, whether from the credible and the probable, or from the plausible and persuasive, or from the purely literary point of view. He was not greatly skilled, as may be supposed, in Fiction considered as a Fine Art, which is, perhaps, the reason why he was quite satisfied in his own mind with his statement, looked at from any point of view.

"Read it," his father repeated. "Let me hear what you have found. If it is true——"

He stopped, because he knew not what he should do if it were true.

The young man hesitated no longer. With perfectly steady eyes, which met his father's fearlessly and frankly, and with brazen front, and with clear, unhesitating voice, he read the Thing he had made up.

"Before I begin this Statement"—the words formed part of the Narrative—"I wish to explain that nothing but your express command that I should investigate the Case for you would have induced me to write down what I know about it. You will consider it as, in part, a Confession."

Mr. Murrige looked up sharply and suspiciously.

"Yes, as you will presently see," Dick repeated, answering that glance, "a Confession. When the duty of taking up and investigating this case was laid upon me, my lips, which would otherwise have remained shut, as a point of honour, were opened. If I did not obey your command to the fullest extent, innocent persons might be suspected and even be punished. I have, therefore, resolved upon telling you all that I know, whatever happens. And since I must write down the Truth, I pray that no further action may be taken in the Case, and that this most deplorable business may be forgotten and dropped, never to be mentioned again."

"What the Devil do you mean by that?" his father cried. "The business forgotten! The matter allowed to drop! Do I look like the man to forget such a thing? No further action, indeed! Wait, you shall see what further action I shall take."

Dick did not stop to press this petition for mercy.

"It is now four weeks," he continued, reading from the paper, "since I had the misfortune—it was a great misfortune to me, and I am very sorry that it happened—to observe, quite accidentally, a certain suspicious circumstance which took place in your own office. This circumstance caused me the greatest uneasiness and suspicion at the time, and has filled me with anxiety ever since. Of course, as you will immediately understand, directly you spoke to me last week my suspicions turned to certainty. I was, as usual, in the outer office, and I had nothing to do but to sit and wait for any work which might be sent out. The time was a quarter-past two. You were gone out to your dinner, and the boy was gone to his. There was, therefore, no one at all in the place except myself. Before you went out you locked

up your safe with your papers in it. I know that, because, as you passed through the outer door, you dropped the keys into your pocket. You left your own door wide open. A few minutes afterwards, to my astonishment, Norah Cronan came in. 'Is your father in?' she asked in a whisper. I asked her if she knew what time it was, and whether she expected a regular man like you to be in at a quarter-past two. She made no reply, but went into your office very quickly and shut the door. As she passed me I remarked that her face was red and her eyes looked swollen, as if she had been crying. I dare say you yourself have noticed that, for some time past, she has been out of spirits?"

Mr. Murrige grunted; but what he meant is not known.

"She shut the door, but, as sometimes happens, the lock did not catch, and the door stood ajar. From the place where I was sitting I could see through the door, and could catch something of what she was about. I was not curious, but I looked, and I observed that she was tearing something out of a book. This was such a strange thing to do, that it caught my eye. Why should she come to your office, when you were out, in order to tear leaves out of a book? It certainly seemed to be a book of some kind, but from my place I was quite unable to see what it was, or why she was tearing it up. Then she folded the leaves very carefully, and, so far as I could see, put them in her pocket. After a few minutes she came out again. Of course I was by this time very curious indeed, but I asked no questions. A man does not like to seem curious about a thing which he has seen, so to speak, through a keyhole. I noticed, however, that her breath was quick, and that her hand trembled. And she said a very strange thing to me. 'Dick,' she said, 'when your father comes back, do not tell him that I came here. I only came to get something—something which I forgot this morning, nothing of any importance.' She stammered a great deal while she said this. I told her that it was no business of mine whether she came or whether she stayed away, because I had nothing to do with her or her work. Then she laid her hand on my shoulder, and looked into my face. 'But promise, Dick,' she said. 'You see we are such old friends, you and I, and Daff is your bosom friend. We ought to be able to depend on you. Promise, dear Dick; say that you will never tell your father

that I came to his office any day when he was out of it.' I naturally promised. And she went away. As soon as she was gone I went into your office to find out what she had been tearing, if I could, being still curious, and not best satisfied with myself for having made that promise. There were two or three great books on the table, your genealogical books. But she would not be likely to tear any of the leaves out of them, because they are not the only copies. I looked about, therefore, and presently, poked away under some papers, I found your cheque-book lying on the table. I took it up and examined it. I do not know why, because I had no suspicion of this kind of thing. What was my astonishment to discover that six of the cheques had been taken out of the book! Six; they were scattered here and there, not taken out in a lump. This, of course, was in order to lessen the chance of immediate discovery. I never before knew that you were in the habit of leaving your cheque-book out. This was the thing that I found. It was afterwards, when I began to think about it, that I connected the leaves torn out of the book, and so carefully folded, with the cheque-book."

Mr. Murrige's face, which had been at first expectant and interested, was now as black as Erebus.

"Go on," he said. "Get on faster. Let us finish with this."

"I returned to my desk, and considered what was best to be done. Of course—I admit this freely—I ought to have gone directly to you and informed you of my discovery. In not doing this I committed a great error of judgment, as well as a breach of duty. For I should have considered that, when the absence of the cheques was discovered, it would be remembered that there were only two persons—not counting the office-boy—who had access to your office. These were Norah and myself. One of us must have taken them."

"Why, no," said Mr. Murrige. "For it cannot be proved that no one came into this office except you two. There is the office-boy; there is the housekeeper; there are any number of people whom the housekeeper may have admitted on the Sunday or in the evening; there is nothing to prove when I left my cheque-book lying about. It might have been lying on the table all night, or from Saturday until Monday. I cannot admit that the thing lies between you and Norah Cronan."

"Very well, sir; I am glad you think that it may lie outside us. That, however, was how I put it to myself, I confess."

"You ought to have told me at once. You find my cheque-book with six cheques torn out, and you did not tell me. Were you mad?"

"Perhaps; but remember that I only saw leaves, or what seemed to be leaves, torn out and folded up. It was not till afterwards, I repeat, that I suspected Norah of stealing cheques. It was not till you told me of your loss that I really connected her with those cheques."

"You ought to have told me directly you heard of the loss."

"I confess, again, that I ought to have told you. Well, I did not. That is all I can say. First, I had passed my word to Norah that I would not mention her visit. Next, I was confused and bewildered on her account, and then I was afraid of you."

"Oh, afraid of me!"

"Yes, afraid of you. Norah has been your favourite always. You give her the confidential work, and me the office drudgery. I thought you would not believe me. Perhaps I hoped that she would get off altogether. But when you placed the whole Case in my hands, the first thing that forced itself upon me was that the forgery must have been committed by means of these very missing cheques."

"Well, the numbers prove that."

"So that nothing was left to me but to confess what I knew, and to follow up that fact as a clue."

Dick sighed heavily.

"I wish the task had been entrusted to another man. First I thought of going to Calista and telling her everything. But Norah is her sister, so that it seemed best to tell you all myself. Perhaps Calista may be spared the pain of ever learning this dreadful thing. As for the actual forger, I cannot yet speak. But I have proofs as to the presentation of two cheques out of the five."

"Proofs? Nothing but the clearest proofs will satisfy me!"

"You shall be satisfied, then. What do you think of this for one proof? The girl described by the Bank Clerk as having presented one of the cheques was Norah herself. For proof send for the clerk when she is here. He will be able to identify her, I dare say. That is my first proof. Now for the second: The young gentleman who presented and cashed the cheque last Thursday, at one o'clock, was no other

than her brother, young Hyacinth Cronan—Daffodil. He must have gone to the Bank just before one o'clock, because he came here a few minutes after one, and we went out to dinner together. We went to Crosby Hall, and sat there till two. The clerk, you know, gave one o'clock as the hour. I have no doubt but he will identify Daffodil as well. It will be perfectly easy."

"The cheques may have been given to them."

"By the actual forger? Very possible. But in this case unlikely. Because who would do it for them?"

"Go on." The Case was getting blacker.

"As regards the character of Daff—I mean Hyacinth, for steadiness, I am afraid we cannot say much. He is, as you know, perhaps, at University College Hospital, and he belongs to a fast set. They play billiards, smoke together, have parties in each other's rooms, and go to theatres and music-halls"—all this was strictly true, and yet—poor Daffodil!—"worse still, he goes to a gaming den. It is a place open every evening for playing baccarat, and every kind of gambling game. I dare say, when they do nothing else, they play pitch and toss. I remembered your recommendation to use every means in order to find out the truth, and I went with him. We went twice last week."

This also, as we know, was literally true. "I have also learned that he is in money difficulties." Daffodil had shown Dick a letter from his tailor intimating that something on account would be desirable. "Altogether, I think my theory will prove right—Norah took the cheques with a view to help her brother. Of course she knows very well your custom of drawing twelve-pound cheques for private purposes. Therefore she filed these up for that amount, confident that they would then pass without suspicion, and might even escape your notice. She imitated your signature; and she gave them every one to her brother, except that which she cashed herself, presumably also for him. I am quite sure she did it for her brother. Whether he knows how she got the cheques—whether he stands in with her—I cannot tell. That will be seen when he is confronted with the Bank Clerk, and charged with presenting the cheque. You will judge by what he replies to the charge."

"Has the girl a lover?"

"She has been engaged for the last week or so only."

"Who is the man?"

"His name is Hugh Aquila. He is Resident Medical Officer at the Children's Hospital. I was at school with him. But you need not enquire about him. He has got nothing to do with it."

"How do you know that?"

"Because his mother has money. Madame Aquila was a professional singer, who made money and retired from the profession. Besides, he thinks about nothing but his work. He has as much money as he wants, and he never was in debt or any trouble. Why should he stand in?"

"He is not a man who bets and gambles?"

"Not at all."

"Humph! Give me the paper. There's a nest of villainy somewhere about the place."

Dick folded it neatly, and handed it over with the air of the undertaker's man handing the gloves at a funeral.

"Of course you are prepared to swear to this statement?"

"Certainly." This with perfectly steady eyes. "Of course, I trust it will not be necessary."

"Very well. There remains the man who presented the three cheques. I have not yet laid my hands upon him. No doubt if Norah confesses, she will tell you who he is. If not, you have enough to satisfy you."

"I have enough, when I have all. Go now—or stay—where are the cheques and the cheque-book that I left in your hands?"

"They are locked up in my private drawer in the other room. I will get them." He vanished, but returned in a moment. "They are gone!" he cried. "The cheques are gone!"

"Gone!"

"They are gone! On Saturday I left them in my private drawer. Now they are gone."

"Was the drawer locked?"

"It is always locked. Here is the key which has just unlocked it. Indeed, I am sure they were in the drawer on Saturday."

Mr. Murrige went into the outer office. The private drawer contained nothing but a few unimportant papers. The drawer, indeed, might just as well have been unlocked. For the forged cheques and the cheque-book, which Dick said were left there on Saturday, had disappeared.

"Who has been in this office, boy," asked Mr. Murrige, "besides yourself, since Saturday?"

"Only Miss Cronan, sir; and Mr. Richard to-day, sir. Nobody came yesterday, sir?"

"What time did you leave the place on Saturday?"

"Not till three o'clock, sir. Miss Cronan was with you when you brought me out the letters to copy and to post."

"Norah was working with me on Saturday afternoon," said Mr. Murrige, "until four o'clock. I remember. Then she went away. I worked here alone till six. Have you a bunch of keys at all, you boy?"

"No, sir; I haven't got anything to lock up. Search me, if you like."

"Have you seen Mr. Richard's drawer standing open? I don't want to search you. What the devil should I search you for?"

"No, sir. The drawer is never open that I know of, except Mr. Richard's in his chair."

"Have you ever tried to open that drawer yourself, with a key or without?"

"No, sir. He always locks it. And I haven't got no keys. And why should I want to open Mr. Richard's drawer?"

"There's villainy somewhere." Mr. Murrige breathed hard, and put his hands in his pockets. "Villainy somewhere. I'll get to the bottom of this."

"The vanishing of the cheques," said Dick, "seems to crown the whole thing."

"What do you mean?" asked his father roughly.

Dick showed his key.

"You see, it is quite a common key. Anybody with a good big bunch of keys could open the drawer. Perhaps, even—such things do happen—when the key was turned the bolt fell back, and the drawer was open. What did you give me the cheques for? They were no use to me—not the least use."

Mr. Murrige grunted. The cheques could not, under any circumstances, have been of use to his son in his investigation. Now they were gone, perhaps lost altogether. Why, it was now become a forgery without what the French call the pieces of conviction. Who can prove a forgery when there is no document before the Court? Mr. Murrige retired to his own office, followed by his son.

"Look here, Dick," he said, "this thing is getting more complicated. I must think it over. You've done your share. Leave it to me."

"You needn't go investigating, or enquiring, or anything," said his son; "you may entirely depend on the truth of my facts. Start from them."

"Perhaps. Yes; well. I've nothing for you at the office, Dick. Go and take a holiday; amuse yourself somehow—as you like to amuse yourself. But, mind, not a word to anybody—not a syllable. Not a breath of what you've told me either to Norah or to her brother. This paper and the accusation it contains belong to me. Do you hold your tongue about the matter. Let no one suspect."

Dick desired nothing so much as complete oblivion and the burial of the whole business. He said so, in fact.

"But what shall you do next?" he asked.

"That is my business. Only hold your tongue, and leave the rest of the Case to me."

"It has come," said the office-boy, watching. "He's done something at last. He's ordered to leave the office in disgrace. I knew he would do something; and I've got something more, and I shall make him wriggle. He thinks he won't be found out. Ho! I'm a measly little devil, and she's a Sapphier. It's something against her, is it. Just you wait. The office-boy has an eye open."

Mr. Murrige went back to his own office and sat down gloomy and wrathful. He left his door wide open, and the boy, sitting at his own table, his hands on the handle of the letterpress, watched him carefully, wondering whether the time was yet arrived for him to step in. But for such a lad to "step in" before the right moment might endanger everything. Suppose if by reason of premature stepping in instead of seeing Mr. Richard wriggle, he might himself have to do all the wriggling? If he got turned out of his berth this would certainly happen to him when he went home, his father being a Fellowship Porter, and stout of arm.

