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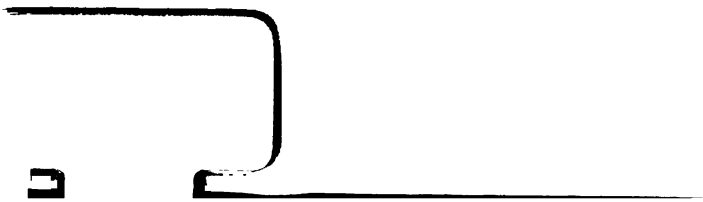
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ALL BUT LOST.

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ALL BUT LOST.

A Novel.

BY

G. A. HENTY,

AUTHOR OF "THE MARCH TO MAGDALA," ETC., ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



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ALL BUT LOST.

CHAPTER I.

COLLEGE LIFE.

It is near the end of the Lent term at Cambridge, a raw, damp day. The grey clouds are drifting thick and low, over the flat fen country, and a fine mist is falling steadily. But for once no one seems to mind the weather. It is two o'clock, and from all the colleges the men are pouring out in groups, on their way down to the river.

Hardly a soul in the University remains behind. Even the reading men have closed their books for the afternoon, have given up their daily constitutional out beyond Trumpington, and are going down to see their college eights row.

It is the last day of the races. Along the men tramp in little knots through the narrow winding streets—talking excitedly as they go, and making many bets as to the fortune of the day—and then, across the wet grass, down to the water side.

Here those who are to row cross the floating bridge to the boat-houses, while the others walk slowly along the banks, to see the boats as they paddle by on their way down. Soon they come; John's in its blazing scarlet, Trinity in dark blue, cherry-coloured Emanuel, chocolate Corpus, and violet Caius; Trinity Hall in its sober grey, Sidney in bright orange, and Queen's in green.* These and many others sweep past, and the narrow river seems alive with the flashing oars.

The men on the banks hurry now, to be up at the starting posts in time.

Some trot along for a little way, by the side of the boat they are most interested in, watching with anxious eye, the condition and form of each man, and the regular swing of the crew. Now they have arrived at the post-reach, and are clustered along the towing path, while the boats,

* Many of the colours have since been changed.

by this time empty, lie at their respective stations. Their crews stand alongside, looking grave and anxious, and receive the final words of advice and admonition from their captains.

At length the last boat has arrived at its post, and the first gun fires. There are three minutes yet, but the men take their places in their boats, strip off the upper jerseys and comforters in which they are wrapped, and, amid a perfect babel of last words, of little speeches of encouragement and good will, from their friends on the bank, push slowly off.

The crowd on the towing-path clusters thickest round the first three boats, but our place is by the fifth, for that contains the men whose fortunes will be the subject of this story. It is Caius; before it lies Emanuel, behind it Trinity Hall, confessedly the best crew of the three. Another gun. The tumult on the bank is hushed as if by magic, umbrellas are closed, coats buttoned up, and all prepare for a start. The boats lie out in the middle of the stream; twenty of them in a long line; each with its eight stalwart oarsmen, all in white, their caps forming the only distinguishing badges. Each

of the coxswains holds in his hand a rope attached to his post. These are forty yards apart, and each boat's bow is therefore only some sixty feet from the rudder of the one before it.

There is a dead silence, broken only by voices of men on the bank counting the seconds, and by the short quick orders of the coxswains.

“Fifteen seconds gone;”—“Paddle bow and two;”—“Twenty;” “Thirty;” “Forty seconds gone;” “Forty-five;”—“Pull half a stroke bow;”—“Fifty;” “Fifty-five;”—“Forward all;”—“Sixty.” As the word is heard, the gun is fired; a hundred and sixty oars strike the water as if by one impulse. At the same moment a roar of exhortation and encouragement breaks from the crowd on the bank; they set off to run—a wild, pushing, shouting throng.

No easy matter is it to keep up with the flying boats, jostled and pushed in that excited, eager crowd. Woe be to him who falls,—fortunate by comparison he who is pushed into the river. A wild looking set are they: men in boating dresses of every variety of colour, their arms waving frantically; men in pea-jackets, and waterproof coats and wraps of every description; sober

reading men, lost in the tumult, bewildered and hustled, intent only on keeping their feet, all shouting in voices which grow momentarily hoarse and broken.

The boats had got an equally good start, but in the first few hundred yards Trinity Hall had considerably lessened the gap between itself and Caius, while the latter had gained but slightly upon Emanuel. In this order they round the post corner, and dash on through the gut to Grassy. "Now bow and three, now bow and three," is the shout, and the boats sweep round the sharp curve.

Here Emanuel steers rather wild, and her pursuer has palpably gained upon her. The shouting redoubles; men who have dropped behind from the leading boats join the throng and take up the cry. "Now, Caius, now; you're gaining, you're gaining." "Now, Trinity Hall, take her along." There are not thirty feet between Emanuel and Caius, while Trinity Hall is not twenty behind the latter. On they fly, the boats leaping forward at each stroke like long hungry water snakes after their prey, past the Plough, and round Ditton corner. Here a fresh burst

cheering breaks out from the opposite bank, from numbers stationed there;—dons too old and staid to run along the towing path, and men on horseback, who start to gallop alongside. Many ladies are there too; these wave their handkerchiefs and parasols, and would like to run along with the rest. On the boats dart; rounding the corner the tired crews pull with renewed energy and hope. It is straight home now; only another half mile. They are nearing each other fast. There is certain to be a bump: which boat will make it? Nearer and nearer. Trinity Hall overlaps Caius; but her bow has not touched her flying adversary, and whenever it draws near, the rudder of the Caius boat is slightly turned, and a rush of water thrown against it. This cannot last. Inch by inch they draw up, and Caius is still three feet behind Emanuel. Her chance seems hopeless. All at once, in a momentary lull of the shouting, a well-known voice from the throng, that of one of the college tutors, himself once a famous oar, comes out clear and strong—"Now, Caius, now—twenty strokes, and you are in to them. One—two—three." The crowd take up the cry: "four"—

“five”—“six;” and at each stroke the boat seems to leap upon its adversary. “Seven”—“eight”—“three more and you do it.” “Nine”—“ten”—“eleven;” and a last wild cheer breaks out as the nose of the Caius boat touches the rudder of Emanuel, and the bump is made.

The two boats immediately pull aside to let those behind them pass, and the gasping crews lean on their oars, exhausted and breathless. One or two get out, too done-up to pull farther, while friends on the bank take their places. The light University blue flag, with the Caius' arms in the centre, is hoisted triumphantly in the stern, and the boat paddles quietly on again, saluted by a burst of “see the conquering hero comes,” from the band on the barge near the railway bridge. The excitement is over, and the men on the bank, awaking to the consciousness that they are terribly wet, once more put up their umbrellas, and make the best of their way back to college.

It is evening now in the quiet courts of Caius. The wind has quite dropped, the rain has ceased, and the night is still and dark; but from some of the windows the lights stream out brightly into the gloom, and sounds of singing and loud

laughter at times break out across the deserted court.

Now a man crosses the court, smoking a short pipe, with a very battered cap upon his head, and a very short gown over his shoulders ; goes up the stairs to one of the rooms from which the laughter and noise come loudest, stops at a door over which the name of Grahame is painted in white letters, opens it, and goes in.

His arrival is greeted with shouts of welcome, with a great thumping of tumblers, and cries of " Hurrah, seven ! Well rowed, old man ! "

" Come up this way, Frank," a voice from the other end of the room shouted through the smoke ; " I have kept a place for you here by me."

" I'll come as soon as I can see my way," the new comer answered ; " but, upon my word, considering that it's barely nine o'clock yet, you have managed to blow a very fair amount of tobacco smoke between you." Accordingly he made his way up to the end of the room, and took his seat by the side of his host, who was the captain and stroke of the Caius eight, and had given this party to celebrate the victory of the day,

and the termination of the last month's training. The men round the table, by the unanimity and earnestness with which they were smoking, seemed determined to make up for their long abstinence from the fragrant weed.

Frank Maynard, the new comer, was a tall, wiry man, lithe and sinewy, with broad sloping shoulders. His face was long and narrow, still whiskerless, or nearly so, and he would be probably a much better-looking man in another two or three years than he was now. But he could never be handsome; his features were by no means regular, and his honest eyes, frank smile, and powerful frame, constituted at present his only claims to attraction. He was generally addressed by his Christian name, a sure sign at the University of unusual popularity. Upon Frank's left sat his cousin, Fred Bingham, and a stronger contrast could hardly be imagined. Fred Bingham was under the middle height, and his figure was extremely slight, almost as much so as that of a boy of fourteen, and his waist could have been spanned by the hands of an ordinary man. Apart from the extraordinary youthfulness of his appearance,

he was good-looking, with well-cut aristocratic features. His hair was very fair, and his face had hardly a trace of colour. His voice was high-pitched and thin, and his laugh especially more resembled that of a girl than a man. He had small and well-formed feet, but his hands curiously were large, red, and coarse. Among a certain set in the college with whom he cared to make himself agreeable he was much liked, but among the boating set he was intensely unpopular. These big, strong men were antipathetic to him, their powerful figures dwarfed his, their deep hearty voices drowned his weak treble and girlish laugh, and his disagreeable remarks and cutting sneers frequently caused disputes which it needed all his cousin Frank's influence to allay. Indeed, had it not been for Frank's popularity, the crew would never have retained him for their coxswain, notwithstanding the fact that he really was a most useful man, always cool and collected, with a perfect knowledge of the river, a good judge of rowing, and above all a feather-weight.

It is unnecessary to enter into any details as to the doings of the evening, the speech-making,

the songs, the drinking, and the smoking. Every one can imagine the scene for himself, and may conceive the noise, the shouting and laughing which twenty young fellows in full health and spirits, highly satisfied with themselves and their day's work, would make upon such an occasion. So great was the hubbub indeed that the dons across the court began to think that even the victory of the day, which they themselves had discussed with great satisfaction over their wine in the common room, could hardly excuse such an uproarious meeting as this. About midnight, however, the party began to break up, and the men scattered over the college to their respective rooms, singing snatches of songs as they went. And then the courts were still again. Frank Maynard, and a few of the quieter men, sat for another hour smoking and discussing the race, agreeing that the credit of the day was mainly due to Crockford, the don who had called upon them for the final ten strokes which had effected the bump. After this they, too, separated, and in a few minutes Caius was quiet for the night.

Frank Maynard had not been very long asleep

when he was awakened by a shouting, and the sound of running in the street. He opened his eyes—the room was lit up with a dull red light—and he hardly needed the cry of “Fire! fire!” to tell him what was the matter. He leaped from his bed, threw up his window, and looked out. There were no flames visible, but the fronts of the houses on the opposite side of the road were aglow with a dark fiery glare. It was evident that the flames were behind him—that one of the colleges was on fire. He ran into the sitting-room—to the windows which looked into the court, and there, through the trees before him, across the court, was a great glare, and sparks flying up. It was close—so close that he could not tell whether it was in the next court of his own college or in Trinity Hall, which lies behind it, separated only by a narrow lane.

It was the work of a minute to throw on his clothes, and to run downstairs and across to the gateway leading to the next court; and then he saw that the fire was not there, but in Trinity Hall.

Turning back, he ran to the porter's-lodge. It was already open, and the porter, in answer to

an appeal at the gate for assistance, had just gone into the college to rouse the men.

Frank ran down the narrow lane between Caius and the schools, and in another minute was in Trinity Hall. From the rooms above the gateway a volume of flame and red smoke was pouring out. Not many men were as yet in the court; those there were, belonged to the college itself. They were looking on, ready enough to assist, but helpless at present. The engines had not yet arrived, and the flames were having it all their own way, pouring out with a fierce crackling from the windows of the first-floor. The volume of red smoke, lit up by an occasional tongue of flame, which filled the adjoining rooms, showed that it was rapidly spreading. Very soon a bright ripple of flame runs along the ceilings, the window curtains catch, the glass shivers into fragments at the fiery touch, and the flames rush out with a roar of triumph. Now the men from the colleges near, from Caius and Trinity and Clare, are clustering in, together with a few of the townspeople. Presently the engines come lumbering up, and the handles are seized by eager volunteers. But there is no

water at hand, and the hose are not long enough to reach to the river behind. So long lines of men are formed down to the water-side, who pass the buckets along from hand to hand, and in a few minutes the engines begin to work. By this time the fire has got a firm hold of the part attacked, and the upper stories are one sheet of flame. Dainty food do the old colleges, with their rickety wooden staircases and wainscoted rooms, dry and inflammable as so much tinder, offer to the hungry fire. At last the engines are in full play, and work at a speed at which engines have seldom worked before. Most of those at the handles are boating-men, who have been for weeks in some sort of training. Beneath their powerful arms the cranks work up and down, with a rapid stroke, very unlike the usual monotonous clank of a fire-engine. The men encourage each other with cheering shouts and boating cries of "Now then, all together!" "Now she moves!" and the jets of water dash eagerly in at the blazing windows. But the fire still spreads. The roof falls in. The flames mount up more fiercely and brightly than before, with vast volumes of glowing smoke, and myriads

of fiery sparks. Day is dawning, and the crowded court presents a strange sight as the grey morning light breaks on the red flashing of the fire. Some of the men are in pea-jackets with boating-caps of every colour, others are in their caps and gowns. Here a party is working its engine with untiring vigour, there another group is impatiently awaiting fresh supplies of water; long lines of men are passing the buckets to and from the river. Sober dons are as busy and excited as any; a few are directing the operations, the rest are hard at work among the undergraduates. In spite of their exertions the fire still spreads. All are anxious; for if the flames extend to the adjoining wing of the court, Trinity, which is only separated by a narrow lane, is certain to catch fire. These old places are terribly inflammable. Some of the dons therefore get upon the roof, Crockford of Caius most active among them, and direct the hose of the engines; not unfrequently in their haste and inexperience deluging themselves and each other with water, to the amusement of the undergraduates below. No attempt is now made to extinguish the fire in the part it has already seized upon, every effort

being directed to prevent it from spreading. Several times the flames break into the adjoining rooms, but the dons with the hose, on ladders at the windows, stand their ground and beat them back. All this time the college servants are moving about with cans of beer among the men at work; the butteries of the colleges near are thrown open, and refreshments served to all comers.

At last the efforts to check the flames are successful, and they spread no farther. Another hour passes, and it is evident that all danger is over. The flames only shoot up at intervals from the shell they have destroyed. The gowns then leave it to the firemen to pump upon the ruins, and scatter to their homes to breakfast.

By the time that Frank Maynard had changed his things and was ready, a friend who had been working next to him at the engine, and who had agreed to come in to breakfast, arrived. Arthur Prescott was a man with a short, thick-set figure, and a kindly face with a quaint, old-fashioned expression—one of those faces which, on a boy's shoulders, looks like that of an old man, but which never alters, and in old age looks younger than it had ever done before.

Arthur Prescott—he had been always called Old Prescott at school, and his intimate friends never spoke of him as anything else even now—was a general favourite. No one was ever heard to say a bad word of him. He was one of those men in whom all around him seem instinctively to confide, and to make a depositary of secrets which they would never relate to anyone else ; a straightforward, sensible, true-hearted English gentleman.

Prescott and Maynard had been great friends when boys together at Westminster ; and, indeed, it was principally the fact of the former's coming to Caius which had induced Frank to choose that college in preference to any other.

Maynard greeted his arrival with, "That's right, Prescott, you're just in time to help me ; there is the gridiron, put the steak on while I see about the coffee."

For some time there was little conversation. Prescott was fully occupied with his culinary charge, and Maynard in the preparation of the coffee ; the apparatus being one of those beautifully-scientific inventions, which, while they produce no doubt an excellent result, demand incen-

sant attention, and are liable, in the event of the least thing going wrong, to explode with disastrous consequences. At last all was ready, and they sat down to breakfast. They had scarcely begun when a new-comer entered.

“I thought I should find you at breakfast, Maynard. Give me some, like a good fellow. My fire is gone out, and I can’t find either my gyp or bed-maker, although I’ve been shouting from the window till I am as hoarse as a raven. What are you eating? Steak, and mighty nicely done too.”

Their hunger once somewhat appeased, they began to talk over the events of the past night, and of the boat supper.

“Do you know, Frank,” Teddy Drake said, after a pause, “that cousin of yours—Bingham—becomes more unpleasant every day. I thought last night there would have been a row half-a-dozen times. He is the most insufferable little beggar I ever came across.”

Frank laughed. “Bingham does make himself disagreeable, Drake, I quite allow; but it is really all manner, he is not a bad fellow.”

"I only go by what I see and hear, Frank, and I call him a cantankerous little vermin."

"It is all outside, Drake; he is a good-hearted fellow in the main."

"I don't think it, Frank. I tell you he is a chip of the evil one."

"Without going as far as Drake," Prescott said, smiling, "I confess, Frank, that I don't like Bingham. It is not that he is disagreeable, although he certainly is that, but that I feel instinctively repelled by him. Frankly, Maynard, he gives me the impression of being bad hearted. He is essentially a man I could not trust."

"Oh come, Prescott," Frank said, warmly, "that is not like you. I have known Fred for many years, and I believe him to be a very straightforward fellow. Disagreeable and cantankerous if you like, but a good fellow in the main. In his way he reminds me, although he is as straight as an arrow, of deformed people. They are generally kind-hearted, but they are often extremely sensitive. They imagine all sorts of slights where none are intended, and are not unfrequently very bitter in their remarks on those

to whom nature has been more bountiful than to themselves. So with Fred; I am sure he feels it very much that he looks a mere boy, and it makes him irritable and snappish."

"I have no doubt there is a good deal in what you say, Frank; but I confess that somehow or other I distrust as much as I dislike him."

"He's a chip of the evil one," Teddy Drake muttered to himself, "and there are no two ways about it."

"Now, Drake," Frank said, "help me to push the table back, and let's have a pipe. Another fortnight and we shall be going down; now the races are over I shall be glad to be away."

"I am going to stop up and read," Teddy Drake said, disconsolately. "My coach says that I never open a book when the men are up, and that my only chance is in the vacations, when there is nothing to do. I am afraid he's about right; and I've made up my mind to stick to it. I shall run up to town and see the 'Varsity,' of course, but that's all the holidays I mean to take."

"Look here, Drake," Frank said; "the best thing you can do is to come and stay for the

week with me. My guardian is a capital old fellow, and there's lots of room in the house."

"I should like it of all things, Frank; but does he object to smoke, because I couldn't do without that?"

"He wouldn't like it in the breakfast-room," Frank laughed; "but he smokes himself in his study, and I have a special smoking-room upstairs."

"In that case, Frank, I shall be delighted. That guardian of yours must be a trump. I wish my father saw things in the same reasonable light. He's always down upon me about smoking; but I am afraid he will never cure me of it."

"I am afraid not, Teddy. Well, you can smoke as much as you like while you are with us."

CHAPTER II.

THE DUSTMAN'S FAMILY.

NEARLY three years have passed since the night of the fire at Trinity Hall. It is a cold wintry afternoon, not a clear frost, but raw and foggy. The ice is forming rapidly, and the costermongers are reaping a rich harvest. All the ponds near London are centres of noisy groups of men with carts, of all sizes and sorts, from the large two-horse vehicle down to mere boxes upon wheels drawn by diminutive donkeys. The drivers are striving and quarrelling, and exchanging volleys of abusive language with each other, in their anxiety for priority of place and right of filling their carts. Those next to the water are engaged in breaking the ice with poles, or with iron weights attached to cords. With these they draw the ice to the shore, pulling it up with rakes, and shovelling and lifting it

into the carts. When they are filled they drive off to dispose of their loads to confectioners and fishmongers.

Although it is nearly dusk there are still a good many strollers by the banks of the Serpentine looking at the state of the ice, and calculating on the chances of skating. On the other side of the bridge, on the long water, the ice is already strong, and will probably bear after another night's frost; but the Serpentine itself, from its greater breadth and depth, is still thin in many places, and will require two or three days more frost before it will be safe. The ice is everywhere smooth and black, and it is agreed that if the frost holds there will be capital skating.

Frank Maynard is walking along the side of the Serpentine with his friend Prescott. He has been for two years upon the Continent, and this is his first winter in England since he left college.

"It will be splendid ice for skating if the frost holds, Prescott. I must certainly invest in a pair of new skates. I have some somewhere, but where I have not the remotest idea. You

must put by your books, and keep me company, at any rate for a day or two."

"I don't think I can do that, Frank. I don't like breaking in upon my regular work; and, indeed, I don't care very much for skating. It must be very pleasant for a really good skater, who can wheel about like a bird, and perform all those intricate figures; otherwise, especially the first day or two of the season, it is very fatiguing and straining. If I could put by my books for a month, I would devote myself to it with all my heart, but for one or two days the pleasure does not pay for the pain. Look, Frank! there is something the matter."

A knot of people were standing together at the edge of the water, apparently watching some small black object upon the ice, but it was already too dusk for the friends, until they came quite close, to see what was the matter. A small dog had run out upon the ice, which was in most places quite strong enough to bear it, but there were many patches, over the powerful springs which well-up in parts of the Serpentine, where the ice had as yet formed a mere skin. On one of these treacherous places the little animal had

run, and had at once gone through. All round it the ice was extremely thin, and, as the dog endeavoured to scramble out, it broke under its fore-paws, until a good-sized space of water was cleared, round which the poor little animal kept swimming. Had it continued its efforts only in the line towards the shore, the dog would speedily have broken its way to stronger ice. This, however, it had not sense to do, although the men called and whistled to it, and endeavoured in every way to encourage it to swim towards them. But the poor thing continued swimming round and round in its narrow circle, making occasional efforts to get out, but only falling back again, and giving from time to time a pitiful whimper. Its mistress, a little girl of about ten years old, was crying bitterly.

"This is very painful, Prescott," Frank Maynard said, after looking on for some time in silence; "the poor little brute's cries go through me."

"Come away, Frank," Prescott said, turning to go. "I don't know that I ever saw anything more pitiful. Let us get away; it is impossible to do anything for him."

Frank did not move, but stood looking on irresolutely. At last he said—

“It’s no use, I can’t help it. Here, Prescott, take my coat and waistcoat, I must go in for it.”

“Nonsense, Frank. My dear fellow, it would be madness!”

Frank paid no attention to his friend’s remonstrances, but sat down on the gravel, and began to unlace his boots. He was however anticipated. There was a movement among the crowd near, and a lad of about fourteen, without jacket or boots, stepped into the water, breaking the ice as he did so, amidst a general cheer and some few expostulations from the crowd. Frank Maynard pushed forward impetuously to the spot.

“Can you swim well, my boy?” he asked.

“Ay,” the boy answered; “I bathe in the Serpentine every morning, winter and summer, except when it’s frozen.”

“They’re gone to fetch the ropes,” a man said; “you had better wait till they come back.”

“No, no,” the lad said, “it will be too late—he’s pretty nigh done already;” and he went deeper into the water.

“That’s right, my lad,” Frank called out; “lose

no time, or you will get numbed by the cold ; and don't be afraid : if you want help, sing out, and I will come in for you."

Frank unlaced his boots ready to kick them off in a moment, unbuttoned his waistcoat, handed his watch to Prescott, and stood with the rest watching the boy's progress.

He was swimming now. It was slow work ; for as he advanced he had to break the ice, sometimes by strokes of his arm, sometimes by trying to get on it and breaking it with his weight. At last he reached the thin ice. It gave way readily enough before him ; he gained the little open piece of water which the dog had made, and then turned to come back. It had not been far, not more than twenty yards, but it had taken a long time, and he was evidently exhausted.

"I must go in for him, or he will never get back," Frank said, pulling off his coat and waistcoat ; but just as he was about to plunge in, there was a shout from the bystanders, and a man came running up with a long rope which he had fetched from the Humane Society's house. Frank took it from him and threw it to the boy, who caught the end, and was drawn

rapidly to the shore amidst the shouts of the crowd, the little dog swimming behind with sharp barks of pleasure. The boy was terribly exhausted, and it was proposed to carry him to the Society's house; but while the matter was being debated, he recovered himself a little, and said—

Please would they leave him alone, he was only out of breath, and would rather run home, for he was late already, and mother would be wondering what had become of him.

Seeing that he really was coming round and was anxious to be off, it was agreed to let him have his way. Two men accordingly chafed his arms and hands. When the circulation was restored, his jacket was put on him, and his hands encased in a pair of warm woollen gloves, sizes too large for him, the gift of one of the lookers-on. In the meantime another of the bystanders took off his hat, and went round among the crowd. He speedily collected a goodly number of halfpence, sixpences, and shillings, and a few half-crowns; Frank dropping in a sovereign for himself and Prescott. By the time that the boy had finished his toilet, such

as it was, and had pronounced himself "all right," the man came up with the amount collected.

The boy opened his eyes in astonishment.

"Is all this for me?"

"Yes, my boy, and you deserve it well."

"But I did not do it for money," he said; "I only did it because I could not bear to hear the dog yelp so."

"We know that, my lad," Frank said; "and this money is not to pay you, but only to show you how pleased we all are with your pluck. You are a brave little fellow. What is your name? and where do you live? for I should like to see if anything can be done for you."

"My name is Evan Holl, sir; and I live in Moor Street, Knightsbridge."

"I shall not forget you," Frank said; "there, run along now, and don't stop till you get home."

While they had been speaking, the man who had collected the money had with difficulty put it into the pockets of the boy's wet trousers, for his hands were quite useless in the big gloves in which they were enveloped.

“Thank you all kindly,” the boy said, when the man had finished; and was preparing to start at a run, when he exclaimed, “But where is my tray?”

“Here it is, please,” the child to whom the dog belonged said; “you gave it to me to keep; and, oh, I am so much obliged to you, and so is Bobby.”

And here Bobby, who had up to this time been shaking himself, frisking and yelping in the most outrageous way, came up and began to jump upon Evan, in evident token of his gratitude.

The tray which the child brought up, was a small wooden one, apparently at some time or other the lid of a box. In it were arranged sticks of peppermint, bullseyes, and brandyballs, in which, during cold weather, Evan drove a brisk trade on the ice. The contents were hastily tumbled into a tin box, in which he carried them when not exposed for sale, and with another “Thank you kindly,” the boy started at a run, and was soon lost in the darkness. This, in the ten minutes which the incident had occupied, had closed in rapidly, and the little crowd by the

waterside speedily dispersed, talking over the adventure.

Evan Holl continued running, slowly at first, for he was numbed and cold to the bones, but gradually, as the blood began to circulate, at a quicker pace. So along by the end of the Serpentine, across Rotten Row, empty and deserted now, through the narrow alley by the side of the barracks into the main road, and then down by the cabstand into Knightsbridge.

Knightsbridge may be described geographically as the region bounded on the north by Hyde Park, on the east by Apsley House and St. George's Hospital, and on the west by Brompton and the cavalry barracks; on the south-east by Wilton Crescent and Lowndes Square, and on the south-west by an unknown region of misery and want. A vast tide of traffic runs through it, formed by the junction of three considerable streams. Two of these are from the west; the one rises in the distant region of Richmond and Brentford, and increases greatly in magnitude by tributaries at Hammersmith and Kensington; the other has its source at Putney, but receives its chief addition in its course

through Brompton. The third stream comes north from Chelsea, and is poured in by Sloane Street. This great tide commences early, and sets eastward with great violence during the early part of the day, beginning to ebb at about two o'clock, and running west till past midnight, after which it may be said to be slack tide until morning.

The stream which flows in at Sloane Street divides Knightsbridge into two portions, differing more entirely in habits, manners, and almost in language, than perhaps any similar division which could be cited. St. George's Channel, or even the Straits of Dover, do not separate peoples more alien in every thought and action than does Sloane Street. It is, as it were, the great gulf which divides wealth and luxury from poverty and want.

Eastward are splendid shops, with their plate glass windows, filled with costly and elegant objects. Long lines of carriages wait in front of them, while their owners expend sums which would appear fabulous to the inhabitants of the western side. On that side are small shops crowded together, as if jostling for room, filled

with the necessaries of life for the working classes. Their customers do not arrive in carriages, but, hurry up from obscure alleys behind, hastily make their little purchases and are gone. At no time of the week is this difference so strongly marked as on a Saturday evening.

Eastward the grand shops are all closed, their customers are at dinner or the opera, and their owners off to their snug suburban villas till Monday.

Westward the flood of business is at its highest. The bakers' shops are so piled with bread that it seems a wonder where it can all go to, but they will be nearly empty by to-night. The grocers' windows are filled with sugar and tea, with the prices marked on tickets of gaudy colours, with the pennies marvellously large, and the farthings microscopically small. At the doors of the greengrocers are huge baskets heaped with potatoes and vegetables. All are full of a noisy busy crowd of purchasers.

Across the pathway are the stalls of the itinerant vendors, lit by candles in paper lanterns. Wonderful are these, too, in their

way—piles of vegetables, so large that it is a marvel how the decrepit old women who look after the stalls ever got them there; book-stalls and picture-stalls; men with barrows covered with toys of every conceivable description, and all at one penny; men with trays of sweetmeats and lollipops of the most tempting shapes and colours; men with yards of songs, and packets of infallible shaving paste; and men selling twenty articles, among which is a gold wedding-ring, for one penny;—all alike shouting at the top of their voices, and expatiating on the merits of their goods, and all surrounded by a gaping crowd, consisting, of course, chiefly of boys.

At some of these, wet as he was, Evan Holl stopped for a minute. Had it not been for the thick gloves, and the tray and tin box under his arm, he would have certainly expended a penny or two among all this tempting display. As it was, after a brief pause, he hurried on past the bright shops, and the crowded stalls, and the butchers' shops with their great gaslights flaring out, and the women bargaining for their Sunday dinner. He then turned down beneath an archway, and was

soon in the labyrinth of small streets lying behind this part of Knightsbridge. Now he has left the whirl and confusion of business behind him; he is among the homes of the poor. All is quiet here. The children are indoors or in bed, the mothers, mostly, are doing their shopping. A few men stand about at their doors, smoke long pipes, and chat with their neighbours. Here and there the sounds of singing and noise come through the windows of small public-houses. At the doors of these, perhaps, pale women, in thin torn clothes, stand waiting anxiously; entering timidly sometimes, hanging on already half-drunken husbands, and begging them to come home ere their pay is all spent. Poor things! well may they persist, for on their success depends whether they and their children shall have food for the next week or not. They must not care for curses or an occasional blow, they are accustomed to that, it is for them a battle of life, they must win or starve. Through all this Evan Holl goes. He takes but little notice of it; not that he is hard-hearted, as he has but now sufficiently proved; but he is used to it, and knows that it will be on a

Saturday night. A few more steps and he is home.