All this took place at ten o'clock, the first thing in the morning. It was over by half-past ten. When, at eleven o'clock, Norah came as usual, she found her employer sitting idle. His letters were unopened, his safe was still shut, his papers were not laid out before him. The day's work was not yet commenced.

"Why!" cried Norah; "what is the matter with you to-day? Are you ill?"

Her eyes were so bright, her face so full of sunshine, her look so radiant with the happiness of youth, innocence, and love, that Mr. Murrige groaned aloud, wondering how this thing could be possible.

"Wait a moment here," he said, taking

his hat; "I will be back in a few minutes."

Norah had plenty to occupy her. She opened her black bag, spread out her papers, and put them in order, till Mr. Murrige returned, which was after five minutes; he was accompanied by a young gentleman, who, while Mr. Murrige opened his safe, and rummaged among his papers, stared at Norah rather more closely than was consistent with good manners, according to her own views.

"Here," said Mr. Murrige presently, taking his head out of the safe, "is what you want." He gave the young gentleman a paper, and followed him out of the office. "Well?" he asked in a whisper.

"That is the young lady," the clerk replied, also in a whisper.

But the office-boy heard and wondered.

"You are quite sure of it?"

"Quite sure. I would swear to her. I am certain of her identity."

Then Mr. Murrige came back and shut the door.

"Norah," he said, walking up and down the room in considerable agitation, "a very curious thing has happened."

"What is that?"

"I have been robbed."

"Oh! How dreadful! Is it much?"

"I have been robbed—treacherously robbed," he added, as if most robberies were open-handed and friendly, "of sixty pounds, by means of five forged cheques, payable to bearer."

"Oh!"

"Each was for twelve pounds. Now, listen. Three were brought to the Bank and cashed by one man—a man who spoke a foreign accent, and who can be easily identified. He presented them on the third, the sixth, and thirteenth of this month."

"Well," said Norah, "if he can be identified, you ought to be able to find him."

"One, also one of the forged cheques was presented on Friday, the fifteenth, at a quarter-past twelve, by a young lady." Mr. Murrige watched the effect of his words, and spoke very slowly. "It was a cheque for twelve pounds, payable to bearer. It was cashed by a young lady. What is the matter, Norah?" for the girl turned white, and reeled as if she was about to faint.

"Nothing. Go on. It is nothing." But she was white and frightened, and she trembled, and was fain to sit down. Norah was a bad actress.

"By a young lady who can also, if necessary, be identified. And on Thursday last, another for the same sum of twelve pounds was presented at about a quarter to one by a young gentleman whom the clerk declares he would recognise at once. He is described as a handsome boy, with light, curly hair, and an easy manner; he wears a pot-hat, and has a red tie. Well, that is nearly all we know at present. I have nothing more to tell you. Stay, one thing more. The forged cheques, with the cheque-book from which they were stolen, were all in my son's private drawer, which he keeps locked, on Saturday morning. Of that he is certain. They have now disappeared. They, too, have been stolen. My son's drawer has been broken open, and the cheques have been taken from it. Do you quite understand?"

She tried to speak, but she could not. In the young lady she recognised herself. She had, with her own hands, presented that cheque, and received gold for it; she remembered who had given her the cheque, and to whom she had given the money; more than this, in the handsome boy with the red tie she recognised her own brother Daff; not because he, too, wore a red tie, but because he had told her, talking trifles over an evening pipe, how he had cashed one of Mr. Murrige's cheques that morning, and for whom he had cashed it.

"Are you quite sure—are you positive that these two cheques, cashed by the young lady and by the boy, were forgeries? Oh, Mr. Murrige, think. It is a dreadful charge to bring against anybody. Were they really forgeries? You may have forgotten, you know. They may have been your own. How do you know for certain that they were forgeries?"

What did she mean? What on earth did she mean by talking in this way?

"They were not my own. They were forged," he repeated sternly. "I know that from the dates, and from the number of the cheques.

"Norah," he said presently, "you have been a good girl to me; a very clever and good girl you've been to me for five years. I acknowledge it—I feel it. I wish I had raised your salary before. You deserve more: you've been a very good girl. You have carried through many difficult Cases for me. I don't know what I should have done in lots of Cases without your help. This robbery distresses me. I did not think I could have been so much distressed by anything. I say it is a most distressing

thing to me." He repeated his words, and seemed at a loss how to express himself. "Now I will give you one more sign of my confidence in you—a complete proof of my confidence in you. I will put this Case, too, into your hands. Do you hear? You shall carry it through for me."

She made no sign whatever.

"I will give it to you for your own investigation. You shall find out, Norah, who took the cheques from my cheque-book, who filled them and signed them, who presented them. You shall help me to bring this villain to justice." The girl sat before him with pale cheek, and eyes down-dropped, and she trembled. Her hands trembled, her lips trembled, her shoulders trembled. "It shall be your task. Will you undertake it?"

Still she made no sign.

"It may be—I say it may be—that some excuses, what men call excuses—idle things, but they are sometimes accepted—may be found. The thing may have been done by someone to help another person in trouble. Oh, there are people so foolish and weak that they will even incur the risk of crime, and disgrace, and punishment for others. Women have been known to do such things for their prodigal lovers and their unworthy brothers. Find out, if you can, such an excuse; and when you bring me the name of the guilty person I will consider how far that excuse may avail in saving him from punishment."

"Spare me!" cried Norah. "Oh, I will do anything else that you ask me—anything else; but I cannot do this."

"Why not?"

"Because I cannot. I can give you no reason."

"You refuse to do it. Why? I don't ask you this time, Norah. I command you. If you are still to remain in my service, undertake this investigation."

"I will not. I cannot. I will rather leave your service."

"Then, before we part, read this paper. It was placed in my hands this morning by my son. He is your old friend and companion. Your brother is also his old friend and companion. Your family have all been kind to him. Yet he has been compelled to write this report for me. Read it. Think of the pain it must have given him to write it; and the pain, yes, the deep pain, it gives me to read it."

Norah read it. When she came to the place where the writer spoke of herself she read slowly, not able at first to under-

stand it. Then she cried aloud in amazement from the pain of the blow, which was like the stabbing of a sharp stiletto. But she recovered, and went on to the end. When she had quite finished it, she sunk into her chair and buried her face in her hands, sobbing and crying without restraint. The man who had told her he loved her, and had implored her to marry him one day, had done this thing the next. The boy in the outer office heard her crying, and wondered whether now the time had arrived for his own appearance.

Not yet, he thought; not yet. Above all things an opportune appearance and a dramatic effect!

"What have you to say?" asked Mr. Murrige.

"Oh, Dick, Dick!"

It was all she had to say. Presently she lifted her head and dashed away her tears, and proudly gave back the paper to Mr. Murrige.

"Well?"

"I have nothing to say," she replied. "What is there to say?"

"Here is a distinct charge against you. A most serious charge. The most serious charge that could be made against you."

"I have nothing to say. Stay! Yes. The Bank Clerk, he says, can identify two persons who presented cheques. He need not be called upon to do so. They were myself and my brother Hyacinth. I have nothing more to say. I will answer no questions. You must do as you please."

"I have done all I could for you. I offered you your chance for confession and for excuses——"

"Confession! He says, confession!"

"And you meet me with the daring avowal that you and your brother presented those two forged cheques. Is it possible? You!"

"The two cheques. I did not say the two forged cheques. It is quite true. I drew twelve pounds with one cheque, and Daffodil drew twelve pounds with another."

The girl repeated this avowal, looking Mr. Murrige straight in the face, without the least shrinking or shame.

"Forged or not, it is the same thing. Since you have owned so much, confess the rest. Why did you take those cheques?"

"Why did I take those cheques? Oh, I have been with this man for five years, and now—now he asks me why I stole his cheques!"

"Tell me, Norah. Yes, you have been with me five years. You have been so honest and faithful that I cannot understand it. Tell me why. I cannot understand it."

"I will answer no questions. Take up the Case for yourself, Mr. Murrige. You will find me at my mother's, or with Calista, when you want me. You must take it up. You cannot let it stay where it is. You shall not. When you have come to the truth, you will understand why I refused to speak."

"Tell me the truth now, then, Norah."

Mr. Murrige, who trusted no one, and thought love and friendship fond and foolish things, was strangely moved by this business. He had thought that when he could lay his hands upon the person who had robbed him, he would straightway hale that person before the magistrate without pity, and, indeed, with revengeful joy. But that person stood before him, convicted by his son's evidence and out of her own mouth, and he was moved to pity.

"Tell me the truth, Norah," he repeated. "For God's sake, tell me the truth, and nothing more shall be said about it! No one shall know; it shall be between us two. We will all go on as before. Only, my girl, tell me the truth."

"I cannot—I cannot. You must find it yourself. I presented one of those cheques, and my brother presented another. That is all I can tell you."

She was no longer pale. She did not tremble any more. In her cheek there was a burning spot, which might have been the outward and visible sign of conscious guilt. As such Mr. Murrige read it. On the other hand, it might betoken a wrath too deep for words. But as such he did not read it. Whatever it was, her eyes were aflame as she turned her face once more to Mr. Murrige, as she stood with the door open.

"I advise you for once to follow your own maxims. You have always advised me to trust no one. Yet you have sometimes trusted me. In this case trust no one but yourself. When you are satisfied, you will ask me to come back to you. Till then you will see me here no longer."

The office-boy listened.

"Oh, miss," he said as she closed the door, "are you going? He's gone too. He's done something. Oh, I know very well! Are you really going?"

"Really going, for a time, Joe; perhaps altogether."

"Is there a row, miss? Is he"—he jerked in the direction of Mr. Richard's chair—"is he in it?"

"You had better ask him. Joe, good-bye."

"She's been crying. The tears were on her cheeks. I wonder," said the boy, "whether I ought to go in now? Oh, if I could go in with a cutlass and a brace of pistols!"

But he was afraid.

"It is impossible," said Mr. Murrige. "She must have done it. Why did she turn so pale? Why did she tremble? Why were her cheeks so red? She must have done it! Why did she refuse to take up the Case? She must! Very well, then. There is something behind it—something that Dick can't find out. Very well, then; they've got me to deal with now. I will find out the truth for myself."

CHAPTER IX. THE BROKEN RING.

"CALISTA," said Norah, half an hour later, walkin' into the Infants' Ward, "I have come to stay with you a little."

"To stay with me? My dear Norah! What has happened?"

"Nothing. I have left Mr. Murrige, that is all. I am come to stay with you."

"Tell me, Norah. What is it?"

"Nothing."

In proof of this assertion she burst into tears and fell upon her sister's neck.

"Tell me, Norah."

"I cannot—yet. Write to mother and tell her that I am here—say, if you please, for a holiday. Yes, tell her I am here for a holiday."

"Go into my room, dear. I will be with you directly, and then you shall tell me as much as you please."

The Sister's room is at the end of the Ward, so that even when she is asleep she is never really away from her charge. It is at once her bedroom and sitting-room, furnished with a table and easy-chair, as well as a bed. In Calista's case—but this, I believe, is matter of individual taste—there were books—in case she might find time to read a little—and pictures, and work. Here Norah sat down and took off hat and jacket, wondering how long people live who are accused of dreadful and shameful things.

"Don't ask me why I am here," she said,

when Calista, after seeing that every Baby was comfortable, and having examined the thermometer and looked to the ventilation, came to her; "don't ask me, Calista, because I cannot tell you. I can tell no one."

"You have left Mr. Murrige, dear!"

"Yes. I have left him. I can never, never go back to him again. And, oh, Calista! I must see Hugh as soon as possible—directly."

"He is somewhere in the Hospital. I will send for him. He can see you in the corridor or somewhere. You are going to tell him what has happened?"

"I am going to tell him, Calista," said Norah frigidly, "that it is all over between us. I am going to give him back his ring."

"Oh, Norah!"

"Please don't ask me why. I cannot tell you. It is not my fault, Calista," she said, while the tears came again; "it is not my fault!"

Calista remembered Dick's strange words on Sunday: "Whatever happens it will be her fault."

"Tell me," she said, "what has Dick done?"

"I cannot tell you."

Then it was something done by Dick. How had he contrived to make mischief between Mr. Murrige and Norah? Calista resolved upon taking the earliest opportunity of seeing Master Dick. Unfortunately the events of the next day made that interview impossible for some time to come.

The Corridor in the Children's Hospital, Shadwell, is a quiet place for a Lover's Tryst, though not like a boaky grove, entirely secluded from observation. And there are no flowers or hedges in it, and the spicy breezes blow not over cottage-gardens, but over the London Docks, which is, perhaps, the reason why they are sometimes very highly spiced. One is, however, safe from being overheard. Therefore, when Norah went out to meet her lover there, she began, quite comfortably, to cry.

"Oh, Hugh!" she said, "I wonder if you will be sorry?"

"What for, dear?"

"I wonder whether you will console yourself very soon? There are lots of prettier and better girls in the world. Oh, you will soon be happy again without me!"

"My dearest child, what do you mean?"

"I mean, Hugh, that it is all over."

Take back your ring. Our engagement is broken off."

Hugh put his hands behind him.

"You must take it, Hugh. I am serious."

"I shall not take it, Norah. I am serious too. It takes two to make an engagement, and two to break it off. I refuse, my darling."

"Hugh, it must be!"

"Tell me why it must be."

"Because—because—— I cannot tell you! Oh, Hugh, believe me! I can never marry you now, and I can never marry anyone!"

"Why—why—why?"

"Hugh," she turned upon him a pair of the most sorrowful eyes ever seen, "would you like to marry a girl disgraced for ever?"

"Disgraced, Norah!"

"Disgraced! Go away, Hugh; I can tell you no more!"

"This is truly wonderful," said her lover. "Who dares to speak of disgrace and my Norah in the same breath? My dear, when we two plighted our troth and kissed each other first, it was like the Church service, you know—for better for worse. Perhaps a little of the worse has come at the very beginning. Let me share it with you."

He took her tearful face in his hands—one on each side—and kissed her forehead and her lips.

"There is trouble in those dear eyes," he said, "but no disgrace. Norah, I flatly refuse to break it off. What will you do then?"