A shout greets his arrival, and some of the children, of whom there are several in the room, run up to relieve him of his tray, but fall back again with the exclamation, "Why, Evan, you are all wet!"

"Wet!" Mrs. Holl said, hurrying up. "Drat the boy! what has he been after now?"

"It is all right, mother; you just wait till I get these things off my hands; why, my pocket is full of money."

"Bless us and save us!" Mrs. Holl ejaculated; and then, maternal solicitude triumphing even over curiosity, "Never mind that now, Evan; why you are dripping wet, and your teeth are all of a chatter; what on earth have you been doing with yourself?"

"I have been in the Serpentine, mother."

"Mercy's sake!" Mrs. Holl exclaimed, "the boy's mad! There, go upstairs and take off your clothes, and get into bed at once."

Evan did as he was told, as far as going upstairs was concerned, but he only changed his things, and came down again.

His mother, had it been her nature, would have been really angry when she saw him reappear, but as it was not, she contented herself by telling him he was a wilful lad. She then bade him sit down by the fire, and drink some hot beer, with sugar and ginger in it, which she had prepared for him while he was upstairs; giving him strict orders not to speak a word till he had finished it, and was quite warm again. Evan accordingly drank his beer, not hurrying over it, but pretending it was too hot to drink fast; amusing himself with the openly expressed impatience of the other children, who were eagerly watching him, and by the less openly betrayed, but not less real curiosity of Mrs. Holl, who kept bustling about the room in apparent unconcern, but really just as anxious as the others to know what had befallen him. Mrs. Holl's family is evidently a large one, for there are four or five now in the room, while occasionally a wail from above proclaims that there is at least one little one up there. They are all healthy looking and clean, and their clothes are tidy and carefully mended. The room itself looks bright and cheerful. It is low and whitewashed, and orna-

mented by sundry pictures in varnished frames, principally brightly-coloured prints. The one in the place of honour over the chimney-piece represents a youth in an impossible attitude, and a Scotch plaid of an unknown clan, beneath a greenwood-tree, bidding farewell to a florid young woman, with feathers in her hair; she is attired in a white dress with Tartan scarf of the most brilliant hues.

There is a large chest of drawers, black with age, which serves also the purpose of a side-board; many queer little mugs and ornaments of various sorts and colours stand upon it, and behind them is a large japanned waiter with gaudy flowers.

The irons and tins and candlesticks suspended from nails in the wall, or standing on the chimney-piece, shine till one can see one's face in them; so do the dark arm-chair and table, and so does the old oak settle, in which Evan is sitting by the fire.

Before Evan commenced his story, Mr. Holl came in, and in the pleasure which his advent occasions all thought of Evan is for a time lost, and he gives up the post of honour by the fire to

his father. John Holl is a dustman, and is a sober and industrious man. He has his peculiarities—as who has not?—but he is a good husband and father, as it is easy to see by the pleasure with which his return is greeted. He is a short, stoutly built man, with shoulders rounded from carrying heavy baskets up area stairs, and his legs are bowed and clumsy. John Holl earns good wages, for he has many a sixpence given him in the course of the day, and he has no need to spend money on beer, for he gets plenty of that in the discharge of his avocation.

Mother is hurrying about now, laying the cloth for supper, and taking the pot containing potatoes, which form the staple of that repast, off the fire, where they have been for some time boiling and bubbling.

Mrs. Holl goes out charing; she is a large woman with a hoarse voice, and her hand is clumsy and hard, from washing and scrubbing and polishing. She has a heavy tread, and is considered by the servants generally at the houses where she works to be a low person. Perhaps she is, but her heart is in the right place. She is a true, kind-hearted, tender woman; a very rough

diamond truly, badly cut and displayed to the worst possible advantage, but a real stone of the first water for all that. She is a foolish person too, for as if her own children were not enough for her to love and work for, she has adopted and brought up an orphan, who had none else to care for it, and must have otherwise been taken to the workhouse. But, in spite of her folly, her neighbours like her for it, and in their little ways assist her, take the young ones between them when she goes out charing, and help her a bit with her washing.

Mrs. Holl can neither read nor write herself, but she wants all her children to be able to do so. She has managed to pay for their schooling at the national schools, and has quite a respect for their learning. She listens with breathless delight and interest of an evening while they read aloud by turns from that exciting periodical, the Red Handed Robber of the Black Forest, published weekly at one penny, and to be completed in one hundred and twenty numbers.

Until Mrs. Holl had placed the large dish of steaming potatoes on the table, she was too much absorbed in her occupation to give a thought to

any other subject. But just as she had done so, John Holl, who had several times taken his pipe from his mouth, and looked round in a puzzled way, said, "It is very strange, Sairey, but it seems to me just as if some one had been a drinking of spiced beer. Don't take it amiss, old woman, I don't mean to say that I think you have been a drinking of it, for you're not that sort. Still there is something that smells uncommon like spiced beer."

"Bless me," Mrs. Holl said, "what a head I have got, to be sure! I do declare I have not told you a word about it, for it slipped clean out of my mind. You are quite right, John, you do smell spiced beer, for Evan has been drinking it. The boy has been in the Serpentine, and came home that wet you could have squeezed the water out of him by the pailful."

"In the Serpentine!" John Holl exclaimed; "I heard that the ice was too thin to think of going on it. Why, Evan, that was not like you, not a bit, you are generally steady enough. How did you get in? Some foolery, I'll wager a pot of beer."

In answer to this appeal from his father, Evan

related what had happened ; the others gathering round him, and the young ones even leaving off eating their supper to listen, and breaking in with many exclamations of astonishment as he proceeded.

“ It was very wrong, Evan,” his mother said, “ you might have got yourself drowned, and what should we have said then ? Why, Lor, you might have gone under the ice, and we should never have known nothing about what had become of you, till they brought your tray of lollipops home. That would be all we should have had left of you. What should we have done ? ”

Mrs. Holl began to weep aloud at the picture she had raised ; the younger children immediately followed her example, and required so much pacifying that it was some time before quiet was restored.

“ Lor bless you, mother,” Evan said, “ there is no call to take on about it. I was not going to get drowned close to the shore ; besides, there was a gentleman, who got ready to come in for me, if I had sung out for help ; and he would have done it too. I could see he meant it.”

“ It were a risky job,” John Holl said ; “ a

plaguy risky job. I ain't going for to say as you are altogether wrong, Evan, but it were certainly risky."

"You were quite right, Evan," a voice said warmly, "quite right, and I would give a good deal, if I had it, to have been in your place, and to have done something one could look back with pleasure upon, if only for once in my life."

The speaker was a lad of about seventeen, who has not yet been described, and yet he was of all these the person who would have first fixed the attention of any incomer.

He sat on the opposite side of the fire to John Holl, in a sort of box with high wheels to it; by turning these he moved himself about the room. He had a very intelligent face, thoughtful but not sad. His shoulders and the upper part of his body were straight and well developed, and his arms strong and nervous; down to his waist he was a fine well-formed figure, but below he was a helpless cripple. He had been injured as a child, his legs had lost all power, and had become perfectly drawn up and useless. He was a sad spectacle, and yet he was not unhappy, and by

the little attentions which the children showed him it was easy to see how great a favourite he was with them. Evan now produced a handkerchief from his jacket pocket, in which he had put his money, and unfolded it and exhibited the store.

It was emptied on to the table, among the shouts of the children, who evidently considered that their brother had become the possessor of boundless riches, and indulged in all sorts of surmises as to what would be done with all this wealth, while Evan counted up the amount. There were twenty-five shillings in silver and copper, and the sovereign Frank Maynard had put in—two pounds five in all.

Having counted it, Evan again took it up and brought it to his father, but John Holl put it aside. "No, lad, the money is thine, you have fairly earned it, and it is yours to do as you like with. Don't fool it away, and think well over everything before you spend it. You are getting too old for your tray now; with that you might buy a good barrow, and do a great deal better; but there's time enough for that. Give it to mother; she will take care of it for you, and

you have but to go to her when you want it."

And so it was arranged; and then Mrs. Holl took the young ones off to bed, whither the elders followed them very soon after.

CHAPTER III.

BROKEN DOWN.

TALKING over their little adventure, Frank Maynard and Arthur Prescott crossed from the Serpentine to Albert Gate. The evening had set in with a cold raw fog, which was momentarily getting thicker.

“One ought to be very careful at the crossings such a night as this, Prescott. It is just foggy enough to prevent the drivers seeing twenty yards ahead of them, and yet not sufficiently thick to make them go slowly. The road is very slippery, too.”

As they spoke a man who was standing at the edge of the pavement near them, after peering cautiously into the fog, started to cross. Frank and his friend followed slowly, for it really required considerable caution; as, from the constant roar and rumble of the traffic it was difficult

to judge how far off an approaching vehicle might be.

They had not gone half-way across the road when there was a shout, and a rapid trampling of horses, and an omnibus came out of the fog not fifteen yards distant. It was driving fast, and the friends stopped simultaneously to allow it to pass in front of them.

The man who was crossing before them was, however, exactly in the line of the omnibus as it came out of the fog. He stopped, hesitated, and, although three steps would have placed him out of danger, he turned to go back. As he did so in his haste and confusion his foot slipped on the frozen road, and he fell. In another instant the horses would have been upon him, when Frank Maynard, who had at once perceived the danger when he stopped, sprang forward, snatched him up in his strong arms, as if he had been a child, and threw himself forward. He was barely in time. The shoulder of the off horse struck him, and sent him staggering with his burden to the ground, but fortunately beyond the reach of the wheels. Frank was on his feet in an instant, raised the man, who appeared to be confused and

hardly conscious of what was occurring, to his feet, and assisted him to the footpath. All this was the work of half a minute, and they were at once joined by Prescott.

“Are you hurt, Frank?” he asked, anxiously.

“No, nothing to speak of, old man; bruised myself a bit, and barked my arm, at least I should say so by the feel of it; but I think that is about all the damage.”

“I thought you were under the horses, Frank; you have made me feel quite sick and faint. My dear fellow, this is the last walk I shall take with you, if this is your way of going on.”

Frank laughed.

“It is all right, Prescott, there are no bones broken. How are you, sir? not hurt, I hope,” he asked the man he had picked up, who was standing looking round in a sort of confused bewildered way, as if he hardly yet understood what had happened.

Frank repeated his question.

“Eh? I beg your pardon,” the man said; “were you speaking to me? No—no, I don’t think I am hurt; indeed, I hardly know what is the

matter. Let me see——;” and he passed his hand helplessly over his forehead. “Oh yes, I remember now. I was crossing, and I saw a ’bus coming, and somehow I slipped down. I shut my eyes so as not to see it come over me, and then I felt myself caught up, and then another great shake. Yes, yes, I see it all now; and it was you, sir, who picked me up, and saved my life? Dear me—dear me—I do hope you are not hurt, sir. I know I owe my life to you, for I must have been killed, and then what would have happened to Carry? I do hope you are not hurt.”

Frank assured him that he was not.

“Now, really, sir” (the man went on in a rambling nervous sort of way), “really I can’t thank you as I ought to do, but if you would but kindly come in to see me, my Carry will thank you for both of us. I am a poor nervous creature at the best, and the whole place seems in a whirl with me, but here is my card,” and he produced a packet of cards from his pocket. “It is a poor place, sir, but we should be very glad if you will come in to see me; and will you please tell me what your name is?”

“My name is Maynard, and I live in the

Temple," Frank answered. "Pray do not trouble yourself about thanking me. I am quite content to know that you have got off without more harm than a few bruises. I will be sure to look you up one of these days—yes, you can rely upon it. Good evening, mind how you go home; you are rather shaky still. Good night." And, shaking him by the hand, Frank moved away with his friend.

The man stood looking after them as they disappeared in the fog, and then turned and walked westward. Pausing sometimes, taking off his hat and passing his hand across his forehead and over his hair in a confused puzzled sort of way, as if even now he were not quite clear what had really happened.

At the corner of Sloane Street he stopped, too nervous to attempt to cross; others went over quietly enough, but he could not summon up resolution to follow their example. At last he went up to a policeman who was standing at the corner, and meekly requested him to be kind enough to cross with him.

The man looked sharply and suspiciously at him. Certainly, his appearance was against him.

One side of his face was much cut where he had fallen the second time, and his hat was all crushed in; altogether, he did not look a reputable figure.

“You have begun it pretty early, you have!” he said, sternly. “You ought to be ashamed of yourself, a respectable-looking man to be about the streets in this state before six o’clock in the evening.”

“I have not been drinking, indeed I have not, policeman; but I have been knocked down by an omnibus, or at least I was nearly knocked down; at least—indeed I don’t quite clearly know how it did happen; but I know an omnibus had something to do with it.”

The policeman’s belief in the man’s state of inebriety was evidently unshaken; however, he took him by the arm and walked across the road with him, and then dismissed him, telling him that “he should advise him to go straight home, or he would find himself in the wrong box before long.” The man again attempted to expostulate, but the policeman cut him short by turning to go back to his former station, with a parting admonition: “There, don’t you talk, it won’t do you

any good; you go home; take my advice, and don't stop by the way."

The man, shaking his head in feeble deprecation at the policeman's opinion, pursued his way along the crowded pavement, past the bright shops, and the stalls with their noisy vendors—through which Evan Holl had passed a short half-hour before. He went along quite unconscious of the crowd and the bustle, getting frequently jostled and pushed against, and receiving angry expostulation and considerable abuse, to none of which he paid the slightest heed. At length he reached the end of the row where the next street ran across it into the main road. This, however, he had not to cross, as his way lay up the side street, but not far, only past three or four houses; then he stopped at the door of a small shop, opened it, and went in.

It was a small stationer's shop, illuminated by a solitary tallow candle standing upon the counter, and whose long wick with its dull red cap testified plainly that it had not been attended to for some time. Round the shop were ranges of shelves filled with dingy volumes, with paper numbers pasted upon their backs. There were

piles of penny periodicals upon the counter, and a glass case with partitions containing cigars. These, with the small pair of scales beside them, and sundry canisters upon the shelves, showed that its proprietor combined the tobacco and literary businesses. The little parlour behind was separated from the shop by a glass door, with a muslin curtain drawn across it, and through this the bright flickering light of a fire shone cheerfully. The man opened the door, and went in. It was a small room, but was very snug and comfortable. The furniture and curtains were neat and well chosen, and altogether much superior to what would have been expected from the shop and locality. The tea-things stood upon the table, and a copper kettle on the hob was singing merrily. On the hearth-rug a girl was sitting reading a novel by the light of the fire; a very pretty figure, light and graceful, as could be seen in the attitude in which she half sat, half reclined; a girl of some eighteen years old, with a bright happy face. Her hair was pushed back from her forehead, and fell in thick clustering curls behind her ears. Her face was very pretty, with an innocent child-like expres-

sion. About her mouth and chin there was some want of firmness and character, but by no means sufficiently so to mar the general effect of her face. She had large blue eyes, over which she had a little trick of drooping her eyelids, and she had a saucy way of tossing her head. Altogether, Carry was a belle, and was perfectly aware of it; and indeed, to say truth, her head was a little turned by all the nonsense and flattery that she was constantly receiving; but she was a good girl for all that, and devotedly attached to her father, the man who now entered.

Stephen Walker was perhaps fifty years old, about the middle height, but stooping a good deal; evidently, by his manner, a nervous, timid man. His address and way of speaking unmistakably showed that he had seen better days; but when he slipped down the rounds of the ladder, he had lost any little faith he might ever have had in himself, and was content to remain helplessly at its foot, with scarce an effort to try to regain his lost position. Stephen Walker's father had been a well-to-do City tradesman, a very great man in his own eyes; an active bustling member of the Court of Common

Council, respected but not much liked there for the harsh dictatorial way in which he enunciated his opinions ; very great upon the inexpediency of pampering the poor, a strict reformer of abuses, and withal a harsh, vulgar, narrow-minded man.

Stephen was a weakly child, and his mother, a quiet timid woman, would fain have kept him at home, and herself attended to his education until he should be old enough to be sent to some school down in the country ; but his father would not hear of it, and in his own house his will was law. Accordingly, at the earliest possible age, he was sent to St. Paul's School, a timid, shrinking child, and among the rough spirits there he fared but badly. Cowed and kept down at home, bullied and laughed at at school, Stephen Walker grew up a nervous delicate boy. When he was fifteen his father said that he knew enough now, or if he did not he ought to, and that so he was to come into the shop. Into the shop he accordingly came, and when there his life was a burden to him. His mother, who would have softened things for him as far as she could, and would at all events have been kind to him, and

have commiserated with and cheered him, had been dead some three years, and his life became one long blank of misery. He hated the shop, he hated business, he almost hated his father. Heartily did he envy his associates in the shop, who at least, when the day's work was over, could take their departure and be their own masters until the shutters were taken down in the morning. His drudgery never ceased, for when the shop was closed, his father, a great part of whose daytime was occupied by City business, would sit down with him at his desk and go into the whole accounts of the day's sales until half-past nine. Then upstairs, where the servants would be summoned, and his father take his place at the head of the table with a large Bible before him, which he would read and expound in a stern harsh manner, eminently calculated to make the Scriptures altogether hateful to those who heard him. This with prayer lasted for an hour. Then to bed; to begin over again in the morning. Such was Stephen Walker's life for six years; and then, when he was twenty-one, his father died suddenly. It was just in time to save his son's life; in another year it might

have been too late, for his health was breaking fast; as it was, it was too late for him ever to become other than he was, a nervous timid man.

It was some time before Stephen Walker could come to understand that he was now a free agent, and that he could really do as he liked. It was so unnatural for him to be able to carry into execution any wish of his own, that, after his father's funeral was over, he went back as regularly as ever to his duties in the shop. At the end of a month an old schoolfellow came in, told him he was not looking well, and asked him to go into the country with him for the day. Stephen was absolutely startled, even the possibility of such a thing as his leaving the shop had never entered his mind. In the six years such an event had never happened. He looked round frightened and aghast at the proposition. As, however, he had no reasons to adduce, beyond the fact that he never did go anywhere, which his friend insisted was the very reason why he should go now, he was finally persuaded. Never did man enjoy his first holiday less than Stephen Walker did. He felt like a guilty self-convicted truant; he had a constant impression upon his mind that he was

doing something very wrong, and on his return entered the shop with a guilty air, and a conviction that the assistants behind the counter were eyeing him disapprovingly.

However, the ice was broken. He began, at first at long intervals, but afterwards, as he learnt really to enjoy the sweets of his newly found liberty more and more often, to absent himself from the shop, until by degrees he discovered that he really was his own master. The first time a friend remarked that he rather wondered he did not sell the business and retire altogether, it seemed to him almost a profane suggestion. Still in time it became familiar to his mind, and at length, finding that no obstacle except that of his own imagination stood in his way, he determined to carry it out. Accordingly in less than eighteen months from his father's death he disposed of the lease and goodwill of the business, and found that he was master of £30,000. He then, acting upon the advice of his physician, started for a long tour upon the continent; not going alone,—he had not sufficient confidence in himself for that, but taking with him as companion a friend who had been on the continent before, and who spoke

French, paying all his expenses, and a handsome sum in addition.

There he remained in all three years, and in this time his health became re-established; but although his manner greatly improved from his mixture with travelling society, he still remained a nervous timid man.

At the end of this three years he married a very pretty ladylike looking girl, who was governess in a family wintering in Rome. Her beauty was her only redeeming point, for she was a silly, vain, indolent woman.

The newly married couple returned after another three months' wanderings to London, near which they shortly after took a pretty villa.

They were unfortunate in their children, having lost all they had when quite young, with the exception only of their youngest daughter Carry. Had Stephen Walker continued to live quietly upon his income all might have gone well; but his wife was an extravagant woman and a miserable manager, and Stephen, who in money matters was helpless as a child, soon found that his expenditure was greater than his income.

The idea of remonstrating with his wife or

endeavouring to curtail the household expenses never entered his mind; the only plan which presented itself to him was to increase his income. To do this he took to speculation, and to the most hazardous of all speculations, that in mining shares; hazardous to anyone, but most of all to a man like Stephen Walker. As might have been anticipated, his operations were almost always unsuccessful. Indeed in the way in which he conducted them it was impossible that it could have been otherwise. He bought shares in mines when they were most prosperous, and stood at the highest point in the market, and directly any reverse or depression took place, although perhaps only of a temporary nature, instead of holding on and waiting until the mine recovered itself, he would rush into the market and dispose of his shares for what they would fetch. It may therefore be readily imagined that Stephen Walker's fortune melted rapidly away, under his repeated and heavy losses, and the extravagance of his wife. The latter although she would peevishly remonstrate with him, not as to his speculation, but on his losses, had not the least idea of suiting their expenditure to their decreased means. And so

things went on from bad to worse, until at last the end came. A mine in which he had invested far more heavily than usual under the influence of the brilliant prospects held out, and the advice of a friend, collapsed, and that so suddenly, that Stephen had no opportunity to dispose of his shares. He was placed on the list of contributory, and called upon for a heavy sum for the winding-up expenses. Then the crash came, and Stephen Walker found himself possessed of only a few hundred pounds and the furniture of the villa. This was sold, and he removed with his wife and his child, then about seven years old, into small lodgings. Here for a year his life was embittered by the reproaches and complainings of his helpless wife; at the end of that time she died, and left a great blank in his life. He had been blind to her faults, and had accepted her querulous reproaches as deserved and natural; besides, as long as she lived, he had had some one to look to for advice, little qualified as she was to give it. Now, excepting his little daughter, he was quite alone. For another year, while his little capital dwindled away, he tried in vain to get something to do. This would have been in

any case an almost hopeless task, and was rendered still more so from his extreme want of confidence in himself, which altogether prevented his endeavouring to push himself forward.

At length he took a resolution, one of the few, and certainly by far the best, he ever had taken. He determined to sink the few hundred pounds he had remaining in buying a house and opening a shop. After a considerable search, he found the one in New Street; the former proprietor, who was also in the tobacco and periodical line, had died, and his widow was anxious to dispose of the house; the goodwill, such as it was, of the shop being thrown into the bargain. Stephen Walker purchased it of her, furnished the lower part, and let off the upper, and never regretted his bargain.

The profits of the shop were not large, but having no rent to pay, and receiving a few shillings every week from the tenants, he was able to live comfortably, and with the company and affection of his little daughter, found himself really happier and more in his element than he had ever before been in his life.

Carry grew up in her humble home, a bright

happy child, very fond of her father, and very fond, too, of all the admiration which the frequenters of the shop bestowed upon her.

“Why, how late you are, father!” she said as he entered. “Tea has been ready this half-hour at the very least,” and she put down her book and looked up at him. “Why, father, what has happened?” she exclaimed in a changed tone, and leaping hastily to her feet. “Your cheek is all covered with blood, your hat is broken in, and you look quite strange. Oh! father, what is the matter? are you hurt?”

“No, Carry, I do not think I am, but I am confused and bewildered.”

“Sit down in the chair by the fire, then; now give me your hat and coat; that’s right, and your comforter, dear old father; now wait and I will get warm water and a towel, and bathe its dear old face. There, now you look nice; now tell me all about it.”

The man submitted himself to the girl’s hands in the helpless way natural to him.

“Well, Carry, I hardly know myself what has happened. I was crossing at Albert Gate when I saw a ’bus coming. It was very foggy and

slippery, and I did not see it till it was quite close, and then somehow I fell. I tried to shut my eyes, but I could not, and then I felt the horses trampling upon me, and the wheels came crushing down upon my body. Oh, it was terrible, Carry!"

"But, oh, father," the girl said faintly, and the bright colour was quite gone from her cheeks now, "you must be terribly hurt; some of your ribs must be broken; why did not you say so at once? Please sit quiet while I put on my bonnet, and run round to fetch a doctor," and she turned to do so, but she was trembling so much that she had to sit down in a chair.

"No, Carry, you do not understand me. I do not mean that the 'bus absolutely did run over me."

"But you just said it did, father; you said that you felt the wheels crush your body."

"Did I, Carry? Well, I did not mean it. Oh no, I was not run over after all."

"What a dear, silly old father you are, and how you frightened me!" the girl said, laughing and crying together. "I have a great mind to be very angry with you in real earnest, and

not to speak another word to you all the evening."

"I am very sorry, Carry. I did not mean it, my child. I only meant that I felt it was going to run over me, and I am sure I suffered quite as much as if it had. No, just as the horses were quite close to me—certainly within a yard or two, for their heads looked to me almost over mine—I felt myself caught up by some one, like a baby, carried a step or two, then there was a great shake, and down we both went with a terrible shock, then I was picked up again, and found myself safe on the pavement."

"Oh, father, what a narrow escape! you might really have been killed, and it was very very serious after all, so I will forgive you for frightening me so much. And who was it saved your life?"

"I hardly remember rightly, my dear, my head is quite in a whirl still. I remember, though, there were two gentlemen waiting to cross just as I started, for I heard one of them say we ought to be careful, and so I was, my dear, very careful, else I should not have slipped. I suppose they were just behind me, and one of them caught me

up just as the horses were going to trample on me. He was not quite in time, for the horses caught him and knocked us both down, only I suppose it was out of reach of the wheels, at any rate they did not go over us; and really that is all I know about it."

"Oh, father, how brave of him! Who was he?"

"I am sure I don't know, Carry. He did tell me what his name was; but I am sure I forget it. Let me see—no, I don't remember it at all; but I know he said he lived in the Temple—or, no—let me see, perhaps it was in Lincoln's Inn, either that or Gray's Inn—anyhow I am nearly sure it was one of the three."

"Oh, father, I am so sorry you do not recollect his name, I should so have liked to thank him, and it will seem so ungrateful if you never go near him to tell him how much obliged you are. If it had not been for him what would have happened to you? I am very sorry." And the girl's eyes filled with tears again. "Did you tell him where you lived, father?" she asked presently, as her father sat gazing dejectedly into the fire.

"I think I did, Carry; yes, I do think I did. By the way I have some recollection that I gave him my card, and I fancy that he said he would call upon me."

"But can't you remember for certain, father, whether you gave him your card? surely you must remember such a thing as that," Carry persisted.

Stephen Walker passed his hand vaguely across his forehead.

"Really, my dear, I can't help thinking that I did, although I can't be sure. Ah!" he exclaimed suddenly, "I have it now. I know I had twelve cards in my pocket. I know that, because when I went to the printer for them the fresh lot were not ready, but as I wanted some to go on with, he struck off a dozen while I was waiting. Look in the breast-pocket of my great coat, the cards are there. Count them, and if there is one short I must have given it to him, for I am sure I spoke to no one else on my way home."

Carry eagerly took the cards and counted them; to her delight there were only eleven.

"Did he say he would come, father?"

"It seems to me that I have a distinct remem-

brance that he did, Carry; but, there, I may be wrong. I am a poor nervous creature."

"You are a dear, silly old darling," Carry said, kissing him, "and I shan't be able to trust you out by yourself in future. The idea of slipping down in the street like a little baby! I have a great mind to scold you dreadfully. But there you have had fright enough for once; and now I will make tea for you, and that always does you good."

While they were at tea Carry asked, "Do you think you should know the gentleman again if you met him, father?"

"Yes, my dear, I am nearly sure that I should."

"What was he like, father?" Carry asked, "do try and think what he was like."

"He was a young man of four or five and twenty, I should say, and he seemed tall to me, and he must have been as strong as a giant, for he picked me up as easily as you would a kitten."

"Was he good-looking, father?" Carry asked, a little shyly, this time.

"I should say he was, my dear; but my head

was in such a swim that I did not notice much about his face ; but I certainly think he was good-looking. There, my dear, there is some one just come into the shop."

After this several customers came in, and Carry was pretty well occupied for the rest of the evening. She did not renew the subject of her father's preserver. Stephen Walker lit a long pipe and smoked thoughtfully beside the fire. Once or twice he went into the shop, but he was not of much use to Carry, and received orders to sit quiet and smoke his pipe, for that he had given her quite anxiety enough for one day. At ten o'clock the shop was shut, and they went up to bed, Stephen Walker to sleep fitfully, waking up with great starts, under the idea that the omnibus wheels were passing over his body. Carry lay awake for a long time, trying to picture to herself her father's preserver, and wondering whether he would ever come to see them.

CHAPTER IV.

THE OWNERS OF WYVERN HALL.

FRANK MAYNARD and Arthur Prescott, after leaving Stephen Walker standing bewildered upon the pavement, did not pursue their way along Knightsbridge, but turned at once into Lowndes Square. They walked the length of this, and stopped at one of the three or four houses which form the end of the square, or rather oblong. It belonged to Captain Bradshaw, Frank's uncle, with whom the young men were going to dine.

Harry Bradshaw was the younger of two brothers, sons of Reginald Bradshaw, of Wyvern Park, in Oxfordshire. It was a fine property. Indeed, there were not many finer in the county—with its noble old mansion, its wide park, and its stately trees—and had been in the family for centuries. During all this time—if tradition is

to be believed—the Bradshaws had been a hearty, honest, hard-riding, and deep-drinking race; and Reginald did not belie his ancestry, but drank as deeply and rode as hard as the best of them could have done.

But stately as was Wyvern Hall, and wide and fair as was its park, the Bradshaws were by no means a wealthy race. Previous to the rebellion they had been so, but the Bradshaw of that time had thrown himself heart and soul into the Royalist cause. He had lost everything but life, and lived abroad with his Prince in France, until, at the death of Cromwell, men once more shook off the iron Puritan yoke from their necks, and welcomed their King home again from his long exile. With him returned Marmaduke Bradshaw. More fortunate than many, he succeeded in regaining his family estate, and in ousting the pious cornfactor of the neighbouring town, who had, by the fervour and lengthiness of his prayers, and the strength of his right arm, fought and prayed himself into possession of the domain of the malcontent and godless follower of the man Stuart. But although Marmaduke succeeded in thus regaining possession of the mansion and

park, he was not so fortunate as to the various outlying farms and properties. Some, indeed, he recovered, but the greater part were in the hands of surly iron-fisted men, who had won them on the fields of Marston and Naseby and Worcester, and who were by no means men to unclothe their hands upon what they had once grasped. Force was not to be tried. The King was engaged in endeavouring to make himself popular to all parties, and had very difficult cards to play between them, Marmaduke Bradshaw, therefore, settled down in the family mansion with a greatly diminished rent roll, but still thinking himself lucky in comparison to many others, whose devotion in times of adversity to their King was but ill rewarded on his return to power.

The mansion and estate were strictly entailed, and the Bradshaws had hard work, with their horses and their hounds and their lavish hospitality, to keep up their establishment in accordance with their apparent wealth, and to hold their own among the county families, with perhaps far larger means and less expensive domains. Nor indeed could they have done so, had it not

been the rule and habit of the family to marry well. They were a good-looking, fine-grown race ; and to be mistress of Wyvern Park was no unenviable position ; consequently the Bradshaws had nearly their choice among the county heiresses. Thus by constant additions of fresh property the lords of Wyvern Park were able to maintain their position and reputation. Reginald Bradshaw had, in accordance with the family tradition, married a neighbouring heiress, and for some years kept almost open house. But by the time that his eldest son came of age, and Harry was seventeen, money began to run short with him. The property his wife had brought him was mortgaged nearly to its full value. To his grievous dissatisfaction and disgust, therefore, he found that he could no longer retain his mastership of the hounds, and that it was absolutely necessary considerably to retrench his expenditure. Harry was offered a choice among the professions ; the church, the army, or navy, or an Indian cadetship. He selected the latter, and started a few months later, with his father's blessing, a light heart, a hundred pounds in his pocket, and per-

mission to draw for two hundred a year as long as he required it.

The times were troublous and promotion rapid; and when at the age of six-and-twenty he heard first the news of his father's death, and, four months later, of that of his brother, who was thrown from his horse returning from a hunt dinner, he was already a captain. He returned to England at once; for his brother had died unmarried, and he was now therefore the owner of Wyvern Park. In another year he married a pretty, quiet girl, possessed of considerable property; with this new accession, and under his auspices, the property improved greatly. Although he had been only eight years in India, the climate had during that comparatively short residence sufficed to ruin his constitution, and to send him home a confirmed valetudinarian. He found himself therefore, to his great disgust—for he was passionately fond of field sports—obliged to give up all horse exercise. Fortunately he was not prevented from shooting, and in the season would spend all his time in the fields with his dogs and gun; but he was entirely debarred from the hunting field, and was forbidden

to indulge to any extent in the pleasures of the table. But although all this was an intolerable grievance to the master of Wyvern Park, yet Wyvern Park throve upon it greatly. In a few years, instead of mortgaging his property as his ancestors had done, Harry Bradshaw found himself in a position to clear off many old standing liabilities on the outlying properties, and to be able to add others to them. Although unable to join in the hunting field, or in the deep-drinking bouts and jovial meetings of the period, there was hardly a more popular man in the county than Harry Bradshaw. He was by no means of the ordinary big burly Bradshaw build, but was a light active figure, with an open kindly bronzed face, clustering black hair, a merry infectious laugh, an inexhaustible fund of fun and anecdote, an inveterate habit of swearing—then a far more common habit than now—a very quick fiery temper, and an intense objection to anything like dictation on the part of others.

Generally popular in the county as he was, there were yet some by whom Captain Bradshaw was looked upon with an eye of extraordinary

disfavour. Foremost among them was the Earl of Longdale, the patron, and, as he considered, the owner of the little borough of Longdale, which had been an hereditary appanage of his family from time immemorial. Very aggrieved and highly indignant therefore was he when Harry Bradshaw—whose estate adjoined the earl's, and who had had a dispute with his lordship respecting the right of shooting over a small piece of waste land which lay wedged in between the properties—brought down from London an unknown barrister of Conservative opinions, and at every election contested the borough with his lordship's Whig nominee. His candidate never polled a dozen votes certainly, for as nearly the whole property belonged to the earl, and none of his tenants dared to record their votes against him, it was a hopeless struggle; still, it was none the less provoking to the earl to read, in the county papers, the fulminations against himself with which Harry Bradshaw wound up his speeches on proposing his candidate, or to hear of the cheers with which these orations had been greeted. For if his lordship's tenants were compelled to vote one way, they considered that they

had at least the right to shout as they pleased. And Harry Bradshaw's speeches were exactly of the sort to carry an audience away with him, — full of biting truths, interspersed with humorous appeals and broad fun, dashed here and there with bitter personal invectives, and spoken with a thorough enjoyment and zest, and an earnest conviction of truth and right.

But the great climax of Harry Bradshaw's offences was when the earl shut up a public footpath leading across a pretty corner of his park.

The town of Longdale, although indignant at losing its prettiest walk, would yet have sullenly acquiesced in it, had not Harry Bradshaw taken the matter up, and with some of his labourers levelled the barrier which had been erected. He then at his own expense fought the case from court to court, until at last the right of the public to the walk was triumphantly established, and the earl's pet project defeated.

Captain Bradshaw had two sisters, both very much younger than himself. The eldest, Alice, after she came of age, when on a visit to some friend in London, met and fell in love with Richard Bingham, a young civil engineer.

Very indignant was her brother when informed of what he considered such an extremely derogatory proceeding. "The Bradshaws had always married well, and why she should want to make a fool of herself he did not know." Alice appeared to give way to the storm, but when a few months later she repeated her visit to London, she one day went out, was quietly married to the man of her choice, and only returned to her friends to bid them good-bye, and inform them that she was now Mrs. Bingham. The first notification which her brother received of it was on reading the notice in the columns of the "Times;" and had the feelings of society permitted a man to fight a duel with his brother-in-law, Harry Bradshaw would most unquestionably have called him out. As it was, he was forced to content himself with solemnly denouncing his sister, and writing a letter to her husband, expressing his sentiments towards him, and these sentiments were of such a nature that no future communication ever passed between them.

Shortly after, his younger sister married, with his consent, if not with his absolute ap-

proval. Percy Maynard was a barrister, with a fair practice and a moderate fortune, and although Captain Bradshaw had rather that his sister had fallen in love with one of the neighbouring proprietors, still, as he really liked the man she had chosen, he made no serious objections to the match.

He himself had at that time been for some years a widower, having lost his wife after only four years of happy married life, leaving him one little girl.

Two or three years later he married again, but his second wife bore him no children. His daughter, Laura, grew up a spoilt child, very loveable in her happy home, but with more than all her father's fiery temper, and an almost sullen obstinacy, which was certainly no ingredient of his disposition. So she grew up until she was eighteen, and then an event occurred which changed all Harry Bradshaw's hopes and plans, and embittered his whole future life. Laura followed her aunt Alice's example. She formed an acquaintance with a lawyer's clerk, who sometimes came down instead of his principal to transact business with her father. How

Laura met him, what opportunities there were for their first casual acquaintance to ripen into intimacy and then into love, Captain Bradshaw never knew and never inquired. Undoubtedly their interviews had taken place almost entirely during the three or four months of each year which the family spent in London, where Laura was in the habit of frequently going out attended only by her maid. However, by some accident he discovered it, a stormy scene followed, Laura's temper rose as quickly as her father's, she openly declared she had been for some weeks secretly married, and was not ashamed to own it. This brought matters to a climax, and Laura, half an hour afterwards, left the house never to return.

Captain Bradshaw's anger was seldom very long-lived, but on this occasion he was far longer than usual before he got over it. However, at the end of some months, he came to the conclusion that it was quite time to forgive her, that is, to forgive her sufficiently to allow her a sufficient income to live upon in comfort. He accordingly wrote to the solicitors—with whom he had quarrelled, taking his business from their

hands, immediately he had heard of Laura's marriage—and requested them to send him the address of their clerk. The answer he received was that he had left their service in the same week that the exposure had taken place, and that they had not seen or heard of him since.

Captain Bradshaw advertised, and tried every means to discover them. He at last put the matter into the hands of the Bow Street authorities, but months elapsed before any news whatever was obtained. When he did hear, it was the worst news possible. His daughter was dead; had died in want and misery, after surviving her husband two months. Harry Bradshaw was fairly broken by the blow. He never inquired more. He shrunk from hearing any particulars. She was dead. That was pain and grief sufficient. Any further detail could but add to his remorse. He withdrew from all society, and after a few months went abroad, where he remained some three years, returning once more a widower. Then he again entered the world, but as a changed and saddened man. The world, however, saw nothing of this, it was only when alone that he gave way; with others he was the same

lively, amusing man as ever, his laugh gay and infectious as of old,—it was his nature, and he could not be otherwise. He entirely gave up country life now, closed Wyvern Hall, left the Earl of Longdale in undisturbed possession of the borough, and took up his residence permanently in London, spending most of his time at his Club—the Oriental.

The younger and favourite sister lived near him. She had only one child, Frank, to whom Captain Bradshaw took greatly, and came to look upon almost as his own son. Under the influence of his present softened feelings, he after some years made advances to young Frederick Bingham, which, however, he could not bring himself to extend to the father and mother.

The lad responded readily to these overtures, called at the house, and was soon as much at home there as his cousin Frank. He spared no pains to ingratiate himself with his uncle, who, although he still preferred Frank, took a warm liking to him, and when the time came for his going to the University, made him a handsome allowance to pay his expenses there. When Frank was about seventeen he lost his father and

mother within a few weeks of each other, and after that, until he left College, his uncle's house was his home, and he spent his vacations entirely there.

When Frank Maynard and Arthur Prescott arrived at the house in Lowndes Square, they found Captain Bradshaw in the drawing-room. He was still a light active figure, although he walked rather bent ; his hair and whiskers were nearly white, and, until he spoke, he looked an old man ; but when he did so, his face lit up, his eyes sparkled, and his lip played in a smile, and in the manner of his talk he was as young again as ever. There was a fourth person present, of whom no mention has yet been made. Alice Heathcote was a niece of Captain Bradshaw, the daughter of his second wife's sister, and to whom he was guardian. The mother had died ten years before, and Alice, except when away at school, had lived with him ever since. A tall girl, with a thoughtful face, and good features ; a broad rather than a high forehead, light grey eyes, a profusion of brown hair, and a slight figure, which almost leant back in its lissome grace. Her age was about twenty.

“That is right, Frank,” Captain Bradshaw said, as the young men entered. “I am glad to see that all this wandering about over the continent has not destroyed your habits of punctuality. Mr. Prescott, I am glad to see you.”

“What on earth have you been doing with yourself, Frank?” Alice Heathcote said. “Your hand is all cut, and you have a great scratch on your cheek.”

Frank glanced at his hand. “Really, Alice, I did not know it. I tumbled down, crossing Knightsbridge. It is a mere trifle: only the skin off. I will run up to your room, uncle; I shall not be a minute.”

“Frank has just been doing a very gallant action,” Prescott said, when his friend had left the room; “he saved a man’s life, at the risk of his own, and a very near thing it was, too.” And he then related what had taken place.

Captain Bradshaw listened with eager interest, and Alice, whose cheek had paled when she first heard Prescott’s announcement of the risk Frank had run, flushed up with pleasure and excitement at the particulars. The story was just finished,

and the questions which arose from it answered, when Frank came downstairs again.

“ Well, Frank, Prescott here is telling us that you have been risking your life in the most reckless way, and becoming an amateur member of the Humane Society. Joking apart, my dear boy, it was a very plucky thing, and the speed with which it had to be done shows that you have a cool head as well as a strong arm and good pluck.”

“ What a fellow you are, Prescott ! ” Frank said, in a tone of indignant remonstrance, and colouring up as a girl might have done. “ Prescott has been making a mountain out of a molehill, uncle. A man slipped down, and I picked him up. It was a mere impulse ; nothing could be simpler or more natural.”

“ Stuff and nonsense, Frank ! you saved the man’s life ; it showed pluck and presence of mind, and the fact that you were knocked down speaks for itself what a very near thing it was. I am proud of you, my boy, and so is Alice, ain’t you, Alice ? ”

“ I think it was very brave of Frank,” Alice Heathcote said, quietly — much more quietly,

indeed than might have been expected from the previous glow of enthusiasm upon her face. "Who was the man you picked up, and did he tell you his name?"

"He seemed a poor nervous sort of creature, and hardly knew whether he stood upon his head or his heels, after he was safe on the pavement. As to who he was, I have got his card; here it is—

STEPHEN WALKER,

TOBACCONIST,

Stationery of all kinds at the lowest prices.

Newspapers and periodicals punctually supplied.

"Stephen Walker!" Captain Bradshaw said, "there was a man of that name, a major in my regiment, when I first joined. He was killed in a skirmish, I remember quite well." And here the captain's reminiscence was cut short by the servant announcing dinner.

"Alice, take my arm. These two young fellows are neither of them strangers."

"I should think not, sir," Prescott said, "considering that it is eight or nine years since I first used to come here from Westminster to spend Saturdays and Sundays with Frank."

The dining-room was a large well-proportioned room, with a dark red paper; and with large prints of Conservative statesmen, in heavy oak frames, looking down at the proceedings. In the daylight it was an undeniably gloomy room, imperfectly lighted, and very dark; but with the curtains drawn, and in the warm soft light of the wax candles, it was a very snug room indeed.

"It is a mere form my sitting down to dinner," Captain Bradshaw continued, when they had taken their seats, "for I dare not eat anything."

"You are not worse than usual, I hope, uncle?"

"I am as bad as I can be, Frank; my liver is all but gone. I can't last much longer, my boy, quite impossible; I am going as fast as I can."

"I hope not, uncle," Frank said, gravely; but he was not much alarmed, for he had heard nearly the same thing almost as long as he could remember.

"I tell you, Frank, it is impossible. I have no more liver than a cat. I can't understand why I have gone on so long. Damn it, sir, it is flying in the face of Nature. I was down at the Club, to-day, and met Colonel Oldham, who was a youngster with me in India. I told him that as

he was going away for three or four months upon the continent, I would say good-bye to him for good, for it was quite impossible I could hold out till he came back again."

"What did Colonel Oldham say, uncle?"

"Well, Frank, between ourselves, the old fool said that he should say nothing of the sort, for that I had made him the same speech ten years ago."

Captain Bradshaw joined merrily in the laugh against himself.

"I should not be surprised, uncle, if you make the same speech to him ten years hence."

"Stuff and nonsense, Frank, the thing is impossible. Damn it, sir, I am a living miracle as it is—a man living without a liver. I intend leaving what there is left to the College of Surgeons, that is, if they can find it. It won't take up much room, for I would lay odds that a half-ounce phial will contain it, with room to spare."

"My dear uncle," Miss Heathcote said, "pray do not talk so very unpleasantly. You have gone on as you are for a very long time, and we all hope that you will for a long time more."

Harry Bradshaw shook his head, and went on with his dinner. He really believed what he said;

and yet he had uttered these forebodings with a cheerful voice, a merry laugh, and a sparkling eye. He could not speak seriously upon any subject, even such an one as this, unless he was in a passion, and then he could be very serious indeed.

Dinner passed off cheerfully. The principal part of the talk was supported by Frank and his uncle. The latter, indeed, kept up a steady stream of chat, mingled with many anecdotes of his Eastern experience, most of which the other had heard before, but they were always fresh and amusing from the humour with which they were told, and the glee with which the old officer related them. After dinner, they drew round to the fire. The servant placed a small table before them, to hold decanters and glasses, and Miss Heathcote took out some fancy work, as it was a rule of her uncle's that unless strangers were there she should remain with them.

“Don't spare the wine, boys, I must not drink more than a glass or two myself, but I may at least have the pleasure of seeing you do so. And now, what have you been doing with yourselves this afternoon?”

Frank, in reply, related the episode of the saving the dog's life at the Serpentine.

"By Gad, Frank, that must have been a fine little fellow. I should like to have been there. I would have given a five-pound note to have seen it. Did you say you took his address?"

"Yes, uncle; I thought I might have an opportunity of doing the boy a good turn some day or other."

"Then, Frank, when you go to see him, I should be glad if you would give him that sovereign for me. Poor little brute! I mean the dog, not the boy. It must have been a painful scene. I never shall forget a thing which happened to me on my way home from India. Your saying how pitiful it was to see the dog drowning and being able to do nothing for it, reminded me of it. There was a little cabin boy on board, I should say he was about twelve years old, one of the sharpest and jolliest little fellows I ever saw. He waited on us at mess, and we all quite took to him. Well, sir, we were becalmed down near the Cape. It was very hot weather, and the crew asked permission to bathe. Of course it was given, and in five minutes half the men were in

the water, among them Curly Jack, as we used to call the boy, who could swim like a fish. Well, sir, they had been in the water some time, when the mate gave the word for them to come out, and most of them had climbed up the side, but there were still a few in the water, and all were close to the ship's side except little Jack, who was some distance off, eighty yards or so. Suddenly a man called out, 'A shark!' Where he came from or how he got there I don't know. He had no right to be there at that time of year, and we had not seen one before. However, sure enough, there he was. Of course it was only his back-fin that we saw, cutting along the surface, but there was no mistaking that. He might have been two hundred yards off when we saw him, and he was making directly for the boy. What we all felt I cannot tell you. My heart seemed to stand still, and a deadly feeling of faintness came over me. I would have given worlds to have looked away, but I could not if my life had depended upon it. There was a shout of 'Swim, Jack, swim for your life!' and then a great splashing in the water, and I believe that every man who had been bathing jumped in again and

swam towards him, splashing and hallooing in hopes of frightening the shark. But he gave no signs of hearing them, and the black fin cut through the water in a straight line towards poor Jack. The boy knew his danger, and I could see that his bright ruddy face was as pale as death. He never said a word, but swam as I never saw a man swim before, and for a moment I hoped he might reach the men who were swimming in a body towards him, before the shark could overtake him. But I only hoped so for a moment, the beast came nearer and nearer, he was close upon him. I would have given worlds to have been able to shut my eyes, but I could not. Suddenly I saw the boy half leap out of the water with a wild cry, which rang in my ears for weeks, and then down he went, and we never saw a sign of him again."

"How dreadful, uncle! how shocking! Please never tell me that story again," Alice Heathcote said. "I shall dream of it. Poor little boy!"

"That was a most horrible business," Frank said. "By Jove! I would not have seen that for any money that could be given me. I do like a row, or danger of any sort if one's in it oneself,

but to stand quiet and look on is more than I could do."

"Let us go upstairs, if you will not have any more wine; Alice will sing you a song or two before you go."

And so they went upstairs. Alice Heathcote took her place at the piano, and glanced for an instant towards Frank to see if he were coming to choose a song. Seeing, however, that he was telling his uncle an alligator adventure he had met with up the Nile, she took the first which came to hand, and opened it before her. Prescott, seeing that Frank was making no sign of going towards the piano, took his place by the side of her, and turned over the leaves. She sang one song, and then, getting up, said that she was quite out of voice, and could not sing any more, that story of the sailor boy had, she supposed, upset her. Then, taking her work, she sat down by her uncle and worked quietly, joining very little in the conversation, and only glancing up occasionally at the speakers. Soon after tea the friends took leave, and, lighting their cigars, walked back to the Temple.

CHAPTER V.

A MODEST ANNIVERSARY.

A QUARTER PAST eight o'clock on Monday morning ; a clear, sharp, frosty day ; the shutters are down and the shop open at Stephen Walker's. From eight to ten is the busiest part of the day with them. Carry, looking very bright and pretty, is counting a number of the morning papers, which have just come in and are lying in a pile, damp and flabby, in front of her. Stephen Walker is standing beside her occupied in folding them, a task which, from long practice, he performs with wonderful quickness and exactitude. On the other side of the counter a small boy, with a good-humoured face and a merry impudent eye, with his hands in thick knitted gloves, and a red comforter round his neck, is waiting, stamping his feet to warm them and swinging his arms for the same purpose.

“Here is your lot,” Carry said, when she had finished; “twelve ‘Times,’ two ‘Posts,’ and three ‘Tisers.’ Now mind, Tom Holl, no stopping about or playing at marbles.”

“As if it were likely, Miss, that one would stop to play at marbles such a morning as this—oh yes! very.”

“There, take the papers and run off then.”

The boy put them under his arm, and went off at a brisk trot.

“What are you doing, father?”

“I am trying to put the books into proper order, Carry. Dear, dear, what terrible confusion they are in! Here is 55 next to 4, and the next to that is 87.”

“Oh please, father, do leave them alone. I shall never be able to find anything. I know now exactly where they all are, and could put my hand upon any book that is asked for in the dark; but if you once meddle with them I shall never find them again; the numbers don’t go for anything.”

“Just as you like, Carry. When do you suppose breakfast will be ready?”

“I am sure I don’t know, father; I must attend

to the shop at present, and I do think the very best thing you could do would be to go in and see about it. Now that would be really very useful; besides, you are such a figure that I don't like you to be seen here. That great cut and swelling upon your cheek make you look as if you had been fighting on Saturday night. Why, those two gentlemen who came in just now, and asked what you had been doing, when you said you had slipped down, looked at each other and winked and laughed. I could see they did not believe you a bit—and no one else will."

"Do you really think so, Carry? Dear me, dear me! that is very wrong of them, and will get me quite a bad name. Be sure to tell them when they call to-morrow how it happened. But perhaps you are right, my dear, and I had better keep as much as I can out of the shop of a morning till my face has got quite right again. I will see about breakfast: but, be sure, if you really want me, to call, and I will come in at once, whatever they may say about me."

In truth, Carry was by no means sorry for an excuse which would keep her father out of the shop of a morning, at any rate for a week or so,

a result which sometimes took her some little scheming to attain. For at that time a good many clerks were in the habit of coming in to buy tobacco, before they took 'bus for the city; not perhaps that Stephen Walker's tobacco was unusually good, but then certainly his daughter was uncommonly pretty. Those who did not smoke bought the "Times" for the use of their office there, which gave them the double advantage of having it to read on their way up, and of having a chat with Carry Walker before starting. So there were quite a number of men came in of a morning from half-past eight to half-past nine; and Carry who, as has been said, was in no ways loath to be admired, had a bright smile, and a laughing remark ready for each. So Stephen Walker's shop was quite a well-known rendezvous, and the young men would stand there chatting with Carry till the 'bus came along past the end of the street, where the coachman would regularly stop for them. Carry very much enjoyed all this. Her head was somewhat turned perhaps; but, in spite of her little vanities, she was a shrewd, sensible girl, and took all the nonsense talked to her at pretty nearly what it was worth. She had

always an answer for every remark, and in the little wordy passages generally managed to hold her own; and yet, although full of fun and life, she never for an instant forgot herself, or allowed her fun to carry her away. Her numerous admirers felt and respected this, and consequently the little war of words never exceeded anything that the father might not have listened to. At the same time there were unquestionably more fun and talk on those mornings when he did not appear in the shop. Some of these admirers of Carry were really in earnest, and would gladly have shared their homes and salaries with the tobacconist's pretty daughter; but she gave no encouragement to one more than another, and to the two or three who, in spite of this, had endeavoured to persuade her to unite her lot with theirs, she had very decidedly intimated that she had at present no idea whatever of changing her condition.

By half past nine her work was nearly over. The last batch of her visitors was off to town; the last "Times" was sold out, and in those days there were no penny papers.

When the shop was empty Carry went into the

little parlour, and found that her father had got the breakfast ready, and was sitting by the side of the fire waiting patiently till she should come in. Stephen Walker was no more sorry than his daughter was that he should have some excuse for leaving her alone in the shop during the busy time. He was perfectly aware that a large proportion of his customers came more for the purpose of seeing and talking with her than to buy tobacco or papers. And as he felt perfectly assured of Carry's discretion and self-respect, he was not at all afraid of leaving her to take care of herself. At first it had not been so, and he had been very loath to leave her in the shop alone, and had, when he went into the parlour, been in the habit of leaving the door ajar, so that he could hear what went on. When he found, however, that the conversation never surpassed the limits of fair badinage, and that Carry turned aside all the compliments paid to her, with a merry laugh, he grew confident, and was quite content to leave her to herself, especially as he could not but feel that his presence was a restraint both to them and her. He was quite sensible of the fact that in the two years which had elapsed since she first took her

place in the shop, that the business had trebled, and that his and her comforts were proportionately increased.

They had scarcely sat down to breakfast before they heard some one come into the shop. Carry got up with a little exclamation of impatience, opened the door, and looked out.

“ Good morning, Evan, what is it ? ”

“ Good morning, miss. Could I speak to Mr. Walker ? ”

“ Come in Evan, we are at breakfast ; that is right ; now shut the door.”

“ What do you want, Evan ? ” Stephen Walker asked.

“ If you please, sir, I wanted to ask you, if when you go up to town, you would get me some books for James to read.”

“ What sort of books, Evan ? ”

“ Not story books sir, but clever books about mechanics, and that sort of thing ; not easy ones, sir, he is a wonderful chap at 'rithmetic, James is, and can do any of the sums in the one we have got at home ; but I have heard him say he should like to learn mathematics. I would go myself sir, and not trouble you, but Lor, I should not

know which was which. I don't want new ones, but books from the old stalls ; I have heard tell, they are very cheap there. Here is ten shillings, sir ; would you kindly choose as many as you can get for it, and please keep them here for me, 'cause I want to surprise him with them ? ”

“ But gracious, child ! ” Carry said, “ where on earth did you get ten shillings to spend on old books ? ”

“ If you please, miss, it were given to me, and more too, for picking a little dog out of the Serpentine, and I thought that I couldn't do better with it than get some books for James. He is mighty clever, and he has nothing to amuse him, poor fellow, except his flowers, so he will have plenty of time to think over all these hard things.”

“ You are a good boy, Evan,” Stephen Walker said, “ and I will do my best, and ten shillings will go a good way. That sort of book is always to be picked up very cheap. I can get an algebra, Euclid, and trigonometry, anyhow, and perhaps a book on conic sections, and it will take your brother some time to master them. But, Evan,

does your father know what you are spending your money upon ? ”

“ Oh yes, he knows,” the boy said ; “ besides, he told me that the money was mine, and I could spend it upon what I liked. And please, Mr. Walker, father told me to give his respects, and would you go in and smoke a pipe with him this evening ? ”

“ Will you tell your father from me,” Stephen Walker said, “ that he may rely upon my coming. And where are you going now, Evan ? ”

“ I am going down to the Serpentine ; I hear they are skating there this morning, and I have got a new tray, and such a lot of bull’s eyes and peppermints, rather. Will you have some, miss,” and the boy took out a handful and put them down by Carry’s plate.

“ Thank you, Evan, I will take two or three, not more ; I could not eat them—that will do, thank you ; I hope you will do a good day’s work.”

“ No fear of that, miss ; I just shall do this week if the frost goes on. Good bye, miss. Good bye, sir, and thank you ; please don’t forget the books,” and Evan Holl was gone.

“Do you know, father, I think it’s lowering yourself going into John Holl’s, he is a very good sort of a man, but he is only a dustman. I think you ought to look higher than that, if only for my sake.”

“John Holl is a very decent man, my dear,” her father said mildly, “and he always treats me with proper respect. There are not many places I do go to ; but I esteem John Holl to be a very respectable man in his sphere of life, and I do not think it can do me any harm.”

Carry pouted a little, but made no further remark. She had very little knowledge of her father’s past life. She could remember vaguely that as a child she had lived in a much better house, but that was all. Stephen Walker had never spoken of earlier times, beyond telling her that he had formerly kept a much larger shop, which had been his father’s before him ; but that he had been unfortunate, and had therefore settled down into a place more suited to his means. More than this he had never told her, for he thought it better for the girl’s happiness that she should remain in ignorance of what the past had been. He thought that if she had known

in what a different station she might have moved, it might tend to make her discontented with her state. For himself, he accepted his lot cheerfully, and was on the whole far happier than he had ever been before, and he judged her by himself.

Stephen Walker really liked these little evenings with his humble friends. When he went in there to smoke a pipe he was always treated with a certain deference which gratified any lingering feelings of personal pride he might have, and made him flatter himself with the idea that in so doing he was really conferring a favour instead of accepting one.

Anyone entering John Holl's at seven o'clock that evening would have seen at once that something very important was about to take place. The floor had been evidently recently scrubbed, and in those parts not covered by the square patch of drugget in the middle of the room, was so clean and white that it almost seemed a pity to tread upon it. The chairs and table absolutely shone with the amount of rubbing and polishing which had been bestowed upon them, and the ornaments on the chest of drawers had been

arranged upon a spotless white cloth to the best possible advantage.

Mother had just come down from upstairs, where she had been engaged in tidying herself, and looked red and hot from the hard work and excitement.

John Holl himself was sitting in his usual place by the side of the fire, smoking his long pipe with his accustomed air of thoughtful gravity. James was in his box on wheels opposite to him, but not immediately so, the chair next to the fire being, as the place of honour, reserved for Stephen Walker.

The younger children are seated upon the stairs as being quite out of the way, and are from that post of vantage viewing all the preparations with an air of extreme interest, passing away the time the while, by munching apples and cakes which have fallen to them as their share of the feast.

Presently Evan returns, and the cause of his absence is at once apparent, for he is followed by a potboy from a neighbouring public-house, carrying in one hand a large can of beer and in the other three empty pewter pots, which he

places upon the table in company with several long clay pipes which are lying upon it ready for use. He then takes from the pockets of his jacket two black bottles which he places beside them, and with a brief "good-night" takes his leave. And now when Mrs. Holl has placed some tumblers upon the table, the preparations for the feast are complete.

For even the Holls have their feasts—not often and not great ones. In no single respect resembling those banquets which a city alderman pictures to himself at the word feast, where turtle soup with its lumps of green fat mingles if not harmonises with venison and truffles, the whole crowned with that wonderful institution—the loving cup.

But the Holls have none of these things, nor perhaps would be able thoroughly to appreciate them if they had. The contents of the black bottles and battered pewter pots form the great staple of the entertainment. Strange stories, could they speak, might these pewters relate of those who have drunk from them, and curious would be the history of each of their numerous dints and bruises. That one was crushed only

last Saturday night by being thrown by a drunken husband at his wife; the symmetry of the next was spoilt against a navvy's skull in an English and Irish row; for stealing the third, Daniel Crinky, alias the Ferret, was sent on a long sea voyage; and many another tale of drunkenness and crime.

This is one of the pewter's innocent uses, and they seem to have been specially cleaned and brightened up in honour of the occasion. It is the twentieth anniversary of John and Sarah Holl's wedding-day. The guests soon begin to arrive; there are not many of them—half-a-dozen or so. In the first case, as he is a public character should be mentioned A 56. For he is a public character, and his place can by no means be termed a sinecure. Far from it, for A 56 has plenty of hard work and not over much pay in return. He must make up his mind for hard knocks, and occasionally in the discharge of his duty to be nearly killed, perhaps in the open day, with dozens of by-standers looking on, too cowardly or too indifferent to lift a finger in his defence. He will have some unpleasant duties, too, such as keeping the line all day in the rain

at Chiswick Fête, and is expected to be within a few yards of every irascible gentleman who is overcharged by a cabman, or who imagines himself to be in any way aggrieved. He must make up his mind to being a pretty general object of dislike among the lower orders, and to be taunted and chaffed and groaned at on all public occasions, he being at those times considered a fair subject for sport. All this and much more must he bear with perfect equanimity and good temper, for if he should ever get a little crusty, and hit rather harder than the occasion appears to warrant, he knows that "Mentor," and "Censor," and "Civis," and many others will be down upon him at once in the columns of the daily papers. But to their credit be it spoken, it is very seldom that A 56 and his brethren from A 1 to the end of the alphabet ever give an opportunity for a charge against them.