"Nothing," she replied. "I can do nothing. But I am in serious—terribly serious earnest, Hugh."

"Then tell me—tell me all."

She hesitated. The girl who hesitates is not always lost.

"I have been charged with a terrible accusation, Hugh—a dreadful accusation, and I have nothing to meet it with but my own denial."

"That is enough for those who love you, Norah."

"It is a charge for which people are every day sent to prison." She shuddered and trembled. "Do you understand that, Hugh? You are engaged to a girl who may even be sent to prison, because I cannot prove that I am innocent. What can innocent people do when other people tell lies about them? I am disgraced, Hugh."

"No, dear; you cannot be disgraced by

a mere accusation. Tell me all—exactly as it happened."

"No. I cannot tell you—I will not. Let him find out the truth for himself. If it is hard for me to bear the falsehood, it will be harder for him to bear the truth."

"Tell me the truth, then, Norah."

"No, I will tell no one—not even you."

"Norah dear, it is my right to ask it."

"Then I withdraw the right. We are not engaged any longer, Hugh."

"Tell me this, then. Is it something connected with Mr. Murridge?"

Norah made no reply.

"Is it anything to do with Dick?"

Still she was silent.

"Dick came here on Sunday, grumpy and miserable. Norah, let me bear your burdens for you."

"You cannot bear my burdens. I take away the right. Hugh, as long as this thing is hanging over me, until my accuser shall withdraw his charge, I am not engaged to you. Oh, Hugh, I am in dreadful earnest!" She drew his ring from her finger and kissed it—a pretty, fragile little thread of gold, set with pearls and emeralds. "Take it, Hugh." He refused with a gesture. "You must—oh, Hugh, you must! Can I wear your ring when I might have handcuffs on my wrists? Take it." Again he refused. She twisted it with her fingers and the gold snapped. "Your ring is broken, Hugh. No—let me go—let me go!"

He tried to hold her; he implored her to let him speak, but she broke from him and fled swiftly down the Corridor to her sister's Ward.

Presently Calista came out, and found the Resident Medical standing beside the open window, confused and bewildered.

"Do not contradict her," she said. "Let her have her own way. She tells me that she has broken off her engagement, and she is crying and sobbing in my room. Hugh, it is something that Dick has done. I am certain of it. He was here on Sunday, gloomy and careworn. He told me—he warned me, he said, that whatever happened was Norah's fault, because, you know, she refused him."

"Did he use those words? He is a cur, Calista! He was a cur at school, and he is a cur still. But what could he do or say? She has been accused—hush, Calista! the very whisper makes one's cheeks hot—she has been accused of something—something, she says, for which people are sent to prison. Think of that—our poor Norah!—our poor child!"

Calista laughed scornfully.

"Oh!" she cried. "This is foolish; this is absurd! Who can have accused her?"

"I do not know. But I will find out before long."

"She has left Mr. Murrige, she tells me."

"Then it must be Mr. Murrige—or—Dick."

"Hugh! Can it be that Dick has himself——"

She did not finish her question, because Hugh answered it by a responsive light in his eyes.

"I will go presently," he said. "This morning there is too much to do, but in the afternoon or to-morrow I will go and see Mr. Murrige myself. Somehow or other, Calista, we will get to the bottom of this."

"Dick could not," said Calista. "Oh, it is impossible! Consider. We have always known Dick. He is almost a brother. He has been our friend and companion all the days of his life. He thought he was in love with Norah. Can a man make love to a girl, and ask her to be his wife one day, and the next day accuse her of abominable and shameful things? It is impossible, Hugh. Don't let us suspect Dick."

"Why, then, did he give you that warning, Calista? Yet we will not suspect him until I have seen Mr. Murrige, and learned all that can be learned. Meantime, what are we to do with Norah?"

"Leave her to me, Hugh."

"But she is crying and unhappy. She should be with me."

"Leave her with me, Hugh, for to-day. When you have seen Mr. Murrige we can consider what is to be done. Perhaps you will be able to lay this spectre. Then you can see her and console her as much as you please."

Norah sat on Calista's bed, crying. Presently she left off crying and began to wonder how a man could be so revengeful and so wicked. Because now she understood quite clearly that the thing must have been done by no other than Dick, who, in order to screen himself and divert suspicion, had deliberately, and in cold blood, accused her. And this was her old playfellow, the man who had told her he loved her!

She sat there until the evening. Then she got up, bathed her tearful face, brushed her hair, and went out into the Ward.

"I am come to work, Calista. My dear,

I must work. It will do me good to sit up all night. If I lie down I shall hear voices and see figures. Let me stay here among the Babies and help to nurse."

The day-nurses went away and the night-nurses came to take their places, and among them Norah stood all the brief summer night till the early morning, when the sun rose over the silent City of Labour, and then she sat down in a chair and fell fast asleep. At five o'clock Calista came out in her dressing-gown, and the nurses carried Norah to the Sister's room and laid her on the bed, just as she was, in her clothes, and sleeping heavily.

CHAPTER X. THE ADVERTISEMENT.

In the whole of Dick Murrige's future life, whether that be long or short, one day will stand out in his memory as the most unlucky. Every man who has been weak and wicked thinks that the day when he was found out is the most unlucky day in his life. Of course, he should consider that the day when he first left the path of virtue was really that day; but to arrive at that conclusion implies a return to that thorny path with what used to be called heart and soul, which is, I believe, rare. The wicked man not infrequently turns away from his wickedness, so many forces acting upon him in the direction of righteousness; but it is seldom indeed that he regards the dodges, tricks, cheats, and deceptions of the past with aught but complacency. There was nothing, at first, to rouse special apprehensions. His father was gloomy at breakfast; he had lost his clerk as well as his sixty pounds, and the clerk was by far the more serious loss; also he could not understand, in spite of his own maxims, how the girl could possibly have done it, and what she meant by avowing the worst piece of evidence against her, and then bidding him take up the Case himself. But to his son he said nothing to alarm him. Dick accepted his father's silence as a proof that nothing more was going to be done. Norah would be forgiven, he fondly thought. As if Mr. Murrige was the kind of man to sit down satisfied with so strange a thing as this unexplained! Dick, like many crafty persons, was a great Fool. In fact, the whole history of Crime shows a remarkable development of the imaginative faculty going parallel with great craftiness, which prevents its possessors from seeing things in their right proportions, so that

they frequently get caught in their own nets. And as if Norah was the kind of girl to accept forgiveness!

He spent the morning—for the third time—with the Count, who was showing him most surprising things with the cards—things which, he clearly perceived, might, in the hands of one who could do them dexterously, lead to surprising results.

"There was a time," said the Count, "when I could do these things, before I lost my finger. Do you think I lived in a place like this, the companion of such men as come here every night? Now I can show you how we do them. Anybody may learn how they are done. But there are few indeed who can do them so as never to be suspected or caught. I have watched you, friend Richard, and I know that you can learn. I will make you, if you please, and little by little, a master of the great Art."

The great Art, of course, was the practical application of scientific Legerdemain to card-playing and gambling. In its simpler forms it means turning the king, forcing a suit, making the bridge, palming a card, giving your adversary the worst hands and yourself the best. When a young man has learned these things, and can do them with a turn of the wrist and without a movement of the eye, he has indeed advanced far, and may be trusted to earn a very decent and comfortable maintenance. But there are higher flights, and although there are many Greeks about the gaming-tables, there never was one who brought to the profession a keener intellect, a more copious resource, a greater wealth of trickery in its highest and most occult branches than the Signor Giuseppe Piranesi.

"And when I have learned all this, what am I to do?"

"Long before that time comes, you will be glad of the protection which I can give you. Ask me when the Trouble comes."

"What do you mean by the Trouble? You are always talking about the Trouble," Dick threw the cards upon the table. "I tell you there is no Trouble coming."

"And I tell you, young gentleman, there is a very great Trouble coming upon you, and that very soon. I have seen it coming day after day, and at last it has come. I believe, Richard, that it has come upon you this very day; I believe you will not go home to your father's this evening."

Dick tried not to tremble, but he suc-

ceeded ill. He tried to laugh, and there came a dismal cackle. He picked up the cards, but his hand shook. Was the man a Prophet?

"I have had a dream, my son," said the Count softly. "I dreamed that age and youth, experience and inexperience, might help each other."

"What has that got to do with me and—and the Trouble?"

"Wait—wait, and listen. My dream was of an old man and a young man. They travelled together, and were Partners, though no one knew it. They worked together. The old man knew where to go, and the young man how to work. He had been taught by the old man. They went wherever the money is—there are only a dozen places in the world worth going to—where, that is, there are rich young fellows who are fools enough to think they can win at the game-table. Do you begin to understand this dream?"

"But what has it got to do with the Trouble?"

"The Trouble may be the means of making this Dream a reality. It is a beautiful dream. There is in it the life of luxury, and of ease, and of love." Dick heard of the love and luxury without much emotion. The former moved him but little, the latter not at all. "And a life of getting money in it—money, my young friend."

Dick's cold eyes lit up.

"It will only be necessary for you to follow my instructions, and to be my pupil. You must obey me, and you shall be my Partner. I will introduce you, and I will play square, like the fools at the table, because the cursed loss of my finger prevents me from playing any other way. But you—you—you shall play with every advantage of Science, skill, and courage."

"Oh!" Dick, it is fair to say, had no objections on the score of honesty, but he distrusted his own powers. "Oh, it is impossible!"

"A beautiful dream. Everywhere the most delightful life, and the easiest; everywhere the fools who sit about the tables, and expect to win. Perhaps a time may come when it will be no dream, but a necessity." The Count sighed, and Dick's eyes kindled. "A divine life, with everything that can be bought, and always money at your fingers' ends. You might be my pupil. In six months I would teach you enough. Then we would begin. You should be the young Englishman of fortune

on his travels. No one suspects the young Englishman of fortune; he is always a Fool; he is always the prey of the Profession. Would you like to be that young Englishman? He loses when the stakes are low, and he wins when the stakes are high. Would that suit you?"

The spider has many blandishments. To the fly he talks the language of innocence, of flattery, of disinterested friendship, and of love. But to brother-spider he uses a different kind of talk.

"If I could only get away!" he said. "As for the City, I hate it! If I could only get away!"

"You may—you shall. My dear young friend, I will help you because you can help me. That is the foundation of every friendship. My secrets are yours and yours are mine for the future. We must trust each other, because we can be of service to each other. Hands upon it."

Dick gave him his hand.

"So," said the Count. "Now, my friend, I have business. I will leave you here. I shall return in two hours. You will stay here;" for the first time he assumed a tone of command. "You will not leave this house until my return." He put on his hat and lit a cigarette. "By the way, have you got me another cheque?"

"No," said Dick shortly.

"Those first three cheques—they were all right—on the square?"

"Of course they were all right. Why should they not be all right?"

"Good—very good. Your secrets are mine, and mine are yours. Partners such as we shall be have no secrets from each other, have they?"

He laughed pleasantly, and went away.

Dick, left alone, began to imagine that life. His own had been so dull that he had not the least idea what it would be like. But there would be no City work, no office, no drudgery of copying and of making up books. There would be change and excitement in it; there would be money in it, and gambling (on the safe side) in it. Was the Count serious? Yet he had spent a great deal of trouble over him. He was not likely to spend that time and trouble for nothing. The chance of leading such a life depended upon himself.

He seized the pack of cards, and began to practise some of the passes and tricks which the Count had taught him. But he was excited and nervous. The most that he dared to hope that morning was safety

for a time; what was opened up for him now was more than safety for a time: it was rescue.

The Count said that the Trouble was coming that very day. Well: he knew that the cheques were burned, with the cheque-book. There can be no forgery unless the documents are produced, and they were gone. Oh, what a fortunate chance was this that placed in his hands the very proofs of his own guilt! The cheques were burned. If his father discovered the truth, he would do nothing—nothing at all. There would be a Row; there would certainly be a Row. Well, the greatest Row breaks no bones. And he would, perhaps, be turned into the street. Very well. Then, perhaps, the Count would really do what he had promised—become his friend and Partner. Because, you see, Dick had as yet none of that sense of honour which exists between brothers in iniquity. That had to be created in him.

He could do nothing with the cards. He threw them down, and took up the paper. It was the *Times*, and on the second column his eyes fell upon the following advertisement:

"FIFTEEN POUNDS REWARD.—Whereas on the 3rd, the 5th, and the 11th days of June respectively, there were presented and cashed at the Royal City and Provincial Bank, Finsbury Circus Branch, three cheques, each for twelve pounds, payable to self or bearer, and purporting to be signed by myself. The above-named reward will be paid to any person who shall discover the man who presented them. He is described as an elderly man, well dressed, speaks with a foreign accent, has short white hair and white moustache, without beard, and has lost the forefinger of his right hand.

"(Signed) JOHN MURRIDGE,
"Finsbury Circus, E.C."

Mr. Murrige, in short, was a practical man. The Case perplexed and worried him. He could see no way out of it. Norah took the cheques; that was certain. She and her brother presented two of them; that was certain. Why? And who presented the other three?

There cannot be many men in London with the three distinctive characteristics of age, a foreign accent, and the loss of the forefinger on the right hand. The man he wanted must be an accomplice in this robbery, or he must have received payment

with these cheques. In the former case, he might be discovered by someone who would see the advertisement; in the latter, he might himself come forward. He was quite right; the advertisement produced the man. It did more. There were, I think, fifty-two members of the Club. It was, therefore, remarkable that, in the course of that day and the next, Mr. Murrige received forty-six letters, all from the immediate neighbourhood of St. Pancras, King's Cross, and Camden Town, and all informing him that the writer had it in his power to produce the man advertised for on the receipt of the promised reward, which might be sent by return post. Thirty-six of the writers followed up the letter by a personal call; twenty-six were abusive when they found that they had to go away with nothing—not even their tempers, which they lost in the office—and ten went away sorrowful. There would have been fifty-one letters; but, unfortunately, the remaining five did not see the *Times*.

A simple advertisement. Nothing more. Yet it knocked down at one stroke the whole of Dick's careful construction. No more was left of it after the advertisement appeared than remains of an Ice Palace in the summer.

Dick knew that. The moment he read the advertisement he understood what would happen.

At two o'clock the Count returned.

"My friend," he said gravely, "you have done wrong."

"What have I done?"

"You have not trusted me. A dozen times have I asked you if those cheques were right."

"Well, they are——" he began.

"Have done with lies," said the Count roughly. "Understand, once and for all, that there are to be no more lies between us. You are to tell me the truth—always. Do you hear? Else you go your own way. Even this morning I gave you another chance."

"You ought to have shown me the paper."

"You might have seen the paper."

"Have you been to my father's?"

"I have. In any case I should have gone to him. What! Am I to be advertised for? Am I to go into hiding? Besides," his face broke into a sweet smile, "there are our worthy friends, the members. Do you think that, for fifteen pounds, these gentlemen would not

rush to denounce the man without the forefinger? Therefore I anticipated them. Why not?"

Dick waited to know what happened.

"I took a cab. I drove to Finsbury Circus. I sent my card to your father. He was not alone, but he admitted me immediately."

"What did he say?"

"Nothing—your father said nothing; from which I augur the worst. For myself, as he might wish to hear from me further, I have given him my name and my address—not at this house."

"He knows that I gave you those cheques. Did he say nothing?"

"He said nothing. When you go home this evening, he will, without doubt, have a great deal to say. But to me he said nothing at all. There is more, however. I was not alone."

"Who was there?"

"Your father knows now that you gave two more cheques to be cashed. There was another cheque half filled up. A boy in the office has found it and given it to your father."

"I knew the little devil had got it. I wish I had him here—just for five minutes. I wish I had him here!"

"He had also picked up and gummed together the fragments of paper written all over by you in imitation of your father's handwriting. A dangerous boy!"

"I wish I had him here."

"What will you do now?"

"I won't go home again," said Dick.

"Well?"

"Oh," cried Dick, "let that dream of yours come to something, Count. Teach me all you can, and I will obey you, and be your servant, or your Partner, or anything you please. I was a fool not to tell you all a week ago and more."

"It was foolish, indeed, because I guessed the truth all along. There are many young men who do these things. They are always found out; then there is Trouble. As for them, they are mostly silly boys who are born only to sink and be forgotten. But you are different; you are clever, though too crafty, and cold, yet too easily frightened; you have courage—of a kind—such a kind as I want; therefore I will help you."

Dick murmured something about gratitude.

"No," said the Count; "do not talk of gratitude. First of all, you will stay here for a while until I am ready. While you

are here you must not leave this room. You are a prisoner. I will give out to the landlord that you are an invalid. You will spend your time in practising the things I will teach you. Courage! You have burned your boats; you have broken with the past."

CHAPTER XL STILL ONE CHANCE LEFT.

THE blackest cloud sat on the brow of Mr. Murrige. Business was before him which wanted his clever clerk, and she was gone. Wonderful! unheard-of! She confessed what she had done, and she went away without a word of excuse, without any appeal to mercy; just as if somebody else had done the thing. Never was audacity more complete.

"I could forgive her," said Mr. Murrige. "I feel it in me to forgive her." Perhaps the thought of her cleverness, and the loss of her departure, assisted him to this Christian frame of mind. "Yes; I feel that I could forgive her. I could stop the sixty pounds out of her salary, and we could go on just exactly the same as before; only I should lock up the cheque-book; if she'd only tell me why she did it, and say she was sorry. And the little devil goes off with a toss of her head and a glare in her eyes as if somebody else had taken the cheques! It's wonderful! it's wonderful!"

Meantime, how could he replace her?

"I'll make her come back to me," he said. "If she won't accept my terms I'll prosecute her, even without the cheques. She must have taken them out of Dick's drawer, too. Women will do anything—anything! But that was clever. What will her father say? I don't care. I'll prosecute the Honourable Norah Cronan, daughter of Viscount Clonsilla, for forgery! That's it"—he paused—"if I can without the cheques; and then she'll be glad enough to accept my terms."

While Mr. Murrige was thus breathing fury and flames, he received a call. A young gentleman, whose appearance was unknown to him, knocked at the door and walked in.

"My name is Aquila," he said. "You will understand why I have called when I tell you that I am engaged to Miss Norah Cronan."

"Oh!" Mr. Murrige replied, with a snort; "you are, are you? And has that young lady seen you since yesterday morning?"

"Yes; I have seen her."

"Has she made any kind of statement to you? Do you understand what has happened?"

"I learn from her that some kind of charge has been brought against her."

"She is accused—not by me, but by another—of theft and forgery. Sixty pounds is the total. I have been robbed in my own office of sixty pounds by five distinct forgeries. She made no bones of confessing the thing to me. Laughed at it, so to speak. Laughed at it! Told me to find out the truth for myself."

"Confessing! Norah confessing!"

"Certainly. And if, young gentleman, you can explain how she came to confess without the least shame, I should be glad to hear that explanation. Come."

"Let me understand. How could she confess? What did she say?"

"She confessed that she cashed one of the cheques herself, and that her brother cashed another. Is not that confession enough for you?"

"Nothing would be enough for me, because I am as firmly convinced of her innocence as of my own. Much more firmly, in fact, because Norah could not do this thing. Consider, Mr. Murrige"—the young man's voice trembled—"this is a very dreadful charge to bring against anyone, and most of all against a girl. Yet you talk of it as if it was not only a possible charge, but already proved."

"Every day in this City," said Mr. Murrige, "there are robberies of this kind. They are all committed by perfectly innocent persons previously unsuspected. When they are found out, the first cry is that it is impossible. Now, young gentleman, I am very sorry, for the girl's sake—I don't know another person in the world for whom I would say so much. The thing is impossible, is it not? Yet it has happened—"

"Is that all? Tell me exactly. Is it all that Norah said?"

"She said that she would answer no more questions."

"Is that all?"

"Not quite. What she said then—I can't understand it—was that I must find out the truth for myself. What do you make of that?"

"Only that you have not got the truth yet. Stay; let us send for her brother. Will you let me put a question to him in your presence?"

"By all means. Send the office-boy in a cab."

Hugh hastily wrote a note, and dispatched the boy in a hansom. From the City to Gower Street a tolerably swift cab takes twenty minutes. They had, therefore, forty minutes at least to wait.

"And now," said Mr. Murrige, "your relations with this young lady are so intimate, and you know so much, it would be just as well if you knew all."

He opened his safe, and took from it a roll of paper.

"This document," he said, "was placed in my hands by no other than my own son. Read it, remembering that the girl is his old companion and friend from childhood."

Hugh read it through, slowly and deliberately. Then he read it a second time.

"You accept this statement," he asked, "without question?"

"Surely. It is a perfectly plain statement by my own son, who can have nothing whatever to gain by misrepresenting the facts. You observe that he suppressed as long as he could the most important fact."

Hugh made no reply. But he read the paper a third time. Then he looked carefully about the room.

"Come, Mr. Murrige," he said, "let us examine this document with a little more care. Dick says that Norah shut the door; that the door, as sometimes happens, was not quite close, but stood ajar; that from the place where he sat he could see through this partly open door. Come into the other office with me."

He carefully adjusted the door so that it should be ajar at an angle of about eleven and a half degrees, which is, so to speak, a good large jar.

"Now," he said, "if it was ajar it certainly could not have been wider than this. Here are two tables and two chairs; I suppose he must have been sitting at one of them while he saw the door ajar."

"This is my son's chair."

"Sit here, then," Hugh went on. "Tell me what you can see in your own office?"

Nothing whatever could be seen of the inner office from Dick's seat, and nothing from the other seat. This will readily be understood if we remember that the fireplace was on the same side for both rooms, and that Mr. Murrige sat near the fire in his room, and Dick between the fireplace and the window in his, while the office-boy was accommodated with a table and a chair on the other side of the fire.

"Very good," said Hugh. "The first point of the story is that your son saw Norah from his own place, through the

partly opened door. Now, in order to see her, he would have been obliged to leave the seat and go over to the other side of the room."

"That makes no difference," said Mr. Murrige. "The point is that he saw what was being done. He may have been standing—or prying and peeping—that matters nothing."

"I do not agree with you," said Hugh. "The point is that, not being curious, he saw without taking the trouble to spy."

"Still, no difference. Why shouldn't he spy? A man doesn't like to confess that he was prying and spying."

Hugh went on to another point.

"He says that Norah folded the cheques and placed them in her bosom. Very good. Let us see the cheques?"

"They are lost. They have been stolen."

"That is unfortunate. Did you see them?"

"Of course I did."

"In what manner. Had they been folded?"

It was a bow drawn at a venture. But Mr. Murrige changed countenance and was disconcerted.

"Strange," he said; "I had forgotten. Only one was folded. The others had been rolled or carried flat in a pocket-book. I noticed that they were not folded. But one was folded. I am certain that one of them was folded."

"This makes, you see, the second mistake in this document."

"What do these little mistakes matter in so weighty a charge as this? My son says that he saw with his own eyes—it doesn't signify to me whether he was peeping through a keyhole—he actually saw Norah tear those cheques out of the book. You cannot get over that plain fact."

"Plainly, then, Mr. Murrige, I don't believe it. If that is the only way out of the difficulty, I do not believe it."

"You think my son lied?"

"I am perfectly sure that if he charged Norah with theft, he lies."

"You are engaged to the young lady. You are bound to say that. But, young gentleman, get over her confession, if you can. I tell you I am ready to believe that my son was mistaken if you can get over the plain facts—that I have been robbed, and that Norah confesses."

"Let us wait till Daffodil comes."

He sat down opposite to Mr. Murrige, and they waited. There was nearly half

an hour yet to wait. To sit opposite to a man for half an hour, waiting for a question to be asked, a question in which is concerned the honour of the girl you love, is awkward.

While they waited, however, there came another visitor.

Mr. Murrige's door was standing wide open, and the visitor walked in.

He was an elderly gentleman with large white moustache, very neatly dressed, with an upright, soldierly bearing. He took off his hat politely, and as he did so Mr. Murrige started, because he recognised the man for whom he had that morning advertised. At least, this man was short of one finger—the forefinger of his right hand was gone.

"You are Mr. Murrige?" he asked in a slightly foreign accent.

"I am, sir. And you?"

"I believe I am the man whose description is given in the *Times* of this morning."

"Pray go on, sir."

"It is, perhaps, usual to advertise for a gentleman under the promise of a reward as if he was a criminal."

"If he is wanted for evidence, why not?"

"You may withdraw that advertisement, sir; and you may save your money. I am the man who presented three cheques at your bank, and for twelve pounds, and each signed by yourself."

"Oh!" said Mr. Murrige. "Now we shall see." He turned to Hugh. "Perhaps, as you feel so strongly in this business, you would like to leave me alone with this—this gentleman?"

"On the contrary, I feel so strongly about it, that I must ask your permission to hear what he has to say."

"As you please. It is the next step in the Enquiry. You understand that I shall connect these three cheques, as well as the other two, with Norah or her brother."

"You will try."

"The question is," said Mr. Murrige, "first, where you got those cheques; and next, for what consideration?"

"As regards the first," replied the stranger, "you ought to know to whom you gave them."

"I did not give them to anyone. Those cheques were stolen, and the signature is a forgery."

"Really? That is awkward. It is very awkward."

"But tell us," cried Hugh impatiently, springing to his feet. "Tell us, man!"

"I am much distressed to hear this,"

said the stranger. "I confess, when I saw this advertisement this morning, that I feared there was something wrong about the cheques. I am most distressed."

"You have not answered my question yet," said Mr. Murrige. "Never mind your distress."

"I am distressed on your account, sir. However, the person from whom I received the cheques was your own son, Mr. Richard Murrige."

"What!" Mr. Murrige shouted.

"Your own son—no other, certainly."

Hugh sat down.

"Why—why—for what consideration did you receive that money?"

"In part payment of a loan. I had lent my young friend, from time to time, sums of money amounting in all"—he produced a pocket-book and looked at an entry—"to forty-nine pounds nineteen shillings. He has paid me by three instalments of twelve pounds each—thirty-six pounds. There remains, therefore, the sum of thirteen pounds nineteen shillings—thirteen guineas we will say. For this I have his acknowledgment—here it is."

He handed Mr. Murrige a slip of paper—a simple IOU drawn and signed by his son. Mr. Murrige examined it. As he held it in his hand, the room became dark, and the figures before him stood as if in thick cloud, and Hugh's voice was like a voice in a dream. For he suddenly understood that it was his son, and not Norah at all, who had done this thing, and he saw, in the signature of his son what he had never noticed before—perhaps he had never before seen his son's signature—a fatal resemblance to his own.

"You have not yet, sir," said Hugh, "given us your name and address."

The stranger laid his card upon the table. Hugh took it, read it, and handed it to Mr. Murrige.

"Signor Giuseppe Piranesi, No. 88, Argyle Square. That address will always find you?"

"I am in lodgings there. That address will find me for a few weeks longer."

"Why did you lend my son money?" Mr. Murrige asked quietly.

"To pay his losses at cards."

"His losses at—at cards? Dick's losses at cards?"

"Your son's losses at cards."

"You will have to prove these things, sir," said Mr. Murrige. "You will have to prove them. You shall go before a magistrate."

"Before the Lord Mayor himself if you please. Meantime, I will keep this little document." He replaced the I O U in his pocket-book. "And, if I might suggest as the next step, you might put one or two questions to your son. As, first, how and where he spends his evenings; next, how he has done lately in the matter of luck; and, thirdly, who has lent him money to go on with?"

Mr. Murridge said nothing.

"As to the first, he will reply that he spends all his evenings at a certain club, where there is social conversation, with a little friendly gambling—such as a baccarat-table and tables for écarté, and so forth, and that he is a gambler acharné—for his age, I have never seen a more determined gambler. As for the second question, he will tell you that luck has been very much against him for some weeks; and, as to the third, that the Proprietor of the Club lent him money from time to time. When you have put these questions and received these answers, I think that you will not want to go before any magistrates."

"You are, then," said Hugh, "the Proprietor of a Gambling Club?"

"I am its Founder, young gentleman. I shall be happy to welcome you, in case you, too, like Mr. Richard Murridge, are devoted to the green table. You will find the Club a highly respectable body of gentlemen."

Mr. Murridge sat quite silent.