Next to A 56 must be mentioned Perkins. Perkins is not a handsome man, in fact the reverse. He is rather tall and strongly built, with high cheek bones, small sunken eyes, and a broken nose. He wears a groom's waistcoat

with a heavy steel watchguard, and a gaudy scarf round his neck with a showy mosaic gold pin. From these tokens it may be at once seen that Perkins is or has been a prize-fighter. A nasty customer was Perkins in his time, and many a victory has he won, from his first appearance as Harry Parson's novice, to the time when backing himself to fight Unknown for 200*l.* a side, he was nearly killed. It was in that celebrated conflict that his nose was broken; and he then retired from the ring, and was established by his admirers in the snug Public, known as "The Lively Stunners," where every Wednesday evening a select harmonic meeting is held, at which good humour and fisticuffs prevail, as see "Bell's Life."

Between Perkins and A 56 a species of feud exists, for Perkins cannot disguise that he objects to A 56. Not on personal grounds, far from it; but as being one of the body who are constantly on the watch to interrupt and put an end to the noble art of which he, Perkins, is a professor; and he attributes to A 56 and his fellows the disrepute into which that noble science has fallen. Of the others present, as they will not

appear again in the pages of this history, no description need be given.

After the first guest had arrived the rest soon came in, entering generally with a rather awkward air, as if impressed somewhat with the gravity and importance of the occasion, but thawing rapidly when they had once seated themselves and had each got one of the long pipes into full operation.

Presently Stephen Walker arrives, and is inducted in the post of honour. His being thus late was caused by his desire to see the shop closed, and Carry comfortably seated at the fire with a novel, before coming out.

As was but natural the weather was the first object of discussion, but this did not last long, it being unanimously agreed that the frost was likely to last any time. After that, various other topics are introduced and discussed gravely, and generally with a fair knowledge of the subject. At last, as all conversation among working men at that period was sure to do, their talk turned upon the Chartist movement which was agitating the lower classes of the metropolis.

“I wish the Charter had never been heard of,”

John Holl said, "I'm sick of it. Look at my brother Bill. A better workman never stepped in shoes, always at work, always on the best wages, and look at him now, never doing a stroke, but wasting his time going about talking. It's been a weary time for Bessy since he took up with it. But, Lor' bless you, to hear him talk you would think that we were all black niggers. It sounds all very fine, and though I know I aint a black nigger, I can't say anything against it. But, Lor bless you! you should hear James, he ats him, and he gives him word for word, and line for line, and Bill gets hit pretty hard, I can tell you; you do slap it into him, James, don't you?"

The lad, who had been very quiet, only putting in a remark occasionally, laughed merrily.

"I like arguing with Uncle Bill, he is so accustomed to have it all his own way, and he does not half like it sometimes when I come down upon him. I am very sorry for him though, and I do wish I could convince him. He is so honest, and he believes in what he says so much, that it is a pity to think that it will lead him into trouble."

“Why did he not come here to-night, John?” Stephen Walker asked.

“He has got what he calls a ‘committee’ on, and, bless you, he wouldn’t miss a committee, he wouldn’t, not if he knew he should find us all dead when he came out.”

Here Mrs. Holl, who had been upstairs putting the younger children to bed, came down again, and began to bustle about, and lay a cloth for supper. She then brought out a huge pie from the cupboard, and in a few minutes the whole party drew round the table and set to. When supper was over, Mrs. Holl cleared the table, put the black bottles and tumblers upon it, poured out a large jug of boiling water, and each mixed himself a glass.

There was then a little pause, and Stephen Walker, finding that the eyes of the company were directed generally towards him, said—

“Gentlemen, we are met here to night to celebrate a very happy occasion. Twenty years ago to-day, my friends, John and Sarah Holl were married. How happy they have been they best know, but from what I have seen of them, and I have known them for some years now, I should

say that they are as happy a couple as any in the town, and I think you will agree with me when I say that they well deserve to be. John, I drink your health and your good wife's, may you continue for another twenty years to be as happy as you have been up to this time."

His speech was received with murmurs of applause, and with thumping of glasses from those seated near enough to the table to be enabled to indulge in that evidence of their approbation.

Then all nodded to John and Sarah over their glasses, and said, "Here's to ye," and there was a pause of silence for John Holl's reply.

And then John, wiping his mouth with the back of his broad, brown hand, and clearing his throat, said—

"Mr. Walker and friends all, speaking ain't in my way much, but for Sairey and self, I must tell you how much I feel obligated for all your kind wishes. Mr. Walker, and friends all, I thank yer kindly. Sairey here and I have been married twenty long years now, and we ha' been very happy together. It don't seem twenty year, but I know it is. Sairey, she were a tall, shapely lass, and I were an active, young chap

then ; as you may see, friends all, we ha' changed rarely since then. But I don't think we ha' changed other way. I do believe, Sairey an' me are just as fond o' each other as we was this day twenty year back. Mr. Walker, and friends all, my wife Sairey has been a good wife to me. I can't say rightly how good, but I feel it. I know well that I ain't made Sairey as good a husband as I might ha' done—hold your tongue, Sairey—but as you see, friends all, I don't think she likes me any the less for it now. We aint lived just an idle life all these years, and we didn't expect to when we got married. We have had our hardish times, too, but nothing not to say to grumble about. On the whole we have got on pretty fair, and ha' laid up a few pound for a wet day. Mr. Walker, and friends all, thank ye kindly. Sairey, old girl, here's to ye," and John gave his wife a loud-sounding kiss, and Sarah, although she was a low person, and hardly knew what nerves meant, wiped away a tear unobserved amongst the thumping of glasses, and stamping of feet, which greeted the conclusion of John Holl's speech. After that there was a greater appearance of general ease, and of a determination to enjoy

themselves. Presently they began to sing. A 56 sang, principally comic songs, and sang them with so much spirit, that it was evident that under the rather stolid demeanor, and close cut regulation whisker, A 56 concealed a strong sense of humour. The crippled lad sang, and with considerable taste and feeling, and Perkins favoured the company with some of the songs of the "Lively Stunners" in his best style. And the others sang; but the most marked feature about their songs was the almost entire absence of any appreciable air, and that they all had a chorus apropos of nothing, of ri tiddy ti tiddy ad libitum. The singers too seemed continually striving to get up to some imaginary note, about two octaves above the normal compass of their voices, and as their eyes moved in accordance with their voices, at these times only the whites were visible; the entire effect to any one unaccustomed to it being extremely painful.

However, all seemed satisfied, and when the party broke up, which they did a little before twelve, as several of them had to be at their work early, they expressed themselves as greatly delighted with their evening. And so they went off;

the others to bed, but policeman A 56, who had only got leave in honour of the occasion, went off to the station to report himself, and then to relieve the comrade who had taken his place on his beat. Tramp, tramp, with his slow, heavy, regular tread all night, up and down many a quiet street, where his heavy foot-fall seems to echo strangely; steadily on, with once or twice a pause, and a sound of voice in remonstrance and dispute, and then a little scuffle as some drunken man is either persuaded to go home or else taken off to the station. Down many an area does the bright eye of his lantern pry; now it dances along a wall, now 'tis on the ground, now it flits into a window. Loudly the bells chime the hours in the still, starlight night—two—three—four—London is at its stillest, the last carriage from the latest party is back now, the last straggling foot passenger in bed. Five—six—and now there are some signs of life and movement again. The workmen are beginning to start to their distant places of work, stamping their feet, and swinging their arms, to warm themselves in the keen morning air. Had it been market-day, long ere this the light carts would have been rattling into

Covent Garden, to purchase a supply of vegetables, and be back again before the earliest customers are awake. Now it approaches seven, and the grey morning light begins to break over London, and to dim the brightness of A 56's lantern. The streets are busy with men hastening to their work. Seven—and it is comparatively quiet again. Half-past—and sleepy-looking housemaids begin to draw up blinds, and to open front doors, and sweep down the steps. And now the milk-carts drive up, and as the clock strikes eight, London seems to wake with a start. The 'busses rattle off with their loads of men for the early offices, foot passengers muffled to the throats, cabs and carts; day has fairly begun. And now A 56 is relieved, and goes home and sleeps long and soundly.

CHAPTER VI.

THE BINGHAMS.

BEHIND Sloane Street lie the quiet and secluded regions of Hans Place. Very respectable, and intensely dull is Hans Place, looking more like a portion of some sleepy little cathedral town than a corner of busy moving London. The rush and the roar of traffic pass it afar off, sounding like the murmur of the distant ocean. Were it not that it happens to be a short cut from Brompton to the upper part of Sloane Street, it is probable that not five vehicles or ten foot-passengers, beyond the inhabitants themselves and the tradespeople who supply them, would ever pass through it. Little groups of children, indeed, from the small streets lying between it and Knightsbridge, come up into it, and the elders sit down on door steps, and discourse soberly and gravely together, while the younger ones play on the deserted pavement,

fearless of interruption. But these seem the only signs of life. It can hardly be that Nature made an exception in the case of Hans Place to her general laws, and that no children are ever born to any of its inhabitants ; but it is believed that, in the memory of man, none were ever seen at play in the dismal piece of ground in its centre, known as the garden. Indeed, the only denizens of the place [which seem endowed with life and vitality are the sparrows. These twitter and fight noisily in the dusty trees, or hop about on the wide road, heedless of interruption, hardly moving even when a passing vehicle drives by, but, standing with their heads on one side, watching it inquisitively with their bright fearless eyes.

In Hans Place reside the Bingham's. Mr. Bingham is a civil engineer, and dabbles generally in building operations. He is a man of about middle height, spare, and active ; very careful as to his attire, and of a mild conciliatory address ; a pleasant, well-informed man.

Mrs. Bingham, the sister of Captain Bradshaw, is the picture of good temper. Short and stout, as such women generally are, devoted to

her husband and children, having no thought, no care, no object in life unconnected with the narrow circle of her own family. Not a clever woman—that is, not a clever woman of the world. As a painter and musician, she was really talented; but to have heard her talk, no one would have given her credit for being anything of the sort. And yet, in any point unconnected with her own family and belongings, she was shrewd and sensible, with a little touch of satire; but the affection and admiration of the mother of the Gracchi for her children, were as nothing to the feelings with which she regarded her progeny. Terrible indeed was Mrs. Bingham's house to visitors when the children were young. She would dilate upon their affectionate dispositions, their extraordinary cleverness and precocity. Their sayings and doings would be rehearsed at length, and the children themselves brought in, exhibited, and praised, Mrs. Bingham taking it for granted that all this would afford at least as much pleasure to her visitors as to herself. It was fortunate that this idea was so thoroughly rooted in her mind, that she required very little active acquiescence. A general smile, an "indeed,"

and "dear me," thrown in from time to time, was sufficient to satisfy her; but even with this, it was universally agreed among Mrs. Bingham's friends that a visit to her was a very dreadful affair.

The children were by no means bad children in themselves. Frederick, the eldest, has been already spoken of, and, as a boy, was a pleasant and quiet, but hasty tempered lad. The two daughters were quiet, simple girls, taking much after their mother in her home tastes, and affectionate disposition. They were, at this time, of the ages of sixteen and fifteen respectively. Fred Bingham was in no way changed by the three years which had passed since the night of the boating party at Cambridge. He did not look one day older; there were no signs of whisker on his smooth fair face; a slight moustache of light hair had grown upon his upper lip; this, contrary to the usual custom in the year '48, he assiduously cultivated, although with small success, but if constant stroking could have conduced to its growth, it would have been a very much more important affair than it was.

The Binghams had nearly finished breakfast. Mr. Bingham had quite done, and was looking

out of the window at a solitary foot passenger who was in sight, when his wife asked him,

“Are you going up to your office this morning, my dear?”

“No; I am going over to Bayswater, to value a house, but I dare say I shall be in town in the afternoon.”

“Then I suppose you are going to the office, Freddy, dear?”

“Now, look here, Venerable,” Fred Bingham said, “I suppose you want something; if you do, say it out, and don’t be beating about the bush, and asking questions about things which don’t concern you.”

“Now, Freddy, that is so like you. No, I don’t want anything at all. I was only thinking what a treat it would be to take the poor children to a pantomime.”

“Oh, you were thinking what a treat it would be to take the poor children to a pantomime,” Fred mimicked. “Well, supposing that it would, I really don’t see what connection that has to my going to office.”

“Now, Freddy, how you do take me up. I was only wondering whether you would be

doing anything to tire yourselves, because if not——”

“Oh, because if not, I suppose you wondered next whether you could do me into buying tickets for them.”

“No, Freddy, I did not wonder anything of the sort. I am sure your dear papa would do that.”

“I don't know, my dear,” Mr. Bingham said, standing on the hearth-rug, and jingling the money and keys in his trousers pockets, as was a favourite habit of his. “I don't know, my dear, that their dear papa will do anything of the sort. He is peculiarly short of money at present.”

“There, Venerable,” Fred said, “don't look so downcast. I will get tickets for the poor things, and as I suppose you will be wanting to go too, instead of staying quietly at home, as an old lady of your age should do, I must get one for you, too. Make up your minds which theatre you will go to, but don't talk about it now, as you will all talk together, and then I shan't get you the tickets at all. Settle it among yourselves out of the room, and let me know before I start.”

“There's a dear, kind Freddy,” Mrs. Bingham

said, admiringly: "he is always such a good, kind fellow." And she looked round proudly upon the girls, who purred acquiescence.

"There, that will do, Venerable, a very little of that goes a long way; besides, I believe I have heard you say as much before. And, look here, girls, I shall expect you both to practise that glee we were singing last night, to-day and to-morrow, so as to be perfect in the evening, and not make such an exhibition of yourselves as you did last night. And now, all three of you take yourselves off at once, and make up your minds about the theatre; I want to have ten minutes talk with the pater upon business before we start."

Mrs. Bingham rose without a word, and went out accompanied by the girls, with the parting remark, given in a decided tone, which defied contradiction, that "there never was such a dear fellow in the world."

Fred Bingham was very kind to his mother and sisters. He was liberal in the extreme with his money, and they deservedly doted upon him. He was, it is true, excessively dictatorial in his way of speaking to them, but they obeyed all he said unquestioningly, taking it partly as fun,

partly his right, the due of his extreme kindness and cleverness.

When they had left the room, Frederick Bingham turned to the father. The smile had gone from his face now, and he spoke in a cold hard business way, very different from the light jesting tone he had used to his mother.

“How long shall you be at Bayswater?”

“I should think two hours will be quite sufficient; it is not a large house.”

“Those Biglows have not paid their rent yet. I think you had better go up to St. John’s Wood and see about it.”

“I will go if you think so, Fred, but it will be of no use.”

“Give them to the end of the week, and if they don’t pay on Saturday, put a man in the first thing on Monday morning.”

“You see, Fred, they said last week when I saw them,” Mr. Bingham said hesitatingly, “that Biglow had been ill for months, and had been too weak to touch a brush.”

“That is their business,” the son said harshly, “not ours. Let them go into a smaller house. There will be enough furniture left, after paying

us our half-year's rent to furnish that. The furniture is very good. I took particular notice myself last time I saw them. Anyhow, the dining-room alone is worth fifty pounds at a sale. You can tell them that you don't want to do anything unhandsome, but that you must have the forty pounds they owe ; and that rather than sell them up, if they like to leave the dining-room and drawing-room furniture, we will let them take the rest out and cry quits. That will suit both of us ; it will save them being sold up, and it is worth a good hundred pounds to us."

"But, Fred, he might easily borrow the means to pay the half-year's rent on the furniture by merely giving a bill of sale."

"Nonsense, father ; the man's an artist, and knows no more of business than a child. Do as I advise you, and you will see he will jump at the offer, and be grateful besides."

"Well, Fred, you will never die a pauper, that's pretty certain," his father said, admiringly.

"I have no intention of doing so," Fred said drily. "That is settled then. I don't know that there is anything else to arrange. Call round at the office if you have time ; but I shall

leave early myself. I suppose we shall dine at five, to give us plenty of time for the theatre business."

Fred then went to the door, and shouted for his mother, who came with the information that they had decided upon the Princess's.

"Very well, Venerable, I will get the tickets as I go up. I am off now. Have the girls got my hat and gloves, and brushed my great coat?"

The girls had; and now brought them to him. It took him another five minutes getting them on—especially the gloves—for Fred Bingham was, like his father, extremely careful about his personal adornment, especially in the matter of gloves—which he was never without—wearing them upon every possible occasion; for if there was one thing which galled Fred Bingham more than another, it was those unfortunate great unshapely red hands of his.

The Binghams lived on the side of Hans Place nearest to Knightsbridge. The shortest way, consequently, into the high road, was to cut down through the small streets instead of going out into Sloane Street. Fred Bingham, however, after turning out of Hans Place, did

not take the most direct way, but turning through two or three narrow lanes, he came out into New Street, which he followed till he came to Stephen Walker's shop, where he turned in. Carry was alone in the shop, and it was at once evident by the girl's manner that Fred Bingham was a regular customer; and by her slightly heightened colour that he was by no means an unwelcome one.

"Good morning, Carry; looking as bright and pretty as ever, I see."

"What nonsense you do talk to be sure, Mr. Bingham!" the girl laughed. "I shall certainly give up coming into the shop altogether, and put father in here from half-past nine till you are gone, if you don't give up talking rubbish."

"Give me a cigar, Carry. No, not those things; one out of my special box; thank you. Now you would not be so cruel as that, Carry, I am quite sure. I should pine visibly if you hid your bright face. I am almost as thin as I can be now, but I should become a candidate for the at present vacant situation of walking skeleton, in no time."

"Oh! I dare say," the girl retorted, "you

would not eat a mouthful the less at your dinner, I'd wager, whether you saw my bright face or not."

"You are quite wrong, Carry, I can assure you. What are you working at so industriously?"

"Never mind," the girl said, laughing. "Never ask questions about things which don't concern you. You know the rest of it."

"Quite well, Carry. But that appears to me to be a masculine garment, and therefore it is possible that it may concern me; because if it is intended for a favoured swain, I shall infallibly slay him."

"You need not do that, it is only a shirt for father. Besides, I have told you fifty times I have no favoured swain, as you call it."

"Oh yes, I know you have; but you see I have a great difficulty in believing you."

"Now, Mr. Bingham, really if you go on like that, I shall go into the next room," the girl said, making, however, no effort to rise.

"Really, Carry, it is very hard on a man that he may not say what he thinks."

"Yes, but you don't think it."

“I do think it, Carry; on my honour I think you the very prettiest girl ——”

“There now, sir, you see I am obliged to go,” Carry said, really getting up this time. “But then that’s fortunate; I can hear a ’bus; so I am well rid of you.”

“Bye bye, Carry; I must be up in town this morning in good time, or I would stay for the next hour, if it were only to plague you.” And so he was gone.

Carry did not take up her work again for some time, but sat thinking quietly, till her father came into the shop from the room behind, when she began to work assiduously.

“Carry, you have not been out for the last two days. Put on your bonnet, child; I will mind the shop for a while. A little fresh air will do you good.”

“Very well, father, I will go out for a little time; and I shall look in and have a chat with James Holl. I don’t suppose I shall be more than an hour gone.”

In a few minutes, Carry came down dressed for her walk; and with a parting nod to her father, went out. First down into Knights-

bridge. Here she spent some little time in looking at the tempting displays in the shop windows. Oh that she had but money that she might go in and make unlimited purchases! Fancy, too, how exactly that bonnet would suit her complexion, and how well she should look in that Indian shawl! And so Carry walked up the hill as far as the Duke's. Turning here she retraced her steps to Sloane Street, and thence, striking into the narrow streets, was soon at the Holls' door. After a preliminary knock with her hand, she lifted the latch and entered.

There were only three persons in the room. The crippled lad was at the window, to which he had wheeled up his box, partly to enable him to see out, partly for the benefit of the light for his work. On a table in front of him were a number of thin sheets of wax of various colours, a few paints and brushes, some wire and modelling tools, and some exquisite wax flowers which he had finished, with others in different stages of progress, upon which he was still engaged. Two little girls were standing beside him, with books in their hands, and one of them was reading aloud, while he listened and corrected her

as he worked. A little impatiently, perhaps, which was very unusual for him, but on the table near him was an algebra, part of Evan's present, which he had only received the day before. It was open, but was lying with its face downwards, and it was evident, by the glances which he cast in that direction, that he was longing to continue his study. He looked up when his visitor entered, and a bright flush of pleasure came across his face.

"How do you do, Miss Carry? It seems quite a time since you were here last."

"Not more than a week, James; and how are you, and where is Mrs. Holl?"

"I am quite well, Miss Carry. Mother has gone out for the day; but please sit down for a little while, you know what pleasure a talk with you always gives me."

The girl kissed the children, and then drew up a chair and sat down by him.

"Thank you," he said, "You see I am hearing Jessie and Loo their lessons. There, children, that will do for this morning; put away your books and go and play, but don't make a noise." The little girls gladly did as they were

told, and were soon sitting on two low stools in front of the fire, busy playing with two dolls, so old and battered that their clothes might be put on at pleasure either way, there being no distinguishable difference between their faces and the backs of their heads.

“What lovely flowers, James! I can't think how you can do them without a copy.”

“No more I could, Miss Carry. Father knows one of the men in the flower shop just as you get into Hans Place from Sloane Street, and he often brings me one, and I copy it at once and put it by till I want to make some of that sort.”

“It must be very interesting work, James, especially when you get to make them as beautifully as you do. What a lovely spray of roses and buds that is!”

“Do you think so, Miss Carry? Yes, they are very pretty. It is a copy of a bunch my friend the gardener brought me in last summer, and I liked it so much that I copied them just as they were. Will you accept that one, Miss Carry?” he said timidly; “I should be so glad if you would.”

“ Oh, I could not think of it, James ; it must have taken you an immense time.”

“ My time is of no great value,” the lad said rather sadly ; “ besides, it does not take nearly as long as it looks. I cut all the petals out with stamps. Please take it, Miss Carry. It would give me so much pleasure if you would.”

“ Well, if it would, James, I will certainly accept your offer, and thank you very much for them. They are really lovely. I have got a little Parian marble vase under a glass shade, father bought me my last birthday ; they will keep under that beautifully.”

The lad took a sheet of silver paper from a drawer of the table, and watched her with a pleased face as she very carefully enveloped them in it.

“ When I think how slowly the days used to pass,” he said, “ I don’t know what I should have done without my flower making.” I had nothing to do but to sit here, and hear the people walking past, and the children at play, and wonder why it should be that I was to be cut off from playing or walking as long as my life should last, and be a helpless burden upon other people all my

life. I shall never forget what I felt, when your father said to me one day, 'I wonder you don't try and do something, James.' Although I might have known that he was the last man to hurt any one's feelings, Miss Carry, for a moment I did think that what he said was without thought. The tears came up into my eyes, and I said, I dare say bitterly enough, 'God knows I should be only too glad, Mr. Walker, but what can I do?'

" 'Do,' said your father, 'plenty of things; make wax flowers, for instance.'

" 'Oh, I should be so glad, but how am I to learn?'

" 'I'll tell you what, James,' your father said. 'I will get you a book to teach you all about it, and all the things you will want. You must get some flowers to copy—easy ones to begin with, and if you are sharp, you will find in a very short time you will be able to earn money, besides keeping yourself employed. I will lay out a pound, James, in the materials, and you shall pay it out of your first earnings.' That's three years back now, Miss Carry, and I was not much more than fourteen. But I had thought a good deal, through sitting here all day with nothing to do,

but to think, think all the long hours, and I had read a great deal too, for Mr. Walker has always lent me what books I liked. But, boy as I was, my heart was too full of delight and hope to say one word. To think that I was not to be all my life without an occupation or an aim, that I was not always to be a burden to others! It was almost too much; for now for the first time your father's words seem to point out that it might be so different to what I had thought. I have read in books, Miss Carry, of what a man condemned to death feels when he is reprieved upon the scaffold, but I am sure he could not feel more than I did. I had so often wished to die, and had thought it would be so much better for me, so much happier than my life could be, that it seemed as if more than fresh life was given me. Oh, how anxious I was till your father brought the things, how I learnt the book by heart before I ventured to begin, how nervous I was with my first attempt, and, above all, what joy I felt when mother took out a box of my flowers, and brought me back far more than I had ever dreamt they would have fetched, and the news that at the shop where she had sold them, they had said

they would take as many more as I could make. I soon paid your father back his pound, Miss Carry; but as long as I live I can never repay him for the benefit he did me. What a different life mine has been since—always busy and happy, with a feeling that I am no longer a burden but a help to father and mother; and all this I owe to your father.”

“Dear father,” Carry said softly, “he is always good and kind. That puts me in mind that he is all alone in the shop, and that I must be going home, to see after the dinner. Good bye, James, and thank you for your flowers.”

“Good bye, Miss Carry, you are heartily welcome to them.”

And so shaking hands cordially with the crippled lad, and kissing the children, Carry went back to relieve her father in the shop; while James's studies at his algebra made but small progress that morning. For a bright face, which certainly Colenso never thought of inserting there, would keep intruding itself between the figures and his eyes, and making a terrible confusion of + and - and of “a's” and “x's.”

CHAPTER VII.

A STARTLING SUGGESTION.

FRANK MAYNARD, on his return from the Continent, had taken rooms close to those occupied by Arthur Prescott, in the Temple. An arrangement, which although in itself very pleasant for both, by no means conduced to the promotion of the latter's legal studies; for Arthur had been lately called to the bar, and was working really very hard at his profession. For the first week after his friend came back to town, he had put by his books, and given up his time to him entirely, but after that he had been obliged to enter into a compact with him. First, that Frank should on no pretence whatever come to his rooms before one o'clock; and second, that although he might pass the afternoon with him, he should be bound to occupy himself in reading, and was on no account to enter into

long conversations. After four o'clock, Prescott put aside his law books, and was at his friend's service for the rest of the day.

The first part of the condition Frank found it easy enough to observe. He did not rise until late; and after he had finished breakfast, the "Times" occupied him pretty well till it was the hour for going into Prescott's. After lunch he would take up a novel, light his pipe, make himself comfortable, and read for an hour or so. But presently he would put his book down, and begin to ask Prescott questions, and to entrap him into lengthy conversations, till Arthur became quite desperate; when Frank would leave him and sally out to make a round of calls, returning at six to go out to dinner with his friend. In the evening, Prescott was safe from interruption, as Frank was almost always out at dances and balls at the houses of the numerous friends he had met during his travels.

It was a week after the party at the Holls'. The frost had broken up, but the weather was raw and cold. Arthur Prescott was studying, and occasionally looking over, with a rather amused glance, at his friend. Frank having in vain

tried to interest himself in his novel, had thrown it down in disgust, and was gazing disconsolately out of the window, upon the green lawn below, and at the leaden-coloured river beyond, with its black drifting barges, and its busy little steamers hurrying past.

“By Jove, Prescott,” he broke out at last, “this is a beastly climate of ours.”

“As how, Frank?” Prescott asked quietly.

“As how?” Frank repeated irritably. “Why in its wind, and its rain; and its damp, and its cold. It’s detestable. Last winter I was in Rome.”

“Ah, and were you there in summer, Frank?”

“Of course not, Prescott. One might as well live in an oven, with an air blowing in from a fever-den.”

“Quite so, Frank. You see other places have their detestable points as well as ours.”

Frank Maynard gave a grunt of discontent, and again looked out of the window. At last he turned round again.

“What on earth am I to do with myself, Prescott?”

“My dear Frank, I am afraid that question is

likely to bring on a long discussion ; but in consideration of the day, and the more especially as I see you do not mean to let me read, I will put away my books for the afternoon."

"There's a good fellow," Frank said, brightening up greatly, and wheeling the fellow arm-chair of the one he had been sitting in, up to the fire, while Prescott put his books back into their places on the shelves. That done, he opened a bottle of beer, poured it into a large tankard—a college trophy of his prowess in boating—and lit his pipe.

"There, that's comfortable," Frank said. "The climate has its advantages after all. Now let us talk seriously. What in the world am I to do? Here have I been back in England little more than three months, two of which I have spent shooting, and now after a month in London, I am bored out of my life."

"It is a hard case, Frank ; a man with eight hundred a year, and nothing to do but to spend it ; and you are out nearly every evening, too."

"That's all well enough for the evening, Prescott, but I can't spend the day thinking

whom I am going to meet in the evening; and whether the pretty girl I danced with the night before will be there, and so on."

"Why not join a club, Frank?"

"I am down for the 'Travellers,' but it may be years before I am elected, and I don't believe I shall care for it when I am. I have been into several clubs with men I know, and they seem to me the slowest places going. Men look in, and moon about the room, and take up a paper, and then throw it down again, and go and look out of the window, and then order their dinner, and grumble over it when they have got it. My dear fellow, it's well enough for old fogies, but I can see no pull in it at all. Of course, in the evening one can play billiards, but as I am out nearly every night, I don't see that I shall gain much by that."

"Why don't you keep a horse, Frank?"

"Well, I might do that, Prescott; but I don't think I should ever go out on the beggar if I had one. I don't care much for riding at the best of times; and as to going up and down Rotten Row, it would drive me out of my mind in a week. No; when summer comes I shall

buy a yacht of about twenty tons, and cruise about; but the question is the winter."

"Well, Frank, as you do not care, I have heard you say, for country sports, I really think it would be worth your while to think seriously of entering yourself at the bar, or of taking to literary work; or in fact making some sort of aim for yourself. I confess that, as a busy man myself, I can hardly conceive a man having the whole day on his hands, with nothing definite before him."

"My dear fellow," Frank said despondently; "what on earth would be the good of my entering at the bar? I should never read—you know that as well as I do; and consequently I should have no more to do than I have now, with the additional disadvantage of being obliged to dine so often in Hall, instead of being able to get my dinner where I like. As to literary work, the thing's simply absurd; what on earth should I write about? And when I had fixed on a subject, what in the name of goodness should I have to say about it? Upon my word, Prescott, your suggestions are positively childish."

Prescott shrugged his shoulders, and smoked

for some time in silence. Presently he took his pipe from his mouth, and asked suddenly—

“Why don't you get married, Frank?”

“Married! My dear Prescott, I wish you would not talk in that light way of such a serious business. I should as soon think of flying up to the moon. Besides, whom in the world should I marry? I go out to parties and balls, and flirt with dozens of girls, but I never think any more of them, nor do they of me. Just imagine one of their faces, if I were to say, ‘Madam, your obedient servant is on the look-out for a wife; will you supply the deficiency?’”