Just then Daffodil arrived. He knew nothing of any trouble, and walked in with his careless, cheerful bearing.

"Here I am, Mr. Murridge. What do you want me for? Is my father elevated to an Earl or a Duke?"

"Will you ask him the question, or shall I?" said Hugh.

Mr. Murridge shook his head.

"Well, then," Hugh went on, "be serious, Daff, if you can. Do you remember cashing a cheque at the Royal City and Provincial Bank the other day?"

"Yes; I cashed a cheque all right. For twelve pounds, it was."

"How did you get that cheque?"

"Why, Dick gave it to me. Asked me to cash it on my way to Crosby Hall, where I was to meet him. I gave him the money. Why?"

"Never mind why. Do you know this gentleman?"

The Signor offered his hand.

"It is my young friend whom Fortune favours. When shall you come again?"

The young man blushed.

"I know him," he said. "I have seen him twice."

"Only twice?" Hugh asked. "Consider."

"Only twice," replied the Signor. "The young gentleman has only twice been to the Club."

"Are you in the habit of gambling, Daff?"

"I've only gambled twice in my life," he replied, blushing.

"Are you in debt?"

"I owe about five pounds to my tailor. It is more than I can pay, but it is all I owe."

"You have only played cards for money twice?"

"I have played whist in some of the fellows' rooms for threepenny points. But I have only gambled twice. The first time I won five shillings, and the second fifty shillings and more."

"Well, who took you?"

Daff hesitated and turned red again. No one likes to tell tales.

"You must tell us. It is for Norah's sake."

"Well, then, Dick took me."

"Dick is my most regular member," said the Signor, as if it was a credit to him. "He begins with the first, and he plays as long as he can stay. My most regular member. There is no one more regular than Dick. He should have been a Russian."

"Very good. There is only one other question I want to ask you. Did Dick, to your knowledge, ever ask anyone else to cash a cheque for him?"

"Once he asked Norah."

"How do you know?"

"Norah told me. We were talking, and she told me. I said she had no business to run errands for Dick."

"Now, sir," said Hugh, "I hope you understand the reason which prompted Norah to refuse any other answer, or to conduct this Enquiry? She knew beforehand."

"There is villainy somewhere," said Mr. Murridge harshly; "villainy somewhere! How do I know that this is not a conspiracy? As for you, sir," he turned to the Signor, "I believe you can be sent to prison for corrupting the young."

Signor Piranesi laughed courteously.

"I assure you, sir," he said, "the members of my Club are quite corrupt, as regards gambling, before they come to me."

"And as for you," Mr. Murrige shook his finger at Daffodil, "as for you, I believe you are in the job somehow. Villains all! villains all!"

"And I too?" said Hugh.

"You have got the girl to defend."

"The villainy, Mr. Murrige, is established nearer home. You are ready, I hope, to acquit the person first charged?"

"Certainly not—certainly not. How do I know that this is not a conspiracy against my son? Where is he? Let him be confronted with these two. Let me have more evidence. Let me find the last of the stolen cheques."

Now, all this time the door had been standing wide-open, and behind it sat the office-boy eagerly drinking in every word. He now, for the first time, understood exactly what had happened. And he now began to experience the joys of revenge, because he had it in his power to deal his long-meditated blow on the man who had called him a measly little devil.

Accordingly, he stepped from his place and boldly entered the inner office.

"What do you want?" asked his master.

"Please, sir, I've heard it all."

"What if you have? All the world shall hear it all before long."

"Please, sir," the boy's bearing was considerably more humble than that invariably adopted by his favourite heroes, but the matter is more important than the manner; "please, sir, I've found something which Mr. Richard dropped."

"What is it?"

The boy produced an envelope in which were two pieces of paper. One of them, pink in colour, he laid on the table.

"It is the last of the cheques!" cried Mr. Murrige.

The signature was only, as yet, in pencil, very carefully written. The rest of the cheque was filled up. Like all the rest, it was drawn for the sum of twelve pounds.

"What is the other paper in your hand?" asked Hugh.

"Mr. Richard was always writing things and tearing them up. One day he spent all the morning in writing over a single sheet of paper. Then he tore it up into little pieces. I picked them up and pieced them together."

He gave Hugh the result. It was a half sheet of foolscap. It had been torn into a hundred pieces, and was now put together like a child's puzzle, and gummed upon another paper. Across it was written, over and over again, like one of Coutts's cheques,

the name of John Murrige—John Murrige—John Murrige, all exactly alike, and all in exact imitation of Mr. Murrige's usual signature. Hugh placed this before Mr. Murrige.

"Are you satisfied now, sir?" he asked.

"I want my son's explanation. You can all go. I am not satisfied until I have my son's explanation."

They left him. But in the outer office the boy sat with a broad grin upon his expressive countenance. He was one of Nature's artless children, and the thought of Dick's downfall filled him with a joy which he had not learned to suppress and was not ashamed to show. Presently Mr. Richard would come in unsuspecting. Then his father would call him, and the Row would begin. And then the policeman would be called in and they would all go off together to the Mansion House, where he, the office-boy, would give evidence.

"And then—" he smiled sweetly—"then I shall see him wriggle."

The office-boy sat all day long lulled with this pleasant anticipation, and contented though he had no novelette in the drawer. Mr. Richard would come upstairs, unsuspecting that his father would call him.

Unfortunately, Mr. Richard did not come that day at all. The office-boy was disappointed. The Row would take place in the privacy of Camden Town. Again, unfortunately, though Mr. Murrige went home thinking he would get that explanation from his son, he was unable even to ask for it, for his son was out when he arrived, and didn't come home at all. And the office-boy will now, probably, never see Mr. Richard wriggle.

CHAPTER XII. UNCLE JOSEPH AS AN INSTRUMENT.

"No, sir!" Mr. Murrige repeated obstinately; "I am not satisfied."

It was the next morning. Hugh called again to learn the result of the proposed explanation.

"I am not satisfied," he repeated. "Where is my son? I don't know. He has not been home all night."

"Has he run away, then? It looks like it."

"I do not know. I say, that until he has an opportunity of meeting these charges, I will not condemn him. What do I know? The case against him may be a conspiracy got up by you, the girl, and her brother,

and the scoundrel who owns a gambling den. Am I to believe that a boy who has all his life been quiet and orderly is suddenly to become a thief and a gambler?"

"We do not ask you to believe that. We ask you to believe that his vices were kept a secret from you—that he lost money, borrowed in the hope of winning it back, lost that, and borrowed more, until he became deep in debt—deep, that is, for a man of his position—and that under the temptation and pressure, he gave way. That is what we ask you to believe!"

"I shall believe nothing. I will form no theory, and I will not condemn my son until I have seen him, and heard what he has to say. For aught I know you may be keeping him hidden out of my way."

"Then you will not withdraw this charge against Norah?"

"Certainly not. It was my son's accusation, not mine. It is not for me to withdraw it until I am convinced that it is false."

"You have evidence in your hand sufficient to convince any reasonable person."

"Perhaps you think so. The evidence of two persons already accused, and by their own admission implicated—the evidence of a foreigner and a professed gambler, and the evidence of a miserable office-boy."

"With his documents."

"What do the documents amount to? Nothing. The imitation of my signature may have been Norah's for aught I know."

Hugh left him. He was not to be shaken. I suppose Mr. Murrige knew perfectly well that there was no escape. The fact was proved, but he was obstinate. Until his son could be confronted with this evidence he would not condemn him. Until that time, therefore, the charge against Norah would not be retracted. Nor would she listen to the voice of Love; nor would she return to Mr. Murrige; nor would his business get itself accomplished; nor would his clients establish their Royal, Noble, and Gentle Descent. So that the impediment of Dick's flight produced consequences of a very wide and unexpected kind. You stick a little pin into a piece of machinery; there is the least possible jar which spreads through all the wheels and pistons, and is felt even to the foundations on which the machinery is built. For a whole fortnight they lived in this suspense, Norah remaining with her sister at the Hospital.

It was reserved for Uncle Joseph to be

the humble instrument by which this impediment was to be removed. And it happened in this way.

It was his custom, in these long summer evenings, to revisit, by the help of the omnibus, some of the scenes of his former greatness, and especially a certain well-known tavern in Great Queen Street. Here he knew the manager and some of the head-waiters—in fact, he knew by sight every waiter in London, and had a nodding acquaintance with hundreds of the gentry who every morning, about ten o'clock, assemble on the kerbstone outside the great restaurants, waiting to be taken on for the evening. Under their arms most of them carry the uniform of their profession. They are an inoffensive folk, as may be gathered by anyone who will loiter for a minute and listen to their talk; they give no trouble; they never want anybody's property; if you were to offer them three-acre allotments they would not listen; they have never been known to strike, to combine, to agitate, or to demonstrate; they never march in procession, and have not, between them all, a single banner or a bit of bunting; they are, in the evening, always beautifully dressed for their work; they are civil of speech, active, and zealous; they have, one and all, a curiously cultivated taste in wine; and they are said to have but one vice. This they share with many landed gentlemen. It is a love for the Turf.

Uncle Joseph, who had formerly been an honoured guest two or three nights in every week, now sat humbly in the manager's room, reading the menus of the day. Alas! they were not for him—those gorgeous-coloured cards, inscribed with the names and titles (all in French) of the most toothsome and delightful dishes. It was something to know that the Banquets still went on, though he was no longer seated at the table near the presiding officer, as richly decorated as a German official; and, no doubt, it was a consolation to accept the hospitable glass of sherry which was sometimes proffered in the manager's room.

One evening, about ten days after Dick vanished away, Uncle Joseph paid a visit to the tavern. There were several beautiful banquets going on, and he read the menus with the soft regrets due to the happy past. It was nearly nine when he got up to go—the hour when the active business of the banquet is finished, and after the material, the intellectual Feast

was to begin with the speeches. Alas! they would never hear him speak again.

As he passed from the manager's room into the hall a door on the first floor was thrown open, and there came out such a joyous sound, a mingling of many sounds in a fine confusion, such as the cliquettes of glasses, the laughter of men who have drunk plenty of wine, the shuffling of waiters' feet, the noise of plates, and the popping of corks, that Uncle Joseph's knees trembled.

"Ah," he said, "it is a blessing indeed to feel that the Craft is not falling off."

He went away, and presently found an omnibus.

Every night about this time he was seized with a dreadful yearning for champagne. This evening it was a yearning which tortured him. The festive sound of the revelry was too much for the old man, and his heart felt like lead to think that there was no more champagne to be had during the short remainder of his history. When he got out of his omnibus at King's Cross, and began to walk homewards, this yearning held him and shook him so that he trembled as he walked, and people thought that he must be suffering from senile weakness. It was not this; it was the yearning after champagne which made his brain to reel and his eyes to swim. Uncle Joseph had never married; the experience might have taught him that the passion of Love in some of its forms, as when its object is absent, closely resembled this craving of his for the divine drink which sparkles in the cup and mounts to a man's brain, filling him with pride, and joy, and charity towards all men. Gin-and-water might stay the craving, but as yet he was a quarter of an hour from his gin-and-water, and though there were many public-houses on the way, Uncle Joseph had no money; even gin-and-water was almost as unattainable as champagne.

While he stopped, however, letting his fancy revel in imaginary goblets, beakers, cups, and glasses, all full, and brimming over, and foaming, and sparkling, and trembling, he became conscious of a face, the sight of which was so little in harmony with his thoughts, that the cup was, so to speak, dashed from his lips and the beverage of the gods was spilt upon the ground.

The face, or rather the head, was in a second-floor window of a house on the other side of the street; it was looking up and down the street; a perfectly familiar face, yet for a while Uncle Joseph could not

remember at all to whom it belonged, so great was the yearning within him for champagne. Presently, however, he regained some command over himself, and understood that the face belonged to none other than to Dick Murrige. It was twilight now, but the old, that is to say, some of the old, have long sight, and the gas below caught the face. Oh, there could be no doubt that it was the face of Dick Murrige the Runaway.

For by this time it was well known in vague terms that there was Trouble about some cheques, and that Dick had run away, and that Norah had quarrelled with Mr. Murrige, and was staying with Calista under the pretext or pretence of a holiday.

This seemed a very remarkable discovery. Uncle Joseph was, by nature, curious, inquisitive, into other people's affairs, and of a prying nature. Therefore, he at once resolved to pursue this adventure farther.

The house, he now perceived, was a public-house—something better than the ordinary run of street-taverns—for it had a side entrance, marked "Hotel." His wits were now completely restored, and he was able to observe carefully the position of the window at which Dick Murrige was sitting. As soon as he was quite certain on this point, he boldly entered by the side-door, and walked upstairs.

Ten days of hiding in his upper chamber had begun to tell upon Dick Murrige. So great was the terror instilled into him by his Instructor and Protector of his father's vengeance and wrath, that he was afraid to venture out, even after dark, having a confused notion that every policeman in London would have a warrant for his arrest in his pocket, and that he would be taken up on suspicion. He stayed, therefore, all day long in one room, leading a most doleful and miserable existence, ordered by the Count to practise continually the tricks and cozenage of the cards, which were to advance him to that life of Perfect Delight promised by the Tempter. Never had Professor a more eager or an apter pupil. Never did Chinaman take more kindly to ways of guile than Dick Murrige, insomuch that his past ardour and passion for gambling wholly died away, and the excitement of chance seemed a poor thing indeed compared with the excitement of dexterity. He called it dexterity because the Professor gave it that name, and because, in his hands, the mystery of cheating at cards became a Fine

Art of the most manifold and occult contrivance, the most profound combination and calculation, the swiftest movement of hand, and the steadiest guard on eye and face. Yet to practise the Black Art all day long, hidden away from the world in a single room, is monotonous.

Suppose that one were to receive, as a gift, the power of cheating with the certainty of never being found out. There are a thousand ways of cheating besides that of cheating at cards. Would not this power be a constant temptation even to the most virtuous among us? What would it not be to one who, like this unfortunate Dick, had been brought up from childhood to believe that there never was any morality, any honour, any honesty, except what springs from a feeling of self-preservation and protection? Would he not jump at such a chance? Now this was exactly the chance that was offered to Dick Murrige. It came in his extremity, when he had cut himself off from his own people by a deed which would never be forgotten or forgiven. It came when he was in an agony of despair and terror, and it seemed to open a way of life of the greatest ease, comfort, and profit. He knew not yet that there is no way of life without competition, and therefore jealousy, with its attendant tokens of malice, slander, mischief, calumny, and the biting of back. Also he knew not how quickly the professional gambler is detected, and how even the most unbounded lovers of the cards become shy of playing with him. All this he had still to learn.

But it was dull in that upper chamber, which he left only to go downstairs at meal-time to the Bar Parlour, where he sat at table with the landlord and his family. They knew him as a young gentleman, presumably under a temporary cloud, in whom the Signor, Proprietor of the Club, was interested. It was horribly dull: He hated reading; he grew tired of drawing; he could not be always practising with the cards; he wanted someone to talk with.

"Good-evening, Mr. Richard," said Uncle Joseph, entering noiselessly.

Dick's head and shoulders were out of the window; but it does not take long to change the position of a head and shoulders.

"What!" he cried, springing to his feet.

"You here—you?"

"Yes, I am here. Ah, you are very snug and quiet, Dick, here! No one would ever expect to find you here. I was just

going along the street, you know—just walking down the street, when I saw your face at the window. What a surprise! what a surprise! How pleased your father will be!"

"Is he? What does he—what does he—what does he want with me?"

Uncle Joseph nodded his head impressively. Some men can convey a solemn and impressive assurance much better by a nod of the head than by any words. Uncle Joseph's nod made this young man understand first that his evil deeds were known to everybody, and next that his father would certainly prosecute him. Therefore he sat down again with terror undisguised.

"What did you do it for?" asked Uncle Joseph, who had not the least idea what had been done. But everybody knew that something must have been done, else why did Dick run away?

"Because I was hard up. What else should I do it for?"

In the extremity of his terror Dick presented a manly sulkiness.

"How did you do it?" asked Uncle Joseph again.

"Well, if you want money, and can get it by signing another man's name to a cheque, I suppose you'd do it that way."

"Ah! To be sure—to be sure; I never thought of it in that light." Uncle Joseph was acquiring information rapidly. "Ah, and when did you do it?"

"Six weeks ago, if you want to know."

"To be sure. Six weeks it was ago. Yes. You are perfectly right, Dick, to keep out of the way—perfectly right—perfectly right. If I were you I would continue to keep out of the way. It is a very serious thing. And your father is a hard man—very. What did you do with the money?"

"I paid some of my debts."

"Quite right. Quite right. As an honest man should. So far you acted wisely. And have you any of it left?"

"Some—not much."

"This is a very quiet and comfortable room, Dick. I don't know that I should like to live in a bedroom always, but for a change now, when one really wishes to be undisturbed. Isn't it rather dull here?"

"I suppose it is."

"Look here, Dick, I'll come here sometimes." The old man's dull face lit up suddenly as a brilliant thought occurred to him. "I'll come here sometimes of an evening, and we'll chat. It's dull for me,

too, in the evenings when I recall the glorious evenings I used to have in the time—dear me!—in the time that is past."

Dick received the proposition doubtfully.

"This will be very much better than going to your father and telling him where you are, won't it?"

"Can you keep a thing quiet?" asked Dick.

"Can I? Haven't I kept the sublime secrets of Thirty-Three Degrees? Secrets of all the Degrees? You forget, young man, that you are speaking to one whose life has been spent in doing nothing else except to keep the secret and work the Degree, and enjoy the Banquet afterwards. Give me a secret and I am happy. With the Banquet afterwards."

Dick reflected. There had been, earlier in the day, a conversation with his Professor, in which the latter promised to take him out of the country in a week at furthest, as soon, in fact, as he had concluded the sale of his Proprietary Club with all its rights, advantages, privileges, goodwill, and clientèle. The purchaser, we may explain, in parenthesis, was a gentleman connected with the Turf, and in some ways entirely fitted for the post of Proprietor. That is to say, he was perfectly unscrupulous, without morals, honesty, prejudice, or pity. And yet for want of the good manners which served the Count in lieu of these things, he speedily ruined the Club, and dispersed the gamblers, who now gamble elsewhere. A week at furthest. He could not shove the old gentleman down the stairs as he wished to do. It was necessary either to change his lodging or to conciliate him.

He conciliated him. He assured Uncle Joseph that it would give him the greatest satisfaction to confide in his honour, and to receive him in this apartment.

"Then," said the old man, with an involuntary smacking of his lips, "as you've got, no doubt, some of the money left, my dear young friend, and it is very pleasant to sit and talk, let us have—ah!—let us have—oh!" he drew a long, deep sigh, "a bottle of champagne."

I suppose his long professional career had accustomed him to associate champagne with secrecy, just as other people's experience leads them to associate champagne with Love, or with racecourses, or with dancing.

They had a glorious bottle of champagne. Uncle Joseph drank it nearly all, and on parting shook Dick effusively by the hand,

promised to come again next day, and swore that his secret was as sacred as that of the Thirty-Third Degree.

He kept his word, and returned faithfully the next evening, when he had another bottle of champagne. How valuable a thing is a secret properly handled! Uncle Joseph rubbed his hands over his own cleverness. Why, it was almost like a return to the good old times, except that the bottle of champagne was not preceded by a Banquet. This caused unsteadiness of gait on the way home, and a disposition to laugh and sit on doorsteps, to become playful, and to find one's speech strangely thick. Dick's secret, however, was safe.

"Oh, my dear young friend," said Uncle Joseph, "what a happiness for you that it was I who discovered you; suppose it had been your father or Norah? What would have happened? I was in a Police Court this morning"—he certainly was a delightful companion—"I was in a Police Court, and there was a poor young man brought up for embezzlement. He had run away, and they found him, and he was committed for trial. I thought of you, Dick, and my heart bled. I'll come again to-morrow."

He did return next day, but meantime Dick had heard something which made him less careful to conciliate the man who had his secret. In fact, the word had come to be in readiness.

The Count had settled everything, and they were to go away the very next day. Therefore, when Uncle Joseph rubbed his hands, and said that it was thirsty weather, sent by Providence in order to bring out the full flavour of a dry, sparkling wine, Dick coolly said that he wasn't going to stand any more, but if Uncle Joseph chose to drink soda-and-whisky, instead, he could.

The old man was wounded in his tenderest and most sacred depths. But he dissembled, and drank the substitute, which, as compared with the Great Original, is little better than mere Zoedone. He drank it, and went away early, with treachery in his heart, but a smile upon his lips.

"Come to-morrow night, Uncle Joseph," said Dick, "and you shall have as much champagne as you can drink. You shall bathe in champagne if you like."

There was a Something, this injured old man felt, which meant mischief. He would not get the promised champagne. Dick wouldn't look like that if he meant fair

and honest. Yet how mean! How paltry! To grudge a single bottle of champagne, just one a day, for the safe guarding of so valuable a secret!

In the morning, Uncle Joseph made quite a long journey. He took the train from King's Cross to Bishopsgate, whence he walked to the Whitechapel Road. Here he took the tram which goes along the Commercial Road. He got out half-way down, and made his way through certain by-streets to Glamis Road, Shadwell, where stands the Children's Hospital.

By this time he had learned everything, partly by pretending to know already, and partly by cunning questions, and partly because Dick, with a brutal cynicism, made no secret of his own infamy. Among other things, therefore, he knew that Norah's pretended holiday was a blind to conceal from the Doctor for a while the fact that she had left her post as Private Secretary to Mr. Murrige, under an accusation of complicity, at least, in a crime.

He went first to Hugh, who presently called Calista.

"I thought," he said, in conclusion, "that the young man's friends ought to know. He may be snatched from worse evils, even if he is punished for what he has done. His father is a hard man, but he is, I dare say, just. And Dick is, I fear, in very bad company—very bad company indeed. There were cards on the table, and I fear there has been drinking."

He lingered, as if there was something more he would like to say. Presently he desired a word in private with Hugh.

He went away with a sovereign in his pocket. He had sold his secret for a sovereign. It was unworthy the Possessor of so many Degrees.

He spent the evening at a restaurant in the Strand over a large bottle of champagne, taken with and after a colourable imitation of a Banquet. There were, however, no speeches, because it might have appeared strange for an elderly gentleman to rise at his little table and propose his own health, and respond for the Craft. But the wine was Perrier Jouet, and he drank it slowly and blissfully.

If in these days of forced abstinence, the Tempter were to approach Uncle Joseph, holding a bottle of champagne in his hand in exchange for the Sublime Secrets of the Thirty-Third Degree, would his virtue sustain him in that hour?

CHAPTER XIII. A LAST APPEAL.

THE Count's preparations were complete. He had sold his club; he was going to take his pupil with him to some quiet place in Paris, where serious instruction in the Art of seeming to play fairly could be carried on without interruption. They were going to cross by the night-boat in deference to a newly-developed modesty in Dick. In the afternoon the Count came with a portmanteau containing all that was wanted in the way of temporary outfit.

"We will start," he said, "as we shall continue, as gentlemen. If we take furnished lodgings, you must not creep in with no luggage of your own."

He then proceeded to exhort and admonish his pupil to obedience, diligence, and zeal, all of which, he assured him for the hundredth time, would be rewarded by such success as his pupil little dreamt of, and by such dexterity as should make him the Pride of the Profession.

"Above all," he said, "Patience, coolness, and continual practice. You must never for a single day lose the steady eye and the quick hand. I have confidence in you, my friend. And you have everything to learn—everything. You can play a little and draw a little. You must learn to play well and draw well. They are accomplishments which will be useful to you. You must even learn to dance, because a man of your age ought to love dancing. You must always seem ready to desert the table for the ballroom. You must learn to fence, and you must learn to use a pistol. You are going into a country where men fight. You will cease to be an Englishman. Henceforth you will have no country. The whole world is yours, because you will command everything which the world produces. Are you ready?"

"I am both ready and willing."

"Good. You must learn to carry yourself less like a London clerk, and more like a gentleman. You must assume the air of distinction if you can. You must learn to laugh, and to smile. But all that will come in another country, and with a new language. Come," he looked at his watch; "only two hours more and we shall be in the train—the past gone and forgotten, everything before you new and delightful, not one of the old friends left—"

Here the door opened, and Dick sprang to his feet with a cry, and a sudden change in his eyes to the wildest terror.

"Dick!"

"Calista! You here! What do you want?"

She saw a table littered with cards. On the bed was a portmanteau, closed and strapped, beside it a hat-box and a strapped bundle. With Dick, and standing over him, was a man whom she had never seen; but, from Hugh's description, he looked like the foreign person who had called on Mr. Murrige.

"I want to talk with you, Dick—alone."

"You can talk, mademoiselle," said the stranger, "in my presence. I believe I may say that our friend here has no secrets from me—now."

"None," said Dick, emboldened by the reflection that he was under protection, and that Calista was alone. "No secrets at all. Say what you have to say, Calista, and get it over. You are come to pitch into me. Very well then."

"Oh, Dick, I do not come to reproach you. But—oh, Dick, Dick—how could you do it?"

"Never mind that now. What else do you want to say?"

"Have you confessed to your father, Dick?"

"No, I haven't; what's the good? Confess! Why, do you take me for a fool? Confess to him!"

"Dick, my old friend, there is another person to think of besides yourself. There is Norah."

"What about Norah? My father knows all by this time. But he hasn't got the cheques. Without the cheques there is no proof."

"If there are no proofs, come with me to your father and tell him that Norah is innocent."

"What's the use? He knows it already."

Calista pointed to the portmanteau.

"You are going away?" she said.

"I am going away altogether. You'll get rid of me, and never see me again. So now you will all be happy."

"Where are you going?"

"That is my business. You would like to go and tell my father, wouldn't you?"

"And how are you going to live?"

"Like the sparrows."

"Oh, Dick, you have in your head some wild and wicked scheme. What does it mean? You are deceived and betrayed by—by your advisers—by this man. Consider, Dick; no one knows except your father, and Norah, and Hugh. I will beg

your father to forgive you. Nothing need ever be said about it. All shall be forgotten, and we will go on as if this dreadful time had never happened—just as we did in the old days, when we were boys and girls together, and innocent—oh, Dick!—and innocent!"

"Listen to this young lady, Dick," said the Count softly, "and consider. There is still plenty of time to change your mind. Consider what she says. You will have a delightful time. Your father is never in an ill-temper, is he? He looks and talks as if he was the most indulgent of parents and of the sweetest disposition. Of course, he will never remind you of this little indiscretion—never. And he will trust you always—always. And he will advance you in his business and make you partner. And you will always live in this delightful suburb, where there is nothing. Heaven! nothing! Neither theatre, nor café, nor society, nor amusement of any kind. As for your secret, it is known to no one except three other people. Of course, they have told nobody; of course, they never will; so that there is no chance of the story being told abroad, and people will not point fingers at you, and say: 'There is the man who forged his father's name, but repented, and came back again, and was forgiven!' What a beautiful thing it will be all your life, to feel that you have been so bad, and that everybody else is so good!"

"Oh no—no!" said Calista. "It will not be so, Dick; it will not."

"I have considered," Dick cried; "I have made up my mind."

"And there is the office-boy, too, who found the last of the cheques, and put together those bits of paper. He will hold his tongue, too, of course. Consider well, Dick. You will live despised and suspected. Bah! To be a young man forgiven! The forgiveness will be a ticket-of-leave; the return to work will be under surveillance of the Police. You can never get promotion; you can never live down the past. Young lady, is not this true?"

Calista hesitated; then she took courage.

"Better this, better obscurity and contempt, than a life of wickedness. What is he to do? What do you yourself do? You play cards. Do you play honestly? Better the most humble life."

"Matter of opinion, mademoiselle. If he goes with me, I offer him—what? He knows very well that at least he will enjoy an easy life and profitable work, with

plenty of money in it, and society, and——"

"Oh, Dick, it cannot be possible! How should this man give you all these things?"

"Dick is a free man," said the Italian; "he is perfectly free. He can go with you, or he can come with me, just as he pleases. I understood that he had resolved to accept my offer, and to come with me. His port-manteau is ready and packed, as you see. But if he prefers——"

"I do not prefer; I will go with you. Go away, Calista! Repentance! Forgiveness!"