Frank laughed loudly; Prescott smiled, and then was quiet for some time. At last he said, with a sort of effort—

“There is one young lady with whom you are at any rate on intimate terms. I mean, of course, Miss Heathcote.”

“Alice!” Frank exclaimed in great surprise; “now that is about the very last suggestion I should have expected to hear from you; for, upon my word, in the three or four times we have been down there together, since I came back, you were so quiet, and—you know what I

mean—that I had a sort of suspicion that you were spoony there yourself!”

Prescott coloured up hotly. “My dear Frank,” he said, gravely, “I have a very great esteem for Miss Heathcote; I think her a very loveable woman, but had I any deeper feeling for her, I should only endeavour to lay it aside as quickly as possible, because I know that I should not have the remotest chance in the world.”

“Upon my word now, Prescott, I don’t see why; Alice is an heiress, but I don’t know that her money would be a serious obstacle. She has no one to consult but herself, and if she fancies you, why should she not have you?”

“I am not speaking of money, Frank. If Miss Heathcote loved me, she would think nothing of her money; and I—although I would far rather bring wealth to my wife than that she should to me, still that would be no great obstacle. I am speaking of herself. I know that she would never care for me. So please do not let us discuss that part of the question. We were speaking of her in reference to yourself. Unless I am greatly mistaken, your uncle would be very

pleased if you were to marry her. Why should you not do so?"

"Well, he has thrown out some hints, but I only laughed, thinking it was a joke. Upon my word now, Prescott, this is too bad!" Frank went on with an air of great perplexity, "It seems to me that my uncle and you have entered into a sort of plot to marry me to Alice. Thank goodness, though," he said, cheering up, "Alice is not in it, for she has quite changed since I came back again. We were awful friends formerly, I used to kiss her regularly, and we were as jolly together as possible. When I came back from abroad, after being away two years, of course I kissed her when we met, but next time I offered to do so, she would not have it, and said that she was a great deal too old for that sort of thing. I said that we were cousins, and therefore it was all right and proper, but she answered quite sharply, that we were, indeed, nothing of the sort. Altogether she has been at times quite stiff and formal, and not a bit like what she was before I went away to the Continent. No, no, she is not in the conspiracy. Upon my word, Prescott, you quite frightened me. We like each

other very well—very much perhaps, but there is not the slightest risk of either of us going further.”

Prescott shrugged his shoulders with an irritable impatience which was very unusual to him. He was angry with Frank for his careless indifference, and yet, although he told himself over and over again that he was sorry to see that his friend was so blind, how could he help being glad? To him this was no new subject. He had thought it over and over till his head ached with the thought many a time. He had seen, years before, how the girl had looked up to Frank, had listened to his schoolboy stories, and his college tales, how she had submitted to all his boy's humours, and had made a hero of him to herself. He had noticed in the last year before Frank went abroad, how the girl's feeling had grown and intensified with her own growth towards womanhood; how she flushed up when Frank paid her little attentions; and how quickly she resented it whenever he still treated her as a child. He had noticed how eagerly she listened to all that was said about Frank when he was away, and, at the same time, how she shrank

from appearing to pay any but the most ordinary attention. And more than ever, since Frank's return, was Prescott sure that Alice Heathcote loved him. Another, a less close and less obtrusive watcher, would not have seen all this, but Prescott had a deep stake in the matter. He knew that he loved Alice with the whole strength of his nature. Had he believed that he had the slightest chance of success, he would have yielded no point of vantage, even to his friend Frank. Had both entered for the prize, and had Alice been neutral, Prescott would have told his friend frankly that they were rivals, and fought the matter out to the last. But here he could do nothing. The prize was given away, and the winner was too indifferent to stretch out his hand for it. True, he did not know that it might be had for the asking, and Prescott, as he sat quietly for a few minutes after Frank had spoken, was thinking very deeply with himself whether he ought to tell his friend that he was sure that he was mistaken. He was interrupted by Frank's saying irritably, "I wish to goodness, Prescott, you had never put such a notion into my head. I was comfortable and at home with

Alice before, as I had no more idea of marrying her than I had of flying, and now I shall never get the idea out of my head. I wonder whether my uncle has ever thrown out any hints of his idea to Alice. I should not be surprised if he has. That would account for what I was saying about her being cold and stiff to me; naturally she supposes that I want to make love to her, and she tries as plainly as she can to show me that she will have nothing to say to me. I tell you what, Prescott, you and my uncle, with your plans and ideas, will end by making Alice and me hate each other."

Frank got up, and walked up and down the room, smoking his pipe in short puffs, with an air of extreme vexation. Prescott said nothing in reply. He was actually far more irritated and much more puzzled than Frank himself was, but he could show neither his irritation nor the conflict of thoughts and feelings which was agitating him. Presently Frank stopped and said, "There is only one thing in the world I do think would induce me to marry Alice."

"What is that, Frank?" Prescott asked, looking anxiously up at him.

“I would marry her rather than that she should marry Fred Bingham. He is constantly there, and I think he is trying to make up to her.”

“I do not think that he has any chance whatever,” Prescott said quietly; “but you were always an upholder of your cousin—what has changed your opinion of him?”

“I don’t think that anything has changed it as far as I am concerned, Prescott,” Frank said, sitting down again; “you know he is not my sort of man. I believe just as much as I did that he is not a bad-hearted fellow—far from it; that is, I have no reason for believing otherwise. But you see I have been away for some time, and his cantankerous way comes upon me fresh. I never know whether he is making fun of me or not, and he does try my temper, which is, you know, none of the best, most amazingly. Although I know it is only prejudice, I own I do not like to see him hanging over Alice, turning over the leaves of her music for her, and that sort of thing; it makes me somehow feel cold and uncomfortable all over, and as I have said, rather than that he should marry her, I would save her

from it by marrying her myself. Of course supposing that she would have me."

"There is no fear, Frank, that you will be called upon to sacrifice yourself to prevent that contingency happening. Whatever Miss Heathcote may do, be assured she will never fall in love with Fred Bingham. As for what you say about your feelings towards him, it is not a prejudice against which you are struggling, it is a natural antipathy; one of those instincts which nature gives us against what is dangerous and bad. You know what we all felt about him at Cambridge; you would not agree with us, you fought against the idea, but your instinct is too strong for you, and you will end by thinking like the rest of us."

"No, no, Prescott, I will not allow that; I grant that he irritates me more than he did, and that somehow, although I have no idea why, I should not like to see Alice marry him; but I have not the least reason for changing my opinion that he is a good fellow at heart."

"He is a bad egg," Prescott said, dogmatically. "A bad egg, Frank; do what you will with him, he is bad to the core. His shell is

white enough, but some day when you crack it, and find what a rotten inside it's got, you will regret deeply enough that you ever took it in your hand."

"You are a prejudiced beggar, Prescott," Frank said, laughing; "but I know it is no use my arguing the point with you. Time will show which is right."

Prescott nodded, and there was a short silence, when Frank rose.

"The sun is shining, Prescott, the afternoon is quite changed; suppose we go out. Oh, nonsense, you said you would give me the afternoon. Where shall we go?"

"It's all the same to me, Frank."

"I wish to goodness it was not, Prescott; you give me all the trouble of thinking—there now, I've got another idea—let's go and see the boy that picked the dog out of the Serpentine."

"What are you going to say to him when you do see him, Frank?"

"In the first place I'm going to give him the sovereign Uncle Harry gave me for him; and in the next place—what a fellow you are, Prescott, in the next place—well, I suppose I shall tell him

he is a fine little chap. No, I've another idea. By Jove, I will make a Buttons of him."

"But what on earth do you want a Buttons for, Frank?" Prescott said, laughing.

"Oh, hundreds of things. He will be very useful in my chambers, go messages, and all sorts of things. I never can find that old bed maker of mine. My dear fellow, I can't make out how I have done without one so long. A Buttons will be just the thing; besides, if I get a horse, look how useful he would be. I will make him cabin boy on board the yacht—hundreds of things; my dear fellow, my ideas come so fast, I think I shall take up the literary line, after all. There, get your hat and coat on, Prescott, and we will charter a cab, and be off at once to get Buttons."

The afternoon had come out clear and fine; so they went out through Essex Street into the Strand, and took a cab, which soon set them down at the end of Sloane Street. Here they discharged it; and inquiring of a policeman where Moor Street was, received the intelligence that it lay down behind, but that they had better take the first turning to the right, and then inquire again.

Accordingly they turned off from Sloane Street and entered the network of small lanes lying between Hans Place and Knightsbridge. Densely populated as the neighbourhood was, there were few signs of business, or the bustle of every day life. The place seemed entirely deserted by grown up people, and handed over bodily to children. The fathers were away at work, the mothers busy within the houses, but children swarmed everywhere; boys and girls of all ages and sizes, from the little baby set down upon a door step—sitting contentedly there, sucking a piece of rag, and gazing with a quiet old-fashioned look at the world around it, while its elder sister, a staid little woman of some seven years old, gossiped with another of the same standing—to lazy, hulking fellows of sixteen or seventeen, lounging idly at the corners of streets, smoking. Everywhere children engaged in every game which the youthful mind was capable of devising from the very limited materials at hand. Boys playing at hop-sotch, and tip-cat, and ball, with much shouting and rushing about, and danger to passers-by; boys playing at marbles, and games with buttons, and flat stones, and half-pence.

These amusements constantly gave rise to great squabbling and disputes, in which one of the great idle fellows before mentioned was usually called in as umpire, although like umpires in general, he always failed signally in giving satisfaction to either party. Girls sitting on door steps working; girls playing at shuttlecock; little things of five or six years old in strange garments and vast bonnets, staggering along with babies nearly as big as themselves; grave little parties of nurses sitting on door steps—while the babies under their charge made dirt pies—and amusing themselves relating stories to each other,—not fanciful Arabian nights' tales, but real histories of life:—"How father had come in on Saturday night drunk, and when mother had asked for money, how he had knocked she down." Or, "how put about father was when he came home last night, to find that mother had been and pawned his Sunday clothes, and got drunk on it." Many a similar tale do these little people relate gravely to each other. Poor little prematurely-old things, with their babies under their charge, and their cares already sitting heavily on their young shoulders, and such a life before them!

Sometimes, but not often, a cart comes along, and the games are stopped, and the marbles scattered, and the little nurses snatch up their charges ; doors open hastily, and women rush out into the road and seize their little ones by their dress, or an arm, or a leg, or anything that comes handy, and carry them off into their houses, with much shaking and scolding, and through the closed doors come out sounds of slapping and cries.

Through all this, Frank Maynard and his friend make their way. They easily find Moor Street, but, not knowing the number, have some difficulty in discovering the Holls' abode. However, after inquiring of some twenty children, they light upon one who is able to point out the house. Mrs. Holl herself opens the door in answer to their knock. Mrs. Holl is engaged in washing, and her arms to the elbows are white with soap-suds. Greatly surprised is she at seeing two gentlemen standing at the door. Finding however, by their inquiry if she is Mrs. Holl, that there is no mistake, she wipes her arms hastily with her apron, and asks them to walk in, apologizing as she does for the state of the room.

There was no occasion for that, for it was beautifully clean. The washing-tub stood upon a low bench in one corner; there were some cords stretched across the ceiling, but the clothes were not yet suspended upon them, and except that there was a warm steam in the room, which made everything look clammy and moist, it was neat and tidy as usual. Mrs. Holl placed two chairs for her visitors, giving them a preliminary polish with her apron, and then waited in silence to hear the reason of their coming. But they were too much surprised at the conduct of the fourth inmate of the room to be able for a time to pay her any attention. He had at their entrance been sitting at work at his artificial flower making near the window. On seeing two gentlemen enter, and supposing that they wished to speak to Mrs. Holl, he had wheeled his box to its usual place by the fire, where there was a ladder fixed at a considerable angle and reaching to the ceiling. Under this he pushed his box, and then taking hold of its rungs he pulled himself up hand over hand to the ceiling, to the rafters of which were fixed a line of large open iron handles. Along these he swung himself to the staircase, and then away out

of sight by similar handles ; the whole being done apparently without the least effort, and as if it were a perfectly normal method of progression.

“By Jove!” Frank exclaimed, when he had disappeared up the stairs, “that’s wonderful. I am pretty good at gymnastics, but I could no more do that than I could fly, and it did not seem the least effort to him ; and it is so much the more difficult that I see the poor fellow has lost the use of his legs.”

“James is wonderful strong, sir, in the arm,” Mrs. Holl said, “wonderful strong. He began that clambering work when he was about twelve year old. He was pale like and thin, and the doctor said he ought to go out in the air, and not always sit indoors. Well, sir, James he could not abear the thought of going out much, being drawed about in a cart, but he thought if father could put up a pole across over his head, he might make a shift to draw himself up and down, and so exercise himself a bit. Well, sir, father he put up a pole, and in time James he got to be like a monkey, he could swing himself up with one arm and hang ever so long. After a bit, father he got the thought of setting some handles in the

beams there, and the ladder to get up to them, and it were a great amusement for James; I have seen him go right round the room ten times; as for the stairs, that were James's own idea. He were then about fifteen, and father used to carry him up to bed, and all at once it came to him, that if he had handles put on the top of the stairs and along his room, and then a ladder to get down by, he might make shift to go up and down of himself. Father went out that same night and got a blacksmith to make the handles, and that very night James went up to bed by himself. Lor, how pleased the poor lad were, to be sure. But I beg your pardon, gentlemen, for running on so—what can I do for you?"

"About ten days since, Mrs. Holl," Frank said, "my friend and I were at the Serpentine, and your son—he said his name was Evan, I believe—went into the water to fetch out a dog."

"He did, sir; are you the gentleman, sir, who was going in to fetch him out?"

"Just so, Mrs. Holl. Now I was very much pleased with him, and I have come here for two things to-day: the one to give him a sovereign which a friend of mine, to whom I was speaking of

your boy's pluck, gave me for him. Here it is; will you lay it out in something useful to him? The other reason was, I want a boy to be a general useful sort of lad—messenger or domestic, in fact for all sorts of things. Now it seems to me your son would be just the thing for me. I don't of course know anything of him, but from what I have seen I have no doubt we should get on very well together, and I think he would be very comfortable with me."

"I am sure you are very good, sir," Mrs. Holl said, gratefully, "very good, and I should think Evan very lucky to get such a place. I can't answer for him, sir, but I should say he would jump at it."

"Let him think it over, Mrs. Holl, and let him come up and see me any time before Thursday evening, when I may be going out of town for a week. Here is my card. By Jove! what beautiful wax flowers; look, Prescott, are they not exquisitely made?" and Frank went across the room to look at James Holl's handiwork.

"They are beautifully made," Prescott said, examining them; "I saw your son was at work at them when we came in."

"Yes, sir, he mostly is at work at them. He is very clever, James is, awful clever, and he earns a good deal of money at it too, besides its being a great amusement to him. Poor boy, it's a heavy life, sir, always to sit in that box of his, with no hope of ever getting any better."

"It must be, indeed, Mrs. Holl. Why, what is this—Colenso's Algebra—does he read that?"

"He do, sir, while he is at work; and when he ain't he never puts it down."

"He must be fonder of it than I ever was," Frank laughed. "But this is very interesting, Prescott, is it not?"

"If your son is so fond of study, Mrs. Holl," Arthur said, "I have a number of my old college books. I shall never touch them again. They only block my place up, and he is perfectly welcome to them."

"Lor, sir, it would be just a godsend to him."

"I will look them out, Mrs. Holl, and send them down to-morrow."

"I should take it very kind of you, sir—very kind; and James will be delighted."

"And, Mrs. Holl, I should like some of those wax flowers amazingly; will you ask him to make

me some?—a basket of them. Eh, Prescott, don't you think a basket of wax flowers would be just the thing for my room?"

"I don't know that they would be altogether in strict keeping with its general contents," Prescott said, smiling, "but no doubt they would look very well."

"Just so," Frank said. "Will you ask your son to make me a basket, Mrs. Holl? I suppose he can buy a basket and a shade, and all that sort of thing? and you know I will pay him for it all when he sends it."

"James will be very glad, sir; and thank'ee, but he is not my son."

"Is he not, Mrs. Holl? If it is not an impertinent question, what relation is he of yours?"

"He ain't no sort of relation, sir," the woman said. The young men looked surprised, and Prescott asked—

"Then how did you come to bring him up, Mrs. Holl?"

"Well, sir, it was a very simple matter; but if so be as you care to hear it, I will tell you just how it happened;" and leaning against the mantelpiece, with the red light of the fire thrown

up into her face, Mrs. Holl went on, very slowly, and speaking as though she almost saw what she was relating. "Well, sir, it were an evening in April—a cold, bitter day—I was sitting here between light and dark, drinking my tea with John, who had just come home from work—John is my husband, you see, sir—when we heard a noise outside in the street. We went out to see what was the matter, and we found a poor young creature, with a baby in her arms, had fallen down in a faint like. She was a pretty young thing, sir; and though her dress was poor and torn, she looked as if she had not been always so. Some one says, 'Take them to the work-house;' 'no,' says I—for my heart yearned towards the poor young thing—'bring her in here; mayn't we, John?' says I. Well, sir, John did not say nothing, but he took the baby out of her arms, and gived it to me, and then he upped and took the poor young creature—she were no great weight, sir—and carried her into the house, and laid her on the bed, as it might be by the window there. Well, gentlemen, that bed she never left; she came round a little, and lived some days, but her mind were never rightly itself

again. She would lay there, with her baby beside her, and sing songs to herself, I don't know what about, for it were some foreigner language. She were very gentle and quiet like, but I don't think she ever knew where she was, or anything about it. She were very fond of baby, and would take it in her arms, and hush it and talk to it. She faded and faded away, and the doctor said nothing could be done for her. It made my heart ache, sir; and if you will believe me, I would go upstairs and cry by the hour. The thought of the little baby troubled me too. I had just lost my first little one, sir, and I could not abear the thought of the little thing going to a workhouse, so one day I says to John, 'John, when that poor mother dies, for God's sake, dont'ee send the little baby to the workhouse; He has taken away our own little one, and maybe He has sent this one for us to love in his place. Let us take him as our own.' John, he did not say nothing, but he up and gived me a great kiss, and said, 'Sairey, you're a good woman;' which of course, gentlemen," Mrs. Holl put in apologetically, "is neither here nor there, for any mother would have done the

same ; but it's John's way when he's pleased. That very same night the baby's mother died."

The young men listened in silence as Mrs. Holl told her story ; standing, with her rough honest face lit up in the bright fire-glow, she related it simply, and as a matter of course, all unconscious of the good part she had taken in it, assuming no credit to herself, or seeing that she deserved any. When she had finished, there was a little silence ; Frank passed his hand furtively across his eyes, and then Arthur sprang up and shook Mrs. Holl warmly by the hand, saying, "Your husband was right, Mrs. Holl ; you are a good woman."

Mrs. Holl looked completely amazed, and stammered out, "Lor bless you, sir, there weren't nothing out of the way in what I did, and there's scores and scores would do the like. Having just lost my own little one, my heart went out to the poor little thing, and it seemed sent natural like to fill the place of the little angel who was gone from us. Bless your heart, sir, there weren't nothing out of the way in that ; nothing at all ; and we have never had cause to regret it.

The boy's a good boy, and a clever boy; and he is a comfort and a help to us. A better boy never lived; but we have always grieved sorely over his accident."

"Then he was not originally lame, Mrs. Holl?" Prescott asked.

"Dear me, no sir, not till he were six year old. It happened this a way: I were laid up at the time; I was just confined of Mary—she's my eldest girl—and somehow, James he were out in the streets playing; I don't rightly know how it happened, but never shall I forget when they brought him in, and said that a cart had run over him. John, he was in, which was lucky, for I think I lost my head like, and went clean out of my mind for a bit, for I loved him just like my own. They did not think he would have lived at first, for the cart had gone over the lower part of his body, and broke one of his thigh bones, and the other leg up high. It was a light cart, I have heard tell, or it must have killed him. He were in bed for months; and if you will believe me, if ever there was a patient little angel on earth, it was surely James. He never complained; and his chief trouble was for my sake. At last

he got well, but the doctors said that he would never walk again, for they thought there were some damage done to his spine; and sure enough he never has walked. He is always cheerful, only he never likes going out; and never would go at all, if we did not almost make him; he thinks folks look at him. Then he took to the climbing work, and that did him good; and the last three years he has taken to making them wax flowers; and it has been a wonderful thing for him, that has. He has always been given to reading. John made a shift to teach him his letters; and then the children of the neighbours, they lent him their school books, and taught him what they knew; and in a short time, bless you, sir, he knew more than them all. He would sit and read for hours together. He is wonderful clever, James is."

"Well, Mrs. Holl," Frank said, rising, "we are very much obliged to you for your story, but we must not keep you any longer. We will call again and arrange matters with you when Evan lets me know whether he accepts my offer."

“And I will be sure to forward the books to you to-morrow. Good bye.”

And greatly to Mrs. Holl's astonishment, the two young men shook hands warmly with her, as they took their leave.

CHAPTER VIII.

A SHATTERED HOME.

“BILL, dear Bill, I do wish you would give up these Chartist goings on. No good will come of it.”

The speaker was a pretty young woman, who would have been prettier, had not premature care traced deep lines on her forehead, which Time, more gentle, would not have done for years to come yet. Her dress was very poor, and the scanty furniture of the attic in which she and her husband lived, and the small embers of the fire over which a few potatoes were boiling for their meal, seemed to say that want had helped care in its work.

Bessy White had been the belle of her native village down in quiet Hampshire. A wilful, merry, coquettish little beauty, knowing her power, and using it; with a bright, fresh colour, and a

happy ringing laugh. It seemed hardly possible that four years could have changed her to the thin, pale, careworn woman she now was. Yet it was only four years since William Holl, a journeyman joiner, had on his wanderings passed through the village, and had stopped to do some work at the Squire's, which had occupied him for several weeks. There he saw her, fell in love with her, and carried her off in triumph from his rustic rivals, who, with the village in general, had marvelled much what pretty Bessy White could see to fancy in the pale, quiet, young carpenter, when so many stout young fellows were laying their hearts at her feet. However, Bessy had laughed at their wonder and their warnings, had gaily married, and gone off with her husband to busy London. For the first two or three years of her marriage her life was as happy as she had hoped that it would be. About eighteen months after she had come up to London, she had a baby, which only lived a few weeks; but this had been the only cloud to her happiness. Her husband earned good wages, for he was a capital workman, and was sober and industrious. He loved his wife fondly, and was very proud of

her, and of the prettily-furnished neat little rooms which constituted his home.

But after a while, strange murmurs of discontent buzzed about among the workpeople of the metropolis, and William Holl, with his talent and enthusiasm, threw himself heart and soul into the movement, and soon became one of its recognised heads.

Then came Bessy's evil days. Her husband, who had been considered one of the best and steadiest hands at the shop where he worked, was now constantly away, and at last lost his place altogether. The pretty furniture they once had, had gone piece by piece. They had moved from the snug lodgings they formerly occupied into the bare garret they now lived in. The rent even of this was frequently in arrear, and a crust of dry bread was often all the food they had. William Holl was ready enough to work now, but he had great difficulty in getting employment. Good workman as he was, masters looked shy at a man whom they considered as a sort of firebrand among their men, and it was only now by doing jobs at home for other hands that he earned even the most scanty living.

Still his heart was in the cause, and although he acutely felt his changed position, and his wife's altered looks, he never wavered for an instant in his course. For himself, indeed, he hardly felt it; the applause which nightly greeted his impassioned speeches at the club to which he belonged, was enough for him, and he would return to his wretched home with a flushed cheek and a proud bearing. He was a pale, sickly-looking man, with a high intellectual forehead, and a clear and expressive eye. Few who saw him at ordinary times would have supposed him capable of filling a large hall with his voice, pouring out bursts of real eloquence, and moving hundreds with his impassioned utterances.

To his wife he answered with a faint smile, "It is too late, Bessy; it is too late, my girl. I must go through with it now; I cannot draw back, and I would not if I could. We have the right with us, Bessy, and we have the strength; we must triumph in the end and get our Charter."

His wife shook her head sadly.

"My poor Bessy," he went on, "my poor girl. It is hard on you, you had better have

stayed down in Hampshire, quiet and happy. It was a sore day for you when ever I saw you. But yet, Bessy, I can't help it. I must struggle for our rights even if I die for it. But I am sorry for your sake, Bessy, that I feel as I do."

"Never mind me, Bill," his wife said, "I can bear it if you can, but I am so afraid it will never come right. I do so fear the future—I am so frightened lest you should get yourself into trouble."

"Never fear that, Bessy, we are sure to win. We must get our Charter, and then things will be all changed again, and we shall be better off than ever."

Again his wife shook her head doubtingly.

"Ah, Bill, if they were all like you, I should not fear—no, not one bit—but they are not. Look at the men you take up with now—men you would have been ashamed to be seen walking with in the old days; men who spend half their time in the public-house, who are seen drunk in the middle of the day—men who beat their wives, and let their children go about in rags. Oh, Bill! with such men as these you will never make

things better than they were before. I have no doubt you are right, Bill, and that things ought to be changed, but, for my part, it seems to me we were very happy as we were before, when we never thought that we were, as you say, only slaves."

"You women don't understand these things, Bessy," her husband said, a little impatiently; and then, with a slight shade on his face, went on, "I know that the men I work with are not the sort I should choose, but for a cause like ours we must work with the tools which come to hand. The better sort will soon come. Let them only hear the truth, and they will join us. They are doing so now—every day we get stronger, the Charter receives thousands of fresh signatures, and the Government, which grinds us down, trembles. Yes, Bessy, we are sure to succeed, and then, my poor girl, your troubles will be over. But it is nearly time for me to be off, let us have our potatoes. I must not miss our meeting to-night, for I expect we shall have an important discussion."

The scanty meal was eaten in silence, for William Holl could not help comparing it in his

mind with the snug, cheerful tea which he had always found waiting for him at the end of his day's work in the old times.

When he had gone out his wife sighed heavily, and then continued the work at which she was engaged, and on which indeed their scanty living at present greatly depended.

William Holl lodged in a small street in Pimlico, close to Vauxhall Bridge, across which his shortest route lay. But a penny now was a serious matter, and he accordingly kept along Millbank, in front of the maze of scaffolding of the new Houses of Parliament, and over Westminster Bridge, straight on to the Elephant and Castle. Then turning off from the bustle and roar of traffic in Newington Causeway, he passed into the heart of Bermondsey.

At first his way was through narrow streets inhabited entirely by the working classes. The clocks have just struck six, and the men are turning out from the neighbouring tan-yards and skinneries. Women are standing in front of their houses talking to each other, and looking out for their husbands' return, and through the open doors can be seen the tables laid with white

cloths, and the little trays with the tea-things standing there, and the bright fires with the kettles singing upon them. The men come trooping along boldly, and lustily whistling snatches of popular airs, laughing and joking together. All is bustle and cheerfulness. Now William Holl has turned off into a narrow lane, and has at once entered another atmosphere. There is no sound of whistling and light laughter here. Heavy surly men lean against door-posts and look sullenly out—men with heavy eyebrows and low foreheads, square jawbones and bull-necks—men on whom crime seems to have set a stamp, and whom instinct would lead you to avoid as you would a wolf or a tiger. Through some of the windows come sounds of quarrelling and blows, and foul imprecations of unspeakable horror, but no one heeds this; the men at the doorways do not even turn their heads to listen. The few women who are about, have for the most part an air of boldness and degradation indescribable. They are dressed in dirty tawdry garments, their faces show deep marks caused by misery and drink; whilst their mouths are full of language even fouler and more horrible than

that of the men. The men seemed all of one stamp, but of the women there were two distinctly marked classes. A few were very different from those just described. Poor creatures, timid and shrinking; wretched worn-out women, who only a few years before had been bright happy girls in some quiet country village far from the misery and crime of London. They had seen their husbands, originally perhaps honest and industrious, go with rapid steps down the social ladder, beginning with drink and ending in a life passed in violence and crime. Through all this the wives had never once thought of leaving them, but had clung to them through good report and evil report, through curses and blows, through desertion and shame, through want and misery. These women looked with trembling and horror upon the life they were bound to. To them death would have been a relief, oh, how welcome! Their early life seemed to them now a glimpse of some far off, long lost Paradise upon which they hardly dared even to cast a thought back.

There were a few children, precocious and old-looking, treading rapidly in their father's steps, born to people these wretched dens, and to fill

the reformatories and gaols of their native land. These nests of crime, these social ulcers, which eat into the heart of this London of ours, defy alike the efforts of benevolence and the sword of the law to cure or eradicate them. But one hope, one resource remains—to cut off the springs by which they are fed, to send the children to schools and reformatories before they are utterly hardened and debased, to make them useful, industrious men, and to show them the happiness of honest labour, and the inevitable misery of crime. Thus, and thus only, can the evil be reached. For the men, reformation is hopeless. They must be treated as savage beasts, and caged as such. And that not merely till the first paroxysm of rage and evil is past, to be then turned loose under the protection of a ticket-of-leave, to prey upon society. The tiger who appears to sleep in his cage, with his glossy paw extended and these terrible claws folded up, is the same tiger who in his native wilds slew men and beasts and drank their blood. Who would think of letting him loose again, to range with unrestrained freedom? Why, then, should these men-tigers be permitted to work their savage

wills? Should they not rather, when once, by repeated crimes, they have shown that their nature is thoroughly evil, be taken for ever from the world, of which they are scourges, not to be confined for life in a cell, but only until they learn that labour is a boon. Then they should be put to pass their lives in labouring for the good of that society to whom their existence has hitherto been a curse.

Through this den William Holl went. Beyond it the dwellings became scarcer; but the lanes were bounded by high walls, or large rambling buildings, the odour of tan and hide from which sufficiently indicated the trade carried on within them.

In a lonely corner of one of these lanes stood a public-house. It seemed at first sight a strange position for it, but doubtless the landlord knew his own business. It was a quiet out-of-the-way spot for men who did not care to enter the full light of more-frequented houses; besides, being in the midst of the tan-yards and skinneries, it obtained a fair share of custom from the men working in them. When William Holl passed the door he glanced in. A solitary gaslight was burning in the bar, but the place seemed entirely empty and

deserted, and no lights in the upper windows betrayed any signs of life and activity. There was a small court by the side of the house ; down this he turned, stopped at a door, and knocked in a quiet and peculiar way. The door was opened a little, and some one behind it asked, " Who knocks ? " to which he answered, " The People and their Charter." The door was then opened wide enough for him to enter, and he passed through into a small court behind the public-house. This he crossed, lifted the latch of a door, and went into a small passage with a staircase leading up from it. He mounted this and knocked at a door, and the same question and answer were exchanged before it was opened for his admission.