"Then, Dick, if you must go, before you do go, I ask you for one simple act of justice. Write me a letter clearing Norah altogether."

"I won't, then! After Norah's conduct to me——"

"Sir," said Calista, turning to the stranger, "you say that you are going to introduce Dick to the society of gentlemen. I do not quite understand how he is to take his place among gentlemen, or what gentlemen will receive him; but that is your concern. Will you kindly tell these gentlemen that this man made love to a girl whom he had known all his life, and, when she refused him, charged her solemnly, and in writing, with the crime which he had himself committed? I suppose you care nothing about his having stolen the thing himself"—Calista, in the satiric vein, surprised herself—"but perhaps——"

"I have forgiven him, young lady," the Count interrupted with a smile. "I have anticipated your own kindness, and his father's, and I have already forgiven him."

"But, at least," she went on, regardless, "you may have manliness enough left to blame him for accusing this innocent girl. She is my sister, and once his friend. Will you join him in making all that girl's future life miserable? It is not enough that you know, and I know, and her lover knows, the truth. This wretched boy has left behind him a paper to which his father clings as a kind of last chance that his son is not guilty, after all."

Dick laughed aloud, and Calista shuddered.

"I think," said the Count gravely, "that, if I were our young friend here, I should sit down and write a letter withdrawing the document in question."

"What's the good?" said Dick. "Of course, he knows the truth by this time."

"I should write a short letter, simply stating that this young lady—who must

be charming indeed to have diverted our friend's attention from his cards—is perfectly innocent. Our friend, thus forgiven by you, mademoiselle, and by me—presumably also by his father—and, we will hope, by the young lady concerned with himself in the matter, will embark upon his new career with a clear conscience such as you English love to possess, and a light heart, and an utter freedom from anxiety as to enquiry by detectives or unpleasant messages."

"No one will enquire, I am sure; no one will send any detectives after him. I think I can promise that. As for the money, Dick, Hugh sends me word that he will repay the whole for you."

Dick offered up, so to speak, a sort of prayer or aspiration concerning the destruction of Hugh. But he was well aware that the repayment of the money was about the surest way of securing himself from pursuit.

"Come," said the Count, "write, my friend—write this letter to the young lady, your old friend. Take the pen."

Dick sat at the table and unwillingly obeyed.

"Write. I will tell you what to say."

"Go on, then."

"My dear mademoiselle—or my dear friend——"

"Dear Calista," wrote Dick. "There, I knew very well what to say. Listen to this:

"DEAR CALISTA,—The paper which I gave my father about Norah was false from beginning to end. I made it up in order to stop him from taking up the Case himself. I thought that perhaps as he was so fond of Norah he would be staggered and let the thing drop. I thought he would rather believe it was me than believe it was Norah. And it lay between us. Norah did not take the cheques. Norah had nothing to do with them, nor had Daff. Norah presented one of the cheques for me, Daff presented one for me; and if I ever meet that office-boy, I'll wring his neck. You can do what you like with this letter. —Good-bye, DICK MURRIDGE.

"There," he said, "take and give that to my father. Tell Norah I didn't mean, at first, to be hard upon her. But it was either her or me. And, besides, she had treated me so badly that I was savage. Tell her that I don't want any forgiving or nonsense. Who cares about forgiveness? All that I want is to be left alone."

"Oh, thank you, Dick!" Calista received the letter with softened eyes. "Norah forgives you, whether you want her forgiveness or not. I am very glad I found you. Now good-bye!" She held out both hands. "Oh, Dick!—poor Dick!—my brother Dick! be good, be honest. There is nothing else in the world worth living for. Be good, Dick."

Was it by chance or was it by design that the Signor's hands should be in his pockets at that moment, and that there should be the clink of coin?

"Nothing else?" said Dick. "There is money."

He turned his face away without taking her hands or being softened by the tears in her beautiful eyes.

The Signor stepped to the door and held it open while Calista passed out. Will there ever, in that unknown future which lies before this young man, fall upon him the memory of this last chance and the tears of the girl who was with him more patient than a sister with a brother, more ready to hear his sorrow, more sure to forgive, and more careful to excuse? Will he ever discover in the years to come that a life of obscurity with honour is better than the life marked out for him of trickery and cheating?

Exactly an hour afterwards another cab drew up at the "Hotel Entrance" of the tavern. There stepped out of it an old gentleman—none other than Uncle Joseph—and an elderly gentleman, who was Mr. Murrige.

"On the second floor!" you said.

"Second floor—first door on the left when you get to the landing. I'll wait for you down here. You can't miss him, and he's afraid to go out, because of you."

Mr. Murrige went slowly up the stairs. Any man bound on such an errand would go slowly. He was resolved what to do. There should not be the least appearance of anger. But he should demand a full confession. Otherwise— He reached the first floor and looked about him. Through an open door he saw a large room filled with little tables, the atmosphere thick with stale tobacco-smoke and the reek of spirits.

"The gambling club," he said, and mounted to the second floor.

He went to the door indicated, and opened it without knocking. The room bore signs of recent occupation; the bed had not been made since the night, and the bed-clothes were tumbled about; there were cards on the table, and a pipe, and a

jug which had contained beer. He thought he must have mistaken the room, and tried the next, and the next. There were some more rooms on the landing. They all presented the appearance of being family bedrooms. Mr. Murrige slowly came downstairs again.

"You told me the first door on the left," he said to Uncle Joseph.

"First door on the left it is."

Mr. Murrige this time sought the landlord in the bar.

The functionary who was in the bar explained that a young gentleman had been staying there some little time, but that he was gone—gone off in a cab that very day. Being asked if he kept a gambling club in the house, he said that he did not; he let his first floor to a social club, which met every night for conversation and tobacco. There might be cards. He did not know the names of the members; it was not his business. The young gentleman who had just gone away paid his bill regular, and was quiet and well-mannered. He kept indoors because he was recovering from an illness. He did not know where he had gone.

Nothing more could be got out of the landlord.

Mr. Murrige came away.

"Well, sir—well!" asked Uncle Joseph. "You have seen him, and made short work with him, no doubt. Ah, he was penitent, I trust! And you forgave him, on conditions—of course on conditions. It rejoices me to have been the humble means, under Providence, of bringing together father and son, under these most interesting and peculiar circumstances. Sixty pounds, I think you said? And five pounds for the humble Instrument. More Providence! Sixty-five pounds. It is a sad, sad loss."

"I promised you five pounds for putting the boy into my hands. Well, he is not there."

"Not there? Mr. Murrige, I give you the word of—an officer in I don't know how many Lodges, that he was there yesterday."

"Very likely. He isn't there to-day. However, as you did your best, here's half-a-sovereign for you."

He gave the old man this paltry coin, which will do little more than purchase one bottle of really good champagne, and left him standing sorrowfully on the kerbstone.

Half-a-sovereign! And Uncle Joseph thought he had secured, at one stroke, a whole dozen of champagne!

CHAPTER THE LAST.

"My poor dear Norah," said Calista next morning—she had actually kept her secret the whole night—"is it not time that things should change?"

"They will never change for me," said Norah. "I have been thinking what I had better do. I never can go back to Mr. Murrige, that is quite certain; no one else wants a girl who can hunt up genealogies. I could not live at home doing nothing. I have made up my mind, Calista, to become a nurse. I will go to the London Hospital, and become a Probationer, and then I will be a hospital nurse."

"My dear child, you could not," said Calista.

"I could, and I will. Why, if Hugh could be a Doctor, and you can be a Sister, cannot I be a nurse? Besides, then I shall be in the same Profession as Hugh, and hearing something about him, though we are parted. I should go mad if I were never to hear anything more of him."

"Poor Norah! But suppose that it will not be necessary for you to do anything at all—suppose, my dear"—sisters do sometimes kiss each other without feeling the force of Hood's remark about sandwiches of veal—"suppose good news were to come for you?"

"There cannot be any good news for me. Why, Calista, you know that Mr. Murrige will hear of nothing until Dick has an opportunity of meeting his accusers. I, for one, have never accused him—and I never will. And now he has run away, is it likely that he will accuse himself?"

"Never mind what is likely. Think of the very best that could possibly happen."

"The very best?"

"The very best."

"Remember, Calista, it is not enough that Hugh should be satisfied. Of course he is satisfied. How can he ever love me unless he respects me? I must have much more than that."

"You shall have much more."

"Calista!" Norah caught her hand. "What have you heard? What have you done? Have you seen him? Have you seen Dick?"

"Patience, dear, for half an hour more, and you shall know all. Tell me, Norah, just this about Dick. Are you very—very bitter about him?"

"I don't know. He has robbed me of Hugh."

"He will give Hugh back to you. Can you forgive him?"

Norah hesitated.

"I know everything, dear; more than you know, even. Dick has gone. He has fled the country, I believe. There is nothing left us but to forgive him. He will never know whether you have forgiven him or not. But tell me that you do."

"Oh, what will it help him for me to say that I forgive him? I would not wish to punish him, nor to take revenge, and yet—Yes, Calista, I forgive him. Poor Dick! we loved him once, did we not?"

"Even if he does not know, it is something that you forgive him. Men's crimes follow them with scourges in their hands—scourges with knots in them, and every knot, for poor Dick, your vengeance and your unforgiveness. Now he will be punished less fearfully. My dear, your trouble is over. No one, not even the most spiteful, will ever be able to hint that there was the slightest truth in this monstrous accusation. No one except ourselves will ever know of it. Come, Norah, to Hugh's room. Someone awaits you there—a most important person, almost as important as Hugh. Come! A most delightful person; and oh, Norah, be prepared for the best news in the world, and for the greatest surprise you ever imagined."

Calista led her sister to the Resident Medical Officer's room, where they found, besides Hugh, a lady whom Norah recognised at once as Hugh's mother—Madame Aquila, the singer. She was in black silk, that kind of lifelong mourning which some widows adopt. Her face was kindly and soft, still beautiful, though her youth had long since vanished.

"My dear," she said, taking Norah by both hands, so that she could draw her close and kiss her comfortably—"my dear child, I have heard all. You have greatly suffered. But all is over now. Your sister has made the rough way smooth, and removed the last obstacle. See what it is to be a Sister in the Hospital; how helpful it makes one! And now you will take my Hugh again, will you not? He is worth taking, my dear."

"Oh," said Norah, her eyes running over, "Hugh knows that first—"

"Yes, my dear," Madame Aquila interrupted; "Hugh knows exactly what you intend. Not yet, then. We will wait a little."

They had not long to wait, for steps were

heard in the corridor, and the Doctor entered, accompanied by Mr. Murrige.

"Well, Calista," said the former, "I am here in reply to your letter. What have you got to tell me?"

"First, here is Madame Aquila, Hugh's mother. Next, you will have to keep perfectly quiet, and not interrupt for five minutes. And then I have got a Surprise for you. Such a Surprise!"

"Not another coronet, I hope?"

"And I am here, Calista," said Mr. Murrige. "I have brought with me a certain document in obedience to your request. What next? My son has left the country, I understand. What next?"

"First, Mr. Murrige, will you withdraw that document, and own to Norah that you have proved it to be false and treacherous from beginning to end, and then tear it up in our presence?"

These were brave words. Mr. Murrige heard them with some surprise.

"I have only to repeat what I said before. I withdraw nothing, and I acknowledge nothing, until my son has had a chance of explanation. I admit—I have never tried to deny—that the case against him is very black. But I will not condemn my own son unheard. The paper shall lie in the safe; the subject shall never be mentioned; Norah can come back as soon as she pleases. But if my son ever returns again—he has gone without a word—he shall have an opportunity of giving any explanation he pleases."

"Norah can never go back to you until that Document is destroyed, and its contents acknowledged to be false. More than that, she can never renew her broken engagement until you yourself acknowledge that its falsehood has been proved."

"I cannot help her, then," said Mr. Murrige coldly.

"I wonder if I might ask what is the meaning of all this?" asked the Doctor. "I was promised a Surprise, and it begins with a mystery."

"Presently," said Calista; "presently, perhaps. In the meantime, sit down and say nothing. I have got something to show to Mr. Murrige, and then you shall have your Surprise."

"Perhaps you have another so-called proof," Mr. Murrige went on. "I warn you that nothing—nothing but my son's voice—can convince me."

"Yet you are morally certain?" said Hugh.

"It is not a question of my opinion, but

of my son's honour. Go on, Calista. Produce your additional facts if you have any, and let me go."

"You shall have his own words, then." Calista produced her letter. "Listen to this."

She read aloud the letter which she had got from Dick.

Norah breathed a deep sigh.

"Why——" began the Doctor, about to ask how anyone in the world could be such an idiot as to suppose that his daughter Norah could be wrongly connected with cheques, but he was peremptorily ordered by Calista to preserve silence.

"Here is the letter, Mr. Murrige. Look at it. You know your son's handwriting. He gave me that letter yesterday afternoon at the place where he was lodging."

"At what time?"

"At six in the afternoon."

"I must have missed him," said Mr. Murrige, "by an hour."

"Are you satisfied now?" asked Calista.

"Do you hear his voice in this letter?"

Mr. Murrige read the letter again, as if considering every word, whether it was genuine or not, and whether the signature was really his son's.

"The writing is my son's," he said, returning the letter. "What do you wish me to say?"

"Nay, Mr. Murrige; you know what you have to say."

He still hesitated. Then he drew a paper from his pocket-book, unfolded it, and handed it to Norah.

"It concerns you, Norah," he said. "Let me place in your hands the string of falsehoods which has given you so much pain. I cannot offer any excuses. I have no apologies to make for my unhappy son. You do not wish me to tell you what I think of him. I had but one son," he added sorrowfully. "As for that boy's father——"

"Oh no—no!" said Norah. "It is enough. Hugh, tear—burn—destroy this horrible paper! Let us never mention it again. Let us all agree to forget it. Hugh, tear it into a thousand fragments!"

Hugh placed it in the grate, and applied a lighted match to it. In a few seconds Dick's masterpiece was in ashes.

"I have one thing to say, Norah," added Mr. Murrige. "On that day when the facts were made clear to me, and the witnesses one after the other—the gambling man, and your brother, and the boy—showed that there was one, and only

one, guilty person, I would not admit the truth because there was the chance, the slender chance, that my son might have had something to explain—some kind of excuse. I even tried to persuade myself that there might be a conspiracy against him."

"He was your son," said Calista; "poor Dick!"

"At all events," said Hugh, "you might have trusted someone."

"Young gentleman, I trusted—my own son."

No one replied.

"I trusted my son," he repeated; "I, who have spent my life in calling those people Fools who trust anyone. Norah, will you come back to me?"

Norah looked at Hugh.

"No, sir," the Resident Medical replied, taking her hand; "Norah shall not work for you or for anyone else any more. It will be my happiness to work for her."

"In that case," said Mr. Murrige, "and as I have no longer a clerk, and time is money—at least, my time—I will go. Good-bye, Norah!" She gave him her hand. "I am sorry, my dear. You were a very good clerk to me, worth three times—nay, six times what I gave you. Well, I wish you"—he hesitated, and laughed incredulously—"I wish you what they call happiness in Love and Marriage. I do not quite understand what they mean by Happiness, but I think it chiefly means making believe, and pretending, and shutting your eyes to facts a great deal. If you do that, I don't see why you may not expect to be fairly happy if you have money enough. Of course that is the first thing. With the recollection of my example, you will naturally never place any hope or belief in the future of a child."

"Do not go, Mr. Murrige," said Hugh; "there remains something which concerns you. It is the Surprise, sir"—he turned to the Doctor—"of which Calista spoke."

"Now for the Surprise," said the Doctor. "After the Mystery comes the History."

"It is a Surprise about—about the Title," Hugh began. "It was as much of a Surprise, when I first learned it, as it will be to you and to Mr. Murrige. To you, I hope, not a disagreeable Surprise. And to Mr. Murrige—"

"Well, what will it be to me?"

"You will see directly. Were you quite sure, Mr. Murrige—perfectly sure, from your information and the enquiries you made, when you bought those reversionary

rights, that only two lives stood between the Doctor and the Title?"

Mr. Murrige started.

"Sure? Of course I am quite sure. The late Lord Clonsilla had two brothers. One of them died young, and the other died a few years ago without issue. The next heir was his first cousin, the grandson of the first Viscount and the third Baron. He it was who died the other day. But the papers took no notice of his death. The next heir is, without the least doubt, the Doctor here. There are other cousins; but they have no claim, and they may be neglected."

"That is quite right so far; but are you sure that the late Viscount had no children?"

"He had one son, who died young."

"He died at seven-and-twenty. He died, Mr. Murrige—to my mother's lifelong sorrow—in the second year of his marriage."

"What!" cried Mr. Murrige. "To your mother's sorrow?"

"To your mother's lifelong sorrow?" Norah repeated.

The others, I am ashamed to say, not being genealogists, failed to catch the meaning of these simple words.

Then Mrs. Aquila supplemented them, saying softly:

"It is quite true; my husband was the only son of Lord Clonsilla. After his death, I went back to my profession and continued to sing. Hugh is my son. He is, therefore, if he pleases, Lord Clonsilla."

"You don't mean this, Hugh?" cried the Doctor, springing to his feet.

"It is quite true. If I please, I can call myself by that title," said Hugh. "Forgive me, Doctor. Forgive me, Norah. It is only a very short time since I heard this intelligence. But it is quite true. Tell me you do not regret the loss of the Title you had resolved never to wear?"

The Doctor gave Hugh his hand.

"Regret it, my dear boy! I rejoice. I have got sixteen threatening letters, all arrived within the last three days. Here they are, with the coffins and skulls and all complete. You are welcome to them, Hugh; only, my dear boy, you will be shot instead of me—"

"Oh, Hugh!" cried Norah.

"No, my dear," said her father. "On second thoughts, I'll keep the letters, and Hugh shall be safe. As for me, who ever went out of his way to shoot a walking general practitioner? And as for this

Title, it has been on my mind like a dreadful bugbear ever since I got it. Take it, Hugh—take it!"

"I don't understand this," said Mr. Murrige. "I don't understand this at all. If you think, any of you, that I am going to lose these estates, which I fairly bought, without a blow for them, you are mistaken."

"I do not at all expect that you will let things go until you are quite satisfied," said Hugh.

"I have issued orders to the tenants to pay up, under pain of eviction. I will evict them all, if I want the whole British Army at my back."

"On the contrary," said Hugh, "the tenants will be served with notices not to pay you any rent. Then it will be for you, I believe, to find your remedy."

"Poor Maria!" the Doctor sighed, "she is no longer Lady Clonsilla."

"I am sorry for her disappointment; but Norah will, I hope— No, dear," said Hugh; "let us have done, once and for all, with the gingerbread rubbish. There is neither a noble record, nor a long pedigree, nor a single great achievement preserved in such a Title as ours. There is not even the duty of maintaining a great family estate. Let us remain what we are, and, if I succeed, let me make a name worth having for those who come after us. This will be worth a thousand Titles. As for the inglorious coronet, with the memory of the ignoble services by which it was won, let it go."

"Yes, Hugh," said Norah; "let it go. We will begin afresh."

Just then Uncle Joseph appeared. He was hot and flushed, because he had lost his way in the network of streets between the Commercial Road and the High Street, Shadwell.

"Most important news, Mr. Murrige!" he said. "News worth telling; news worth hearing. I heard you were come down here, and I made haste after you."

"I want no more news," said Mr. Murrige. "I think I have had enough."

"There has been a steamboat accident—a collision. They have put back, and Mr. Richard, Mr. Murrige—Mr. Richard—"

"What? Is he killed?"

"No, sir, he is not killed. They have put back. His name is in the list of passengers picked up. He can be stopped if you please. You can have him arrested by telegraph; he is still at Dover."

Mr. Murrige made no reply. He put on his hat and walked away.

"Now, really, do you think he has gone to send that telegram?" said Uncle Joseph. "And without a word of thanks."

He then became aware that Norah was in Hugh Aquila's arms, and that the young man was kissing her without the least affectation of concealment.

"Oh," he said, "I am glad that things are made up. It will take place soon, Mr. Hugh? I am very happy indeed to think of my part in bringing together two hearts which will not, I am sure, be ungrateful. Will the Ceremony of Initiation, I mean of Marriage, take place soon?"

"Very soon, Uncle Joseph," said Hugh. "As soon as we can arrange it."

"There is no ceremony," said Uncle Joseph with a sweet smile of anticipation, "no ceremony at all, next to the Inauguration of a new Lodge, where I am more at home than a Wedding Breakfast. On this occasion, Doctor—on this occasion, though our accession to the Peerage, actually to the Peerage, was allowed to pass unnoticed and unmarked in the usual manner—on this occasion I trust that Champagne will mark the day."

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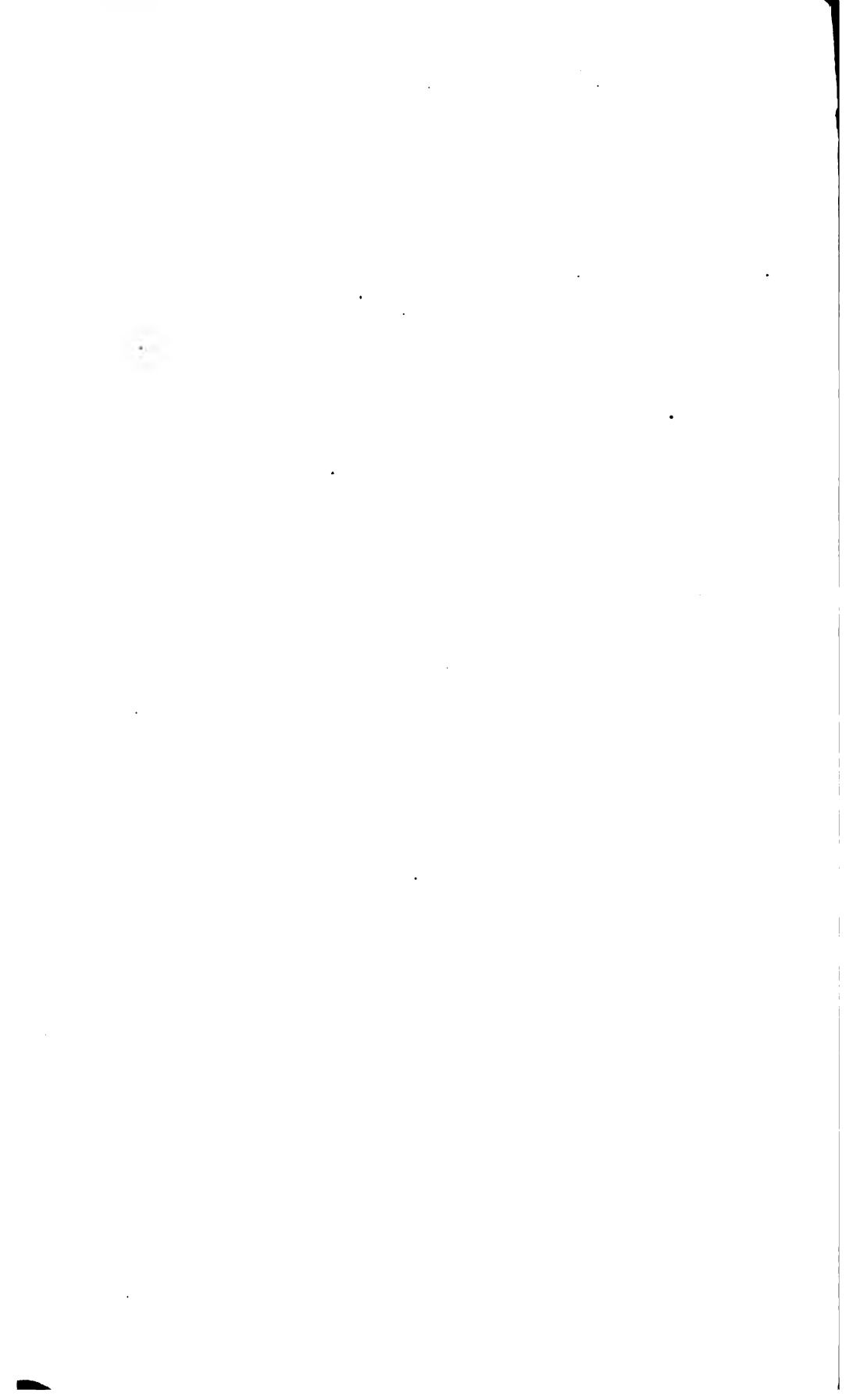
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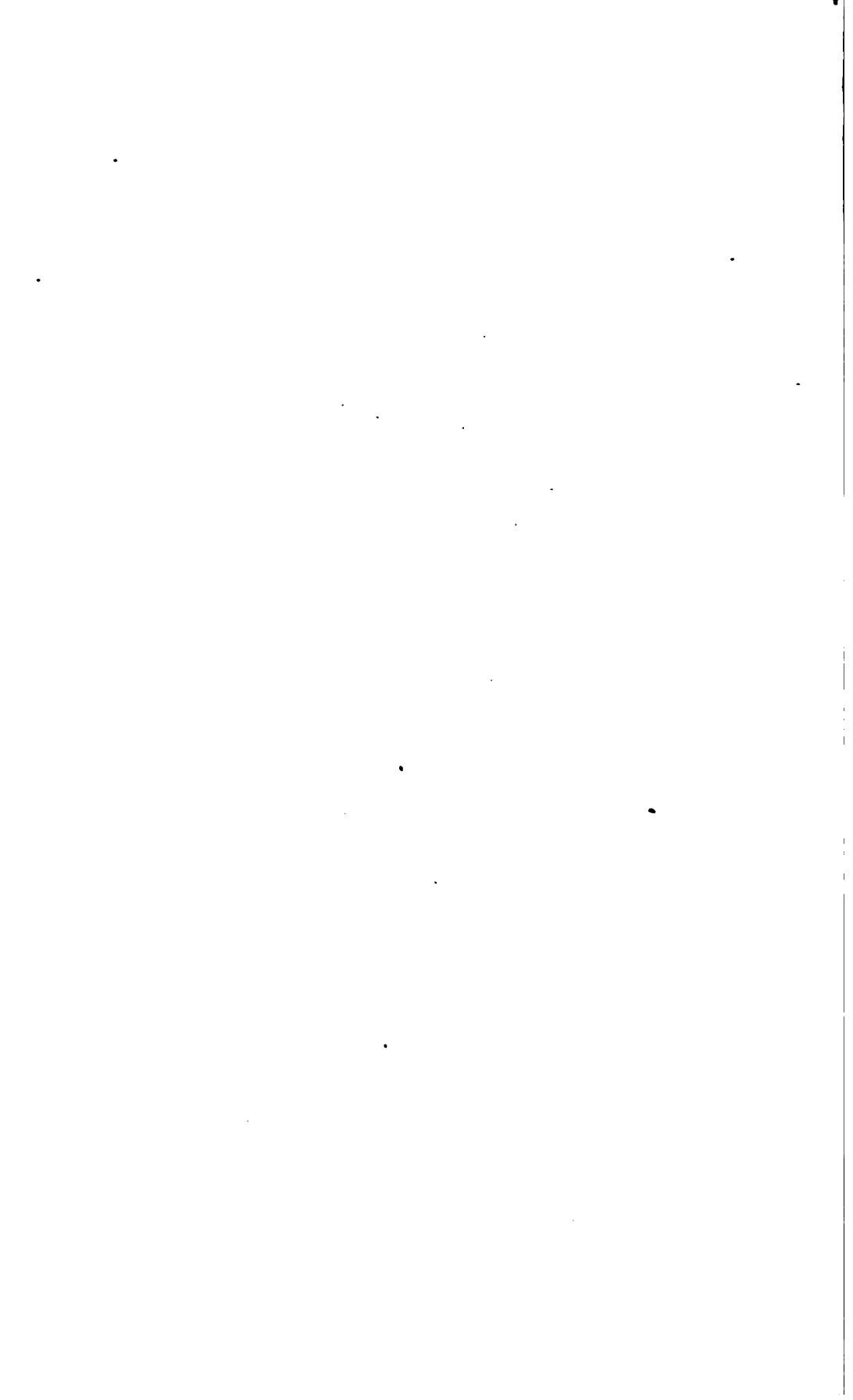
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