The room which William Holl entered was a large one, and had probably been used at one time for a penny concert room or singing hall, for at the end was a sort of raised platform. The roof was black from the smoke of years, and from it hung two chandeliers for gas. Neither of these however was now in use, as the room was lit by some candles fastened to a hoop hanging immediately over the table, at which fourteen

men were seated. The shutters were closed, and strips of paper pasted over the cracks to prevent the light within being seen from the street. To these men there was an indescribable charm in all this mystery, in these closed windows and secret passwords, this obscure meeting place, and this rough illumination. It seemed to raise them to the grandeur of conspirators. They pleased themselves by imagining themselves watched and tracked by the agents and spies of Government. While Government, secure of the unanimous assistance of the middle classes and the fidelity of the troops, troubled itself little with the ramifications of the plot, although it looked with some little anxiety upon the increasing murmurs and disaffection of the working classes, stirred up as they were by the violent orations of their demagogue leaders. These men, for their own selfish aims and ends, assured them that they were down-trodden slaves, pointed to the scenes then enacting on the other side of the water, and called upon them to make one united effort for their freedom.

The present meeting was composed of some of the most influential and violent of the agitators of

the time, being, some of them, members of the central committee, the rest delegates from various parts of London. They were, as in the French Revolution they aspired to imitate, divided into two distinct classes. A small minority were men like William Holl, intelligent and enthusiastic, to a certain extent theorists and dreamers, but actuated only by a sincere desire of ameliorating and raising the condition of their fellow-workmen—men with pale faces and lustrous eyes, animated with ardent hopes and pure intentions. But the vast majority, had very different aims and notions. They desired in the first place to pull down all above them, under the conviction that, in the confusion and anarchy which would follow the carrying out of their plans, they would somehow or other better their own condition. These men cared but little for the nominal objects of their schemes, but to secure their personal aggrandizement would not have hesitated at a reign of terror. They hated work, and lived upon the contributions wrung from their dupes, and took up politics simply because they were selfish and indolent. The general end for which all alike professed to

be agitating was manhood suffrage and political equality; their secret hopes and wishes differed greatly. Some would have been satisfied with a change of Government, and a House of Commons in which the democratic element thoroughly preponderated; others would have abolished the House of Peers, and have ruled only by an assembly chosen from the people; some, again, openly advocated the establishment of a republic; while a few went in for universal equality and a community of goods. The men present were composed principally of the working classes, but there were some few who by their attire belonged to a higher class, clerks and small tradesmen, who, either from interest or ambition, had joined the movement.

The chairman was evidently a man of a considerably higher social grade than most of his associates, and was elevated to the position he at present occupied for that reason, and not for any mental superiority. Indeed, among all the faces present, his was the most strikingly distinguished for an entire absence of any intellectual expression. An elderly man, with white hair, whiskers, and hair under his chin, with a look of self-

importance which was laughable in its inordinate vanity. He was a bad speaker, and delivered his harangues with an exaggeration of attitude, and an inflated pomposity of manner, at which even his associates had difficulty in restraining their laughter. And yet their chairman was a useful man to them, and the LL.D. after his name threw a sort of halo of respectability over the cause. Next to him sat a man who differed in appearance yet more strongly from the remainder of those present. He was a tall man, very carefully dressed, and with a military bearing. Captain Thornton had been an officer in the army, but had been put upon half-pay, and considered himself hardly used. He resembled the chairman, only in being inordinately and absurdly vain. His personal vanity it was which had urged him to take part in the present movement, and made him delight to march at the head even of a mob from St. Giles's. He was one of those men who would fain be king, but would otherwise be content to act the part of king's fool, as being the next most conspicuous personage. He loved being looked up to as a man of consequence by the mechanics and roughs with whom he was

associated. It tickled his consuming vanity, when he was saluted in the streets with the cry of "Bravo, Thornton!" To obtain popularity, even among the lowest class, he would have done anything, short of disturbing the set of his coat or the arrangement of his hair. Had there been no other way of making himself conspicuous, he would have done it by wearing a feather in his hat, or painting his boots scarlet. Not the least gratification which Captain Thornton derived from his prominent position in the ranks of the Chartists was the belief that he was revenging himself upon the authorities for the manner in which they had treated him. He was a more dangerous man than the chairman, for although equally vain, he was not equally weak, and would have gone any lengths, even to deluging England with blood, if he could have increased the notoriety of his name by so doing.

Such were some of the nominal leaders of the Chartist movement of '48. William Holl took his place at the lower end of the table by the side of a few others who were, like himself, animated by a really disinterested and lofty spirit. A whispered conversation was kept up for a few

minutes, and then the chairman rose. He accompanied his speech by swaying his body backwards and forwards, and by striking one hand in the palm of the other. He spoke very slowly in broken sentences, pausing between each, as if he expected applause to follow every utterance.

“ My friends, the glorious moment when we shall shake off the yoke under which we have for a thousand years groaned, is at hand. The aristocracy, who batten on your sweat and blood, tremble. The Government are preparing for flight. The great cause gains ground daily. Ten thousand signatures have been added to the Charter of the people during the last three days. The moment of freedom is at hand ! We agreed, at our last meeting, that we would this evening discuss what our course of proceeding shall be, when the Charter of the people is presented to the House of Commons. In that House we have no confidence ; it is composed of the enemies of the people,—of the very men who are the worst oppressors,—who lay the taxation of the nation on the shoulders of the working men, while they enjoy their iniquitous wealth scot-free ! They are the ravening lions who lay wait to devour

the poor! Yet to them must we, in the first place, submit our cause. We have now to consider what is the course it behoves us to adopt."

There was a slight silence, and then William Holl said, "It appears to me that the question resolves itself into two sides. If the House receive our petition, and act in accordance with it, our object will have been gained, and our course then will be to strain every nerve throughout the country to return men of our own views. Every working man in the kingdom must be pledged to vote only for the members selected for them by a central committee, and as we shall be in a majority of twenty to one everywhere, we shall return exactly such a House as we desire, and can pass laws which will put an end to the injustice and anomalies of which we complain. But this is for after consideration, and the machinery can be arranged at a future time. The other alternative is, if the House refuse to receive our petition, or if they accept it, to carry it into force. The question then arises, and should now be determined upon, what shall be our course? Shall we submit to the refusal, or use force?"

Each man looked at the other. This was palpably the question upon which the whole of their plans depended, and although nearly all were of one opinion on it, none liked to be the first to propose violence. At last Captain Thornton said :

“It appears to me, gentlemen, that we must be all of one opinion. The voice of the people is the voice of God ; we must compel the Houses of Parliament to pass our Charter. We compelled them in '32 to pass the Reform Bill, and the same means must be used now ; but if those means fail, we must follow the example of the people of Paris. We must march our tens of thousands down from Manchester, and the manufacturing towns. We must fill the galleries of the House ; we must compel them to sit until they have passed it ; we must awe them into submission.”

“Right, Thornton,” another said. “We must render refusal out of the question ; we must make them carry our wishes into effect.”

“But force will be opposed to us,” one of the others remarked, doubtfully.

“Then,” William Holl said, resolutely, “it must be met by force. Are we greater cowards

than the working men of the other capitals of Europe? and yet in the last month or two we have seen them carry their way against Despots, with armies of ten times the force of ours to back them. Are we greater cowards than the French, who in '87, in '30, and again now, have insisted on their will being respected? The working men of London may be put down at five hundred thousand; and to oppose us, are only the handful of troops now in it; for none will be spared from other parts. Manchester, Birmingham, Sheffield, Leeds, all the great manufacturing towns are with us, and there are not thirty thousand troops in England, and these are of ourselves. Let us always, when interrupted by the police, beat them off. When the soldiers come against us, cheer them and fraternise with them. If the worst comes to the worst, let us defy them."

There was a general sound of applause when he ceased.

"But," said the man who had before objected, "we are not in the same position the French people were; we are quite unarmed."

"You are always timid, Wilkins," one of the

others said; "and timid counsels have had their way long enough; it is the time now for action. At any rate there are paving-stones, and a good supply of paving-stones on the tops of the houses make a street nasty walking for the best soldiers in the world. Besides, there are the gunsmiths' shops; our first move will, of course, be to possess ourselves of the contents of them, and then to take possession of the arsenal in the Tower; it is not half so strong as the Bastille was."

"Woe be to London if they try and oppose us by force," a man at the other end of the table said. "We shall only have to call for our friend Turner's lambs; and it will take more troops than London can bring to keep down St. Giles's and Westminster."

The man to whom he alluded was a powerful man, with a ruddy face, a low forehead, overhanging eyebrows, and a coarse sensual mouth; he was a butcher of Clare Market, and might have been well drawn for his prototype the famous butcher Lepelletier, the leader of the fanbours of the French Revolution. He smiled
ntly.

“Ay, ay,” he said, “if you once let my lambs loose, the devil himself would not chain them up, as long as there is a shop ungunned in London.”

William Holl, and several others of the same class, made a movement of disgust and dissent.

“I trust to God it will never come to that.”

“I hope not, too,” another speaker said, “but we must not blink the fact; we must let those who would keep us down know, that we have it in our power to compel them to assent to the popular will; and that unless they obey it we will use that power. By so doing we shall gain the support to a certain extent of all the shop-keepers, who are at heart our most bitter opponents, for, rather than have their shops sacked, they will be glad enough to help us to put a pressure upon the Houses to do us justice.”

“I agree with you there,” William Holl said; “as a threat they will be useful, but I for one will never consent to invoking riot and robbery for our aid. In the French Revolution, anyone caught with plunder about him was hung up instantly, and I should vote that we did the same; as far as ourselves go, I should not

hesitate, if necessary, to resort to arms, and would fight to the last with my fellow-workmen in an effort for liberty, but not by the side of St. Giles's. But I do hope, and I believe, that it will never come to that. I trust that Parliament will quietly yield to the wishes of the nation."

A significant look passed between two or three of the more advanced party. A peaceful solution would have ill suited their plans and schemes; and had William Holl's wishes been carried into effect, he would have found, as his predecessors, the Girondists, had done, another Mountain to oppose him, and perhaps met with such a fate as them in the end.

"I should say," another man said, "that the whole of the working classes in London—every man—should be agreed to meet at three or four centres, such as Primrose Hill, Hyde Park, and Kennington Common, and that they should go in procession to Westminster to present our petition, and should call upon the House to name an early day for its consideration. That on that day we should again assemble, and march to the House; that we should fill the galleries, and sit

there till it had passed. That we should have everything prepared in case of refusal; the men all told off in companies under officers, and their work given to each; so many to the gunsmiths' shops, so many to the Tower; the rest to throw up barricades. That an agreement should be made with the northern towns to rise simultaneously; and that we should then as a people declare Parliament dissolved, and proclaim a Republic. That we should disarm the troops when they did not resist us, annihilate them when they did, and then proceed all over the country to elect a house of representatives by universal suffrage."

The speech was received with loud applause, and they proceeded to discuss the details of the undertaking. Many of the speeches were really brilliant, and the assembly was perfectly in accord on the main points. It was nearly one o'clock when they separated. As they were breaking up, Thornton spoke aside to a small malignant-looking man, who had taken a very prominent part in the debates. This man was the editor of an obscure paper, which pandered to the passions of its readers, by pouring out

the foulest abuse on all who were above them,—

“Everything goes on well, Hausford; don’t forget your part of the work. We depend greatly upon you, you know. Be sure you keep them up to boiling point.”

The man replied by a meaning nod, and then quietly one by one, to avoid attracting attention, the council took their departure.

CHAPTER IX.

WHAT WILL IT LEAD TO.

AT about seven o'clock on the next evening, Arthur Prescott was sitting smoking in his friend's room, which was immediately under his own. The two apartments were similar in size, but this was the only resemblance that existed between them. Arthur's was strictly a student's room, plain and neat, half office, half sitting room, with a few bookshelves filled with plain, legal-looking volumes. Stiff dining-room chairs with leather-covered seats, a horsehair sofa at the hardness of which Frank was constantly grumbling, and two easy chairs of questionable comfort, nearly made up the inventory of the contents. Frank's room was in strong contrast to this; it was handsomely, indeed luxuriously, furnished. The walls were wainscoted with dark, or rather black oak, on the panels of which hung

a few really good pictures, which Frank had purchased during his rambles in Spain. The curtains were green, and the floor covered with a rich Turkey carpet, in which the same colour predominated. In the centre of the mantelpiece stood a bronze statue from Herculaneum, flanked by two real Etruscan vases, and a pair of magnificent Venetian goblets. Crossed above these upon the wall were two long Turkish jasmine pipe-stems, with their red bowls and amber mouth-pieces; and higher still, two swords, Toledo and Damascene, bought in the countries where they were manufactured. On brackets round the room were a few Parian marble statuettes. On a small round table stood a large Turkish nargheli, with its long tube of green and gold coiled round it like a glistening snake. In the recess on one side of the fire-place was a really good library of choice standard works; in the other was a perfect confusion of boxing-gloves, single-sticks, foils, masks, heavy clubs, and dumb-bells, with which, as Frank said, he kept his hand in for a quarter of an hour before breakfast. The chairs were covered with furniture to match the hangings, but this was their

only point of mutual resemblance. They were all of different shapes; most of them being of the sort coming under the general term of easy, while the two large ones by the fire, in which the occupants of the room were seated, were of a particularly comfortable and luxurious appearance. It was about these very chairs that the young men were speaking.

“It is quite a treat to sit in them,” Prescott said.

“Yes,” Frank answered, puffing out his smoke with an air of extreme contentment. “I flatter myself that they approach as nearly to perfect comfort as it is possible for anything earthly to do. I do love an easy chair. I remember when I was a child I used to be tortured, not as a punishment, mind, but as a regular thing—tortured by having to sit on a high-legged, straight-backed chair, with a seat no bigger than a cheese-plate, so that you could neither lean forward nor backward. How my unfortunate little back used to ache! I really wonder that my spine ever grew straight. At other times, when not in that terrible little chair, I had to sit bolt upright, and it was a penal offence to loll, as my grand-

mother called it, or in any way to approach a comfortable attitude."

"It was nearly as bad in my case, Frank," Prescott said. "I believe our fathers had a vague idea that unless we sat perfectly upright, our spine would become irretrievably crooked, whereas I really believe the reverse to be nearer the fact. I feel certain that many a man and woman with a curved spine and broken health has nothing but those atrocious chairs and the miserable stiff attitudes they had to sit in as children to thank for their misfortunes."

"If our ancestors had but used their common sense," Frank said, "which with respect to the treatment of their children they never seem to have done, they would have seen that the straightest and best formed people in the world, the Arabs of the Desert, and I may add the North American Indians—as they used to be, before they were improved off the face of the earth—never sat on a chair in their lives, but always either lay at full length, or squatted on the ground with their backs in a bow.

"Halloa!" he broke off; "there's a single knock at the door; I wonder who that can

be, I have not ordered anything that I know of."

So saying he got up and went to the outer door. A boy was standing there.

"Please, sir, I want to see Mr. Maynard."

"I am Mr. Maynard," Frank said; "what do you want?"

"Please, sir, my name is Evan Holl."

"Oh, is it you, Evan? Come in, it is so dark out here I did not know you again. I am glad you have come."

Frank led the way back again into the sitting-room, followed by Evan, greatly abashed at the splendour of its belongings.

"Well, Evan, my lad," Frank said, leaning against the mantel, "I suppose your mother has told you what I said to her. Mr. Prescott here and I were so much pleased with your pluck the other day at the Serpentine, that I thought we should get on together capitally, for if there's one thing more than another I like, it is pluck. What do think of it; would you like to come?"

"Please, sir, I should like it very much."

"That's right, Evan. Now you understand you are to be my man of all work — errand-boy,

footman, valet, groom, coachman, gardener, butler, sailor, steward and cook—in fact, general factotum.”

Prescott laughed, and Evan opened his eyes in astonishment.

“Lor’ bless you, sir, I don’t know nothing about driving coaches, or gardening, or cooking.”

“No!” Frank said in a tone of great surprise. “Of course in that case I shall not be able to trust either my coach or my garden into your charge at present. As to cooking, I should advise you to commence as soon as possible; and I should recommend you to go through a course of study: begin, say, by boiling a potatoe in its skin; next endeavour to reach perfection with an egg; proceed gradually to a rasher of bacon; and after that, master the intricacies of chops and steaks. I think that will do for the present; my little favourite dishes I will myself instruct you in afterwards.”

“What nonsense you do talk, Frank!” Prescott said, laughing; “the boy does not know whether you are in earnest or not.”

ch, indeed, was the truth, for Evan was g shifting uneasily from one foot to the

other, and twirling his cap between his hands with a look of considerable embarrassment.

“Well, Evan,” Frank went on, “as Mr. Prescott seems to think that at present we had better leave these matters alone, I suppose we must postpone the cooking part of the business, as well as the driving and gardening, and hope that it will all come in time. And now, Prescott, about his dress; what do you say to a neat thing in green, picked out with scarlet?”

“Nonsense, Frank! I don’t see that you want to put him in livery at all.”

“My dear Prescott,” Frank said, plaintively, “you have no idea of the fitness of things. You destroy all my illusions. I did think that green picked out with scarlet would have harmonised well with the room. Do you not agree with me, now, that a Turkish dress with a fez, and especial instruction as to cleaning and lighting pipes and making black coffee, would have a good effect;—a sort of Nubian slave attire, only he would have to black his face to be in keeping? You would not mind that, Evan, would you?”

Evan had by this time an idea that his new master was only joking, so he answered more

briskly, "I don't know that I should mind it much, sir."

"That is right," Frank said, approvingly; "but I foresee a difficulty in the matter. You see, Prescott, if he blacks his face, of course his hands must be blacked, too, and that would be disagreeable, for it would be sure to come off. I wonder, now, whether I could get a good receipt anywhere. I should say that a gipsy would be a likely person to apply to. They say, you know, that they steal children and dye them brown, and perhaps they could do rather a darker shade if they liked. However, till I find a gipsy the matter must stand over."

"There, Frank, do stop talking nonsense, and let the boy go."

"Very well, Evan, that will do for to-night. You understand, there will not be much for you to do for the present. Keep yourself clean and tidy; lose no time when I send you on messages; and, above all—and this I feel sure I may trust you in from what your mother says of you—above all, never tell me a lie; whatever may happen, tell me exactly the truth, and I have no question that we shall get on capitally together. I will

give you a line to my tailor, and tell him to fit you out with a suit of plain undress livery. And now, here are three sovereigns, take them to your mother, and ask her to get you shoes and everything you may want, and then you will start fair. I have arranged nothing about your wages, but we shall not differ about that. There, good night, Evan; go with the note at once to the tailor's; I have told him to get, at any rate, some of your things ready by the day after to-morrow, and when you have got them come here at once. You will sleep in the little room off the passage. I will get a bed and things for you to-morrow. Good-night."

Evan took his leave, highly contented with his visit, and went home in great spirits, and related to his brothers and sisters what had taken place at the interview. The little ones were so amused at the idea of Evan dressed up as a black boy, and having his face painted, that Mrs. Holl had the greatest difficulty in getting them off to sleep, their laughter bursting out afresh again and again; so that at last father himself had to halloo at the foot of the stairs, that if they were not quiet he should have to come

up to them, a threat which they knew meant something, whereas all mother's scolding went for nothing.

After Evan had left, Prescott announced his intention of going up to read, and asked Frank what he intended to do with himself.

"What time is it now?—half-past seven. To-morrow evening I am engaged out. I think I shall go down and see my uncle."

Frank, in accordance with this intention, proceeded to change his coat, Prescott waiting while he did so. He took a quantity of letters from his pocket.

"How terribly letters do accumulate, and I am afraid that most of them want answering. Put me in mind of it to-morrow morning, Prescott, and I will do a regular batch of letter writing. What's this? Ah! Stephen Walker—by the way I promised to look him up, and see how he is after his shaking. It is somewhere down Knightsbridge way, so I may as well do it while I think of it. As he is a tobacconist, I will go in and get a cigar, and if he recognises me, well and good; if not, I shall not introduce myself. Good-bye, old man, take care of your-

self. Mind, you breakfast with me in the morning."

Frank Maynard found the shop of Stephen Walker without much difficulty. The solitary candle burnt on the counter, but no one was in the shop. However, on hearing the door open, Carry came out of the back room, where she had been sitting reading, bringing another lighted candle in her hand. Frank, who had fully expected to see an elderly man make his appearance, was not a little surprised at seeing such a remarkably pretty girl come out. He asked for some tobacco, which Carry, who had noticed at the first glance that he was not a regular customer, gave him in silence; for, indeed, at the moment he entered, she had been engaged in a most interesting chapter of her book, and she was longing to get back to it again.

"Have you any good cigars?" Frank asked.

Almost mechanically she drew back the glasses from above the cigars upon the counter. Frank glanced at them.

"No, thank you," he said. "I mean, have you any really good ones?"

Carry looked fairly up at Frank for the first time.

“Come, now,” he urged, “I have no doubt but that you have a box of good ones which you keep for your favoured customers.”

Carry smiled, and brought out the box which was usually reserved for Fred Bingham’s smoking. “I believe these are good, sir.”

“Yes,” Frank said, examining them, “these look the right thing, I will take half a dozen.”

Now Frank had entered the shop with his mind perfectly made up, that unless he was recognised, he should go out again without saying who he was; but Carry looked so very pretty and bright, that he thought it would be very pleasant to sit down and have a chat with her, and to do so there was no other way than to say who he was. So he began,—

“Mr. Walker—your father I presume—has he quite recovered from the fright and the shock he got the other day?”

The bright eyes glanced up inquiringly at him now, and a flash of eager colour came across her face.

"How did you know my father was hurt, sir?"

"I saw him fall," Frank said; "indeed I was fortunately close to him at the time, and helped him to pick himself up."

"Did you indeed, sir?" Carry asked earnestly, "and was it you really who saved his life?"

"I do not know that I actually saved his life," Frank said, smiling, "but I certainly helped him up."

"Father! father!" Carry cried, flying into the next room and calling up the stairs. "Come down, come down at once; here is the gentleman who saved your life." Then she rushed back into the shop, but this time to the same side of the counter as that on which Frank was standing, seized his hand in hers, and looked up into his face with those large eyes of hers. "Oh, I am so glad you have come, I wanted so much to thank you; so, so much. Father has told me all about it, and I know that I owe his life to you."

"Don't say anything more about it," Frank said; "I saved your father's life by the simple accident that I happened to be close to him when

he fell, and fortunately having my wits about me, picked him up in time."

"It is very well for you to say so, sir," Carry said, "but you will never make me feel differently towards you; you saved father's life at the risk of your own, and how can I ever thank you enough?" And Carry looked up so gratefully and earnestly, that Frank did as most other young fellows would have done in his place, bent down and kissed the bright face lifted up to his. Carry returned the kiss as an impulsive child might have done; it was the saviour of her father's life that she thanked, not a good-looking young man, and flushed and excited as she was, the colour hardly deepened upon her cheek.

"There, we are quits now," Frank said, "so the burden is off your mind."

At this moment Stephen Walker entered. He was evidently even more nervous and embarrassed than usual.

"Oh, sir," he began, when Frank interrupted,—

"Pray say no more about it, Mr. Walker. I was lucky enough to be close to you, and did what any one else would have done under the circumstances. Your daughter has already thanked me

most amply for you both," and he glanced for a moment at Carry, who this time coloured up hotly; "so please let us say no more about it," and he shook Stephen Walker warmly by the hand. As he did so, Stephen Walker, by a great effort, overcame his habitual nervousness, and said, quietly,

"My life, sir, is of no great value to myself or to any one else except to my daughter here, but for her sake I thank you very much for saving it. And now, sir, it is very long since any gentleman has honoured my roof with his presence, but if you will come in for half an hour, and smoke a cigar, I shall take it as a favour."

Frank willingly accepted the invitation, and rather surprised at the manner in which it was given, went into the little parlour, Stephen Walker pausing for a moment to speak a word or two to his daughter. He then produced his best cigars, lit one himself instead of his usual pipe, and when Carry came in with two bottles of spirits, she was surprised to find her father and his guest talking together like old acquaintances.

Stephen Walker seemed for once to have laid aside that nervous timidity which had cost him

so much during his life, and which had become almost a part of his nature ; he chatted with Frank quietly and cheerfully, as one gentleman with another. The conversation turned upon travels, and Frank found to his astonishment that there was hardly a place he had visited in Europe that his host did not know as well as he did himself. As for Carry, she could hardly believe her senses. Was this her dear, nervous old father ? She had heard him say incidentally that he had travelled when he was a young man, but she had had no idea of the extent of his journeyings. As the conversation went on, her blue eyes opened wider and wider, and at last she was so convinced that she must be dreaming, that she ran the needle, with which she was pretending to work, into her finger, to assure herself that she was awake. Frank remained for about an hour in conversation with Stephen Walker, and then took his leave, promising that he would call again. With Carry he had hardly exchanged a word after his first entrance ; indeed he had been so much interested in his conversation with her father that he had quite forgotten the motive he had in first declaring himself. As for Carry,

she was far too much surprised at her father's change of manner, to think of speaking at all. After Frank had gone, Stephen Walker went back into the little parlour, while Carry locked the door and closed the shop for the night. When she had done this, she went into the other room, and found her father sitting in his chair with his head bent down, and his empty pipe, which he had mechanically taken down, lying across his knees. Carry paused a little, and then seeing that he did not raise his head, she went up to him, laid her hand upon his shoulder, and said, "Who is this person? Have I been dreaming, or has this been my old father who has been talking here for the last hour?"

For more than a minute her father did not answer. His fingers played nervously with his pipe; then he looked up and said, hurriedly,—

"No, Carry, no. It was not your old father who was speaking then. Not his real self, but quite another being. It was one who might have been me, but not myself as I am. No, no, child, don't think it, don't think it." And he moved his hands nervously, as if to wipe away the thought.

"Don't think what? pappy dear," she said,

coming closer to him and putting one arm round his neck, while with her other she stroked his thin grey hair. "I only am thinking what a bad naughty pappy it has been, when it could talk like that, and knew all these things, never to let poor little me know anything about it. To think that all these years this bad thing should have hidden what it really was, and let me have my own way, and be mistress, and scold it and talk to it as if it were a child, when it was all the time so clever and wise. Naughty, naughty pappy." Carry talked playfully, but it was evident that she was very much in earnest, for the tears stood in her eyes.

"No, no, Carry, whatever you do, do not think that I was ever as I was to-night; do not think that the one you have always known is a pretence, and that this one was the real thing. I was never like that. Do not think that misfortune,—you know I was better off once—has so changed me that I have become what I am from that. I never was so, dear; I might have been so, but I never was. Had I always been as you just saw me we should not be here as we are now, and all would have been quite different; but that other

nature went away when I was quite little, scared by harsh treatment, and never came back again except for a little little time till to-night. Why it did come back to-night I cannot say, only to raise doubts between my child and me," and Stephen Walker wrung his hands in feeble despair.

"No, no, father dear," Carry said, throwing her arms round his neck and kissing him, "not doubts. I was very pleased and proud, but very surprised too, to hear my old pappy talk like that, and a little ashamed when I thought how much I had underrated you. Not that I should have loved you more, had you been the cleverest man in the world, not one bit more; but I should have looked up to you more, and felt somehow differently towards you."

"That is just it," Stephen Walker said, helplessly; "she would have felt differently. She is not going to be my little Carry any more. That other one has come in between us, and frightened her away."

"No, no, pappy," Carry said coaxingly, and seating herself upon his knees, "this is your little Carry, is it not? There, look up, and don't hang your naughty head down. Is not this

little Carry? Come, speak, sir, or I shall scold you dreadfully."

"Yes, yes, my darling," the old man said, "you are my own little Carry. And now listen, dear, and I will tell you in a few words the story of my life. My father was a tradesman well to do, but he was a stern man, and took a mistaken view of his religious duties. I was a poor weakly delicate child; at school I was beaten and worried; at home lectured and preached at; my life was a misery and a burden; and even at that young age, all hope of my ever being what I otherwise might have been, had I been differently brought up, was lost. After some years I became my own master, but it was too late then, my child; too late. For awhile I travelled, as you have heard this evening. Then I married; things went badly with me. I am, as you know, from my nervous timidity, a poor hand at business. So I lost, as might have been expected, what little I had; and here I am a poor, but, I thank God, a far happier and more contented man than I had ever hoped or deserved to be. Happy in having enough to live upon without anxiety, and in having my own little Carry

to love and pet. And now, Carry, light my pipe, and try and forget what has taken place to-night."

Carry never spoke of it again, but she did think of it a good deal. Only to think that if that dear old father of hers had not lost his money, she should have been rich, and perhaps riding in a carriage instead of selling periodicals and cigars behind a counter. Her father had certainly spoken of losing what little he had, but that could only have been his way of talking; for did he not travel about everywhere, and did it not cost a good deal of money to travel; and was it not only rich people who travelled about in that way? Oh! he must have been rich; and how nice it would have been to be rich, and to do what one liked, and to buy beautiful dresses and things, instead of merely looking at them in the shop windows. And Carry pictured herself in all sorts of pretty dresses, and tasty little bonnets, and thought she should certainly look very nice. Then she sighed a little, and wondered whether she should ever be rich. Who could say? The gentlemen who came to the shop all paid her compliments, and some of them

were real gentlemen, not mere clerks ; and Carry resolved in her mind to be rather more distant in her manner to these last than had been her custom. Besides all this, she thought a good deal of Frank Maynard, so brave and strong and good-looking, but very impertinent—not, perhaps, that she liked him any the worse in her heart for that, girls seldom do—and to think of her kissing him, too. How could she have done such a thing ? He must think her very bold and forward ; and even when alone, Carry coloured up at the thought, as she had not done at the time when, in the fulness of her gratitude, she had kissed Frank Maynard.

That gentleman, after leaving the shop, had gone straight to Lowndes Square, where he found only his uncle at home, Alice having gone out, under the chaperonage of a neighbour, to a ball.

“ Well, Frank, where do you come from ? You do not often drop in so late as this.”

“ No, uncle ; but I have just been making a call.”

“ Making a call, Frank ? You have chosen rather a curious hour for visiting. Who is your friend ? ”

“ Stephen Walker, uncle.”

“ Stephen Walker !” Captain Bradshaw said, in a puzzled tone. “ I seem to remember the name, but damme if I can recollect who it is.”

“ It is the man I picked up at the crossing last week, uncle Harry.”

“ Ah, yes, I remember now,” Captain Bradshaw said, laughing ; “ periodicals punctually supplied. And how long did your visit last, Frank ?”

“ Better than an hour, uncle. I went into his room and smoked a pipe with him.”

“ Oh, indeed. And has the excellent newsman any family, Frank ?”

“ He has one daughter, and she is without exception one of the very prettiest girls I ever saw.”

“ Oh, indeed,” Captain Bradshaw said, drily ; “ that accounts for the length of your visit. I suppose she was very grateful to the preserver of her father’s life, and that sort of thing ? I should not be surprised now if she threw herself into your arms and kissed you—eh, Frank ?”

“ Well, uncle,” Frank said, laughing, “ I shall think you are a conjurer, for I confess that I did kiss her.”

“Just what I guessed,” Captain Bradshaw said, even more drily. “And the father, Frank? I suppose he is a very superior sort of man?”

“Very much so, uncle; I can assure you, although you are laughing at me, he is quite a gentleman; has travelled all over Europe, and has evidently mixed in good society there.”

“Look here, Frank” Captain Bradshaw said, very gravely; “this is exactly the sort of thing which is sure to end badly. Here we have all the elements: father a decayed gentleman; daughter a lovely and accomplished girl, gushing over with gratitude to the preserver of her father’s life. I should advise you very seriously not to go there again. I have known these sort of things over and over again, scores of times, and they end in nine cases out of ten in a man’s making either a fool or a rascal of himself.”

“But, uncle,” Frank broke out hotly——

“Pooh, pooh! Frank, don’t tell me,” the captain said. “Damme, sir, do you think I have not heard it over and over again? Of course you have only been there once; you have found a pretty, grateful girl, and you have given her a kiss, as was only right and natural that you should

do under the circumstances. There is no harm in these first meetings—there never is. A man seldom goes into these things with his eyes open—very few men are scoundrels enough deliberately to plan these things—but he calls again and again. He still finds her very pretty, and her gratitude gradually grows into a warmer feeling; he has kissed her once, and of course it would be absurd for her to make any objection when he does it the second time; and so these things go on, until the man, as I have said, either makes a fool of himself, and marries her, or makes a rascal of himself, and does worse. I know, Frank, that such an idea is at present as far from your head as it is from mine; but as a man of the world, I ask you, ask yourself, if you were to go there often—sometimes, of course, finding her father away, and having a half hour's chat with her all to yourself—would you not end by feeling that you had very much better have left the matter alone? Honestly, now?"

"Well, uncle, honestly, now you put it in that light, very likely I should. But I think you know me well enough to feel——"

"Quite so, Frank," the captain said, taking

his hand ; " quite so. I believe you to be an honourable, upright young fellow. I believe you to be more free than young men in general from this sort of thing, but for that very reason more likely to make a fool of yourself. Now you have my opinion of the affair. If you are wise you will take my advice, and not go there again."

As Frank Maynard walked home that night, thinking over what had happened, he took his cigar from his mouth, and said to himself, " By Jove, uncle is right ; she is a wonderfully pretty winning little thing ; and if I were to go there often, and find, as he says, her father out, I should be very likely to get spoony, and make in the end, as he prophesies, either a fool or a rascal of myself ; so I will take his advice, and go there no more. Prevention is better than cure."

CHAPTER X.

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL.

MR. BARTON is at breakfast in his snug little house down Brompton way. Mr. Barton enjoys his breakfast, and eats largely. Mrs. Barton does the same. It may be here observed that Mr. Barton enjoys all his meals, and that Mrs. Barton in this particular strictly follows his example. And yet there was nothing in Mr. Barton's appearance to lead an observer to believe that he cared particularly for his meals or was a great eater. He was a large boned, ungainly, awkward man, with long ill-shaped limbs; he carried himself stiff and upright, and moved his head as if his gaunt long neck were encased in a stiff military stock. His hair had been black and bristly, but it was now thin and grey; his cheeks were closely shaved, and his face was hard and passionless. Altogether, Mr.

Barton's appearance was not prepossessing. He was a man whose age it would have been next to impossible to guess, but he really was about fifty-five. Mr. Barton was a Scotchman. He had come up to London young, and had, through the interest of some relations, obtained a situation in the Detective Police, at that time known as the Bow Street Runners; and a sharp, active, intelligent detective he turned out. The stiffness, which he had now so long put on that it had become a second nature to him, was originally assumed when engaged in London upon ordinary duties, in order to render detection the more difficult when he was in disguise. Although somewhat heavy and uncouth in appearance, he was a young man active and lissome, and, as he had shown on several occasions when he had been found out, and had been obliged to fight for his life, was possessed of great strength as well as activity. But situations like these were not Mr. Barton's forte; he could, if necessary, fight desperately for his life, but he was by no means fond of putting himself into positions where such an eventuality was probable. The authorities at Bow Street were well aware of this

weakness, and generally selected him in researches in which shrewdness and patience were required rather than courage. In these they knew he was to be thoroughly relied upon, and would hunt down his game with the unerring sagacity of a hound. Even here he failed sometimes, losing his clue unaccountably, and that just at a time when success seemed certain. The authorities happened upon one of these occasions to obtain proofs that it was not his sagacity but his honesty which had been at fault, and that a heavy purse had proved sufficient to render his eyesight temporarily defective. Thereupon Mr. Barton was dismissed the force in disgrace. This was fifteen years back; soon after that time he had married.

Mrs. Barton's figure was in the strongest possible contrast to that of her husband. She was a large woman and enormously stout. Mrs. Barton was a Jewess, the widow of a Hebrew clothier in Houndsditch, who had left her a small fortune. She had been very handsome when young, but not the slightest trace of her good looks remained in her fat, coarse face. She was nearly as old as her husband, but there was

not a white hair in the black bands on her low square forehead. What had induced Mrs. Barton to marry her present husband was a riddle which none of her friends could solve. It seemed, however, that he had been employed in some enquiry in which her late husband was interested, and she was a woman who could keenly appreciate the shrewdness and energy of the rather uncouth Scotchman. At any rate, when the days of mourning had expired, the widow signified her willingness to lay aside her weeds in his favour. As Robert Barton had just left the force, and was looking out for a fresh opening, he gladly accepted her offer, although even at that time, at five-and-thirty, the widow was, to say the least, large, and her good looks had completely flown. Indeed, he hesitated not a moment. He had saved up some money, and with that and the widow's fortune and connection, he thought he saw his way very clearly before him. It is true that her friends were extremely angry with her for marrying a Christian; she became as it were excommunicate, and cut off from all participation in the service of the synagogue. This feeling, however,

in no way interfered with their willingness to work with her in business, and as she had been a popular woman among her class during the lifetime of her first husband, her connections, with the exception of a few of the strictest set, soon forgave her her marriage out of the pale. A few weeks after his marriage Mr. Barton opened an office in the City, which he entitled "Barton's Private Research and Detection Office." In a very short time he began to do a good business, and once or twice made especially happy hits—succeeding in tracing stolen property, and in ferreting out an absconding clerk—when the regular detective force had given up the task in despair. After this his success was a certainty, and it was soon apparent that he had means of obtaining information altogether beyond the ordinary police sources of intelligence. Here it was that Mrs. Barton's connection came into play. The whole of the agents he employed belonged to her persuasion, and so numerous and active were they, that scarce an attempt was made to pass a stolen note without Barton being informed of it. Even on the Continent, at Hamburg and other places where Jews congregate,

he had numerous correspondents; and as most of the stolen property was likely, sooner or later, to find its way there, the information with which he was furnished enabled him frequently to make the most surprising captures in England. It must not be supposed that these men betrayed themselves or each other, or that they restored stolen property which they had purchased. They simply let him know that they had become possessors of it, and gave him such clues as would enable him to trace the thief. Besides this they arranged through him the terms for restoration of bills, and various other securities, and even for the recovery of bank-notes. There were, indeed, occasional murmurs heard against him. It seemed, men said, that although Barton was certain to bring the guilt home to the smaller class of delinquents, pilfering shop-boys, forgers for small amounts, or defaulting collectors, yet in cases of great importance, where perhaps the absconding clerk had made off with very large amounts, his zeal in following upon the scent, though apparently very great, was rewarded with singular ill-success.

Rebert Barton's business was not confined to

the discovery of frauds ; many of his researches were of a far more complex and delicate nature. Wives who sought missing husbands ; broken-hearted fathers, missing daughters ; claimants to property, who set him to work to find the lost link in their chain of evidence ; husbands and wives who sought proofs of each other's infidelity :—all came to Mr. Barton, and on the whole they were well satisfied with him. In these researches he seldom took any active part, contenting himself with sitting in the office, holding the threads of all the nets which his active subordinates were spreading round their victims. Occasionally, however, when the fit took him, or the affair was too important to be trusted to any hands but his own, he would put on a disguise, lay aside his stiff carriage, and transforming himself so completely that no one would recognise him, sally out upon his search.

“ What have you got to-day, Barton—anything important ? ”

Robert Barton took out his pocket-book and examined the entries.

“ Marriage certificate between John Rogers and Mary Hare, somewhere about 1792, probably in

London. That's a mere matter of sending circulars to all the parish clerks, offering a reward.—Register of baptism of William Pollard, 1822. Liverpool or Manchester.—Trace and recover notes and bills in Borough Bank robbery. That, of course, I cannot move in at present. It is a large sum, and I have no doubt, from the lot I believe are in it, that the notes will go over to Hamburg. I must write to Levy there to get hold of them and hold them for a time, and then I must find out how much they will give for them.—John Bell, cashier, Latham and Producers', defaulter; determined to punish; offer £400. I shall soon lay him by the legs.—Evidence against Mr. Halfall, Bristol. That is rather a delicate matter. I must send Isaacs down, he is just the man for that; the fellow is so good-looking, he gets round the servant girls in no time. It is just nine, I must be off."

"Mind, Barton, don't forget sharp six is the dinner-hour; you were ten minutes late yesterday, and the joint was overdone."

In a few minutes Mr. Barton was on the roof of his 'bus on his way to the city. As he went

along he sat grave and immoveable, scrutinizing the passers-by, as if he considered they all possessed secrets he might be some day called upon to investigate.

Mr. Barton's office was in one of the narrow streets leading off Cheapside, and consisted of two rooms on the first floor, the one a general waiting-room, the other his private office. In the former two lads were at work at a desk, copying from the "Gazette" the bankrupt and insolvent list.

"Has any one been here?"

"One gentleman, sir; he left his card."

Mr. Barton looked at it. "Did he say he would call again?"

"He left word would you go round directly you came in."

The card was that of the manager of a large banking firm.

"Ask any one who calls to wait, I shall not be gone many minutes," and Mr. Barton took his way to the Bank.

On his sending in his name, he was at once shown into the manager's room. The manager, an elderly man with spectacles, was evidently at

the present time considerably ruffled and put out.

“Take a seat, Mr. Barton. A very unpleasant business has taken place, very much so, indeed. One of our clerks has made away with a great deal of money; we do not yet know the particulars; we only found it out yesterday afternoon. We sent for one of the books which he kept as we wished to compare it with another; on doing so we discovered some extraordinary discrepancies; we sent down to him, but he was gone—had left immediately the book was taken up to us. We sent up to his house, but of course he had been in and gone out again. We put the police on his scent last night, but as I was coming up to town this morning, I remembered that you knew his face, as he was several times at your office about that case of forgery you followed up for us; his name was Symes—David Symes.”

“I remember, sir, a fair young man.”

“Just so; we shall offer two hundred pounds reward for his capture.”

“Well, sir,” Mr. Barton said, “I will
time. I will telegraph down to my

agents in Liverpool and Southampton. The police are sure to watch Dover and Folkestone, and I will myself see about the London shipping. If he is still in the country, depend upon it we shall catch him, sir."

"Reuben," Mr. Barton said to one of the lads in his office, upon his return, "go at once and see Jonah Moss and Levi, and tell them to go to all the slop shops in Houndsditch and eastward, and find out if a young man of about thirty, fair, with bluish eyes, and very little whisker, looking like a gentleman, bought any sea clothes down there last night. If so, bring me a description."

"You need not trouble yourself, Mr. Barton," a man said, coming into the office. "Perhaps I can give you the information you want."

Mr. Barton looked at him steadily; then opened the door leading into the inner office, motioned to the man to enter, followed him in, and closed the door carefully after him. He then took another steady observation of his visitor. He was dressed as a sailor, with a few little bits of finery, a chain and rings, such as foreign sailors affect. He was swarthy and dark,

with black hair falling in little curls. He was the beau ideal of a sailor from the shores of the Mediterranean.

"A very good get-up, Mr. Symes," Mr. Barton said quietly, "really very creditable; pass muster very well in the street, but would hardly deceive anyone on the watch for you. Don't you think it is just the least bit rash for you to come here?"

"Rash! not a bit of it," the man laughed; "the very best thing I could do."

"I suppose you know I have just come from the Bank."

"Quite so, Mr. Barton, I was watching for you. I felt sure they would put you after me, so I waited till you had been there and got instructions, and then I thought I would come in and hear all about it."

"You are a cool hand, certainly," Mr. Barton said, in a tone of admiration.

"Well, you see I have been for some time looking things in the face and making my calculations. I knew, of course, that it must come out, sooner or later, and I think I have made myself pretty well master of everything which

could bear upon my chances. As I felt sure they would put you on me I inquired all about your way of doing business."

"And what was the result of your investigation?" Mr. Barton asked, rather grimly.

"Why, you see," the man said, carelessly, "here I am. And now to business. How much have they offered you?—a hundred pounds?"

"Two hundred," Mr. Barton said.

"I am sure I feel it a compliment. Two hundred pounds! Well, now look here. I have taken a big sum altogether, but it has been over a long time, and has gone pretty nearly as fast as I got it. My luck on the turf has been really a caution. So I don't get off with much in the end, only a few hundred pounds, but I tell you what, I will give you five hundred pounds to let me go."

Mr. Barton hesitated, and sat thoughtfully for nearly a minute, and then he said, "The three hundred you offer me more than they do is not sufficient to cover the risk."

"Nonsense, man, there is no risk in the matter, as you know as well as I do."

“ But suppose, Mr. Symes, that the police catch you, how then ? ”

“ Ah ! but the police must not catch me. It's precisely for that that you are going to take the extra three hundred. It will be your part of the business to throw them off the scent, you will find that an easy job enough.”

“ How am I to be paid ? that is, supposing I agree to this ? ”

“ I will tell you. I have five hundred and fifty pounds standing as a deposit in the Joint Stock Bank, in the name of Rogers ; here is the pass book. When I paid it in, a year ago, I said that I should probably draw it out in a lump for investment. I have written a letter here to the manager, saying that I have given a cheque for five hundred—at least I have left the figures blank at present, and that I shall be obliged if he will fill up and return my pass-book, and let me know the amount remaining to my credit. So that he will be prepared for the cheque when it is presented. In what name shall I fill it in ? ”

Mr. Barton thought for a minute, and then said, “ John Halfourd ; he is a lawyer, it

will be better through him, we do business together."

David Symes filled up the cheque.

"I have dated it the day after to-morrow," he said. "I sail to-morrow in the 'Louisa,' for America. She warps out of the docks this evening. Put the police on the track of the Australian ships. I depend on you to do this. If I am taken, I shall, of course, stop the payment of the cheque. Good-morning, Mr. Barton."

"Good-morning, Mr. Symes, a pleasant voyage."

And the ex-clerk went down the street, whistling gaily.

"That is a monstrous clever fellow," Mr. Barton said, admiringly; "cool as a cucumber. It is as well, before I do anything else, to see if this money really is at the Bank. There, Reuben, run round with this pass-book to the Joint Stock, and ask them to be good enough to see if it is all right, and then bring it back here. Don't say who you come from, but do it in a regular way of business."

While the boy was gone, Mr. Barton sat think-

ing deeply, till he returned with the message that the book was correct with the exception of the interest, which could not be added unless the book was left.

“Is Aaron Solomons here, the man who came from Liverpool yesterday?”

“Yes, sir, he is in the outer office. And am I to see about what you told us before, about the buying the outfit?”

“No, Reuben, that matter is arranged. Tell Solomons to come in here.”

The man entered. He was a well-made, good looking fellow.

“Solomons, when are you thinking of going back to Liverpool?”

“To-night, Mr. Barton.”

“You have never been much in London before, have you?”

“No, sir, I only came up for a week at the time——”

“Yes, Solomons, at the time you assisted at that little affair at the goldsmith’s—there, don’t look nervous, man. I have kept your secret as long as this, and you may rely upon it, that as long as you remain faithful to my interests, I

shall continue to do so. Then you are sure that the police don't know you?"

"Quite sure."

"Very well, then I will tell you what I want. Get yourself up as a gentleman; have you clothes?" The man nodded, and Mr. Barton went on. "Put on moustaches if you like; don't put on any jewellery about you, but look plain and straightforward. Drive in a Hansom to Clinton's Bank, and ask to see the manager. Introduce yourself as Mr. Herbert Parker, of 25, Sloane Street, Knightsbridge. The house is really empty at present, but I have got the name put into the red books; it is useful having a name or two which no one else can claim. Say to the manager that you have been intimate for some years with David Symes, a clerk in their Bank, and that some time since he borrowed a hundred pounds of you; mention that you called at his house this morning, and found him gone, and the place in confusion, and that you heard a rumour that he had absconded."

The man had been taking notes as Mr. Barton went on. He asked now, "What was Symes's address?—you have not told me."

“ 123, Brompton Square. Say you came down to the Bank at once, to inquire if anything was really wrong with Symes ; mention that you have heard him say that he intended to go out some day to his friends in Australia. Do you quite understand all that, Solomons ? ”

“ Quite,” the man said, repeating from his notes the instructions he had received. “ After that ? ”

“ After that, the manager is pretty certain to ask you if you would be so good as to go round to the police-station, and tell them what you think are the reasons why Symes will make for Australia. Get him to give you his card, and then go to the police-station, and tell them you have been to the Bank, and, at the manager’s request, came round to give them the information.”

“ Is that all, Mr. Barton ? ”

“ Yes, I think so, Solomons, except that you had best go off by the first train after you leave the police-station. Here are fifteen pounds for your trouble.”

The man hesitated a little. “ One question, Mr. Barton. Does the man Symes really go to

Australia?—I suppose you are working to get him away? ”

“ Why do you ask, Solomons? ”

“ I ask because, if he is not going to Australia, I do not think you have hit on the safest plan.”

“ No, Solomons? — what is your idea? I know you are a sharp fellow, let me hear it, man.”

“ Well, Mr. Barton, I should think that in any case the police are safe to have a strong suspicion that it is a plant. Now, if I just get up a little bit flashy—not too strong, you know—they will suspect it still more, and they will be sure to send down to Sloane Street, and find out that No. 25 is empty, and Mr. Herbert Parker is unknown. Now, where does Symes sail for—America? ” Mr. Barton nodded. “ Very well, if I go and tell the same story, only putting in America for Australia, they will be safe to think that it is a plant, and that I have been sent down to put them on to the American ship while he gets off in an Australian.”

“ Very good, indeed, Solomons; very good. I shall double what I promised you, and make it thirty pounds, and if you are inclined in a month

or so to come up here from Liverpool, I will promise you a good berth. But it is time for you to be at work. Remember, you are very likely to be closely watched when you leave the police-station, so take a four-wheel cab, and leave your bag in it, and change your things as you go to the station. Don't take the cab all the way, but pay him beforehand, and tell him to stop whenever you get into a lock, so that you can slip out and join in the crowd without being noticed; then take another cab to the station, and take your ticket only as far as Crewe: get out there, and go on by the next train."

Events turned out as Solomons had predicted. The police had been all day closely watching the ship "Louisa," which, with several others, was lying in the stream ready for a start in the morning; but in the evening word came down that from information obtained during the day, there was no doubt that David Symes was not going to America, as had been supposed, but to Australia or some other part. Consequently, the sharp watch which had been kept up over the "Louisa" all day was relaxed, and the vigilance of the police was directed to the other vessels preparing

for a start. The foreign sailor, therefore, who was going out as a passenger in her to New York to take command of a French vessel lying there, passed under their eyes almost unheeded, and by eight o'clock next morning, the "Louisa," with all sail set, and a strong ebb tide underneath her, was running past Woolwich, to stop no more till she furled her sails in New York harbour.

Mr. Barton was very busy all day, sitting like a spider in his den, and throwing his threads skilfully abroad to entangle the human flies; which, some buzzing gaily in the sunshine unsuspecting of danger, some hiding in nooks and corners, were yet equally sure, sooner or later, to be caught in the meshes.

At a quarter to five Mr. Barton left his office and took his way homeward, in great content at the day's proceedings.

"Rachel," he said to his wife, on entering, "we will have a bottle of that old crusted port to-day."

"That means you have done a good day's work, Robert?"

"Yes, indeed; the best I have done this many a month. Five hundred pounds clear."

"That is good indeed, Robert. What was it—a cross, I suppose?"

"Just so, Rachel. One very seldom makes five hundred in a day's work by working on the square." And Mr. Barton told his wife with great glee the day's incidents. "Four more years, Rachel, and we shall give it up. By the way, that puts me in mind of something," and he consulted his pocket-book. "It is rather more than six months since I called to see that boy. I will go in there to-morrow night."

"I suppose, Barton, you cannot do anything with him till he gets of age?"

"Nothing, Rachel; there are only four more years to wait now. That pulled off, we shall be able to retire comfortably."

"We should not do badly if we gave it up now."

"By no means, Rachel; but as he will be worth to us at least ten thousand pounds, it will pay very well to go on another four years. Of course I shall make my bargain with him, and get a deed drawn up and signed, before I tell him who he is, and I am sure he would give his ears to be a gentleman."

“It was certainly a good idea of yours, Robert, and does you great credit. Suppose, in honour of the occasion, we have two bottles of that old port, instead of one.”

CHAPTER XI.

AN EVENING AT THE HOLLS'.

It is evening at the Holls'. The children are in bed, the place is, as Mrs. Holl says, "tidied up," and John is smoking his pipe with several visitors who have dropped in. There is policeman A 56, and Perkins; William Holl, and his wife too, have come over, for this does not happen to be one of his nights at the meeting. Lastly, there is Mr. Barton. That person, however, was certainly a less welcome guest than the others, for John Holl did not like the man; why he could hardly say, but he knew he did not, and was at no particular pains to conceal his aversion. Mr. Barton never seemed to notice John's rebuffs, but periodically, perhaps once in six months, would come in and smoke a pipe with him. John Holl had very often asked his wife, on whose good sense he much relied, What that chap Barton meant by coming to see them?

He seemed comfortably off, and why he should come in twice a year to smoke a pipe was a thing he could not understand. But for once, Sarah was quite unable to enlighten her husband. The matter had fairly puzzled both John and his wife. Many years had passed since John Holl first made Mr. Barton's acquaintance. It happened thus: John had no children then, and was much younger and not quite so steady as he had since become. John's temptations, too, were many; for in the discharge of his occupation as dustman, he had sundry mugs of beer offered to him in the course of the day. So it chanced that one particularly warm summer afternoon, being oppressed by the heat, John accepted several of these offerings, and had felt his thirst noways abated thereby. After his work was done, therefore, he went into a public-house, to endeavour still further to wash the dust from his throat. Here, somehow or other—he never could exactly recall the cause—he became involved in a fierce dispute with a man who was also engaged in quenching a devouring thirst. To settle this difference of opinion, they adjourned into the back-yard. The end of this

was, that John Holl, who had drunk more than his opponent, got considerably the worst of it. The first thing he remembered afterwards was, that he was sitting on the ground, supported by Mr. Barton. This good Samaritan had entered the public-house just after John himself, had espoused his side in the argument with great zeal, and now sprinkled water in his face, and endeavoured to pour brandy down his throat. When he had partially recovered, Mr. Barton, in the kindest manner sent for a cab, drove John to his house, and there delivered him over to the tender care and pity, mingled with upbraidings, of his wife. After this he came in several times to see how John was getting on, but, when he had as it were got a footing in the house, his visits gradually became less frequent, and at last months passed by without their seeing him. Then, greatly to their astonishment, he had dropped in again; and from that time, every six months or so, Mr. Barton would pay them a visit; greet John and Sarah as if he had seen them only the day before; reach a long pipe down from the mantelpiece, seat himself in his usual place next to James, and begin

to smoke tranquilly. Husband and wife had often wondered and discussed much what could be his possible motive in thus, for seventeen years, continuing his periodical visits. They did not like the man; still they had no reason for telling him so, more especially as he tried to make his visits as acceptable as possible, never failing to produce a small bottle of spirits, remarking—with an immovable face, which it was impossible to question—that he had in his pocket by accident, and to insist that it should be drunk then and there. For the children, too, he always brought a bag of cakes or lollipops, so that to them his visits were noteworthy affairs. Indeed they served Mrs. Holl as a species of calendar, and she reckoned the date of all her household events for years past by them. Baby had been born about a month before Barton's fourth visit back. James had the measles just about the time of his sixth visit, and so on; and, indeed, Sarah would sometimes greatly mystify her neighbours by this method of reckoning. It was not till many years after the commencement of this disjointed intimacy that John Holl had found out who his visitor really

was. He had always supposed him to be something in the city—for Barton occasionally mentioned his office—but he did not even know in what part of London he lived, and put him down as being a close man, not given to talking about his affairs. Four years ago, he had made the discovery in this wise. A 56 happened to be spending his evening with John when Mr. Barton had come in. A 56 had said rather respectfully, "Good evening, Mr. Barton," and Mr. Barton had looked for a moment decidedly taken aback, but recovering himself had said, "We are both off duty together to-night, Brown;" Brown being the name by which A 56 was known in private life. After this Mr. Barton had sat smoking and talking for a time as usual, and when he was gone, A 56 told them that Mr. Barton was a sort of private detective, at which John and Sarah had been astonished, and indignant.

"What," John said, "a detective! and what does he mean by coming spying here? I hain't nothing to be ashamed of, Mr. Brown; he may spy as much as he likes in my house, but he won't find nothing but what is honestly paid for. I ain't

no thief, Mr. Brown. If I find anything in the bins—and many a silver spoon and fork, and all sorts have I found there in my time—when I finds them I gives them up. Why, Lor, what good would it be if I didn't? Sairey would not so much as look at them. Next time Mr. Barton comes here he'll see what he'll get for his peeping and spying. Just to think of it, Sairey, to think that while I thought everyone knew John Holl was an honest man, that all this time I have had a policeman—no offence, Mr. Brown—but a private policeman a spying into my doings."

"I don't think—do you know, John," A 56 said, after smoking meditatively for some time, "I don't think you need trouble yourself about Barton's suspicions of your honesty. If there had been any great robbery of plate, and they could not make out how the stuff had gone, and you had taken away the dust, say early in the morning, I don't know that they might not suspect you, and keep you under their eye; but Lor bless you, it would not have lasted more than a few weeks at most. It ain't nothing of that sort, you may take your solemn Davey. It

is a rum start surely. I have often heard you talk about a Mr. Barton, who came in twice a year, but it never entered my head as how it were Barton the private detective."

"Well, but what does he come here for, Mr. Brown? Just tell me that," John Holl said, bringing his heavy hand down upon the table. "I'll find out next time he comes, or my name's not John Holl. I will punch his head for him, Mr. Brown, detective or no detective; there's no law against that I expect, if he comes into my house without even saying by your leave."

A 56 smoked thoughtfully, not paying much attention to what John Holl said; then he remarked, "It is certainly strange, John. Barton is a deep one, there's no doubt of that, and not a bit the sort of chap to waste a minute of his time without some good reason for it, but I can't see what his game is here."

"What was this Mr. Barton?" Mr. Holl asked.

"He was a Bow Street runner," A 56 said, "but he was turned out of the force some twelve years back. He calls himself a private detective

now, and does all sorts of things in that way. They say he is as sharp as a needle. He's got to the bottom of several jobs which have beaten our people, but I have heard, though I should not say so to every one, that he plays double sometime. But there, that mayn't be true, and you see our people are rather jealous of him."

"That's right enough, Mr. Brown, but still I can't see what he has been spying about here so long for—twelve years—no, more—nigh upon thirteen, it were just about the time when James and his poor mother came here."

"Was it though?" the policeman said; "then you may take my word for it, John, he comes to keep his eye on the boy. I'd bet a gallon to a pint he knows who the boy is, and is paid by his friends to let him know if he's alive, and how he is getting on; yes, you may depend upon it, that's about the mark."

John Holl and his wife looked at each other in astonishment. Sarah was the first to speak.

"That's it, John, sure enough. Like enough he'll turn out some rich man's son, and get all his money yet."

"I would not think that, Mrs. Holl; no, not if

I was you," policeman Brown said; "I should say his chance now is worse than it was before. Then some day, I don't say it was likely, still there it was, it might have been found out by some accident who he was, but now it seems as if they must know where he is, and all about him, but don't want to acknowledge or do anything for him."

"Then they're a bad, unnatural lot, whoever they are," Mrs. Holl said, indignantly, "and the poor lad a cripple too. But any ways, John, if he comes to look after James, we must speak him fair, for who knows, perhaps some day when they are dying they may be sorry for what they have done all these years, and turn round and send for him."

"That is so," the policeman said; "let him come and go just as if you thought nothing more of him than before; if any good come of it, so much the better. If not, his visits won't have done you any harm."

And so it was settled. Since that conversation Mr. Barton had paid his seven visits with his usual punctuality—this was his eighth. No hint was ever given by John and Sarah that they

suspected the cause of his coming, and to James they had never spoken of what had passed, for he had gone to bed at the time when their discovery of Mr. Barton's occupation was made, and they agreed that it was much better to say nothing to him on the subject.

For some time the little party talked on indifferent matters, and then the cripple boy, who was rather fond of attacking William Holl, brought up the question of politics. James had read much, and variously. All these years that he had been crippled, he had had no other occupation, and he had thought as well as read; at ordinary times his diction, although better, still resembled that of those around him, but when he warmed into a subject he dropped this altogether, and spoke in the language of those in the world, of which he had seen so little and read so much. "Well, Uncle William, and how go on the Chartists?"

"The great cause goes on well, James, as well or better than we could hope. The working classes are everywhere moving, and a deep feeling of discontent at their condition is fast gaining ground among them."

“And a great pity too, William,” Sarah Holl said; “we have always done very well before we got these Chartist notions into our heads, and for my part I can’t see what we want with them, or what good they are to do us, when we do get them.”

William Holl smiled pityingly, his wife sadly.

“Sairey is right,” her husband said. “We have done very well, and I for one don’t want no change. I should like to own my horse and cart, but I don’t see that the charter is going to give it me. So let well alone, says I.”

“Anyhow, William,” Sarah said, “it has done neither you nor Bessy any good. When I think of what you both were two years ago, and what you are now, it makes me sick of the very name of the Charter.”

“The first disciples of a cause always suffer,” William Holl said earnestly, “and Bessy and I must be content to do the same. When we look back some day upon our success, we shall be rewarded.”

“The success you will have to look back upon some day, William Holl, if you don’t watch it,” A 56 said, “will be finding your-

self some fine morning shut up between four walls."

"The voice of the million cannot be put down!" William Holl said, sententiously.

"Yes, it can, Uncle William," James said, "when the million don't happen to be united, and the two or three hundred thousand who are their masters, and who have an armed force at their command, are perfectly unanimous."

"The history of the world says otherwise."

"In some cases, uncle, I grant you, where the million are really ground down, as you are so fond of saying, or are crying for bread, their voice is, I allow, irresistible, but unless their grievance is a real one, and their hearts are in it, it may be very loud, but no one cares for it. Your opponents have strength, and perfect unanimity; they have the law on their side, the troops and the police, and against all this your mere mob is a wave against a rock."

"The French Revolution, James, has taught us the power of the people."

"The French Revolution!" James laughed. "You will never play that game over here, nor is

it the slightest criterion for you. The French people had reason on their side, they had justice if not law. The people were tyrannised over to an extent we can hardly understand; they groaned under an overbearing nobility with feudal power, who looked upon them as hardly human beings; their condition was dreadful, and they were nearly starving. They had something to fight for. But we are not mere slaves as they were, nor are we starving. The French people groaned under so terrible a tyranny, that the whole of the middle classes, the great proportion of the clergy, and a good many even of the nobles were at first with them—in fact were the Revolution, although in the end the people turned upon their benefactors, and destroyed nobility, clergy, and middle class. The people there were at the commencement united with the middle class, and at any rate knew what they were fighting for, and were sufficiently in earnest to be ready to give their lives for their cause. You stand alone; the middle classes are more bitterly opposed to you than even the upper, you have no unity among yourselves, and lastly, you are fighting for you know not what—for a chimera.”

“ I beg your pardon, James,” William Holl said, hotly, “ it is no chimera. Universal suffrage is Nature’s law ; every man has a right to a voice in the Government.”

“ Now, my dear uncle, that is so like you. You see you get together, and you dogmatise, and agree with each other, till you lay down things as law, which have no existence except in your own brain. What do you mean by that great sounding phrase,—‘ universal suffrage is Nature’s law.’ It sounds well, but what does it mean ? Has it any meaning at all—and if so, is it true ? Let us go back to a state of nature—savage nature, and what will you find ? Chiefs or governors are elected to rule the nation ; but I will venture to say, in no tribe or race of which there is any history, were they chosen by the vote of man, woman, and child ; they were elected and are now elected among savage tribes by the wise men of the nation, the object being to choose the men most fitted for the place. And so with this Government of ours ; when Parliament was established, it was proposed that the men most suited to rule the nation should be chosen. There were various ways in which this might have been done,

but the way selected was that boroughs and counties should each send so many members, which members were in those days unquestionably selected by the leading men in such boroughs and counties. Since its foundation the number admitted to the privilege, or to speak more correctly, the number of those upon whom the responsibility of selecting the representatives devolves, has largely increased, until nearly every man of intelligence or energy, having a house, can vote. The object of it all is to obtain a good Government. Is not that object attained? Do you mean for an instant to say that a Parliament such as would be elected under a system of universal suffrage would be equal in intelligence, in character, or in any single point, with the present one? Failing to prove that, your whole argument falls to the ground. If under the present state of things you found Parliament legislating entirely for the benefit of the rich as against the poor, taking burdens off their own shoulders to lay them on yours, you might well complain. But it is not so. The burdens on property are very great, the burden on you very slight. Every question which comes before them

which can in any way benefit the working classes has always its full share of attention. What reason therefore have you to complain? Of those who have the vote, not one half exercise the inestimable privilege you make so much fuss about; not one quarter would do so unless canvassed and worried and bribed. My dear uncle, as father says, we are very well as we are; let well alone."

"There is something in what you say, James; but unquestionably a republic in which each man has a voice is the happiest form of government."

"Theoretically it may be, uncle, although I should doubt it. The Jews tried it, and fell back upon a monarchy. The Athenians tried it, and there it lasted till the time of their fall; but you will find that the house of assembly, so to speak, in Athens, was chosen by a more limited proportion of the people than have the vote here; besides, if you read their domestic history, I don't think you will conclude that it was a happy or reputable one. Rome tried it; but in her earlier history the real power was always in the hands of the patricians, who chose consuls, who were kings with another name. And in Rome, as the popular element became stronger, so was

the government worse, until the nation took refuge under an emperor. England tried a revolution, and fell into the hands of Cromwell, who, although he ruled them wisely and well, was far more despotic in his power than any king who preceded him. France tried it, and you can't say much for the conduct of King Mob there; and at last they came to the conclusion that an emperor was better than mob-law. Yes, I see, uncle, America. America is a young country. She has had, since her formation, no enemy near her to try her; she started with every advantage, and what is the result? She has pretty nearly universal suffrage—that is, every man has a vote—but what is the consequence? he finds it of no use voting independently, and he therefore binds himself to a party, and has a ticket given him with a list of names, which he is bound to vote for. Look at Congress, no sane man could compare it, either for intelligence, eloquence, statesmanship, or conduct, with our own House of Commons; besides, above all is the President, who is really very nearly independent of Congress, and is, indeed, as despotic as any European monarch.”

While James had been speaking, the others had been smoking in silence. Mr. Barton was surprised, although he said nothing, and the others were accustomed to his talk, which was indeed far beyond his age and station. When he ceased there was a moment's silence, and then John Holl said,—

“Well spoken, James, spoken out like a man, ay, and a clever man, too. I don't quite know all you were saying, not having learning myself; but I am proud to hear you, James, and I feel more than repaid, if it were only to hear you talk like that, for any trouble we may have had with you, my boy. Now, brother Will, you ain't got nothing to say to that; give it up, man, for Bessy's sake if not your own; give it up, and go to work again like a man.”

“I have plenty to say against it if I choose, John,” William said. “James talks very well, looking at it in the light he does, and, I will say fairly, puts his side stronger than I ever heard it put before; but he talks from books, and not from real life. He does not know how we are put upon—how should he?”

“Ah, that's what you always fall back upon,

uncle," James said, laughing. "You are put upon; it is very vague, and therefore, unsupported as it is by a single fact, very difficult to disprove. How I wish I was like other people. I should like to go to one of your meetings, and speak there. You get together, you are all the same side, and you talk and talk, and back each other up, till you think there is nothing to be said on the other side of the question."

"Lor bless you," Perkins said, "they wouldn't let you speak; don't you go to think that; if you didn't agree with them they wouldn't hear a word you had to say, and you might think yourself very lucky if you got out of the place as whole as you went in. I've been to some of these sort of places, but the more I find they talk about liberty, the less they will give it to any one else."

"Do you know, Perkins, I should like to go to one of these Chartist meetings. I have heard James talk it over so often, that I think I could tell them a thing or two."

"Look here, John," the prize-fighter said, "I don't like these things, but I should not mind it for once for a lark. So if you go, here's one with you. What do you say, William, will you take us?"

"I don't know when there will be one," William Holl said, evasively, glancing at A 56.

"You need not mind me, William Holl," the policeman said; "we've no instructions about you yet. When we have, be as cunning as you like, we shall soon find out all about your goings on; but if you will take my advice, you will drop it. James has put it very straight and right, and I drink his health, and it would be better for some of you if you had a little of his sense. You will find yourself in the wrong box one of these days."

William Holl only shook his head, and then rose, saying it was past nine and it was time to be off. So his wife put her bonnet on, and all took their leave, including Mr. Barton, who had, as was his wont, spoken very little, but who had listened attentively, especially when James was speaking, as if desirous of judging as far as possible of the lad's character.

CHAPTER XII.

THWARTED PLANS.

FRANK MAYNARD had by no means forgotten what his friend Prescott had said to him upon the subject of Alice Heathcote. He had thought it over constantly and with increasing annoyance. Frank could have been easily led to do almost anything, but he was one of the worst men in the world to drive, and this he considered to be an attempt to force him into a marriage for which he had not the least desire. He was the more annoyed because he was really very fond of Alice in a cousinly sort of way, and he felt that he could never again be upon the same pleasant footing with her as before. Had he believed for an instant that Alice regarded him in any other light than that in which he thought of her, he might have acted differently: but Frank had not the least personal vanity, and it never entered his mind

that Alice ever thought of him except as a sort of brother. Altogether it was very unpleasant, and he consequently stayed several days away from Lowndes Square, instead of paying his almost daily visit. At last he felt that it would seem strange if he did not go, and so started with an uncomfortable feeling, and a dogged resolution that if he had the least opportunity he would enlighten his uncle as to what his own views upon the subject were; knowing Captain Bradshaw's peppery disposition, however, he had no doubt that he would be exceedingly irritated at finding his wishes thwarted in a matter so very near his heart. On arriving at Lowndes Square he found his uncle alone in the drawing-room. It was a large room, with folding-doors. These on ordinary occasions stood open, but in cold weather were kept closed, as Captain Bradshaw said the large room made him cold. Alice, on her part, liked the arrangement, as the back drawing-room made a sort of snuggerly, where she could work or paint undisturbed by visitors. In the front room Frank found his uncle.

“ Well, Frank, I thought you were lost. Where

have you been all this time? It is nearly a week since you were here."

Frank said, rather confusedly, that he had been a good deal engaged.

"Nonsense, engaged! You may be out of an evening, but you could surely manage to run down some time in the day to see us."

Frank knew that this was one of Captain Bradshaw's weak points; that he liked attention, and could bear anything better than being neglected; so he said that he was sorry he had let so many days pass without calling, but would come oftener in future.

"That is right, Frank," Captain Bradshaw said, mollified. "You know we don't see many visitors here, and you brighten us up. It is not for myself, but for Alice's sake, that I like you to come down often. You ought to be more attentive there."

Frank thought that this was a good opportunity to express his opinion upon that point, and he said, rather coldly;—

"I really do not see, uncle, why I should be specially attentive to Alice. I do not think it

likely that she interests herself in the slightest degree as to my comings and goings."

Now Captain Bradshaw was just as anxious to have a talk with Frank upon this subject, as Frank was himself. For years this marriage between his nephew and niece had been his pet project. He had so thoroughly settled it in his own mind, that he believed they were equally agreed, and that although no actual love-making might have taken place, it was a sort of tacit engagement. He had often during Frank's absence joked Alice about him, and the girl's rising colour and evasive answers more than ever confirmed him in his opinion. Since Frank's return, however, things had not gone quite as he had anticipated. It was not that he doubted in the least that all was right, for he was a good deal accustomed to have his own way, and had beside an oldfashioned idea that in these matters young people should do as their elders recommend. Still Frank was not so attentive as he ought to have been under the circumstances, and it was Captain Bradshaw's opinion that now his nephew had had his fling, the sooner he settled down and married Alice Heathcote the better. He had

therefore quite made up his mind to intimate his wishes to him upon the first opportunity.

“ I hardly know what you mean, Frank. If I were a young man in your place, I should think that it would be only right and proper, under the circumstances, that she should take a good deal of interest in what I did.”

“ What do you mean, uncle, by ‘ under the circumstances ? ’ ” Frank asked, shortly.

“ Mean, Frank ? Damme, I mean, of course, in the relation in which you stand to each other.”

“ I am your nephew, uncle Harry, and Alice is your niece ; but I imagine that the relationship between us is something very slight.”

“ Pooh ! nonsense, man ! ” Captain Bradshaw said, irritably ; “ you know what I mean ; but I will put it plainly for you, if you like. I think it natural that Alice should feel some interest in your goings-on, considering that you are some day going to be man and wife.”

“ Man and wife, uncle ? What are you thinking about ? Alice and I have about as much idea of marrying each other as we have of flying.”

“Damme, sir!” Captain Bradshaw commenced, fiercely; “but no, I will not get angry;” and then he continued, in a tone of concentrated rage, which showed far more than any gesticulation could have done, how angry he was: “Do you mean to tell me, seriously, Frank Maynard, that you do not intend to marry your cousin, Alice Heathcote?”

“Most distinctly and clearly, uncle, I do not. I like Alice exceedingly. I love her almost as a sister. She is a dear, good girl; but I have not, and never had, the slightest intention of marrying her.”

Captain Bradshaw sat down. He could not trust himself to speak for some time; he knew how passionate he was, and that he should be sure to say something which he would afterwards wish unsaid. At last, after a great struggle with himself, he said, quietly;—

“My dear Frank, you have upset me sadly. I always thought it was an understood thing between you, and I had set my mind on it. For years I have planned and hoped for this. What objection can you have? It would make me very happy. You are like a son to me, Alice like

a daughter; why can you not come together?"

"My dear uncle," Frank said, "there is hardly anything that I would not do to give you pleasure, but I can hardly change my present feeling for Alice into the love I should give to a wife. I am sorry, very sorry, that you are disappointed, but I never dreamed of such a thing. If you had spoken about it some years sooner, I might have got to look upon it in that way. But it is too late now."

"But I always thought you did understand, Frank. I have watched you both closely, and I thought you loved Alice, and I was quite sure Alice——"

Captain Bradshaw did not finish his sentence, for the folding doors opened suddenly, and Alice Heathcote herself stood among them. Had not the light of the winter afternoon faded out,—the room being only lit by the deep red glow of the fire,—they would have seen that her face was very pale, and that her cheeks were still wet with tears. However, she gave them little time to notice this, for she moved hastily forward, and stood between them with her back to the fire, so that

her face was in deep shadow. Then she said, trying to speak in a playful tone, but in a voice which shook and wavered a little as she began ;—

“ My dear uncle, if you gentlemen want to talk secrets you should not choose a room with folding doors, through which every word can be heard. Not that I am sorry I heard what you said, in the first place, because I have a right to have a voice in a matter in which I am so much interested ; and in the second, because I am able to come in and join my voice to Frank’s in asking you to let us each go our own way. You see, uncle, we make very good cousins, but we have no inclination to exchange that relationship for a nearer one. Let us have our own way, uncle : you cannot make two people love each other who have no natural inclination that way, and we could not love you better if we were married than we do separately.”

Captain Bradshaw was silent for a moment in astonishment, and then broke out ;—

“ Damme, Alice, if I understand you at all. I always thought——”

Alice stepped forward, and laid her hands upon his shoulder, and murmured very low, so that

only he could hear her, "Hush, uncle, for pity's sake!" and then, more loudly, "you see, uncle, unfortunately, we have been playing at cross-purposes; Frank and I have been caring for each other in a brotherly and sisterly sort of way, and you, wanting it to be something else, have all along misinterpreted what you saw. Now, be a dear, kind uncle, as you always are, and let us have our own way."

"Just so, uncle," Frank put in; "you see it has all been a mistake, and I am very glad that Alice has overheard us, because she has been able to assure you that she agrees with me."

Captain Bradshaw was silent for a moment, and then said softly to Alice as he kissed her cheek;—

"You are a darling, Alice; as for you, sir," he said, turning fiercely upon Frank, "my opinion of you, sir, is, that you are a young fool. Yes, sir, damme, a thorough young fool," and with this explosion of wrath, Captain Bradshaw strode out of the room, slamming the door behind him.

Frank gave a long whistle.

"Upon my word, Alice, this is too bad; Uncle

Harry is turning a complete tyrant in his old age. The idea of getting into a passion because you and I, who have known each other for the last ten years, are not going to fall in love with each other all at once to please him. It is too absurd, upon my word."

"Very absurd, Frank," Alice said, quietly; "and now I think you had better go, and I will go down and pacify uncle."

Frank took up his hat, but paused as he went towards the door, and said,—

"I hope I did not say anything rude about you, Alice? You know how much I like you as a sister; but I was obliged to protest against his making us man and wife, when I know that neither of us had such an idea in our heads. You are not vexed, Alice?"

"Not vexed at all, Frank," she said, quietly; "now, please go."

Frank went downstairs, and out into the chilly evening air, with a strong feeling of discontent at things in general. The whole thing was, he assured himself, too ridiculous; still, somehow or other, he did not feel as pleased as he had expected now that the affair was settled. By

the time he reached the Temple, however, he had recovered his usual good temper; and going straight up into Prescott's room, he sat down and gave his friend an exact account of what had passed. Prescott listened with great attention. When Frank came to the part where Alice appeared upon the scene, Prescott almost held his breath to catch every word, and murmured to himself,—

“Dear Alice; dear, brave girl.”

When Frank had done, he said,—

“Now, Prescott, just give me your opinion of it all; it is too bad, is it not?”

“Do you want my honest opinion, Frank?”

“Of course I do, Prescott.”

“Very well, Frank; then I will give it you. I agree entirely with your uncle. You are a fool, and a thorough fool.”

It would have been a very dangerous proceeding for anyone else than Prescott to have expressed this opinion of Frank to his face. As it was, Frank looked for a moment as if inclined to be exceedingly angry, but glancing at Prescott's thoughtful face as he looked into the fire, his brow cleared again, and he said,—

"At any rate, old man, I was a fool to ask your opinion, for I might have known beforehand what it would be. You had as good as said you were in the plot with uncle, and advised me to marry Alice, so you are put out by finding that you are ridiculously mistaken. I can only say, that as you would have doubtless acted so much more wisely in the matter than I have done, I wish you had been in my place."

"I wish to heaven that I had been, Frank," Prescott said, with an earnest sadness.

"Upon my word, I wish you had, Prescott, for I do believe that you love Alice; although why, if you do, you should have been urging me on to marry her, is more than I can make out."

"I wished you to marry her, Frank, because, above all things, I should want to see her happy."

"Then why in the name of fortune don't you marry her, and make her happy yourself, Prescott?"

"Because she would not let me, Frank."

"Pooh, nonsense, Prescott! we know very well that she does not care for me, thank goodness;

and, therefore, it is all the more likely that she may for you."

Prescott did not care to pursue the subject farther, for he did not wish his friend to see that he felt any serious interest in the matter.

When Frank Maynard had left the house in Lowndes Square, Alice Heathcote did not for some time carry out the intention she had expressed of going downstairs to pacify her uncle. As she sat in her low easy-chair before the fire, not leaning back, but with her figure bowed, her hands listlessly clasping each other, and a look of weary hopelessness upon her face, she needed comfort too much to be able to dispense it. Alice had suffered a severe shock; one of those shocks which cast a shade over the whole life. The pain of a rejection—or, perhaps, more properly speaking, the duration of that pain—is in almost exact proportion to the amount of hope which was previously entertained. Instances are not wanting, indeed, where a perfectly hopeless attachment has embittered a whole existence; but those who so suffered must have been endowed either with a peculiarly sensitive organisation, or an ill-regulated mind.

It is the same thing in all relations of life. If a man hopes to attain a large fortune by the death of a relation, or by a fortunate speculation, or successful invention, he will form plans for the future, and build greatly upon his expectations. It will be a great shock, then, when he finds that the money is left to another, or the speculation or invention turns out a failure; but it will not rankle in his mind, will not permanently affect his whole career in life as it would do had a banker, with whom he had placed a similar sum of money, failed. It needs certainty, or that strong belief which is the same as certainty, to make the loss of a fortune, or the failure of a love-dream, cast a permanent blight over a life. Had Alice Heathcote doubted Frank's feelings for her, she might still have loved him truly, she might have dreamed happy dreams, and built fairy castles of love and happiness. But she never would have quite given way to her love; she would have known that her dreams were but visions which might never come true, and that her castles were but baseless fabrics after all. Had she then found out that Frank did not love her, she would have felt it as

a very great pain ; she would have mourned over her vanished dreams, and her ruined castles, but the wound, deep as it might have been, would have healed over in time, and left but a slight scar. But she had believed, believed surely, that her love was returned, and so had given her whole heart, and nursed her love until it had become a part of her very being. Many things had assisted to cause this delusion. For so many years, almost ever since she could remember, she had looked up to him as her protector and adviser. He had always seemed fond of her, and, having no sister of his own, had petted and made very much of her ; and Frank had a warm kindly way about his manner and talk which might very well deceive a young girl into the belief that his affection was love. While he was abroad, too, he had written so often and so affectionately, that, judging his feelings by her own, she had believed that he loved her. But most of all she had been deceived by her uncle's manner and talk. The little hints and innuendos he frequently threw out, the way in which he had seemed to consider that it was a settled thing, had im-

pressed her with the idea that Frank had spoken to him upon the subject before he left England, and was only waiting until his return to ask her formally. And so she had given her whole heart, trustingly and confidingly, and it was now a terrible shock to find that she had been mistaken after all. She could not blame him; she knew now that her eyes were opened, that he had never spoken or looked as a cousin, thrown with her as he he had been, might not have done. Nor could she blame herself; for she felt that it would, under the circumstances, have been next to impossible for her not to have misinterpreted him. She could only lament her mistake, and feel with grief and bitterness, that her bright hopes and dreams had all faded away, that her castles which had seemed so solid had fallen, and that there was nothing to take their place; that dreaming and hoping were over for her, and the light of her life gone out for ever. So she sat there, and looked with a dull pain into the fire; the slight fingers twined in and out round each other, the lips, folded together to keep in the cry of grief she could hardly repress, yet quivering restlessly, while

from time to time great tears rolled down from the long lashes. For a long while she sat thus; sometimes quite quiet, at others swaying herself backwards and forwards. At last, when the clock upon the mantel struck six, she roused herself with a weary sigh that was almost a wail, passed her hands slowly across her forehead and back over the hair by her temples, and then, dropping them listlessly by her side, passed out and up to her own room. She did not come downstairs until the dinner was announced; but when she did there were few signs upon her face of the hard struggle she had gone through. Captain Bradshaw, on the other hand, had by no means recovered the equability of his temper. He was throughout dinner in a state of explosion. He swore at the footman in an unusual way, and sent fiery messages to the cook, until she was, as she expressed it, so flustered she did not know what she was doing. Even the footman, accustomed as he was to his master's outbreaks, felt aggrieved.

“He is just the very image of an Indian tiger, cook. I have been with him a good many years now, but I never did know him so awful can-

tankerous as he is to-day. He ain't a bad master, the Captain, nowadays, but flesh and blood can't put up with him; not white flesh and blood, black might; I shall tell him in the morning he must provide himself elsewhere."

"Why didn't you tell him now?" the cook asked sarcastically. "I would, right off."

"I don't think you would now, cook; I wouldn't, no, not if he were to swear ten times wuss at me. He's a regular old tiger, when his temper's up, he is; and if any one were to say anything to him it would be a dreadful business; pretty nigh as much as one's life were worth, I should say. Lor' bless you, he would think nothing of taking up a poker or a candlestick, or a soup tureen, or anything which happened to come handy to him at the time."

"And what does Miss Alice say to it all, James?"

"She is a right down good one, she is," the footman said, admiringly; "she does all she can, but to-day he's too fierce even for her. She ain't looking quite herself neither. She did try once or twice to smooth him down a bit, but,

bless you, when he's in such a tantrum as he is to-day, nothing short of a strait-waistcoat and a cold bath would smooth him down."

While this conversation was passing below, Alice Heathcote was having by no means a pleasant time of it upstairs. Captain Bradshaw had taken his usual place by the fire, with his port wine upon a small table beside him, while Alice sat down opposite, with a piece of fancy work in her hands as an excuse for idleness. For a little time after the servant had left the room, there was silence, and then Captain Bradshaw, after drinking off a glass of wine, and pouring himself out another, said, with great deliberation,—

"And now, Alice, I shall be glad if you will give me an explanation of all this; for, damme, if I can make head or tail of it."

"My dear uncle," Alice said, cheerfully, "I don't know that there is anything to explain. You see, Frank and I do not want to marry each other, and although I believe that parents and guardians have a right to put a veto upon marriages of which they do not approve, I confess that I do not think their power extends to the

point of compelling two strongly objecting parties to marry each other."

Captain Bradshaw rubbed his forehead with his handkerchief, and then performed the same operation with great violence all over his head, brushing up his short grey hair into a state of the wildest and most aggressive looking confusion. It was not that he was actually hot, but it was a trick he had acquired in India, and was a certain sign, with him, of great irritation.

"But I always looked upon it as a settled thing, Alice; I have set my mind upon it for years, and I always felt sure that you were fond of him. I don't know what to make of it; but if you do care for him, Alice, by Gad, he shall marry you, or, at any rate, he shall be made most thoroughly to understand that not one penny of my money shall he ever have if he does not."

"Thank you very much, uncle," Alice said, smiling quietly; "but you see I should not particularly care about being married to a man who only took me as an incumbrance with my money and yours."

"But, Alice," her uncle said impatiently, "I do not understand why you took his part to-day,

and so rendered all I said of no avail. I was sure you cared for him. You never attempted to deny it when I spoke to you upon the subject, and now you upset all the force of my arguments, and confirm that young jackanapes in his refusal to listen to my wishes, by saying that you are mutually indifferent to each other."

"My dear uncle," Alice said, very gravely, "the whole of the unfortunate position has been brought about by your deceiving yourself in the first place; and in the second, by the very unfair and unjustifiable way in which you have deceived me."

"Upon my word, Alice," Captain Bradshaw said, astonished at this sudden attack upon himself, and replacing untasted upon the table the wine he was in the act of raising to his lips, "I do not understand what you mean."

"This is what I mean, uncle. You all along thought and hoped that Frank and I would some day take a fancy to each other. About that I have no reason to complain, nor that you deceived yourself into believing that things were turning out as you wished. What you were wrong in, my dear uncle, was, to have spoken to me as you

did about Frank. What could I think? I could not suppose it possible that you were doing so merely upon the strength of your hopes upon the subject. I naturally concluded that you were in his confidence, that you had talked the matter over before he left England, and that although he or you might have thought it wrong to ask me to enter upon an engagement at the age of eighteen, and just as he was leaving England for two or three years, still that he perfectly intended to propose for me upon his return. What else could I think, uncle?"

Captain Bradshaw was silent. He felt that he had been wrong, and that without sufficient cause he had led his niece to believe that Frank loved her, and had thus greatly endangered the happiness of his favourite. Once feeling himself to be wrong, no one could be more ready to admit it than Captain Bradshaw.

"Upon my word, Alice," he said, earnestly, "I never looked upon it in that light. I see that what you say is true, and that I have behaved like an old fool, as I am, in the matter. But even now it may not be too late—even now I may be able to persuade Frank——"

“My dear uncle, you forget that I could not accept him under such conditions, and beside that, few men are less likely to be persuaded or forced in a matter of this sort than Frank is. It would be folly upon my part to pretend that I do not like him very much. I always believed that he cared for me; and I daresay, had he been very attentive when he returned, and made pretty speeches, and behaved well, I should not have thrown any serious obstacle in the way of the fulfilment of your pet project. As it is, I find now that I have been mistaken all along as to the whole affair, and all I have to do is, to make myself as comfortable as possible under the circumstances.”

“I am afraid that I have done a great deal of harm,” the old man said, sadly, “and I can only say that I did not do it wilfully, for I certainly deceived myself as much as I did you; but that is a very poor consolation to me when I reflect that my thoughtless folly has made you miserable.”

“Not miserable, uncle,” Alice said, speaking as cheerfully as she could, though she had very hard work to prevent herself from breaking down and going off in a fit of crying. “Not quite so

bad as that. It has been a little shock for me, but I shall soon get over that. But, please, do not speak about it any more. At any rate, Frank is not to blame in the matter. You could not renew it with him without letting out that we have both been deceiving ourselves about it; and it would, of course, be very painful for me to know that he even guessed that it was so." So saying, Alice went across and kissed her uncle. "That is settled, then?"

"Ay, ay, Alice. I do not see that I can say no to you. I have made so much mischief that the least I can do is to let you have your own way now. As for Frank, I repeat what I told him to-day—that he is a thorough fool not to have fallen in love with the dearest and best girl in the world."

Alice was satisfied, for she had gained more than she had anticipated, knowing well how obstinate her uncle was when he had once set his mind upon anything. Indeed, it was only the thought, that the pain he knew Alice must be feeling was caused by his own error, which made Captain Bradshaw, as a sort of reparation, give up his long-cherished plans and hopes.

And so, as far as taking active measures were concerned, the matter dropped ; but not from the thoughts of either. Captain Bradshaw could not forgive Frank all at once, for having thwarted his plans, and made Alice unhappy ; nor could he forgive himself for the share he had taken in the affair. For although Alice tried hard to seem cheerful when with her uncle,—though she talked more, and smiled more frequently than had been her wont,—she could not deceive him, now that he was really watching her. Her voice was not always steady and under her command ; she spoke in a forced way, very unlike her former merry talk ; and above all, the smile never went farther than her lips—never lit up the rest of her face. Over that a cloud had fallen. It was difficult to say what the change was, but it was as if the light had suddenly gone out. Her uncle tried to be very kind to her, but at this time he did not make matters easy for her. The very tone of kindness and commiseration in which he spoke to her was in itself a trial ; while with every one else he was so terribly bad tempered that he made the lives of all around him a burden to them.

Frank called a few days afterwards, and Captain Bradshaw hardly spoke to him; but Frank had made up his mind that his uncle must be allowed time to work off his disappointment, and appeared to take no notice of this, but chatted with Alice as usual.

These first visits of Frank's were a great trial to Alice, but she had at least the satisfaction of knowing that he did not even guess what the state of her heart was, and was therefore able to get on with him better than she had expected to have done. At first, too, Frank made his calls as short as possible, for with his uncle in a state of extreme irritation, they were by no means pleasant visits. After a fortnight or so Captain Bradshaw began to calm down, and things gradually resumed their old footing, except that Alice still looked pale and wan, and her voice was no longer to be heard singing snatches of old ballads as she moved about the house. But of this Frank knew nothing, and put down her altered looks partly to the annoyances he conceived that she had to bear from his uncle's temper.

It was after one of these visits he said to Prescott,—

“ I think, Prescott, it would be a great thing if I were to go away for a little while. I have been thinking on my way back, that if I were to write to Teddy Drake, and offer to pay him a visit, it would be very good fun, and would give my uncle time to get into a better temper. As long as I am in town I must call regularly, and that keeps the sore open ; whereas, if I go away only for a fortnight it will calm him down a little. I shall be very glad to see Teddy, too, for I have not seen him since I came back.”

“ I think it is a very good plan, Frank. Do you know his address ? ”

“ Oh, yes. Teddy and I exchange letters once a year or so. I will write at once, Prescott. I shall be very glad to get away for awhile, for I am heartily sick of this London life.”

END OF VOL. I.

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